The Concept of Character Development in the Writings of Ellen G. White

John M. Fowler
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FOWLER, John Mathew, 1939-
THE CONCEPT OF CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT IN THE
WRITINGS OF ELLEN G. WHITE.

Andrews University, Ed.D., 1977
Education, religion

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THE CONCEPT OF CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT
IN THE WRITINGS OF ELLEN G. WHITE

A Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

by
John M. Fowler
June 1977
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IN THE WRITINGS OF ELLEN G. WHITE

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Date Approved: June 30, 1977

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Date completed: June 1977

Problem

Character development is a fundamental objective of the Seventh-day Adventist educational system. The purpose of this study was to define the concept of character development in the writings of Ellen G. White whose thought is foundational to the philosophy of the worldwide system of Seventh-day Adventist schools.

The investigation focused on four subproblems: (1) the meaning and significance of character; (2) the nature of character development; (3) factors affecting character development; and (4) responsibility for character development.
**Method**

The problem was approached by (1) carefully perusing White's published writings and noting every statement related to the study; (2) inductively analyzing the statements and arranging them logically into categories related to the subproblems; and (3) interpreting the data with the use of appropriate hermeneutics and synthesizing the findings.

A survey of selected research studies on character development—those of Hartshorne and May, Ligon, Peck and Havighurst, Piaget, and Kohlberg—was included to provide a background against which White's concept may be understood.

**Conclusions**

The study concluded that White in her writings expresses a definite concept of character development, structured around her belief that man and his character can be understood only within the context of God. The fundamental elements of her concept are as follows:

1. Character is that which gives motivation, coherence, consistency, and direction to the total relational and behavioral functions of man. It involves the whole man: what he is—his motives, feelings, and thoughts—and what he does—his actions and habits—in respect to his relationship to God, man, and himself.

2. Character is important for the fulfillment of divine purpose in history, the vindication of the validity of the Christian faith, and the optimum realization of human potential and destiny.
3. Godlikeness is the ultimate objective of character development. Hence the norm for evaluating human character is the character of God, revealed in Jesus and particularized in the Bible and in the law of God. Likewise the ultimate evaluation of character rests with God's judgment.

4. The means of character development are located in God's movement of grace toward man in the redemptive activity of Christ and the empowering of His Spirit. When man in faith chooses to accept the provision of God and enters into a new relationship with Him, the Spirit of God actualizes within man a divine-human unity with a new motivation and a new empowering. In this experience, self-centeredness gives way to God-centeredness, so that man's basis of action is no longer the self, but the internalized principle of godlikeness, namely, love, which assures man to exist, relate, and function on a principled level, making character development possible.

5. As man continues to grow and mature in this divine-human unity, and as God continues to remain the central motivating and empowering force of life, perfection of character becomes his privilege. Contrarily, retrogression remains a constant threat.

6. Personal and relational factors such as self-concept, heredity, environment, health, intelligence, dietary habits, purposive vocation, study of the Bible, meditation, prayer, worship, peer relations, and unselfish service influence character development either as preparatory to or nurturing of the divine-human unity within man.
7. Although the individual is ultimately responsible for character development, the home and the school share a major responsibility for providing their wards adequate character-oriented nurture and atmosphere. Parental responsibility includes adequate prenatal and early childhood care, modeling, discipline, teaching, and providing choice-making opportunities. The responsibility of the school, in addition to many of the above, centers around the selection of teachers and curricula committed to character development.
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author wishes to record his appreciation to his chairman, Dr. George H. Akers, for having gone the extra mile in providing encouragement, criticism, and counsel in the execution of this project; the members of his doctoral committee, Dr. Sakae Kubo, Dr. Bernard M. Lall, Dr. John B. Youngberg, without whose availability and counsel this study could not have been completed; Dr. Ruth Murdoch, whose inspiring course in the psychology of character development sowed the seeds for this study; Dr. Thomas S. Geraty, chairman of the Department of Education, for his counsel and support in the initial planning of the doctoral program; Pastor H. H. Mattison, who, years ago, introduced the researcher to the spiritual and intellectual wealth of the writings of Ellen G. White; Pastor Cecil B. Guild, who, in the last days of his inspiring life, convinced the author to pursue the doctoral program at Andrews University; Nora Guild, a friend and former colleague, for critically reading through the draft; Joyce Jones, for valuable editorial assistance; and Joyce Campbell for typing the manuscript.

The researcher also wishes to express his gratefulness to the Southern Asia Division of Seventh-day Adventists, particularly its president Dr. R. S. Lowry, for providing a leave of absence and financial assistance to complete this program.

vii
Appreciation is also due to the Pacific Press Publishing Association and its book editor, T. R. Torkelson, for providing the researcher a copy of each of the Ellen G. White books published by them.

Finally, the silent and patient ones within the author's immediate environment deserve his total and unreserved gratitude: father who, himself limited in formal education, encouraged his son to pursue forever the joy of learning; wife Mary, daughter Fylvia, and son Falvo, who, while enduring the hazards of a preoccupied husband and father, showed full understanding, love, and support.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Throughout history man's character has been an object of study and concern. Man's quest for existence and destiny has been closely related to what he is, how he behaves, and how he distinguishes between right and wrong. Great religions, philosophic systems, educational endeavors, and social movements have been persistent in debating the polarities of is and ought, right and wrong, and means and ends. At the center of the debate lies the question of character. Indeed history attests that the survival of any society to a large extent depends on the "character of its components."

This concern for character—what it is and how it is acquired—is particularly germane to the field of education. As Martin Buber argues, "Education worthy of the name is essentially education of character. . . . In education one can and one must aim at character."  

Character development—whether in the form of moral education, value education, religious upbringing, or social ethics—

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1Kelvin Ryals and Dennis Foster, "Classroom Climate and Value Teaching," Education 95 (Summer 1975):354.

has been a central issue in the history of education. The biblical injunction, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it,"\(^1\) is one expression of the issue. The Socratic maxim that "the unexamined life is not worth living" is another expression of the moral dimension that has continued to be a problem in education.

A more recent example of the importance of character development in education is the statement on the aims of education issued in 1918 by the Commission for the Reorganization of Secondary Education in the United States. This statement includes ethical character as one of the seven cardinal aims of education in this country.\(^2\) The Educational Policies Commission in 1938 issued an important report on *The Purposes of Education in American Democracy*\(^3\) which centered upon four major areas: self-realization, human relationships, economic efficiency, and civic responsibility. The description given to each of these includes phrases such as "formation of character," "respect for humanity," "friendship," "cooperation," "courtesy," "appreciation of the home," "conservation of the home," "need for social justice," "social understanding,"

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\(^1\)Pr 22:6, Revised Standard Version.


"tolerance," and so forth. All of these are related in one way or another to character formation as an appropriate educational concern.

This emphasis on character development occupies a commanding role in the philosophy of education subscribed to by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in its operation of a world-wide system of educational institutions from kindergarten to university level. The Church has stated in an official document that a primary purpose for the existence of its schools is "to develop Christian character motivated by love and controlled by steadfast principle, . . . preparing the individual for self-government and self-discipline."^1

Thus the significance of character development as an objective of the educational system of the Seventh-day Adventist church is beyond dispute. But the point at issue is the how of character development: how is one to understand character? how does one acquire it?

This study proposes to deal with this problem by attempting to define the concept of character development as found in the thought of Ellen G. White, whose writings have influenced and


continue to influence the philosophy and administration of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist school system.

**Statement of the Problem**

The purpose of this investigation is to define the concept of character development found in the published writings of Ellen G. White. This definition involves the following subproblems presented in the form of research questions.

According to Ellen G. White,

1. What is the meaning and significance of character development? The question deals with the definition, importance, and evaluation of character.

2. What is the nature of character development? The question deals with the means of character development, emphases in character development, perfection of character, and retrogression in character development.

3. What factors affect character development?

4. Whose is the responsibility for character development?

**Significance of the Study**

The role of the person and writings of Ellen G. White in the Seventh-day Adventist Church and its educational work constitutes the significance and value of this study.

Ellen Gould White (1827-1915) was a "cofounder of the SDA [Seventh-day Adventist] Church, writer, lecturer, and counselor to the Church, who possessed what SDA's have accepted as the prophetic
gift described in the Bible.\textsuperscript{1} Her influence and leadership were instrumental in the development and growth of the Church and its institutions. During her life, "she exerted the most powerful single influence on Seventh-day Adventist believers."\textsuperscript{2} She still remains "the acknowledged inspiration of the [Seventh-day Adventist] movement. . . . Her ideas established the mold of Adventism in its medical, educational and missionary work around the world."\textsuperscript{3} Robert H. Pierson, world president of the church (1966– ), has stated:

For Seventh-day Adventists, Ellen G. White is more than a tradition. For those who have read her works, tested her counsel, trusted her judgments, she has been the messenger of the Lord for these modern times. No excuses are made for her contributions, not only to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, but to the world in general. Her writings have been an invaluable asset to Seventh-day Adventists. Much of the success the Adventist Church has experienced in its worldwide program, whatever advance perception it has enjoyed in such fields as education and medicine, the open secret is usually found in her writings.

No man can go it alone. To know that God has spoken in the Bible and in the writings of Ellen G. White is reassuring indeed.\textsuperscript{4}


\textsuperscript{3}Hartzell Spence, "The Story of Religions in America—Seventh-day Adventists," \textit{Look}, June 24, 1958, p. 79.

Ellen White wrote on widely different themes: biblical doctrines and sacred history, education and medicine, family living and child care, health and nutrition, and ecclesiastic affairs and personal problems. A 3,000-page index to her published books lists thousands of topics on which her counsel is available.¹ Her writings are available today in the form of over sixty-four books, "4,600 periodical articles in the journals of the church; 200 or more out-of-print tracts and pamphlets; 6,000 typewritten manuscript documents consisting of letters and general manuscripts, aggregating approximately 40,000 typewritten pages; 2,000 handwritten letters and documents and diaries, journals, et cetera, when copied comprising 20,000 typewritten pages."²

White believed that what she wrote was of supernatural origin and that her work was "of God, or it is not," and that it "bears the stamp of God or the stamp of the enemy [Satan]. There is no half way work in the matter. The Testimonies [her writings] are of the Spirit of God, or of the devil."³ In a 1903 statement, issued when she was seventy-six years old and twelve years before her death, White affirmed:

Sister White is not the originator of these books. They contain the instruction that during her lifework God has been giving her.


²Neufeld, SDA Encyclopedia, p. 1413.

They contain the precious, comforting light that God has graciously given His servant to be given to the world.1

The Seventh-day Adventist Church accepts the divine origin of the writings of White. Its official statement of fundamental beliefs contains this article of faith:

That God has placed in His church the gifts of the Holy Spirit, as enumerated in 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4. That these gifts operate in harmony with the divine principles of the Bible, and are given "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Eph 4:12). That the gift of the Spirit of Prophecy is one of the identifying marks of the remnant church. . . . They recognize that this gift was manifested in the life and ministry of Ellen G. White.2

Flowing from this confessional position is the normative value the White writings hold for the Seventh-day Adventist church and its institutions. Neufeld has pointed out that the church at various official sessions "has recognized Mrs. White as having been called in a special manner as the messenger of the Lord."3 At the 1975 world session of the church in Vienna, Austria, the assembled delegates in a formal resolution unanimously expressed their continued faith in the normative and authoritative value of the White writings for their faith, doctrine, life, worship, and study:

The fundamental principles set forth in the Spirit of Prophecy writings do not shift back and forth with the passage of time. The teachings and instructions given in the early days of this movement are safe counsel to follow in these


3Neufeld, SDA Encyclopedia, p. 1414.
latter days. . . . As delegates coming from all continents and scores of lands we recognize that the principles so vigorously and so clearly enunciated by Sister White apply with equal value and consistency to God's church around the globe.¹

Thus the White writings are so fundamentally connected with the Seventh-day Adventist church that a study of these writings leading to a definition of her concept of character development will be of significance to both the church and its educational program.

Although White wrote no book on character development, the theme runs through her writings. The official index to her writings, for example, includes forty-one book-page columns of references under the word "character" alone.² White recognized the importance of character development when she described it as "the most important work ever entrusted to man."³ To her, it is the noblest work in which to engage.⁴

From the foregoing it is apparent that a careful analysis and synthesis of her writings leading to the definition of her concept of character development will be of significance. Such an accomplishment will:

¹"Final Reports of the Plans Committee: General Conference Bulletin No. 10," Review and Herald, August 7-14, 1975, p. 8.
²Index to the Writings of Ellen G. White, 1:378-98.
⁴White, Testimonies, 4:657.
1. Be a contribution to the advancement of knowledge on character development, and provide an alternative to the various views of character development currently in vogue.

2. Serve as a guide to the study of character development from a Seventh-day Adventist point of view.

3. Assist Seventh-day Adventist educators to develop educational objectives and to build curriculum materials.

4. Serve as one basis for a possible formulation of a Seventh-day Adventist theory of character.

**Delimitations**

This study has the following delimitations:

1. This is a descriptive-analytical study which aims to define Ellen G. White's concept of character development. The study proposes to isolate White's statements on character development, evaluate, describe, analyze, interpret, and organize her thoughts in a logical, coherent, and consistent manner so as to arrive at a definitive concept.

2. The study is limited to the published writings of Ellen G. White. The writing career of White stretched from 1846 to shortly before her death in 1915. Her writings fall into four groups: (1) books published during her lifetime; (2) books compiled and published posthumously; (3) periodical articles published in church journals; and (4) unpublished manuscripts, letters, and diaries. Categories (1), (2), and (3) constitute the source for this investigation. Category (4) is not included because it is largely
of a personal nature and of local interest and, where such is not
the case, contains little that is not available in the published
writings.¹

3. The study does not propose to establish the truth-
fulness or falsity of any particular theory of character develop-
ment.

4. Although the study is limited to Ellen G. White, a
discussion on selected research studies on character development
is included to provide a background against which White's concept
may be better understood.

The selected studies are those of Hartshorne and May,
Ligon, Peck and Havighurst, Piaget, and Kohlberg. These studies
represent specifically the major research studies carried out on
the nature and development of character since shortly after Ellen
White's death to the present time.

The Hartshorne and May study² was "the first large scale
investigation of the nature of character"³ and was a "classic
demonstration of the results of tests of conduct."⁴ "Nothing

¹Arthur L. White, Ellen G. White, Messenger to the Remnant
pp. 80, 81.

²Hugh Hartshorne and Mark A. May, Studies in Deceit (New
York: Macmillan and Co., 1928); Studies in Service and Self-Control
(New York: Macmillan and Co., 1929); Hugh Hartshorne and F. K.
Shuttleworth, Studies in the Organization of Character (New York:
Macmillan and Co., 1930).

³Hubert Bonner, Psychology of Personality (New York: The

⁴Encyclopedia of Educational Research, 1950 ed., s.v.,
"Character Education."
comparable in scope has been done since, and their work . . . is still one of the most important sets of findings that we have available\textsuperscript{1} on character development.

Ernest M. Ligon and his associates have been investigating the nature of character development for over forty years and have produced voluminous literature on the theory\textsuperscript{2} and curricular implications of character. Ligon's work recognizes the complexity of intra-personal forces and nature-nurture forces, centrality of motivation, and the contribution of Christian insight in the formation of character. Ligon's approach is built around an active alliance of psychological principles and Christian affirmations found in the teachings of Jesus. This Christian-psychological hypothesis of Ligon is unique to the study of character and therefore his research is selected here.

Peck and Havighurst in their longitudinal study\textsuperscript{3} investigated character development from a vantage point different from Hartshorne and May. Their research took into account both the Freudian analysis of oral, anal, phallic, and genetic stages and Fromm's moral classifications of receptive, exploitative, hoarding, and marketing personalities.\textsuperscript{4} Thus their research represents a


\textsuperscript{4}Ibid., pp. 1-11, 170-75.
theory of moral development based on motivation from a psycho-social point of view.

Jean Piaget, "the recognized pioneer in the psychology of moral development,"¹ was selected because his work takes into consideration both the sociological thrust of E. Durkheim and the developmental schema of J. Baldwin. Piaget has also been most influential in the study of children's thinking and concept formation, and his research is seminal to the genetic paradigm in the study of character.²

Finally, this selection of research studies includes the work of Lawrence Kohlberg.³ Perhaps "the most important psychologist in the field"⁴ of moral development today, Kohlberg has moved moral education from its secondary role as a hidden curriculum to a respectable place in the academic world. Brown has noted: "Among psychologists who study morality, only one—Kohlberg—seems to have made a serious effort to separate moral values from other kinds and to invent techniques of investigation aimed at the specifically moral."⁵ Like that of Piaget, Kohlberg's work is

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³ See bibliography for a listing of Kohlberg's important publications.
⁴ Duska and Whelan. Moral Development, p. 42.
basically cognitive-developmental, but he has gone beyond Piaget and extended his theory to all aspects of socialization through a series of longitudinal and cross-cultural studies.

**Assumptions**

The study assumes that Ellen G. White believed in and wrote about character development in sufficient scope and depth to provide adequate information for effective analysis and synthesis which will lead to the definition of her concept of character development.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Inasmuch as this study deals with the concept of Ellen G. White, this review will be limited to literature pertaining to her life, thought, and writings. It will deal with analytical theses, historical studies, apologetical works, and hermeneutical writings relevant to this study.

Analytical Theses

An examination of the standard sources\(^1\) revealed no doctoral dissertation related specifically to the problem under investigation. However, several dissertations have been written on the writings of White, which establish the academic significance of Ellen G. White and chart appropriate methodologies for conceptual analysis of her voluminous writings.

One of the earliest analytical approaches to the White writings was carried out by E. M. Cadwallader.\(^2\) His study isolated 9,098 excerpts on education from White's published writings


\(^2\) Edward M. Cadwallader, "Principles of Education in the Writings of Ellen G. White" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Nebraska, 1949).
and topically classified them under 208 topic headings, as suggested in Voegelein's List of Educational Subject Headings.\(^1\) After comparing these topics with the tables of content of standard textbooks on education, Cadwallader concluded that "the scope of her [White's] knowledge and thoughts on the broad subject of education was indeed extensive."\(^2\) In the area of religious education, Cadwallader found that character development is central to White's thinking, although he did not offer any systematic treatment to the topic.

Joseph N. Barnes in his study\(^3\) of the body-mind concept in the White writings showed that White's holistic concept of the nature of man ("the body, the mind, and the soul" are "interdependent and interrelated aspects of a single living unity--man") was at the base of her educational philosophy which insisted on a "harmonious development of . . . physical, mental, and moral powers."\(^4\) According to Barnes, White "saw this unified educational approach as producing sound bodies, which produce sound minds, which produce sound characters."\(^5\) In addition to this conclusion, the methodology of Barnes was helpful toward the development of this study.

\(^1\)Belle L. Voegelein, List of Educational Subject Headings (Columbus, Ohio: The Ohio State University Press, 1928).


\(^4\)Ibid., pp. 184, 375. \(^5\)Ibid., p. 440.
W. R. Lesher investigated Ellen G. White's concept of sanctification by systematizing her statements on the nature, characteristics, and means of sanctification and by comparing her views with those of Luther, Ritschl, Aquinas, and Wesley.\(^1\) In addition to its methodological significance, this work is important to the present research because of the author's conclusion that White considered the religious concept of sanctification as essential to character development.

Another analytical study that provided thematic and hermeneutic guidance to this research is that of Joseph J. Battistone.\(^2\) In his study the author developed the theory that White's theological understanding of the ongoing controversy between good and evil under the leadership of Christ and Satan, respectively, governed the thought patterns of her major writings. Battistone has further shown that central to this great controversy theme is the character of God, a point that is of vital concern to this study.

Frederick E. J. Harder's\(^3\) analytical study also provided methodological and hermeneutic aid to this research. In his thesis, Harder developed the concept of revelation from the writings of Ellen G. White and compared it with the views of Aquinas, Aquinas, Aquinas,


\(^3\)Frederick E. J. Harder, "Revelation, A Source of Knowledge, As Conceived by Ellen G. White" (Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1960).
Schleiermacher, Strong, and Brunner, each of whom represents a significant school in Christian discussion. The study itself was epistemological and therefore had no direct bearing to the subject of this research.

A. L. Moore's study on White's concept of the nature of man found that White viewed man as a holistic being in origin, nature, and destiny. As such, White held man solely responsible for his character development. This responsibility included:

(1) the development of the will toward self-direction and adequate relationship with God;
(2) the development of reason to be balanced by a will "in accord with the principles of truth and righteousness"; and
(3) "the development of an adequate value system."  

**Historical Studies**

Arthur W. Spalding's *Origin and History of Seventh-day Adventists* is a four-volume history of the denomination written for "believers" by "an Adventist who believes in the message and mission of Adventists, and who would have everyone to be an Adventist." Obviously not a disinterested work, the author presents

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2. Ibid., pp. 264, 265.
4. Ibid., 1:5.

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the historical context in which White lived and wrote, and he traces her importance to, and impact on, the development of doctrine, polity, and institutions of the Seventh-day Adventist church.

*There Shines A Light*, by the same author, is a brief biography of White, written from the standpoint of a believer in White's claim to inspiration. Well documented, it covers chronologically the life and ministry of White. The facts and human interest stories of the book are largely based on White's autobiographical *Life Sketches*.

Rene Noorbergen's *Ellen G. White: Prophet of Destiny* is a recent (1972) biographical account of White. The author, a journalist, examines the prophetic claims of White and compares these claims with various psychic phenomena. Although the book has no direct relation to the problem under investigation and does not contain any new information on White's life, it is valuable to the extent the author tries to establish the validity of many of White's views, particularly in the area of nutrition and health.

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Other historical works that provide background material and clarification of context in which White wrote include the writings of Delafield, Froom, Robinson, and Vande Vere.¹

Apologetical Works

Apologetical works that are relevant to the understanding of the thought of Ellen White range in theme from establishing her prophetic role to commenting on her influence over the growth of the church to answering her critics.

T. H. Jemison's *A Prophet Among You*² is a textbook used in most Seventh-day Adventist colleges for a course in the gift of prophecy. It deals with the biblical meaning of the prophetic gift and shows how this gift was manifested in the Seventh-day Adventist church through the life and writings of White. The author lists twelve objectives for the book and none of these is related to the problem of this study. However, the book provided this researcher with: (1) a valuable background to the religious and cultural world of White; (2) a brief chronological account of her life; (3) useful methodological suggestions in the study of White; and (4) a list of 210 topics for study, one of which is character.


Jemison also suggests three hermeneutical principles "to be followed in topical studies" in order to arrive at "a balanced view of what the writings teach:"

1. The general teaching of all the applicable counsels should be studied before conclusions are drawn.
2. The time, place, and circumstances of the giving of certain messages should be considered.
3. One should try to discover the principle involved in any specific counsel, and its applications.

L. H. Christian, a contemporary of White and a prominent leader of the Seventh-day Adventist Church for many years, has recorded the influence and guidance of Ellen G. White on the church in *The Fruitage of Spiritual Gifts*. The author confesses that he is dealing with "the creative ideas of a divine message" and relates how the creativity was particularly manifested in the doctrinal, organizational, institutional, and evangelistic thrusts of the church. In the chapter "Principles of Adventist Education" the author stresses the unique contribution of White to the educational philosophy of Seventh-day Adventists pertaining to the holistic development of man.

Another contemporary and a close associate of White found her work "a gift that builds up." William A. Spicer's *The Spirit of Prophecy in the Advent Movement* is a chronicle of conviction.

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1Ibid., pp. 437-38  
2Ibid., p. 438.  
4Ibid., p. 112.  
The author discusses White's influence on the worldwide growth of the church in its publishing, medical, educational, and evangelistic endeavors. Apart from historical and contextual information pertaining to the White writings, this book has no direct bearing on this study.

A. G. Daniells' *The Abiding Gift of Prophecy* is a result of twenty-eight-year long personal acquaintance with Ellen White. Daniells was a minister of the Seventh-day Adventist church for fifty years and was president of its worldwide organization longer than any other individual. Although apologetic in tone and purpose, the work is valuable in that the author appeals to the character and content of the White writings to establish his thesis that the writings are of divine origin. Daniells applies the tests of Scripture and internal evidence and concludes that White represents a link in the chain of God's chosen representatives from the time of biblical patriarchs through the Mosaic era, the apostolic period, and the present time. The author alludes to the importance of character development in the educational philosophy of White, but he does not deal with it in any detail.

George Knapp Abbott's *The Witness of Science to the Testimonies of the Spirit of Prophecy* attempts to establish the

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2 Daniells was president from 1901 to 1922. Neufeld, *SDA Encyclopedia*, p. 326.


credibility of White's statements on health and nutrition. A practising physician and researcher for forty years, the author outlines what he considers "some settled conclusions regarding the reliability of scientific statements made in the [White] messages on health and medical practice." His interest is to corroborate the accuracy of White's statements on diet, health, and nutrition by comparing them with scientific findings since the time she wrote. Since many of White's views were not advocated by scientific opinion of her time, Abbott contends that White's claim to inspiration requires careful consideration. One chapter, "Spiritual Reasons for Healthful Living," shows how White related conduct to behavior, behavior to health, and health to diet. Abbott extensively quotes White on the relationship of moral character to physical well-being. Although the point is not systematically developed, it is relevant to the problem under investigation in this research.

Last to be considered in this selection of apologetic works is F. D. Nichol's Ellen G. White and Her Critics, a documented defense of White. Prepared under the direction and sponsorship of the Defense Literature Committee of the Seventh-day Adventist church, the work in no way claims to be disinterested. The subtitle of the

1Ibid., p. 11.  2Ibid.


4Ibid., p. 4.
book sets out its theme: "An Answer to the Major Charges That Critics Have Brought Against Mrs. Ellen G. White." Forty-six charges under thirty-two categories are carefully examined and refuted, by documentary evidence in most cases and argumentation in some. The charges are leveled against White's personality and character, family ties, theological views, phenomenological experiences and views, literary style, and authorship. The value of this work, so far as this research is concerned, lies in its establishment of the authenticity and validity of the writings of White. Criticisms raised by Canright and Winslow are carefully examined and answered. The argument of Numbers discounting inspiration as a source of White's views and crediting them to contemporary writings is anticipated by Nichol and is dealt with.

Other apologetical works that deal with the authenticity and credibility of White as an author and church leader include those of Branson, Delafield, Douglas, Haynes, and Rebok.

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2 Guy H. Winslow, "Ellen Gould White and Seventh-day Adventism" (Ph.D. dissertation, Clark University, 1932).


Hermeneutical Writings

A study of this type requires established hermeneutic principles. The analytical theses and the historical and apologetical works reviewed in this chapter contained important principles of interpretation. Two other specific sources on hermeneutics were examined.

The Ellen G. White Writings\(^1\) by Arthur L. White covers the authority, integrity, and interpretation of White writings. The author is a grandson of White and the secretary of the White Estate which holds the custody of the original manuscripts and supervises the worldwide publications of her writings. He has handled the White documents for over forty years and is a living link to White. The principles of interpretation presented in this work are similar to Jemison's.\(^2\) The second work on interpretation, Ellen G. White, Messenger to the Remnant,\(^3\) by the same author, is significant for the documented research it contains on the chronological development of the writings of White.

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\(^2\)See p. 20 above.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH PROCEDURE

This chapter presents the sources of data, methodology, and organization of this study.

Sources of Data

The primary sources for this study are the published writings of Ellen G. White. These include (1) books published during White's lifetime; (2) books compiled and published since her death; (3) periodical articles published in church journals. Currently, there are sixty-four books in circulation, representing 26,144 pages of printed matter. In addition, there are some 4,600 periodical articles, selections from which have been published in category (2). A complete list of all the sources that provided necessary information for this study is included in the bibliography.

All the sources needed for this investigation were available in the researcher's personal library, James White Library of Andrews University, E. G. White Research Center at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, and the archives of the Ellen G. White Estate in Washington, D.C.
Methodology

As noted earlier, Ellen G. White wrote no book on character development, but the theme runs through her writings. To arrive at a comprehensive understanding of White's concept of character development, an exhaustive study of her writings is necessary. The researcher made a page to page search of books and periodical articles published during her lifetime. Books compiled and published since her death contain considerable duplication of previously published material, and these were searched by the use of available indexes. During the study and search of the published materials, the researcher noted, as a quotation or in summary form, every statement directly or indirectly related to the problem under investigation. The notes were placed on 4-by-6-inch cards, each card bearing an appropriate heading, key words, category, context, and earliest date of writing. The data gathered amounted to more than 6,000 note cards. These were inductively analyzed and logically arranged in broad categories developed in relationship to the subproblems, as under:

I. The Meaning and Significance of Character in the Writings of White
   A. Preliminary Considerations
      1. The origin of man
      2. The nature of man
      3. The destiny of man
B. Definition of Character

1. The spiritual dimension of character
2. The moral dimension of character
3. The mental dimension of character
4. A holistic approach

C. Importance of Character

1. Importance to history
2. Importance to Christianity
3. Importance to individual
4. Importance to human destiny

D. Evaluation of Character

1. Norm for evaluation
2. Method of evaluation

II. The Development of Character in the Writings of White

A. The Nature of Character Development

1. The means of character development
2. Emphases in development
3. Perfection of character
4. Retrogression in character development

B. Factors Affecting Character Development

1. Personal factors
2. Relational factors

C. Responsibility for Character Development

1. Responsibility of the home
2. Responsibility of the school
3. Responsibility of the individual
The citations in each of these categories were treated for internal and external criticism, employing the historical method outlined by Barzun and Graff. The hermeneutical principles recommended by Jemison were applied to the treatment and interpretation of the data. The emerging conclusions were subjected to tests of coherence, logical consistency, and thematic unity. The results are reported in an expository form, and summarized along with the findings of Hartshorne and May, Ligon, Peck and Havighurst, Piaget, and Kohlberg.

The relevant writings of these researchers and secondary sources bearing on them were studied and analyzed. The data in the form of notes and/or quotations were placed on 4-by-6-inch cards, each card appropriately categorized according to its relationship to the subproblems. The findings are written in an expository form and constitutes one chapter of the study. These findings are later summarized along with the views of White. Finally, conclusions pertaining to the views of Ellen G. White are drawn from the analysis.

**Organization of the Study**

This study is divided into seven chapters. Chapter I presents the rationale of the study. It includes the statement of the problem, significance of the study, delimitations, and assumptions.

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2 See p. 20 above.
Chapter II reviews related literature pertaining to the study of Ellen G. White.

Chapter III presents the research procedure of the study. It includes the sources of data, methodology, and organization of the study.

Chapter IV presents an overview of selected studies in character development. Studies of Hartshorne and May, Ligon, Peck and Havighurst, Piaget and Kohlberg are examined. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a background against which the central problem may be understood.

Chapters V and VI constitute the main body of this study. Chapter V analyzes the meaning and significance Ellen G. White attaches to character. This involves analysis of her views on the definition, importance, and evaluation of character.

Chapter VI deals with the development of character. This examines the nature of character development, factors affecting character development, and responsibility for character development.

Chapter VII presents a summary of White's views against the background of selected studies in character development, conclusions and recommendations.
CHAPTER IV

A SURVEY OF SELECTED STUDIES

IN CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

This chapter surveys the research on character development done by Hartshorne and May, Ligon, Peck and Havighurst, Piaget, and Kohlberg.

The Study of Hartshorne and May

One of the earliest experimental and critical approaches to the nature of character was carried out by Hugh Hartshorne and Mark May some fifty years ago. Named the Character Education Inquiry (CEI), the project was spread over a period of five years from 1924 to 1929 and involved a sample of some 11,000 children in grades five to eight. The inquiry sought data regarding moral knowledge, moral attitudes, and actual moral behavior. The data obtained came from several sources: intelligence and moral-knowledge tests; conduct tests; opinions of teachers, parents, and peers; interviews; questionnaires; and inventories. The tests were ingeniously constructed and administered to ensure objectivity and control.

The research concentrated on three areas that were thought to be significant for the understanding of character: deceit, self-control, and service. Behavior of the subjects was quantitatively
recorded by reference to commonly accepted definitions of deceit (cheating, lying, and stealing), self-control (inhibition and persistence), and service (helpfulness, cooperation, self-denial, self-sacrifice, and charity). Extensive statistical data were obtained concerning the validity and reliability of such tests, the intercorrelation among them, and the relationship of various factors, such as age, intelligence, home background, and so forth.

The behavior tests were conducted in such a way that the individual had an either/or choice. For example, in the case of honesty, a child was sent to buy something and, by prearrangement, he was given too much change. A record was kept of his response to the surplus change. In another test, children were given class tests. After making copies of their responses, they were asked to self-score. Any alteration in the responses was recorded as an instance of cheating.

To test service children were invited to come to school one hour early to make pictures for hospitalized children, or they were asked to give up ice cream and donate the money to orphans in a faraway land. Similar tests were given to study self-control.

Altogether a total of twenty-three sample-situation tests were administered. The rationale behind these tests was to see if there were any general trend in the response and behavior pattern of a child. For instance, if honesty were a general trait a child possessed, then the tests should reveal honesty in all situations.
That is to say, a child who scored high in one test of honesty should score high on other honesty tests as well. In other words, predictability should be possible from one situation to another.

The results of the study were published in three volumes: *Studies in Deceit*, *Studies in Service and Self-Control*, and *Studies in the Organization of Character*. The major conclusions are given below.

**Specificity of Character**

The CEI researchers found that character is not a structure; nor is it an internal entity that guides the moral conduct of a person. A child does not possess honesty as such. He is either honest or dishonest depending upon the situation. If honesty were a trait possessed by a child, he would be honest in all situations. But this was not the case. Hartshorne and May found that a child may be honest in taking an examination, but he may not be honest in returning excess change to the storekeeper.

The researchers found that: (1) intercorrelations between sample tests of the same types of behavior were low; (2) cheating or honesty measurements in one situation could not predict behavior in another situation; (3) honesty and cheating were normally distributed so that children could not be divided into cheaters and non-cheaters; and (4) the tendency to cheat or not to cheat depended on the risk of detection and the punishment involved. From these findings, Hartshorne and May concluded that character is not general but specific.
This doctrine of specificity ... maintains that a child's conduct in any situation is determined more by the circumstances that attend the situation than by any mysterious entity residing within the child. Three things determine whether, in any situation, a child cheats, or exhibits self-control, or is charitable, or is persistent: (1) the nature of the situation, (2) what the child has already learned in similar situations, and (3) his awareness of the implications of his behavior. Of these three factors, our data show the first to be by far the most potent. It is our conviction that cheating, lying and stealing are mainly products of unfortunate situations.¹

This doctrine of specificity led the researchers to attest that the child has no autonomous need to be honest, self-controlled, or considerate. Nor do these values suggest how one should behave. So, then, character must be looked at not from the point of inner worth, but rather from the point of outward behavior as related to particular situations. Given this, the authors concluded:

A trait such as honesty or dishonesty is an achievement like ability in arithmetic, depending of course on native capacities of various kinds, but consisting in the achieved skills and attitudes of more or less successful and uniform performance.²

Moral Knowledge and Moral Behavior

Correlating moral knowledge scores and conduct scores of each participant, Hartshorne and May found that knowledge and intentions are one thing, conduct and behavior something else. They explained the incongruity between knowledge and behavior:

If you ask fifty children who exhibited cheating in a gross way as to whether or not an individual is justified in cheating on an examination when everyone else is cheating,


²Ibid., p. 379.
you will find that part of them will say yes, and part of them will say no. In like manner, if you ask the same question of fifty perfectly honest children, that is children on whom we have no evidence of cheating, they will give you the same kinds of answers in about the same proportion as cheaters.¹

Character and Peer Influence

Hartshorne and May found that individuals of varying and diverse views and conduct tend strongly to be drawn into the ways of the group in which they function. For example:

When in group A, a child . . . will very likely act in accordance with the standards and customs and ways of behavior approved by this group. Put him, now in another group, whose customs he also knows, although they differ from, even oppose those of group A. This time he acts in accordance with the ways of the new group.²

The group phenomena was so strong that Hartshorne and May found that a boy may have three vocabularies—one for Sunday School, one for the dinner table, one for the alley—with practically no crossing over of the three patterns. The same is true of the moral codes which fluctuated in harmony with the particular group in which the individual functioned—once again reiterating the doctrine of specificity.

Moral Conduct and Biologic Factors

Although Hartshorne and May found that as children grew older they became more appreciative of ideal standards and social


norms, the older pupils tended to be more deceptive than the younger. No consistent changes were found between older and young children in their attitude toward service, and some differences were found in persistent behavior and inhibition.

Further, the research found no consistent sex differences in the matter of deception, but there were significant differences in service and self-control, with girls faring better. There was no relationship between health and moral behavior. Correlations between intelligence and honesty were found to be strong, but between intelligence and service and self-control, correlations were somewhat lower. Resistance to temptation was strongly related to intelligence, and intelligence was found to have a significant part in the development of a child's social concepts and ethical discrimination. Therefore the researchers were led to the conclusion that if persons are "led to think effectively about conduct, genuine changes in conduct may be expected."

Character and Social Concomitants

The Character Education Inquiry found that socio-economic background, home influence, religion, schooling, and peer influence affected the development of moral conduct. The researchers

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found that "socio-economic handicaps are accompanied by corresponding increments of deceptive conduct."¹ Children from the higher income group were found to be less deceptive than children of day laborers,² although this factor was not strong enough in self-control and service tendencies.

Home influence as seen in parental modeling correlated with all three behaviors.

The homes from which the worst offenders came might be characterized as exhibiting bad parental example, parental discord, bad discipline, unsocial attitudes toward children, impoverished community and changing economic or social situation. The homes from which the more honest children came revealed the opposite of these conditions.³

Even the consistency of behavior children may have achieved was shown to be the product of home training in the early years, and this consistency was particularly present when home and school mutually reinforced each other's values.

As far as religion was concerned, Hartshorne and May found that children who went to Sunday School were more honest, more cooperative, and more persistent than those who did not. However, they did not find any general correlations between religious affiliation and moral conduct.⁴

²Hartshorne and May, Studies in Deceit, p. 409.
⁴Hartshorne and May, Studies in Deceit, p. 411; Studies in Service and Self-Control, pp. 268, 453.
School influence, particularly that of the teachers, was of considerable significance. A sympathetic, cooperative attitude on the part of the teacher tended to evoke in the children the desire to be honest, cooperative, and self-controlled.

Peer influence was also found to affect moral conduct. When a pupil's conduct score was compared with that of his friends, the researchers found a high positive correlation. Bonds of friendship strongly influenced conduct so that pupils tended to resemble their friends even when they were not classmates. When they were classmates, however, the resemblance was even greater.¹

The Study of Ligon

Ernest M. Ligon's work on character development began in 1920 when he first became interested in the scientific study of character, and took on a wider organizational basis in 1935 when he was appointed the director of the newly founded Character Research Project of Union College, Schenectady, New York. He has published numerous monographs, pamphlets, curriculum aids, and several books on the subject of character development. Two books are of particular importance to this study: The Psychology of Christian Personality and Dimensions of Character.

One of the more important contributions of Ligon is his emphasis on integrated moral character, which challenges the doctrine of specificity advocated by Hartshorne and May.² Basic

¹Hartshorne and May, Studies in Deceit, p. 411; Studies in Service and Self-Control, p. 269.

²Bonner, Psychology of Personality, p. 422.
to Ligon's approach is his conviction that in the teachings of Jesus, one could find a satisfactory method of character development. After analyzing the ethic of Jesus as contained in the Sermon on the Mount, Ligon concluded that character is central to the existence of man. Character is in fact the test of a man's personality.¹

Ligon refuses to identify character solely with particular behaviors. A person may behave in different ways according to varying situations. So the basic thrust and purpose of his behavior must be taken into account in the definition of his character. "Strength of character," therefore, "is not necessarily the function of any types of external behavior, good or bad. Rather it consists of the power with which one behaves."²

Ligon identifies this power to be love. "There is no character apart from love," says Ligon, and this love must be expressed in terms of unselfish service and full self-realization.³ So the nature of character consists "not in forms of external behavior or negative ethics, but in strength and unselfishness of action. It is not inherited, but must be developed. Its motivation is not fear of punishment, but the desire for self-realization and love."⁴ Ligon further states:

Character, then, is the power and the unselfishness with which one behaves. The man who carries through his purposes with the greatest force and with the fewest deviations from

¹Ligon, Psychology of Christian Personality, p. 106.
²Ibid., p. 109.
³Ibid., p. 110.
⁴Ibid., p. 109.
his purpose is the man of the strongest character. It must not be defined in terms of external behavior. If we develop strong character, our behavior will be ethical; but it does not follow that if our behavior is ethical, we have strong character.\(^1\)

**Ligon's Hypothesis**

Having thus defined character, Ligon proceeds to build the "Christian hypothesis" for his character theory. The hypothesis, based largely on his interpretation of the Beatitudes, consists of eight dimensions:

1. **Vision**—a wholesome curiosity, creative imagination, growth in inspiration, and vocational vision.

2. **Dominating purpose in the service of mankind**—purposiveness of action, self-confidence, and vocational choice.

3. **Love of righteousness and truth**—a genuine desire to know the truth and a positive challenging concept of right and wrong.

4. **Faith in the friendliness of the universe**—faith in God, in oneself, and in one's role in the world.

5. **Sensitiveness to the needs of others**—social confidence, social skills, and sympathy.

6. **Democratic sportsmanship**—democracy of contacts, sportsmanship, unselfish helpfulness, and social vision.

7. **Magnanimity**—cooperation with authority, respect for others' rights, ability to work with others, an optimistic attitude, and tolerance.

8. **Christian courage**—courage, reaction to injustice, vicarious sacrifice, and courageous leadership.\(^2\)

\(^1\) Ibid., p. 124.

It is Ligon's contention that when these dimensions are present in an individual, his behavior pattern will project a consistency that reflects the strength of character. Such a person is said to possess an "integrated personality" which is characterized by integrity in every sphere of action.¹

But how is character formed? Ligon's answer is found in what he describes as the mathematical group theory.

The Mathematical Group Theory²

Although the theory has not been widely published, its rudiments are found in the already published works of Ligon. The author attempts to apply the mathematical theory of groups as a model to postulate the development of character. Through a series of cluster analyses, Ligon has factored human potential into a group of sixteen elements: A (action), C (investment of emotional energy), D (influence of one's willed decisions), E (one's use of hereditary and cultivated endowments), G (the force of one's growth and his maturing potentials), H (home influence), J (judgment), L (one's learning tendency), M (motive power), P (pervading values in one's life), R (life roles), S (self-image), V (purposiveness), W (influence of social and physical world), X (evaluative tendency), and U (one's uniqueness).³

¹Ibid., pp. 275, 276.
When two of these elements are led by the uniqueness of the individual to creatively interact, Ligon foresees certain predictable triads which form the strength of character. For example, when element L interacts with element X through the uniqueness of a person, J results. In other words,

When that part of learning [L] which is integrated into the personality and is dynamically influencing the individual toward the achievement of his maximum potential interacts creatively according to the uniqueness [U] of his personality with his habits and skills of evaluation [X], in his effort to achieve his highest potential, these will tend to strengthen that dynamic process of judgment [J] (the tendency to objectivize, to stand off against one's self in objective judgment as to how one should respond to "this" situation).¹

Underlying this theory is the assumption that within man are remarkable resources of character potential that are awaiting creative development. Once suitable opportunities are provided, the elements can interact and produce the desired behavior. Hence Ligon defines strength of character as "strength of purpose, breadth and effectiveness of social influence, and degree of dedication to a philosophy of values."² Hence also is Ligon's "single general formula" for character development:

Find a life purpose, which uses all of your capacities, in some form of social service, in the value of which you have an enthusiastic faith, for which you have faith in your ability to perform, and in the performance of which you get your greatest pleasure.³

Ligon's optimistic faith in human nature is obvious. He believes that man, given the Christian hypothesis and the group

¹Ibid., "Triad 17."
³Ligon, Psychology of Christian Personality, p. 16.
theory, has the ability to maximize his potential in moral development. The nearer he reaches that maximization the greater is his strength of character.

Resources for Character Development

In addition to projecting a theoretical framework for character development, Ligon's research has also concentrated on practical conclusions upon which curriculum material may be structured. Some of the areas in which character and other dimensions interact and the major conclusions drawn therefrom are as follows:

Character and human potential

Ligon's research insists that a child can contribute toward his own growth. The human nature has potential that can never be completely exhausted. To maximize this potential is to develop character.¹

Character and attitude formation

Changes in behavior take place only when evaluative attitudes are changed, and so effective character development requires positive attitude formation² along the lines of the eight dimensions.³

¹Ligon, A Greater Generation, p. 56.
²Ibid., p. 68.
³See p. 39 above.
Character and religion

Ligon maintains that the "central role in character is still religion. Human nature can never achieve its highest potential without religion."¹ This position is consistent with his definition of character as involving a dedication to a personal philosophy of values; for Ligon, religion is the most important source for such values.²

Character and integration

All the experiences of a child have their effect on character. Effective character development is possible only if the child's mental, social, and spiritual experiences are free from contradiction. The home, school, church, and the community which provide these experiences for the growing child are to be in a cooperative partnership to ensure that the child has an integrated experience which in turn assures the development of an integrated character.³

Character and modeling

Ligon's theory holds that every child has a tendency to hero worship, and "every child develops an ideal which motivates his every activity and dream."⁴ The home is the most important

¹Ligon, A Greater Generation, p. 66.
³Ligon, Dimensions of Character, pp. 396-97.
⁴Ligon, Psychology of Christian Personality, p. 334.
source of a child's models. Other sources are the school, church, and peers. Ligon states:

Children do not always do what they know to be right. . . . It is much more important, then, to give the child an ideal that is ethical, than to teach him what behavior is ethical. If he has hero-worship for such an ideal, he will come much more nearly developing moral character.1

The Study of Peck and Havighurst

The research of Robert F. Peck, Robert J. Havighurst, and associates concentrated on the moral development of a group of boys and girls as they grew from the age of ten to seventeen in a small Midwestern city in the United States. The researchers attempted to explore moral character through depth psychology methods, such as "intelligence tests, achievement tests, attitude questionnaires, the Moral Ideology Test, the Emotional Response Test, and personal sociometric measures."2

Out of this longitudinal research involving numerous case studies and analysis of massive data, Peck and Havighurst developed a theory of character reported in The Psychology of Character Development.

To Peck and Havighurst, a man of character is one "who adopts a set of ethical principles and applies them intelligently and effectively in his everyday life."3 Character, therefore,

1Ibid.

2Peck and Havighurst, Psychology of Character Development, p. 28.

"is a special aspect of personality"\(^1\) in which the fundamental motives underlying and causing behavior are centered. To speak of character is to go beyond the observed or observable behavior: it is to probe the inner intent and reason behind that behavior.

Insofar as concerns moral character, the intent that counts is the intent to do good or ill to other people. . . . Whether to explain the present character, or to trace it to its original sources, it appears essential to investigate the individual's feelings and attitudes toward the other people in his life.\(^2\)

Types of Character

Relating their research findings to this motivational understanding of character, Peck and Havighurst present five broad areas through which character express itself. A person's character, after a careful analysis of his behavior and intent, can be fitted into one of these five types. The researchers also found that the five types represent the sequence of moral development in a normal population from infancy to adulthood. Briefly the types are:

Amoral (0 to 2 years)

This character type has no morality and resembles a baby in his lack of moral sensitivity and autonomous direction. This type is quite normal in the first years of life, and most children outgrow this in their third year. A few, however, are fixed in

\(^1\)Peck and Havighurst, *Psychology of Character Development*, p. 166.

\(^2\)Ibid., p. 2.
this stage even in their adult years. Such are clinically diagnosed "psychopaths."

Such a person follows his whims and impulses, without regard for how this affects other people. He considers himself the center of the universe, and sees other people or objects as means to direct self-gratification. If his basic emotional attitudes are mainly hostile, he is apt to be found committing delinquent or criminal acts. If he has a positive, pleasant view of others, he is more apt to be known as "charming but irresponsible." He may form temporary alliances with people, but will abandon them the minute he sees a richer source of gratification. He has no internalized moral principles, no conscience, or superego.\(^1\)

**Expedient or ego-centric (2 to 4 years)**

This type seeks the easy way out of a situation. He wants the most possible gratification with as little inconvenience to himself as possible. His relationship with others is on a me-first basis. He does not hesitate to view others from an instrumental perspective. His only reason to adhere to rules is to secure his own advantage, and he is quite prepared to abandon the rules when it is no longer in his interest to keep the rules.

A person of this type is primarily self-centered . . . behaves in ways his society defines as moral only so long as it suits his purpose. For instance, he may act in "honest" ways to keep an advantageous reputation. If he can gain more by being dishonest, particularly if he can avoid detection and censure, he does so . . . Like the amoralist he regards himself as the only person who is really important; but he is more aware of the advantage of conforming to social requirements in the short run, in order to achieve long-run advantages.\(^2\)

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 5. \(^2\)Ibid.
Conforming (5 to 10 years)

Feeling a strong need to conform to social demands, this type observes the rules not out of volition but to please others. When the social situation demands certain behaviors, he complies. But when the collective pressure is removed, he may behave in contradiction to previous behavior. He may not be ego-centric, but he is group-centric.

A convenient way to distinguish this type may be to ask whether the person feels bad when he breaks a rule, out of shame or guilt. We define shame as fear of disapproval by others. Thus, a person who acts morally because he would be ashamed if others found him violating the moral rules is controlling himself according to external sanctions. It differs from the Expedient approach in that social conformity is accepted as good for its own sake.1

Irrational-conscientious (5 to 10 years or beyond)

While the conformist seeks to merge with the collective, the irrational-conscientious equates morality with a set system of authority and tradition. He expects rigid legalistic obedience to standards and is more interested in upholding them than in meeting the needs of the human person. He tends to oversimplify life and often makes moral judgments to the hurt of others.

An act is "good" or "bad" to him because he defines it as such, not necessarily because it has positive or negative effects on others. This is the "blind" rigid superego at work. It is characteristic of children who have accepted and internalized the parental rules, but who have not attained awareness that the rules are man-made and intended to serve a human, functional purpose.2

1Ibid., pp. 6, 7. 2Ibid., p. 7.
Rational-altruistic (post-adolescent)

A person in this type is characterized by emotional and intellectual autonomy and maturity. He has a strong, internalized set of moral principles, and he attempts to foresee the moral consequences of his behavior. This is the highest, best, and developmentally most mature of all the types in the Peck-Havighurst scheme.

Such a person not only has a stable set of moral principles by which he judges and directs his own action; he objectively assesses the results of an act in a given situation, and approves it on the grounds of whether or not it serves others as well as himself. . . .

The picture of the Rational-Altruistic person represents an ideal goal . . . probably never to be perfectly achieved. . . .

He is actively for his principles, neither a passive conformist nor an intolerant reformer. . . . He reacts with emotion appropriate to the occasion. . . . His behavior is both spontaneous and rationally oriented. . . . He is consistent in principle, but not rigidly ritualistic. . . . His public and private values are just about identical.1

Peck and Havighurst maintain that few individuals fit at all times into any one particular type. Individuals move from the amoral stage in babyhood toward the altruistic until in adulthood one stage begins to characterize one's moral behavior more often than the others. In addition, different social contexts and different moral issues may be met by responses of varying types so that a person experiences movement from type to type.

Movement toward Altruism

But what causes mobility from amoralism to altruism? Peck and Havighurst found that it is not sufficient to relate moral

1 Ibid., pp. 8-9.
growth to normal developmental sequence from infancy to adulthood. Without denying the importance of human development, the researchers contend that the reason some children fitted in the higher stages of character while some adults fitted in the lower types is to be found in the development of motivation.

From Amoral to Rational there is evidence of increasing ego strength, including all the characteristics of rational, emotionally mature, integrated behavior. There is a straight-line trend through the types, of increasing superego strength, in the broad sense of increasingly firm, internalized moral principles which act as an effective guide to behavior.

This motivational line moves through the stages of "don'ts," "do's," "must's," and "principles." The first one is a collection of harsh, punitive negatives. The "do's" represent a passive morality of compliance. The "must" motivation is a legalistic, stereotyped observance of rules for their own sake. Finally, the "principle" motivation reflects an internalized moral principle from which a person acts. This internalized principle is "the final theme" of moral maturity. Peck and Havighurst identify this theme as love.

The final theme which runs through the Maturity of Character scale (type sequence) could be summed up as love. The Amoral person feels unloved and is incapable of loving. The Expedient person is no more capable of genuine love and concern for others, no matter what counterfeit show he may put on; and he feels unloved himself. The average Conforming person tends to feel loved more than unloved, and to be able to love others; perhaps not with very keen perception of what others want and need, . . . The Irrational-Conscientious person feels unloved and unloving; but has no choice except to act in conventionally "kind" and "considerate" ways. . . . The Rational-Altruistic person feels, and is, lovable.

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1Ibid., p. 100.
and loved. He is warmly, spontaneously loving. . . . Since he is at peace with himself and lives by his own resources, he need make no excessive demands on others. He can give love freely, without insisting it be returned as a pre-condition to his gift.¹

Sources of Character Formation

Peck and Havighurst have identified important elements in society that affect the formation of character. These are:

Home

To Peck and Havighurst, character is "predominantly shaped by the intimate, emotionally powerful relationship between child and parents, within the family."² Mutual trust, consistency, friendliness, democracy within the family relationship were positively correlated to character development in children.³ For example, in parental discipline, Peck and Havighurst found that authoritarian practices are more likely to produce either conforming or irrational-conscientious traits, while democratic patterns tend to result in higher rational-altruistic types. The laissez faire method effects either amoral or expedient types.⁴ They concluded:

From the present evidence, it appears that the only sure way to rear children with the best kind of character is by a combination of mature love and mature, permissive, but consistently guiding discipline. The fact is, these two kinds of parental behavior either occur together or neither occurs at all, in a mature form.⁵

¹Ibid., pp. 101-02. ²Ibid., p. 175. ³Ibid., pp. 125, 175. ⁴Ibid., pp. 176-79. ⁵Ibid., p. 125.
Peer group

Friends and associates were found to be more in the role of reinforcers and models than originators of moral values and behavioral patterns. However, the researchers did find that peers do exercise a formative force on some children, particularly if they are from "chaotic, unloving families."  

School

Schools seemed "less to shape character than to crystallize and throw into sharper contrast the punishments for undesirable behavior and the rewards for proper behavior." Generally, schools tended to encourage more of a conformist-type behavior than the altruistic type.  

Religion

Peck and Havighurst found that "most of the children with good characters came from actively religious families," although the researchers are quick to caution that "church affiliation, per se, and even church attendance was no guarantee of well-developed character."  

Social status

The researchers did not find any predictable relationship between social class background and moral development, although "there was a very limited relation... with the children of

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1Ibid., p. 182.  
2Ibid., p. 141.  
3Ibid., p. 185.  
4Ibid., p. 152.  
5Ibid., p. 185.
the lowest social status somewhat less effective morally than the other children."¹

The Study of Piaget

About the same time Hartshorne and May published their findings Jean Piaget was engaged in the study of moral judgment in children. Although primarily his research and publications deal with cognitive development in children, Piaget's pioneering work in moral judgment has initiated the cognitive and stage approach to moral development. Piaget's main emphasis is on moral judgment rather than moral behavior, and his thesis is that as a child matures, the basis of his moral judgment changes. So Piaget is interested in the developmental stages of morality. His findings are published in the monograph The Moral Judgment of the Child.

Piaget begins with the statement that "all morality consists in a system of rules and the essence of all morality is to be sought in the respect which an individual acquires for these rules."²

Piaget's work is largely based on observation and interview. "The only good method in the study of moral facts," writes Piaget, "is surely to observe as closely as possible the greatest number of individuals."³ Piaget watched children of different age groups playing marbles and questioned them about the rules of the game—what they are, how they began, and how they could be changed. He was particularly interested in the practice and consciousness of

¹Ibid., p. 148.
³Ibid., p. 107.
rules. He discovered different orientations toward the rules, and the difference was explained in terms of the developmental maturity of the child.

Stages of Development

The toddler up to the age of two merely plays with marbles. He is ignorant of any rules. He does what he pleases; the game is purely a motor activity. He is not conscious of any rules regulating the game.

In the second stage, around two to five years, the child has grasped the basic rules of the game from observation of other children playing. Although he imitates what he sees, he plays for his own end and so he is egocentric in his regard for the rules. The consciousness of rules is also highly heteronomic; that is, children of this age group accept the rules as coming from outside of themselves, as sacred and unchangeable, and as requiring strict obedience. "Every suggested alteration strikes the child as a transgression."^1

In the third stage, around seven to eight years, rules cease to have an inviolable authority of their own. They are seen for what they are—designed to serve the good of all the participants in the game and to regulate behavior of the participants. Piaget calls this the stage of incipient cooperation. Children now begin to experience a movement from heteronomy to autonomy.

^1Ibid., p. 18.
But real autonomy comes in the fourth stage, between the ages of eleven and twelve, when codification of rules takes place. The child realizes that rules exist to guarantee fairness to all, to maximize skill and group pleasure, and to minimize unfairness. Rules are not left to chance. Cooperation of the third stage gives way to codification through mutual discussion and agreement. Moral consciousness becomes autonomous; that is to say, "A rule is looked upon as a law due to mutual consent, which you must respect if you want to be loyal but which it is permissible to alter on the condition of enlisting general opinion on your side."¹

In addition to watching children play, Piaget also turned to another area in which children are most interested—stories. Piaget presented children with a series of paired, short stories which centered on a moral issue and asked the children to make judgments as to the naughtier or guiltier action. The following is an example of one of the paired stories:

A. There was once a little girl who was called Marie. She wanted to give her mother a nice surprise, and cut out a piece of sewing for her. But she didn't know how to use the scissors properly, and cut a big hole in her dress.

B. A little girl called Margaret went and took her mother's scissors one day that her mother was out. She played with them for a bit. Then as she didn't know how to use them properly she made a little hole in her dress.²

Studying the children's responses to these paired stories, Piaget found that younger children up to the age of five judged the seriousness of a transgression in terms of its physical consequences. In the above stories, for example, Marie was

¹Ibid., p. 18. ²Ibid., p. 118
naughtier because she did the most damage—the hole that she cut was bigger than the one Margaret cut. The older children judged Margaret naughtier because of her intentions. Likewise, if lying is bad, younger children considered a big lie worse than a small lie; whereas older children took intent into account so that an intentional lie is worse than an accidental one.¹ Says Piaget: "The younger children are inclined to ignore the intention and to think only of the actual result of the action. The older ones, on the contrary, pay much more attention to motives."²

Thus up to the age of six or seven, a lie is a naughty word; from the age of four to eight, a lie is saying something that is not true, including mistakes and exaggerations; from the age of eight to ten, a lie is a statement that is intentionally false, and worse so if it is intended to mislead others.³

The Dual Stage Theory

On the basis of the above and similar findings, Piaget formulated a two-stage theory of moral development: heteronomous and autonomous.


²Piaget, Moral Judgment of the Child, p. 158.

³For a helpful commentary on this aspect of Piaget's work, see Duska and Whelan, Moral Development, pp. 20-27.
Heteronomy

The heteronomous stage (approximately up to eight years) is "based on an ethic of authority."\(^1\) Moral judgment is related to being subject to the rule of another. Authority and performance are emphasized. Duty is defined in terms of obedience to authority which originates from and is determined by adults. Rules are sacred and unchangeable. The child believes in imminent justice in which the punishment for disobedience is immediate, inevitable, and expiatory. He is exclusively concerned with adult demands. "The little one's society constitutes an amorphous and unorganized whole in which all individuals are alike. . . . [It] is a sort of communion [community] of submission to seniors and to the dictates of adults."\(^2\)

Piaget calls this submissive attitude "moral realism"--the tendency which the child has to regard duty and the value attached to it as self-subsistent and independent of the mind as imposing itself regardless of the circumstances in which the individual may find himself.\(^3\)

Moral realism, then, demands that the letter of the law shall be observed. From the very beginning of the moral development of the child, adult constraint produces a literal realism so that a child takes rules literally and thinks of good only in terms of obedience; the child will at first evaluate acts not in


\(^3\)Ibid., p. 106.
accordance with the motive that prompted them but in terms of their exact conformity with established rules.¹

**Autonomy**

Distinct from an ethic of authority inherent to heteronomy, the autonomous stage (approximately eight years and over) is characterized by an ethic of cooperation and codification based on mutual respect and egalitarian democracy. Between the two stages, Piaget discerns "a phase during which the rules and commands are interiorized and generalized."²

Moral realism in which the child remains morally dependent on the adult through a relationship of unilateral respect and submission gives way to a cognitive conviction that conduct must be regulated in such a way that it results in moral reciprocity. Thus the most significant factor in the development of autonomy is the maturity to cooperate because cooperation "forces the child to be occupied with the point of view of other people."³

Piaget states:

> The unique contribution of cooperation to the development of the moral consciousness is precisely that it implies the distinction between what is and what ought to be, between effective obedience and an ideal independent of any real command. If unilateral respect and social constraint were alone at work, moral good would be given once and for all under the imperfect and often grotesque forms assigned to it by the duties and regulations of existing society. But cooperation and mutual respect in so far as they involve indwelling norms that are never exhausted by "constituted" rules, play an irreplaceable part as catalytic agents and give a definite direction to moral evolution.⁴

The autonomous stage thus recognizes that rules are no longer sacred; they can be changed by mutual consent. Morality is no longer mere subordination to an external code of law or even rigid reciprocity in human relationship, but it consists of the rights and needs of all individuals. This emphasis on human relationship recognizes a moral motivation from within and takes into account the principles of justice and equity. Punishment is no longer expiatory, but specific to the infraction; it is either "a simple act of reparation or a simple measure of reciprocity."\(^1\)

Movement toward Autonomy

Thus in Piaget there is a two-stage theory of moral development. But how does a child proceed from one to the other? What contributes to the lessening of heteronomy and the increase of autonomy? Piaget has identified four factors in development:

First of all maturation . . . ; second, the role of experience of the effects of the physical environment on the structure of intelligence; third, social transmission in the broad sense (linguistic transmission, education, etc.); and fourth, a factor which is too often neglected but one which seems to be fundamental and even the principal factor . . . the factor of equilibration, or . . . self-regulation.\(^2\)

For Piaget moral development is dependent upon the cognitive maturation of the child.\(^3\) As the child grows older, the

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\(^1\)Ibid., p. 322.


\(^3\)Although not within the scope of this study, it may be pointed out that Piaget's concept of moral heteronomy and autonomy...
The process of maturation causes a movement from heteronomy to autonomy: "Objective responsibility diminishes on the average as the child grows older and subjective responsibility gains correlatively in importance."\(^1\)

The role of the adult world—home, school, church, or community—is limited to facilitate this process of maturation. The less the adult restraint and exercise of adult authority in moral matters, the more conducive the atmosphere for a child to move toward self-regulation and autonomy. The role of peers, however, is quite important to Piaget's theory. As a child's interaction with his peers increases, he gains experience in social relationships and perceives the need for cooperation and reciprocity.

Through free, reciprocal relationship with his peers, the child develops a morality of mutual respect. To be good is no longer to be obedient; it is to be fair. But through the very experience of reciprocity the child comes to realize that strict fairness is not enough. Motives, relationships, needs and obligations must all be taken into account. Thus reciprocity develops dynamically towards the highest level of autonomy—towards an interiorised morality of good will, understanding forgiveness and love.\(^2\)

moving from egocentrism to authoritarianism to cooperation and finally to autonomy is related to Piaget's stages of cognitive development, consisting of sensori-motor period (first two years of life), pre-operational period (two to seven years), concrete operational period (seven to eleven years), and formal operational period (eleven years to adulthood). For the states in cognitive development, see Jean Piaget, *The Origins of Intelligence in Children*, trans. Margaret Cook (New York: International Universities Press, 1952); and Mary Ann Spencer Pulaski, *Understanding Piaget* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), pp. 25-88, 207-08.


The Study of Kohlberg

In a series of longitudinal and cross-cultural studies since the mid-50s, Lawrence Kohlberg has combined the Platonic concept of justice, the Deweyan devotion to scientific method, and the Piagetian principle of cognitive development into a singular attack on the problem of moral development.

The central concern of Kohlberg is "How does man become moral?" To begin with, Kohlberg dismisses the theories that attempt to explain morality in terms of character traits, socialization, value clarification, or spiritualization. To him the way to moral development is through the Piagetian tradition of cognitive-developmental approach—cognitive because morality, like intellectual development, has its beginnings in the function of reason; developmental because moral reasoning, like intellectual reasoning, moves through definite, identifiable stages.

But what is morality? Kohlberg's definition deals not with moral content or behavior but with moral judgment which is

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characterized by " impersonality, ideality, universalizability, and preemptiveness."  

Although Kohlberg concedes that moral character may include the translation of moral judgment into "actual guidance and criticism of action," his priority is clearly on the reasoning aspect. Says Kohlberg:

In short, we intend the term "moral" to be understood in the restricted sense of referring to situations which call for judgments involving deontological concepts such as right and wrong, duty and obligation, having a right, fairness, etc.

Having thus defined morality, Kohlberg proceeds to outline his method of measuring the moral judgment of a person. His method consists of presenting a moral dilemma in the form of a story and then inviting the participants to respond to the dilemma. An example is the story of Heinz:

In Europe, a woman was near death from a very bad disease, a special kind of cancer. There was one drug that the doctors thought might save her. It was a form of radium that a druggist was charging ten times what the drug cost him to make. He paid $200 for the radium and charged $2,000 for a small dose of the drug. The sick woman's husband, Heinz, went to everyone he knew to borrow the money, but he could only get together about $1,000 which is half of what it cost. He told the druggist that his wife was dying, and asked him to sell it cheaper or let him pay later. But the druggist said, "No, I discovered the drug and I'm going to make money from it." So Heinz got desperate and broke into the man's store to steal the drug for his wife.

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Should Heinz have done that? Why? If Heinz was arraigned before a court, what should the judge do? Why?

Kohlberg is not interested in a right or wrong answer to the moral dilemma. He is interested in the reason for the answer the respondent gives. That is to say, he is not so much concerned whether the respondent answers that Heinz was right or wrong or that Heinz should or should not have done what he did. Kohlberg wants to know why the respondent answers the way he does.

After interviewing hundreds of children from pre-teens to adolescents in different countries, Kohlberg concluded that moral judgment is characterized by an over-all developmental pattern which consists of six stages, grouped under three levels.

Stages of Development

I. Preconventional level

At this level the child is responsive to cultural rules and labels of good and bad, right or wrong, but interprets these labels either in terms of the physical or the hedonistic consequences of action (punishment, reward, exchange of favors) or in terms of the physical power of those who enunciate the rules and labels. The level is divided into the following two stages:

Stage 1: The punishment-and-obedience orientation. The physical consequences of action determine its goodness or badness regardless of the human meaning of value of these consequences. Avoidance of punishment and unquestioning deference to power are valued in their own right, not in terms of respect for an underlying moral order supported by punishment and authority (the latter being stage 4).

Stage 2: The instrumental-relativist orientation. Right action consists of that which instrumentally satisfies one's own needs and occasionally the needs of others. Human relations are viewed in terms like those of the market place. Elements of fairness, of
reciprocity, and of equal sharing are present, but they are always interpreted in a physical, pragmatic way. Reciprocity is a matter of "you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours," not of loyalty, gratitude, or justice.

II. Conventional level

At this level, maintaining the expectations of the individual's family, group, or nation is perceived as valuable in its own right, regardless of immediate and obvious consequences. The attitude is not only one of conformity to personal expectations and social order, but of loyalty to it, or actively maintaining, supporting, and justifying the order, and of identifying with the persons or group involved in it. At this level, there are the following two stages:

Stage 3: The interpersonal concordance or "good boy--nice girl" orientation. Good behavior is that which pleases or helps others and is approved by them. There is much conformity to stereotypical images of what is majority or "natural" behavior. Behavior is frequently judged by intention--"he means well" becomes important for the first time. One earns approval by being "nice."

Stage 4: The "law and order" orientation. There is orientation toward authority, fixed rules, and the maintenance of the social order. Right behavior consists of doing one's duty, showing respect for authority, and maintaining the given social order for its own sake.

III. Postconventional, autonomous, or principled level

At this level, there is a clear effort to define moral values and principles that have validity and application apart from the authority of the groups or persons holding these principles and apart from the individual's own identification with these groups. This level again has two stages:

Stage 5: The social contract, legalistic orientation, generally with utilitarian overtones. Right action tends to be defined in terms of general individual rights, and standards which have been critically examined and agreed upon by the whole society. There is a clear awareness of the relativism of personal values and opinions and a corresponding emphasis upon procedural rules for reaching consensus. Aside from what is constitutionally and democratically agreed upon, the right is a matter of personal "values" and "opinion." The result is an emphasis upon the "legal point of view," but with an
emphasis upon the possibility of changing law in terms of rational considerations of social utility (rather than freezing it in terms of stage 4 "law and order"). Outside the legal realm, free agreement and contract is the binding element of obligation. This is the "official morality" of the American government and constitution.

Stage 6: The universal-ethical-principle orientation. Right is defined by the decision of conscience in accord with self-chosen ethical principles appealing to logical comprehensiveness, universality, and consistency. These principles are abstract and ethical (the Golden Rule, the categorical imperative); they are not concrete moral rules like the Ten Commandments. At heart, these are universal principles of justice, of the reciprocity and equality of human rights, and of respect for the dignity of human beings as individual persons.1

One way to understand these six stages is to look at the differentiation of motivation in each of these stages. A stage-one person acts out of fear of punishment; a stage-two person acts to satisfy his own needs; a stage-three person acts to gain the approval of others; a stage-four person acts to conform to authority and to maintain law and order; a stage-five person acts out of mutual obligations and a sense of public good; and, finally, a stage-six person acts out of a universal principle.

According to Kohlberg, the only true and universal moral principle is justice. It is the only meta-ethical criterion for moral choice, and it alone "concretizes the concept of the moral, and it delimits."2 Kohlberg adds:

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By a moral principle we mean a mode of choosing which is universal, a rule of choosing which we want all people to adopt always in all situations. . . . A moral principle is a principle for resolving competing claims—you versus me, you versus a third person. There is only one principled basis for resolving claims, justice, or equality. Treat every man's claim impartially regardless of the man. A moral principle is not only a rule of action, but a reason for action. As a reason for action, justice is called respect for persons.¹

The principle of justice is so crucial to Kohlberg's theory that he is prepared to let human welfare take a second place:

"Benevolence in the sense of 'love, empathy, sympathy, human concern, humanism,' and so on, can never be a principle of choice. It is primarily another stage-3 virtue label, not a guide to action."²

The Concept of Stage

If justice is the universal principle in Kohlberg's scheme, the concept of stage is its universal developmental mode. Kohlberg defines stage in terms of invariant sequence, universality, consistency, and hierarchy.

Invariant developmental sequence

"Moral development is growth, and, like all growth, takes place according to a predetermined sequence."³ This sequence is to be understood in terms of stages. Kohlberg maintains that "true stages come one at a time and always in the same order"⁴ and that "each stage stems from the previous one and prepares the way for the

1Kohlberg, "Indoctrination Versus Relativity," p. 305.
3Duska and Whelan, Moral Development, p. 48.
subsequent stage;\textsuperscript{1} so that, while children may move through these stages at varying speeds or may stop at one stage, they cannot skip stages in their forward movement. Nor is there real retrogression; that is, a person who has reached a higher stage does not normally reverse to a lower stage of moral reasoning, although the possibility of stage inconsistency in reasoning and behavior is conceded.\textsuperscript{2}

**Universality**

From his cross-cultural and multi-national studies,\textsuperscript{3} Kohlberg has concluded that these moral stages, not the rate of development, are of universal application in that there is a consistency in the order and stages of development in moral reasoning among children from different nationalities and cultures.

**Consistency within the person**

Kohlberg contends that a stage represents a person's individually worked out moral synthesis, so that "although there is little consistency to honest behavior as such, there is a high


degree of stage consistency in judgment from one verbal moral situation to the next.\textsuperscript{1}

**Hierarchy**

In Kohlberg's scheme, a higher stage is always more complex than a lower one, requiring advanced rational capacity,\textsuperscript{2} and the higher presupposes the lower. With each successive stage, there is differentiation from and integration of the lower stages.\textsuperscript{3}

**Stage Mobility**

If moral development is conceived in terms of sequential stages, how can upward mobility be brought about? Kohlberg's argument is that the cognitive developmental potential within the child is a necessary condition for growth in moral judgment. Since movement is progressive, since each higher stage demands an increase in cognitive strength, since the higher stage demands differentiation from and integration of the lower, and since an individual is always attracted to one stage higher than his own, Kohlberg's theory holds that facilitating the child's movement to the next step of development involves exposure to the next higher level of thought and conflict requiring the active application of the current level of thought to problematic situations. This implies: (1) attention to the child's mode or styles of thought,


i.e., stage; (2) match of stimulation to that stage, e.g., exposure to modes of reasoning one stage above the child's own; (3) arousal, among children, of genuine cognitive and social conflict and disagreement about problematic situations (in contrast to traditional education which has stressed adult "right answers" and has reinforced "be-having well"); and (4) exposure to stimuli toward which the child can be active, in which assimilatory response to the stimulus-situation is associated with "natural" feedback.1

If change can be brought about or accelerated in the moral development of the child on the basis of cognitive process, one final question needs to be raised. What is the role of the traditional sources of character, such as, the church, culture, home, and school?

Kohlberg maintains that he "found no important differences in development of moral thinking between Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Buddhists, Moslems, and atheists."2 He further adds:

On the basis of my studies and observations of other societies, I have concluded that religion is not a necessary or highly important condition for the development of moral judgment and conduct.3

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Kohlberg's conclusion on religion immediately raises the question, what religion? Kohlberg apparently thinks of religion in terms of belief, metaphysics, and doctrine. Merton P. Strommen's A Study of Generations (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1972) has provided empirical evidence that this kind of religion—what Strommen calls the law-oriented religion—may indeed have no effect on moral development. But Strommen has shown that another kind of religion—practical, love- and gospel-oriented religion—has a significant effect on the moral development of children.
Kohlberg also found that cultural differences do not affect the universality of either the stages of development or the principle of justice. Although the rate of development may vary due to cultural complexities and availability of social opportunities, Kohlberg insists that "the same basic ways of moral valuing are found in every culture and develop in the same order."  

The role of the home does not receive much attention in Kohlberg's studies, but almost half of his published writings deal with the school's role in moral development. His main contention is that schools should be reconstructed as little Platonic republics where a spirit of community, consensus, and full student participation will make justice "a living matter" and where also "Socratic peer discussions of value dilemmas" will replace indoctrination.

The aim of moral education in schools, Kohlberg argues, must be "the stimulation to the next step of development rather than indoctrination into the fixed conventions of the school, the church, 


or the nation." To facilitate this objective, educators are to provide for

1. Exposure to the next stage of reasoning up;
2. Exposure to situations posing problems and contradictions for the child's current moral structure, leading to dissatisfaction with his or her current level;
3. An atmosphere of interchange and dialogue in which the first two conditions obtain, in which conflicting moral views are compared in an open manner.²

**Summary**

To Hartshorne and May, character is not a general or inner entity but is specific and situational. Moral behavior is a matter of immediate situational forces and is not directly related to moral knowledge. Any consistency of behavior a person may possess is due to internalization during early childhood in the home. The development of character depends upon a variety of cognitive and social forces. The more opportunities a child has for intellectual discrimination and social interactions, the better the development of adequate moral character. So conceived, character is not a matter of fixed moral virtues but of various emotional tendencies and defenses that reflect in behavior consistency.

Ligon's approach to character is based on a psychological interpretation of the ethic of Christ as found in the Beatitudes. To Ligon character is the power that motivates a person to act unselfishly. This power consists of eight dimensions—vision, dominating purpose, love of righteousness and truth, faith in the

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¹Ibid.

friendliness of the universe, sensitiveness, democratic sportsmanship, magnanimity, and Christian courage. Ligon maintains that character development takes place according to the ability and willingness of a person to realign his priorities so as to maximize his potential. Within the person lies both the potential and the power to achieve its maximization. Applying the mathematical concept of group theory to character development, Ligon has broken down human potential into sixteen manageable elements. A creative combination of two chosen elements through the uniqueness of the individual produces predictable triads which constitute the strength of character. Ligon suggests that in addition to the individual's own will, the home, the church, and the school have a formulating influence on character development; the highest degree of influence is provided through modeling.

Peck and Havighurst define character as a special aspect of man in which the fundamental motives underlying and causing behavior are centered. Character includes intent and motivation, and involves an intelligent and effective application of ethical principles in everyday life. There are five types of character representing the sequence of moral development from infancy to adulthood. These types—amoral, expedient, conforming, irrational-conscientious, rational-altruistic—also represent the level at which a person's moral attitudes and behavior may be placed. Movement from type to type occurs by an increase in internalization of rules. Home is the predominant source of character development, although peers, religion, and school have a moderate influence.

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Piaget is interested more in moral thinking than in moral behavior. He defines morality as respect and relationship to a system of rules. Moral development involves the kind of respect—objective or subjective—a person has toward rules. In Piaget's theory, moral development consists of two broad stages. The first one, the stage of heteronomy, is based on an authoritative ethic in which rules are considered from an objective standpoint as sacred and inviolable. Duty and blind obedience are stressed. The second one, the stage of autonomy, consists of cooperation and codification. Behavior takes into consideration not just the rules but rights of and responsibility to others. Piaget's theory is cognitive-developmental; that is to say, moral development is related to cognitive growth. Maturation, experience, socialization, and self-regulation are vital for this development. The role of the adult world—home, school, church, and so forth—is limited to provide or to encourage these ingredients.

Kohlberg also approaches morality from a cognitive point of view. Moral development moves through six invariant, sequential, universal, hierarchical stages: (1) the punishment-obedience orientation, (2) the instrumental-relativist orientation, (3) the interpersonal concordance orientation, (4) the law and order orientation, (5) the social contract orientation, and (6) the universal-ethical-principle orientation. Beginning with the first, these stages are paired under three levels: (1) the preconventional in which physical consequences are emphasized, (2) the conventional in which conformity is stressed, and (3) the postconventional in which
autonomy and universal principle are ascendant. According to Kohlberg, the only universal principle is justice. Stage mobility occurs through the arousal of genuine moral conflict and exposure to modes of thought one stage above the person's own.
CHAPTER V

THE MEANING AND SIGNIFICANCE OF CHARACTER

IN THE WRITINGS OF WHITE

This chapter examines the meaning and significance White attaches to character and is divided into four sections: (1) preliminary considerations, (2) definition of character, (3) importance of character, and (4) evaluation of character.

Preliminary Considerations

The answer to what is character must be preceded by an answer to the perennial question, what is man? Character concerns man. Animals, plants, and inanimate objects are not thought of as possessing character. White recognizes this and her understanding of character flows from her concept of the origin, nature, and destiny of man.

The Origin of Man

White believes that man was created by God. Man is the "crowning act of the creation of God, made in the image of God, and designed to be a counterpart of God."

1 Except where indicated, all of the works cited in this and the following chapter, are by Ellen G. White; therefore, the author's name is given only in the first reference of hitherto uncited works.

2 Ellen G. White, "Go Ye into All the World," Review and Herald 72 (June 18, 1895):385.
story of creation as the only "authentic" account of the origin of man,\(^1\) White refuses to accept that man is a cosmic accident or a result of natural evolution.\(^2\) She describes God's creative activity as follows:

In the creation of man was manifest the agency of a personal God. When God had made man in His image, the human form was perfect in all its arrangements, but it was without life. Then a personal, self-existing God breathed into that form the breath of life, and man became a living, intelligent being. All parts of the human organism were set in action. The heart, the arteries, the veins, the tongue, the hands, the feet, the senses, the faculties of the mind, all began their work, and all were placed under law. Man became a living soul.\(^3\)

When man came out of the Creator's hands, he was perfect in every faculty of mind and body,\(^4\) perfect in health and in all arrangements of the human form.\(^5\) He was harmoniously balanced, equally developed, and had a beautiful form.\(^6\) Of the first man, White says:

Adam was a noble being, with a powerful mind, a will in harmony with the will of God and affections that centered upon heaven. He possessed a body heir to no disease, and a soul bearing the impress of Deity.\(^7\)

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\(^1\) *Testimonies*, 5:25.


\(^4\) *Testimonies*, 3:29.  

\(^5\) *Ministry of Healing*, p. 415.


\(^7\) Ellen G. White, "Keeping the Heart," *Youth's Instructor* 51 (March 5, 1903):1.
Man, a monistic being

In accepting God as the origin of man, White believes that man was created monistic. The Platonic dualism of body and mind or the traditional trichotomy of body, mind, and soul is totally foreign to her thinking. Barnes found that although White often spoke separately of the body, the mind, and the soul, and in one place stated that "the nature of man is three-fold," comprised of "the physical, the intellectual, and moral powers," she did not conceive of these as distinct entities that could exist independently of each other. Rather, she viewed them as three interdependent aspects, or faculties, of a single living whole—man.¹

This holistic concept led White to assert that man is held responsible for what he does as a person—whether in body, mind, or spirit. What affects one part of man affects the others as well, so that physical, mental, and spiritual functions of man cannot be segmented. This is the basis for her repeated affirmations that the central concern of life ought to be the "harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers."²

Man, in the image of God

The concept of the image of God as found in the biblical narrative of the origin of man is vital to White's understanding of the nature of man and her emphasis on character development. Primarily, "the image" meant to White complete agreement with God. Man was to bear God's image, both in outward resemblance and in character. . . . His nature was in harmony with the will of God. His mind was capable of comprehending divine


²Educational p. 13.
things. His affections were pure; his appetites and passions were under the control of reason. He was holy and happy bearing the image of God, and in perfect obedience to his will.\(^1\)

White believes that the significance of the "image" is to be found in the creative purpose of God in that man was to bear the likeness of the Creator in all his activities. Whatever attributes God has—love, righteousness, holiness, and so forth—man is expected to reflect. Furthermore, man was not "only capable of comprehending divine things," but also was enabled to cooperate "with his Creator" in "executing His plans."\(^2\)

In White's thought, the image of God is ever to be a symbol that "God made man upright" and gave him "noble traits of character."\(^3\) The "image" affirms that "next to the angelic beings, the human family . . . are the noblest of His created works."\(^4\)

Although White sees in the "image" the high status and worth of man, "designed to be a counterpart of God," she nowhere recognizes total autonomy for man; nor does she concede that man was intended to shape his destiny apart from God. She dismisses the thought that man is a demigod accountable to himself and capable in himself.\(^5\) Her views have nothing in common with the Platonic notion that man possesses a conscious, eternal soul,

\(^1\)Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 45. \(^2\)Testimonies, 5:311.\(^3\)Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 49.\(^4\)Ministry of Healing, p. 397.\(^5\)Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 688.
and, therefore, is inherently immortal.¹ To White, apart from God, man's origin, existence, or destiny cannot be explained: "The beating heart, the throbbing pulse, every nerve and muscle in the living organism, are kept in order and activity by the power of an infinite God."²

The Nature of Man

Closely related to White's concept of the origin of man is his nature. An analysis of her writings reveals that White views man as a spiritual, moral, cognitive, physical, and sinful being. These various emphases are not to be considered as individual entities but are to be viewed as functioning within a holistic framework that man acts as one and is responsible as one.

Man, a spiritual being

By virtue of the fact that man's origin is in God, man is looked upon as a being of faith and worship. Although the object of that worship has been part of man's enduring dilemma, the "human mind cannot evade its obligation to a higher power."³ In fact, White maintains that man's true value can be estimated only in reference "to the capacity of the heart to know and understand


So man, as White understands, is on a spiritual quest searching for a fuller expression of his affective feelings. He has a heart, the best and holiest feelings of which are to be directed toward God.²

An important part in the spiritual nature of man is his conscience. White defines conscience as "the voice of God, heard amid the conflict of human passions."³ God's intention in bestowing man with conscience is that it should guide and control a whole spectrum of activities that range from the mundane to the most spiritual. Some of these activities she specifically mentions are: appetites,⁴ desires,⁵ emotions,⁶ affections,⁷ speech,⁸ passions,⁹ self,¹⁰ will,¹¹ and worship.¹² From the list it is clear that White considers that the spiritual dimension of man is closely knit with his other activities.


³Testimonies, 5:120.

⁴Ministry of Healing, p. 319; Testimonies, 3:491.

⁵Ibid., 5:177. ⁶Ibid., 5:177, 314.

⁷Ministry of Healing, p. 399; Testimonies, 2:562.

⁸Ibid., 5:175.

⁹Ministry of Healing, p. 399; Testimonies, 2:562, 3:84.

Man, a moral being

"Man was created a free moral agent."¹ The moral nature of man is interpreted to include the will and the autonomy of man—the power and freedom to choose and decide.² This power and freedom are essential both for the development of man's character and for the cosmic purposes of God.

Without freedom of choice, his [man's] obedience would not have been voluntary, but forced. There could have been no development of character. Such a course would have been contrary to God's plan in dealing with his inhabitants of other worlds. It would have been unworthy of man as an intelligent being, and would have sustained Satan's charge of God's arbitrary rule.³

To White the bestowal and the possession of the power of choice are essential to the definition of God as God, on the one hand, and man as man, on the other.⁴ The volitional freedom is so basic to human nature that neither God,⁵ Christ,⁶ the devil,⁷

¹Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 331.
³Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 49. ⁴Ibid., pp. 331-32, 49.
⁷Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 421; Testimonies, 5:177.
angels, nor man can coerce one to choose against one's will. "The will is the governing power in the nature of man, bringing all the other faculties under its sway. The will is not the taste, or the inclination, but it is the deciding power."  

As the sovereign decision-making power, the will plays a crucial role in the functions of man, such as, healing, restoration of mental and nervous strength, conversion, overcoming sin, remedying defects of character.

Although White recognizes that the power to will is the "spring of all man's actions" and that it is the deciding power working in man, she cautions that the will, left to itself, is seriously limited in making moral and spiritual decisions. Indeed, there is no power in the "unaided human will" to resist sin.

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2Counsels to Teachers, p. 76; Education, p. 288.

3Testimonies, 5:40

4Desire of Ages, p. 203.

5Testimonies, 1:387.

6Steps to Christ, p. 51.

7Temperance, pp. 113-14.


9Testimonies, 5:515.

10Ibid.

11Ibid., 8:292; Christ's Object Lessons, p. 96; Steps to Christ, p. 18.
But when the will chooses to place itself on the side of God to cooperate with Him, "it becomes omnipotent."\(^1\)

To the power of choice, White presents a corollary: the need for accountability. Man is held responsible for the choices he makes; upon his choices, wise or otherwise, rest his life and destiny.\(^2\)

**Man, a cognitive being**

White recognizes the ability to think as a gift of God that places man above other creatures and relates him to the Creator.\(^3\) The mind, created by God, is meant to be developed\(^4\) so as to "reach the very height of intellectual greatness."\(^5\) The responsibility for this development rests on the individual himself:

> If you allow another to do your thinking for you, you will have crippled energies and contracted abilities. . . . You should wrestle with problems of thought that refine the exercise of the best powers of your mind. . . . We have dwarfed and weakened our capabilities by depending upon others to do our thinking.\(^6\)

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\(^1\)Christ's Object Lessons, p. 333.

\(^2\)Education, p. 178; Great Controversy, p. 543; Prophets and Kings, p. 536; Sanctified Life, p. 76.

\(^3\)Ellen G. White, "The Renewing of the Mind," Review and Herald 65 (June 12, 1888):369; Education, p. 17.

\(^4\)Education, p. 41; Steps to Christ, p. 17.

\(^5\)Testimonies, 4:413; Education, p. 17; Counsels to Teachers, p. 475.

Although cognitive strength and activity are considered a measure of man, White warns that the mind becomes a true measure only as it participates with divine power and purpose.

Intellect alone does not make the man. . . . There is a power in intellect if sanctified and controlled by the Spirit of God. It is superior to riches and to physical power; yet it must be cultivated in order to make the man. The right which one has to claim to be a man is determined by the use made of his intellect.¹

Man, a physical being

To White the body of man "is the most wonderful work in the world."² It was formed by God³ and it is as truly divine in origin as any other part of human nature. Every nerve and muscle, every fibre and sinew, every need and function of the physical organism is to be subjected to God's will as expressed in His laws.⁴ White denies the Platonic concept that the body is evil and is a prison for the soul; rather, the body is the temple of God,⁵ a "temple which the Lord Himself has fitted for the indwelling of His Holy Spirit."⁶ The supreme regard White has for the physical nature of man is obvious from the following:

¹Testimonies, 4:519.
³Sons and Daughters of God, p. 172.
⁵Desire of Ages, p. 161; Education, pp. 200-201.
The Creator of man has arranged the living machinery of our bodies. Every function is wonderfully and wisely made. And God has pledged Himself to keep this human machinery in healthful action if the human agent will obey His laws and cooperate with God. Every law governing the human machinery is to be considered as truly divine in origin, in character, and in importance.¹

Man, a sinner sought by divine grace

White presents not only the high level at which God placed man at his creation, but also the low level to which he has sunk as a result of sin. To define man's nature as sinful is at once to point out the immense problems he faces in his moral development.

But what is sin? White accepts the Genesis narrative of the fall of man and concludes that "it was distrust of God's goodness, disbelief of His word, and rejection of His authority . . . that brought into the world a knowledge of evil. It was this that opened the doors to every species of falsehood and error."² To White, "sin is the opposite of holiness"³ and thus of righteousness and love.⁴ Deliberate, willful rebellion against God⁵ and a willful disobedience to God's expressed will as revealed in His laws⁶ are at the foundation of every sin. Therefore sin begins with

¹Medical Ministry, p. 221. ²Education, p. 25.
⁵Ibid., p. 51.
self-centeredness and self-assertion so that man rejects God as the center of his life and makes himself the center, thus diverting God-given abilities to perpetuate selfish interests.

Sin, therefore, is an alienation both from God and humanity and in an ultimate sense is a "virtual denial of God."

Trapped in sin, man stands condemned and helpless. He has "lost his power to discriminate between light and darkness, truth and error." Sin has deadened his moral perceptions to such an extent that "it is as impossible to cause... [his mind] to dwell upon pure and holy things as it would be to turn the course of Niagara, and send its waters pouring up the falls."

The depravity is not only moral but also mental, physical, and spiritual. "Through sin the divine likeness was marred, and well-nigh obliterated. Man's physical powers were weakened, his mental capacity was lessened, his spiritual vision dimmed."


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4. Bible Commentary, 1:1083; Mount of Blessing, p. 51.
6. Counsels to Teachers, p. 33; Testimonies, 5:641.
7. Ibid., 2:346.
8. Education, p. 15.
Thus the whole man has come under the sway of sin. His mind is perverted. His imagination is corrupt. His will, conscience, and freedom have been affected. His sense of the ultimate and eternal is dwarfed and he is possessed by the immediate and the self-centered. His affections are depraved and he stands demoralized. 1 "Temptations from without find an answering chord within the heart, and the feet turn imperceptibly toward evil." 2

Man stands helpless with seeds of moral death imbedded in his inmost self. 3 But he is not altogether hopeless. White maintains that God has answered the sin problem. By taking the "first advance" 4 in the redemptive activity of Christ, God has bridged the gulf between what man is and what he ought to be. She expands this thought further:

In the apostasy [of sin] man alienated himself from God; earth was cut off from heaven. Across the gulf that lay between, there could be no communion. But through Christ, earth is again linked with heaven. With His own merits, Christ has bridged the gulf which sin had made . . . ; Christ connects fallen man in his weakness and helplessness with the Source of infinite power. 5

In the life and work of Christ, White sees divine evidence that humanity is still vested with "great possibilities" 6 and that "human nature is worth working upon." 7 White argues that Christ made possible for man to be "restored, rebeautified, reconstructed,

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2 Ministry of Healing, p. 451. 3 Ibid., p. 455.
4 Christ's Object Lessons, p. 189.
5 Steps to Christ, p. 20. 6 Desire of Ages, p. 568.
7 Counsels to Teachers, p. 236.
and made fit for the presence of God." ¹ This redemptive plan of God "contemplates our complete recovery from the power of Satan."² She adds:

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 purposes in his creation might be realized—this was to be the work of redemption.³

The Destiny of Man

To complete White's understanding of man, it is necessary to consider the destiny to which man is ascribed. White confesses her inadequacy to explain the noble destiny of man: "Eternity alone can reveal the glorious destiny to which man, restored to God's image, may attain."⁴ But she is certain of the ultimate goal for man: "Higher than the highest human thought can reach is God's ideal for His children. Godliness— godlikeness—is the goal to be reached."⁵

Thus complete restoration of man to his original status and eternal communion with his Creator is the destiny to which man may look forward. And this high and noble destiny is determined by the type of character man possesses in this life.⁶

But what is character?

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¹ Testimonies, 5:537. ² Desire of Ages, p. 311.
³ Education, pp. 15-16.
⁴ Mount of Blessing, p. 61. See also Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 602.
⁵ Education, pp. 18-19.
⁶ Christ's Object Lessons, pp. 74, 123, 356; Sons and Daughters of God, p. 361; Testimonies, 4:429.
Definition of Character

Ellen White dismisses the use of the word "character" as referring exclusively to outward behavioral patterns of a person. Mental ability and genius,¹ reputation,² "brilliance of style . . . , high conception of art, delicate refinement,"³ high positions,⁴ money and wealth,⁵ rank and noble descent,⁶ or even "mere gentleness, patience, meekness, and kindness"⁷--important as these may be--do not constitute character.

To White, "character is power"⁸ that radiates from within⁹ and expresses itself in the spiritual, moral, and mental domains of man. Because man is a holistic being, White believes that character as power takes in the whole man.¹⁰ Ill-formed characters, thus, contribute to "mismatched pieces of humanity."¹¹

²Ibid.
³Great Controversy, p. 567.
⁴Testimonies to Ministers, p. 362; Testimonies, 9:277, 283.
⁶Desire of Ages, p. 219.
⁷Ellen G. White, Colporteur Ministry, p. 63.
⁹Desire of Ages, p. 307; Testimonies, 2:175, 3:376.
¹⁰Ibid., 4:197-198, 425.
The Spiritual Dimension of Character

Character is a quality of the soul,¹ a wholeness for God,² and the medium through which man participates in divine nature and functions.³ Ideally the character of man is to be a counterpart of the character of God, especially as it manifests itself in knowledge and love,⁴ and righteousness and holiness.⁵ Spiritual relationship with God is essential for the formation of harmonious character.⁶ Hence "none but a wholehearted Christian can be a true gentleman."⁷

Spiritually speaking, character is that part of man through which God wishes to express Himself and vindicate His enduring interest in man. This spiritual dimension of character is also described by White as the "impressing upon the human soul the image of the divine,"⁸ which reveals itself in a "disinterested love for all mankind."⁹ Thus love is the spiritual foundation of character.¹⁰

¹ "A Good Character," p. 34. ² Desire of Ages, p. 566.
⁵ Desire of Ages, pp. 555-56; Testimonies, 2:484; Testimonies to Ministers, p. 446.
⁸ Counsels to Teachers, p. 139; Fundamentals of Education, p. 280.
⁹ Testimonies, 2:484. ¹⁰ Christ's Object Lessons, p. 49.

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The Moral Dimension of Character

As seen already, White views man as a moral being with the ability to will, to choose, and to value. From this stand flows her moral understanding of character:

Strength of character consists of two things—power of will and power of self-control. Many youth mistake strong, uncontrolled passion for strength of character; but the truth is, that he who is mastered by his passions is a weak man. The real greatness and nobility of the man is measured by the power of the feelings that he subdues, not by the power of the feelings that subdue him.¹

Several points need emphasis here. First, will power is considered an essential part of the character of man. In it is the power to choose and value. The will, rightly employed, enables a person to "rule the spirit when passion is seeking for the mastery,"² "to possess a singleness of purpose and indomitable determination,"³ and to "reveal steadfast principles, pure, noble aspirations."⁴

Second, self-control is vital to character. White argues that self-centeredness destroys the fragrance of character,⁵ defaces and mars the image of God in man,⁶ destroys the vigor of intellect, and perverts the sense of justice.⁷ It is self-mastery that assures purity of life and freedom from the depravity of sin.⁸ Hence, on the one hand, a man who fails to achieve self-control is

¹ Testimonies, 4:656. ² Ibid., 4:521.
³ Bible Commentary, 2:1003.
⁴ Messages to Young People, p. 382.
⁵ Desire of Ages, p. 504. ⁶ Testimonies, 4:91.
⁷ Desire of Ages, p. 222. ⁸ Ministry of Healing, p. 130.
"not registered in the books of heaven as a man;" on the other, the self-controlled man grows stronger and stronger and has within him the highest evidence of nobility.

So she states: "A noble character is the result of self-discipline, of the subjection of the lower to the higher nature—the surrender of self for the service of love to God and man." Thus self-control in White's thought is not a negative principle but an active one in that resisting selfishness opens up the possibility of identifying with the universal imperative of love and with the divine destiny of godliness.

Third, character is fully developed only as a man possesses and exercises sufficient will power and self-control to resist temptation and overcome every passion. Postponement or denial of self-satisfaction is a definite prerequisite for maturity in character. But the task is not easy. Self-mastery does not come by chance or accident. It is the "greatest conquest" one can achieve.

It is formed by hard, stern battles with self. Conflict after conflict must be waged against hereditary tendencies. We shall have to criticize ourselves closely, and allow not one unfavorable trait to remain uncorrected.

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3 Education, p. 57. 4 Testimonies, 3:183.
Thus the moral dimension of character defined in terms of will and self-control reflects the necessity of moral vitality that can stand the test of time and adversity.

Some men have no firmness of character. They are like a ball of putty and can be pressed into any conceivable shape. They are of no definite form and consistency, and are of no practical use in the world. This weakness, indecision, and inefficiency must be overcome. There is an indomitableness about true Christian character which cannot be molded or subdued by adverse circumstances. Men must have moral backbone, an integrity which cannot be flattered, bribed, or terrified.¹

This moral force, radiating from within,² does not lead to a mere passive resistance of evil, but insists on persistence in the right.³ It expresses itself through "the irrepressible desire for some greater good, the indomitable will, the strenuous application, [and] the untiring perseverance."⁴

The Mental Dimension of Character

To the spiritual and the moral, White adds a cognitive dimension by saying that character is the fruit grown in the garden of the mind.⁵ She elaborates further:

"As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." Many thoughts make up the unwritten history of a single day; and these thoughts have much to do with the formation of character. Our thoughts are to be strictly guarded. . . . By these the spiritual pulse is quickened, and the power for doing good is increased.⁶

Although the rational capacity of man has an important role in the make-up of character, White sees the mind only in its relationship to the whole man. Therefore brain and heart, every "drift of the mind and bent of the heart," are taken into account. White does not separate the cognitive from the affective; rather, she states: "The thoughts and feelings combined make up the moral character." 

Thoughts and feelings, the cognitive and the affective, are interdependent. If one is wrong, the other will be wrong. Therefore cognitive strength alone is of no avail; it must be preceded by purity of feelings. Cognitive strength and affective purity are essential for the formation of strong characters.

Thoughts and feelings, White says, are revealed in action. Repeated actions lead to formation of habits, and habit produces character. It must be noted that her emphasis is not on an isolated act, but on a repetition of acts through which "habits are established and character confirmed." She further adds:

Character does not come by chance. It is not determined by one outburst of temper, one step in the wrong direction. It is

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2. Ibid., 4:17.
3. Ibid., 5:310.
4. Ibid., 5:310.
the repetition of the act that causes it to become habit, and molds the character either for good or for evil.\(^1\)

By arguing that "actions make habits, and habits, character,"\(^2\) White wants to emphasize that "every act, however small, has its place in the great drama of life,"\(^3\) and that "every act of life, however unimportant, has its influence in forming the character."\(^4\) To her there are no "nonessentials" in life.\(^5\)

Every individual act of duty, every neglected act has its effect on measuring and molding character.\(^6\)

The relationship of action to character is interactive in White's thought. On the one hand, character produces action;\(^7\) on the other, action affects the formation of character.\(^8\) What man is, is revealed in what he does,\(^9\) and what he does affects what he is.\(^10\)

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\(^3\) *Testimonies*, 5:93

\(^4\) *Child Guidance*, p. 165.

\(^5\) *Messages to Young People*, p. 148.


\(^7\) *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 312.

\(^8\) *Messages to Young People*, p. 144.

\(^9\) *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 312; *Education*, pp. 61, 146.

\(^10\) *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 312, 356.
Feelings, thoughts, actions, habits, character. To this continuum White adds one a priori—the motive. "It is the motive that gives character to our acts, stamping them with ignominy or high moral worth."\(^1\) It is not the observable behavior, but the unseen "motives from which we act" that count.\(^2\)

In other words, the essence of character is not that it is so much a collection of thoughts, feelings, or even deeds, but the epicentric principle or motive from which these thoughts, feelings, and deeds flow. It is the motive that determines the direction and the course of character. Being right precedes doing right.

Thus one has in White the mental continuum of character: motives--feelings--thoughts--actions--habits--character. Taking into account White's belief that actions reflectively influence self,\(^3\) one may also place character at the head of the continuum: character--motives--feelings--thoughts--actions--habits.

A Holistic Approach

Thus far it has been noted that White views character as embracing the spiritual, mental, and moral domains of man. In so viewing, it is not suggested that these domains are autonomous of each other. Indeed, integration and ultimacy characterizes her understanding of character.

\(^1\)Desire of Ages, p. 615.


\(^3\)Fundamentals of Education, p. 194.
The point of integration

White conceives man as a unity and therefore the character of man expresses itself as a unity, affecting the varied functions of man—physical, intellectual, moral, and spiritual. None of these functions can be divorced from the other. One cannot be cultivated at the expense of the other. Only in harmonious, consistent, and integrated development can adequacy of character be obtained. This integrated development is a key factor in White's thought, as is obvious from the following:

Education is not complete unless the body, the mind, and the heart are equally educated. The character must receive proper discipline for its fullest and highest development. All the faculties of mind and body are to be developed and rightly trained. It is a duty to cultivate and to exercise every power that will render us more efficient.

How can one ensure the development of such a harmonious, integrated character? White argues for a point of center in reference to which all the motives, feelings, thoughts, acts, and habits may be articulated.

But what is this central, focusing point? Certainly, it is not man or his immediate interests, for such a center can lead only to moral chaos and confusion. To White, only one center can assure harmony, consistency, integration, and growth in character—God.

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1 Sanctified Life, p. 7. 2 Counsels to Teachers, p. 541. 3 Ibid. 4 Ministry of Healing, p. 398. 5 Testimonies to Ministers, pp. 376, 481.
God is the great center. From Him all life proceeds. To Him all service, homage, and allegiance belong. For all created beings there is the one great principle of life—dependence upon and cooperation with God.¹

In saying that God must be the center, White really acknowledges that it is God who has revealed Himself in Christ. Thus Christ is the "great center"²—"the living center of everything."³ She states:

Jesus Christ is everything to us,—the first, the last, the best in everything. Jesus Christ, His Spirit, His character, colors everything; it is the warp and woof, the very texture of our entire being. The words of Christ are spirit and life. We cannot, then, center our thoughts upon self; it is no more we that live, but Christ that liveth in us,. . . Self is dead. . . . Continuing to look unto Jesus, we reflect His image to all around us.⁴

White contends for a theocentric approach as the only means of true integration of character.⁵ In the absence of such a center, man's anchorage continually shifts,⁶ and he inevitably turns to himself as the center. Consequently his character is imbalanced, inconsistent, and leads to degradation.⁷ Hence her emphasis on the divine as the sole integrating factor:

Christ is the center to which all should be attracted; for the nearer we approach the center, the closer we shall come together in feeling, in sympathy, in love, growing into the character and image of Jesus.⁸

**Immediacy and ultimate**

White's understanding of character presupposes that man's life is not confined to the present alone. Beyond time there is an eternity to account for. Therefore she views the immediate as the preparation for the ultimate. This world is "God's workshop,"¹ a "fitting-up place," a probationary scene² in which character is formed in preparation for the world to come. Once man dies his character cannot be changed,³ and his future is decided upon what has been accomplished by the present. Although White's theological position leads her to relate the character of man to the second coming of Christ, the latter does not change characters: it only fixes them forever beyond all change.⁴

> When He [Christ] comes He is not to cleanse us of our sins, to remove from us the defects in our characters, or to cure us of the infirmities of our tempers and dispositions. . . . It is now that this work is to be accomplished.⁵

Thus in White's understanding the teleological purpose of the ultimate is closely related to the accomplishments of the present in that character is not merely a fashion of the now, but the arbiter of eternity.

**Importance of Character**

To White, character is the great work of life,⁶ and its development has eternal implications.⁷ This section will consider

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⁶ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 596.
⁷ *Counsels to Teachers*, pp. 61, 63; *Great Controversy*, p. 169; *Medical Ministry*, p. 184; *Testimonies*, 4:606.

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under four categories the importance she attaches to character: (1) importance to history, (2) importance to Christianity, (3) importance to individual, and (4) importance to human destiny.

Importance to History

Five major works of White (Patriarchs and Prophets, Prophets and Kings, The Desire of Ages, Acts of the Apostles, and The Great Controversy) published under the generic title "Conflict of the Ages Series" contain White's concept of history as an interim between the entrance of sin and the elimination of sin and as a movement from the former toward the latter. White traces the entrance of sin to heaven when Satan disputed the character of God. The elimination of sin takes place when God's character is finally vindicated.

From a theological perspective, White conceives the theme of history to be the great controversy between the forces of good

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1. Analyzing these works from the standpoint of an historical theory, Battistone comments: "The 'Conflict of the Ages Series' is a masterpiece. In a unique way Ellen White unfolds the drama of the most significant controversy in human history, identifies the main issues in the conflict, and demonstrates their relevance for each individual. In a simplistic way she provides answers to some of the most vexed questions relating to the human dilemma—those having to do with the problem of evil. One of the major achievements of this work, if not the most important one, is the exoneration of God's character." Battistone, Great Controversy Theme, pp. 169-70.

2. Great Controversy, p. 569; Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 78; Testimonies, 5:738.

and evil under the leadership of Christ and Satan, respectively, and uses this theme to construct and interpret the story of man.\(^1\) She writes:

The student should learn to view the world 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 working through the records of history and prophecy, to the great consummation. 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, whether he will or not, he is even now deciding upon which side of the controversy he will be found.\(^2\)

The central issue of this great controversy is the character of God. On the one hand Christ strives to show and establish that God's character is perfect and consistent both in love and justice; on the other, it is Satan's "studied plan . . . to misrepresent the character of God . . . as arbitrary, severe, and unforgiving."\(^3\) Battistone comments:

From beginning to end the controversy between Christ and Satan turns on the proper understanding of God's character. Through subtle and devious schemes Satan attempts to misconstrue God's character in an effort to lead men and women into open defiance of the divine law. His ultimate goal is to incite an insurrection against God's government on a universal scale so as to gain a position of pre-eminence for himself. To counteract the schemes of the devil and at the same time redeem men and women from the grips of sin Christ submitted to humiliation and suffering. Through the plan of redemption, Ellen White observes, Christ will vindicate God's character in the universe, redeem mankind, and purge the world of every trace of sin and evil.\(^4\)

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\(^1\)For an outline of the controversy, see Battistone, *Great Controversy Theme*, pp. iii-v, 169-74.

\(^2\) *Education*, p. 190.  
\(^3\) *Testimonies*, 5:738.  
\(^4\) Battistone, *Great Controversy Theme*, p. 169.
To White, this controversy between Christ and Satan is not merely a theological or a philosophical problem. It is very much a practical issue connected with the history of man ever since Adam and is "carried on in everyday practical life." Both Christ and Satan are involved in the battle for the human soul. White describes the conflict accurately. On the one hand, there is Satan:

It is Satan's work to dethrone God from the heart, and to mold human nature into his own image of deformity. He stirs up all evil propensities, awakening unholy passions and ambitions. He declares, all this power, these honors, and riches and sinful pleasure will I give thee; but his conditions are that integrity shall be yielded, conscience blunted. Thus he degrades the human faculties, and brings them into captivity to sin.3

On the other hand is Christ:

God calls upon men to oppose the power of evil. . . . The Lord Jesus infuses spiritual life into the soul, quickening its energies for good, cleansing it from moral defilement and giving it a fitness for his kingdom.4

Christ delights to take apparently hopeless material, those whom Satan has debased and through whom he has worked, and make them the subjects of His grace. He rejoices to deliver them from suffering and from the death that is to fall upon the disobedient. He makes His children His agents in the accomplishment of this work, and in its success, even in this life, they find a precious reward.5

From the above statements, it is clear that the outcome of the controversy between Christ and Satan is being worked out with reference to man's character.6 In fact, White insists that the

1Great Controversy, p. 656. 2Bible Commentary, 3:1159. 3Messages to Young People, p. 54. 4Ibid., p. 55. 5Testimonies, 6:309. 6See Ibid., 5:471-76.
controversy is repeated over every man, and everyone is an "experiment" in the laboratory of character development. The "sharp and persevering workman" that Satan is, his purpose is to mar man's character by weakening the body, darkening the intellect, and debasing the soul. But God "does not leave His people to be overcome by Satan's temptation. . . . To those who call upon Him for strength for the development . . . of character, He will give all needed help."

Although White has no doubt as to the ultimate outcome of the controversy, she stresses that the victory of God over Satan involves the restoration and perfection of man's character.

Importance to Christianity

As a Christian writer, White maintains that both the objective and the vindication of Christianity are bound up with the character of man. The primary goal of the Christian message is the reproduction of Christ's character in man so that man may be enabled to "act from a moral and religious standpoint." Without such a development, profession of religion is a mere exercise in hypocrisy. When character is neglected, Christianity loses its

1 Prophets and Kings, p. 585.
3 Adventist Home, p. 81. 4 Desire of Ages, p. 341.
5 Prophets and Kings, p. 590.
6 Christ's Object Lessons, p. 69.
7 Ibid., p. 67. 8 Temperance, p. 213.
reason for existence and becomes nothing more than an impotent ceremony. Therefore the validity of a religion or the religious experience of a person is dependent upon the type of character and moral worth the professor of that religion possesses. 

Says White: "Let the life, the character, be the strongest argument for Christianity;" for, after all, character is but an experiment of divine grace on human hearts.

Importance to Individual

White considers character formation as the "noblest," the "most important work ever entrusted to man." Character is more precious than gold or silver, or worldly possessions, and more beautiful than "the choicest productions of art." The reason for such superlatives is obvious from the following:

A good character is a capital of more value than gold or silver. It is unaffected by panics or failures, and in that day when earthly possessions shall be swept away, it will bring rich returns. Integrity, firmness, and perseverance are qualities that all should seek earnestly to cultivate; for they

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1 Prophets and Kings, p. 565.
2 Christ's Object Lessons, p. 342; Desire of Ages, p. 676.
3 Medical Ministry, p. 39.
4 Testimonies, 7:16; Testimonies to Ministers, pp. 49-50.
5 Testimonies, 4:657. 6 Education, p. 225.
7 Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 223; Counsels to Teachers, p. 225.
8 Testimonies, 4:657.
9 Ministry of Healing, p. 37; Testimonies, 7:143.
clothe the possessor with a power which is irresistible—a power which makes him strong to do good, strong to resist evil, strong to bear adversity. 1

It is character that makes a man fit for life's responsibilities, 2 whether they are to one's family, 3 work, 4 or society. 5 In fact, without character the human heart knows no happiness or security in any sphere. 6

Further, character formation constitutes the meaning of true education. 7 In the absence of character, there can be no true intellectual advancement; 8 all the greatness of scientific advance sinks into insignificance. 9 So a truly educated man, just like a truly religious one, is a man of character. He fills a great vacuum in society:

The greatest want of the world is the want of men—men who will not be bought or sold, men who in their inmost souls are true and honest, men who do not fear to call sin by its right name, men whose conscience is as true to duty as the needle to the pole, men who will stand for the right though the heavens fall. 10

1Counsels to Teachers, pp. 225-26.
2Testimonies, p. 579.
4Education, p. 13; Fundamentals of Education, p. 82.
5Education, pp. 29, 225.
6Messages to Young People, p. 54.
7Education, pp. 19, 225; Counsels to Teachers, p. 61; Fundamentals of Education, p. 459.
8Counsels to Teachers, p. 396. 9Ibid., p. 61.
10Education, p. 57.
Importance to Human Destiny

Finally, White relates the importance of character to human destiny. God is deeply interested in man's character, and it is only moral worth that He values. So in the divine plan, character constitutes the "harvest of life" and determines whether man is "fitted to live through the eternal ages."

It is not money or lands or position but the possession of a Christlike character, that will open to us the gates of Paradise. It is not dignity, it is not intellectual attainments, that will win for us the crown of immortality. Only the meek and lowly ones, who have made God their efficiency, will receive this gift.

Hence White calls character the passport to heaven, its development the first duty toward God and man, and its possession the only enduring treasure.

A character formed according to the divine likeness is the only treasure that we can take from this world to the next. Those who are under the instruction of Christ in this world will take every divine attainment with them to the heavenly mansions. And in heaven we are continually to improve. How important, then, is the development of character in this life.

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1 Christ's Object Lessons, p. 74; Testimonies, 4:429.
2 Steps to Christ, p. 85; Desire of Ages, pp. 219, 826.
4 Testimonies to Ministers, p. 379.
5 "Our Work," p. 113.
6 Education, p. 19.
7 Ellen G. White, "The Primary Cause of Intemperance," Signs of the Times 16 (November 17, 1890):557.
Evaluation of Character

Now that the meaning and importance of character in the writings of White have been unfolded it is time to turn to the question of evaluation. Evaluation is an important issue in White's thought, for she always views character as the deciding factor for both the destiny of man and the ultimate vindication of God's purposes. The question of evaluation will be examined under two sections: (1) the norm for evaluation and (2) the method of evaluation.

Norm for Evaluation

In the thought of White, a norm is essential both as an objective to reach and as an evaluative test of achievement. Man cannot rise higher than the standard by which he is to be measured, and therefore the norm for his character must not be sought within himself or his world. Any suggestion that man is morally strong enough or free enough to be his own criterion of conduct is foreign to the thought of White. She does not accept anything of human origin as ultimately normative. Man's impressions, feelings, inclinations, customs and practices, standards of appreciation

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1 Great Controversy, p. 555; Medical Ministry, p. 46.
2 Great Controversy, p. 555.
3 Education, p. 228; Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 621-22.
4 Testimonies to Ministers, p. 502.
5 Testimonies, 3:68.
6 Ibid., 5:506.
and judgment (either individual or collective)\(^1\) are insufficient to be the norm of character. Even human reasoning, however faultless or principled it may be, is inadequate.\(^2\) Human institutions cannot be a source of norms,\(^3\) neither can social mores,\(^4\) customs and practices,\(^5\) nor human models.\(^6\)

No human potential or standard is sufficient to serve as a norm of life.\(^7\) Any attempt to establish or promote such a norm is Satanic in origin,\(^8\) is meant to "misshape the human character,"\(^9\) and will result in human defeat and unhappiness.\(^10\)

What, then, is the norm? White's position is related to the nature and destiny of man. As a created being made in the image of God, man's destiny is to achieve "godliness, godlikeness."\(^11\) Hence the norm for his character is nothing less than God's will and character.

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\(^1\)Ibid., 3:68; Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 621-22.

\(^2\)Prophets and Kings, pp. 170-71.

\(^3\)Ibid.

\(^4\)Prophets and Kings, pp. 651-52.

\(^5\)Testimonies, 2:71.

\(^6\)Christ's Object Lessons, pp. 150-51.

\(^7\)Testimonies, 3:222.

\(^8\)Ellen G. White, "Satan's Malignity Against Christ and His People," Review and Herald 72 (October 22, 1895):673; Desire of Ages, p. 671; Testimonies, 2:71.


\(^10\)Testimonies, 6:140; Prophets and Kings, pp. 170-71.

\(^11\)Education, p. 18. See also p. 87 above.
But how is one to understand this norm? White admits that it is impossible for man to comprehend the divine character. The resources at his command are limited. His inheritance and environment are inadequate to understand God's character. Even in nature to which man has traditionally turned for a revelation of God, there is only a glimpse.

White admits that man can observe "God's image and superscription on nature" and discern therein God's character. Nature reveals God's love, wisdom, power, glory, truthfulness, mercy and grace, goodness, interest in man, care and concern, and forbearance.

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1 Steps to Christ, p. 105; Testimonies, 5:698-99.
2 See pp. 84-87 above. Education, p. 100.
4 Adventist Home, p. 147; Medical Ministry, pp. 94, 97, 103; Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 33; Prophets and Kings, p. 47; Testimonies, 8:263.
5 Adventist Home, p. 147; Christ's Object Lessons, pp. 22, 107; Counsels to Teachers, pp. 187-88; Testimonies, 5:443.
6 Life Sketches, p. 94; Ministry of Healing, p. 413.
7 Adventist Home, pp. 27, 144; Messages to Young People, pp. 365-66.
9 Medical Ministry, p. 103; Testimonies, 5:443.
10 Messages to Young People, p. 365.
11 Ministry of Healing, p. 412; Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 600; Testimonies, 5:312, 443.
12 Testimonies, 6:358.
But nature's revelation is not perfect.¹ "Marred by the curse of sin, nature can bear but an imperfect testimony regarding the Creator. It cannot reveal His character in its perfection."² Moreover man's cognitive and spiritual powers are not perfect enough to understand the imprint of God in nature.

Yet man is not helpless. White argues that restoration of man's character is so supreme in God's design and purpose that He has taken the initiative and has revealed His character through (1) the life and ministry of Jesus, (2) the Bible, and (3) the law. These avenues of revelation constitute not only a disclosure of God's character, but also the norm of man's character.

The life and ministry of Jesus

To White, Jesus Christ is the revelation of God.³ He was God's ambassador⁴ to "represent His character and will" to man.⁵ He lived by "the authority of God, bearing His image, fulfilling His word, and seeking His glory."⁶ In Him was "infinite wisdom, infinite love, infinite justice, infinite mercy,"⁷ and the beauty of holiness.⁸ Full of "compassion, courteousness, and divine politeness,"⁹ He recognized the dignity of man¹⁰ and was always "tender,

¹Ministry of Healing, p. 419. ²Testimonies, 8:256.
³Mount of Blessing, p. 49. ⁴Ministry of Healing, p. 365.
⁵Medical Ministry, p. 79. See also Desire of Ages, p. 407; Testimonies, 6:70.
⁶Desire of Ages, p. 212. ⁷Testimonies, 6:59.
⁸Education, p. 76. ⁹Testimonies to Ministers, p. 225.
¹⁰Desire of Ages, p. 274.
compassionate, sympathetic, [and] ever considerate of others."¹ His thoughts, words, and deeds had complete congruity.² He was "true in every purpose, feeling, and thought—true in heart, soul, and life."³ He was the "embodiment of divine perfection"⁴ and a "living exhibition of the way to do good and overcome evil."⁵

Since the ideal of character is Christlikeness,⁶ "the life and spirit of Christ is the only true standard of excellence and perfection; and our only safe course is to follow His example."⁷

Thus White sees in Jesus a perfect revelation of God's character, and by virtue of that fact, she sees in Him a perfect norm and model for human conduct. In numerous places she presents Jesus as the example and model for man. In Him she sees a pattern that is perfect,⁸ complete,⁹ divine,¹⁰ heavenly,¹¹ holy,¹² unerring,¹³ faultless,¹⁴ meek,¹⁵ great,¹⁶ and the only true one.¹⁷

¹Ministry of Healing, p. 423. ²Education, pp. 78-79.
³Testimonies, 5:235. ⁴Ibid., 5:739.
⁵Ibid., 4:139. ⁶Desire of Ages, p. 311.
⁷Testimonies, 1:408.
⁸Child Guidance, p. 95; Christ's Object Lessons, p. 336; Counsels to Teachers, pp. 49-50; Gospel Workers, p. 69; Testimonies, 2:396, 3:58, 4:357, 5:129, 6:130.
⁹Ibid., 5:235.
¹⁰Testimonies to Ministers, p. 406; Testimonies, 2:408, 3:463.
¹⁴Ibid., 2:91. ¹⁵Evangelism, p. 113.
¹⁶Medical Ministry, p. 199; Testimonies, 4:490.
¹⁷Ibid., 1:126, 155, 5:37, 9:181.
For man to develop a character that will meet the ultimate standard of godlikeness, it is necessary to accept the life of Jesus as the norm and imitate Him in a wide range of attitudes and activities, such as: love and faith; holiness and goodness; self-control and self-denial; freedom from sin and purity of life; working with people and cooperating with God; faithfulness and obedience; truthfulness and piety; disposition and diligence; benevolence and service; speech and manners; and patience and forgiveness.

The Bible

White considers the Bible an infallible revelation of God's will and character. In it is a sense of certainty and security.

1. Ibid., 5:345.
3. Ibid., 2:228, 5:739; Counsels to Teachers, p. 262.
12. Ibid., 5:161.
13. Ibid., 4:312; Great Controversy, p. vii.
for man's life\(^1\) and a divine disclosure of man's destiny.\(^2\) Hence it presents a perfect standard of character.\(^3\) White writes:

The Bible presents a perfect standard of character. This sacred book, inspired by God, and written by holy men, is a perfect guide under all circumstances of life. It sets forth distinctly the duties of both young and old. If made the guide of life, its teachings will lead the soul upward. It will elevate the mind, improve the character and give peace and joy to the heart.\(^4\)

While pointing to the biblical teachings and precepts as normative for human conduct—"to mold our actions, our words, and our thoughts"\(^5\)—she also suggests that the men and women of the Bible in their struggle for excellence of character have left models for men of all ages.\(^6\) A study of these lives, White suggests, would assist man in understanding the problem he faces in his own character development. They stand as models of what to avoid and what to achieve in life.

The law of God

To White the law of God meant the biblical requirements for human conduct, particularly the Decalogue, in which she saw a verbal representation of God's character and will as adapted to the human situation.\(^7\)

\(^1\)Gospel Workers, p. 250; Testimonies, 1:310.

\(^2\)Ibid., 3:194-95; Fundamentals of Education, p. 444.

\(^3\)Testimonies, 4:312.


\(^5\)Education, p. 260. \(^6\)Ibid., p. 51.

\(^7\)Selected Messages, 1:230; Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 305.
The law of God is as sacred as Himself. It is a revelation of His will, a transcript of His character, the expression of divine love and wisdom. The harmony of creation depends upon the perfect conformity of all beings, of everything, animate and inanimate, to the law of the Creator. . . . To man, the crowning work of creation, God has given power to understand His requirements, to comprehend the justice and beneficence of His law, and its sacred claims upon him; and of man unswerving obedience is required.1

In this statement White reveals the significance she attaches to the law of God as a norm of character. First of all, she states that God is the origin of the law. As such, the law expresses His nature of love and wisdom, and therefore, it is neither arbitrary nor negative.2 Bearing the stamp of the divine,3 it reveals holiness.4 Its existence and fulfillment are fundamental for the preservation and continuance of God's universe. Without it, there will be only chaos and confusion.

Second, White insists that the law was given for man. It is the "perfect rule" of his life,5 a rule by which God measures man.6 It is the "moral looking glass"7—the mirror that brings to man a true knowledge of himself, his needs, his defects, his problems, and his sin.8 It guards man's sense of justice, truth, 

1Ibid., p. 52.

2Education, p. 76; Ministry of Healing, p. 114.

3Selected Messages, 1:235. 4Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 465.

5Bible Commentary, 1:1104. 6Acts of the Apostles, p. 505.

7Christ's Object Lessons, p. 314; Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 207.

8Bible Commentary, 7:935.


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and purity. It "is the only safeguard for individual integrity, for the purity of the home, the well-being of society, or the stability of the nation." To this law, man's unswerving obedience is required. This requirement is not an imposition on man. Since the law is a transcript of God's character, and since godliness is the ultimate aim of character development, White argues that it is only natural and necessary to expect perfect obedience from man.

Obedience to the laws of God develops in man a beautiful character that is in harmony with all that is pure and holy and undefiled. His daily obedience to the law of God obtains for him a character that assures him eternal life in the kingdom of God.

So interrelated is obedience to the law of God and man's character that White cannot envision a situation or time in which the law can be set aside. The normative value of the Decalogue is so supreme and so universal that it transcends the limits of culture, society, and even history and forms a moral constitution for the existence of man.

To live in accordance with the law, then, is a supreme obligation. Since the law is an expression of God's thoughts, a reception of this law in the mind and heart of man creates a transference of God's thought to man, so that in effect these

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1. Prophets and Kings, p. 678; Testimonies, 5:143.
2. Prophets and Kings, p. 83.
thoughts become man's thoughts. Thus man is able to identify himself with God's will and character.

Hence to White any suggestion that disclaims the normative value of the law or sets aside the need for obedience to it is Satanic in origin. Satan may well use "genius, talent, sympathy, even generous and kindly deeds" as decoys to lead men against the law of God, but the law is inviolable. It is as immutable to God Himself, and it "will maintain its claims upon mankind in all ages."

Having established the normativeness of the law of human conduct, White adds a definitive aspect to the understanding of the law. To her the law is the transcript of God's character, and that character is primarily love. Therefore, the law is not a cold, abstract, and impersonal code but an expression of God's love. The function of law and love are so closely knit that to violate one is to violate the other. White is quite specific: "No one can keep the commandments of God who does not cherish love in his heart; for without love there is no true obedience."

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1. Desire of Ages, p. 308. 2. Counsels to Teachers, p. 53.
5. Ibid., pp. 33, 595; Mount of Blessing, p. 77.
In White's thought, there is no distinction between love and the Decalogue:

The first four of the Ten Commandments are summed up in the one great precept, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." The last six are included in the other, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Both these commandments are an expression of the principle of love. The first cannot be kept and the second broken, nor can the second be kept while the first is broken. When God has His rightful place on the throne of the heart, the right place will be given to our neighbor. We shall love him as ourselves. And only as we love God supremely is it possible to love our neighbors impartially.

And since all the commandments are summed up in love to God and man, it follows that not one precept can be broken without violating this principle... Our Lord presents the first four and the last six commandments as a divine whole, and teaches that love to God will be shown by obedience to all His commandments.\(^1\)

Thus love to God and man expressing itself in adequate relationship with and service to both as particularized in the Decalogue\(^2\) becomes the visible criterion of character.\(^3\) It is the biblical test of character.\(^4\) So if there is to be a universal principle that should govern man's character, White believes that principle to be love, for love embraces both the imperative of God and the imperative of man and transcends the demands of time, culture, and history.

Method of Evaluation

Consistent with the stand that the norm of human character is God's will, White maintains that the evaluation of character is

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\(^1\)Desire of Ages, p. 607.

\(^2\)Education, p. 136; In Heavenly Places, p. 190; Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 34; Steps to Christ, p. 60.

\(^3\)Counsels to Teachers, p. 32. \(^4\)Medical Ministry, p. 46.
the prerogative of God. This process of evaluation is described by White as judgment. The judgment is necessary not only to evaluate the character of man in terms of his destiny\(^1\) but also to vindicate God's character and will.\(^2\) Three important factors concerning judgment emerge from her writings: (1) judgment is not given to man, (2) God is the judge, and (3) judgment will be fair and comprehensive.

First, judgment is not given to man. The work of evaluating or judging the character of man in an ultimate sense is not the duty of man. White's reasons for this position are traceable to the limitations of man. Man cannot read the heart or understand the motives.\(^3\) He tends to judge from appearance,\(^4\) and hence his conclusions are often partial and imperfect,\(^5\) either too quick and harsh in censure or too unwisely sympathetic.\(^6\) Moreover man tends to misjudge\(^7\) or "undertake the job of tinkering up the defective characters of others."\(^8\)

Second, God will judge character. The work of judgment—that which places man's character in ultimate evaluation—is reserved for God. It is His prerogative.\(^9\) Since the character

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\(^1\) Testimonies to Ministers, p. 47.

\(^2\) Desire of Ages, p. 58; Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 338-40.

\(^3\) Ministry of Healing, p. 494.

\(^4\) Christ's Object Lessons, p. 72.

\(^5\) Steps to Christ, p. 30.

\(^6\) Testimonies, 4:66.  
\(^7\) Ibid., p. 47.

\(^8\) Ibid., p. 191.  
\(^9\) Ibid., p. 47.
of man is the deciding factor in his destiny, since that destiny is to be or not to be in God's eternal kingdom, since character is man's passport to that kingdom, and since, as will be seen in the next chapter, God in Christ has provided for man's character development it is White's argument that God through Christ will hold the scales of justice.

Third, judgment will be fair and comprehensive. White believes that arbitrariness is never a part of God's character. His law, the standard of man's character, is not arbitrary; nor will be the judgment. Both fairness and comprehensiveness are ensured by the fact that it is the law of God that will be the great rule and test of character.\(^1\) White maintains that God has kept an accurate record of man's life, and this record will stand before man in judgment. She speaks of the

record kept on high— that book in which there are no omissions, no mistakes, and out of which they will be judged. There every neglected opportunity to do service for God is recorded; and there, too, every deed of faith and love is held in everlasting remembrance.\(^2\)

The judgment will not only be fair, it will also be comprehensive. Before passing judgment on man's character, God will take a total review of the whole man: his motives, intents, secrets, and desires;\(^3\) what he ought to have done and what he actually

\(^{1}\)Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 34; Christ's Object Lessons, p. 314.


\(^{3}\)Christ's Object Lessons, p. 316; Steps to Christ, p. 34; Testimonies, 2:87, 158, 520, 4:583, 5:147.
did; his work and his consecration; his deeds of faith and love; his thoughts, words, and actions; his faults and errors; his neglects and failures; and his declensions and shortcomings.

With his life an open book before the scrutinizing eyes of God, man faces his final reckoning. He cannot escape accountability:

As fire reveals the difference between gold, silver, precious stones, and wood, hay and stubble, so the day of judgment will test characters, showing the difference between characters formed after Christ's likeness and characters formed after the likeness of the selfish heart.

Presenting this picture of the certainty and far-reaching nature of judgment, White focuses on the frightening responsibility of life on earth. Even the most insignificant act or the most casual word has its effect upon character. What man is and does in this life are of ultimate significance. How man relates to God and the provision He has made for character development in Christ is a crucial issue in judgment. Thus White maintains that "the

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5 *Testimonies*, 5:485.
7 Ibid. 8 *Temperance*, p. 49.
9 *Bible Commentary*, 6:1087-88. 10 See pp. 126-30 below.
character formed in this life will determine the future destiny.¹

Summary

White's definition of character is based on her understanding of the origin, nature, and destiny of man. As a Christian writer, she maintains that man was created by God in His image as a holistic being without the possibility of division or separation into conflicting entities such as body, mind, and soul. She recognizes, however, that man functions as a spiritual, mental, moral, and physical being, but these functions are interrelated and together constitute the oneness of man. White also recognizes the reality of the problem of evil and argues that man is a sinner with a broken relationship between himself and God. Consequently, man is limited but not altogether helpless. Help has come from the divine initiative through the redemptive activity of Christ, in and through whom complete restoration of character to godlikeness is made possible.

With this as her context, White defines character as a motivating and activating inner power that expresses itself in the varied behavioral and relational patterns of man. Spiritually, she views character as that part of man through which God wishes to express Himself through a restoration of His image, which in turn will manifest itself in disinterested love for all men. Morally, White views character in terms of will power and self-control

¹Testimonies, 4:429.
which together constitute moral vitality seen in the individual's powers of resistance, decision, and action. The cognitive dimension of character includes moral reasoning which is preceded by motives and feelings. Motives and feelings translate into thoughts which through repeated actions become habit. Habits form character.

Character and behavior are thus interrelated: character produces behavior and behavior affects the strength of character.

White's holistic definition of character calls for a two-fold emphasis: integrational and directional. She argues that integration of man's character is assured through a theocentric approach to life. With God as the center and godliness as the ultimate goal of character development, integration of character becomes a reality. The direction of character development includes both the immediate and the ultimate. To White, character is vital for the fulfillment of man's objective in life here and is inseparable with his ultimate destiny.

Character is of supreme importance in the thought of White. It is evident in the following: (1) her concept of history as the great controversy between Christ and Satan requires the vindication of the former through the restoration of a perfected character in man; (2) her assertion that the test of Christianity is its effect on the character of its followers; (3) her belief that character alone is the secret of man's quest for fulfillment; and (4) her conviction that character decides human destiny.

White's definition of character also includes a norm by which human character may be measured and evaluated. Since
godliness—godlikeness—is the goal to be reached, God's character alone can be the norm. An understanding of God's character is available in the life of Jesus, the Bible, and the law. Unreserved and unselfish love to God and man is the universal principle that should govern man's conduct. Whether man meets this norm or not is decided by the act of ultimate evaluation when man meets God as his judge.
CHAPTER VI

THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHARACTER
IN THE WRITINGS OF WHITE

Having considered the definition, importance, and evaluation of character in the writings of White, the investigation now centers around the question of character development. The issue is approached in this chapter under three sections: (1) the nature of character development, (2) factors affecting character development, and (3) responsibility for character development.

The Nature of Character Development

White's views on the nature of character development are considered in this section under four categories: (1) the means of character development, (2) emphases in development, (3) perfection of character, and (4) retrogression in character development.

The Means of Character Development

White views the task of character development as both a predicament and a possibility. The former lies in the fact that although man's supreme task in life is character development, he

1Except where indicated, all of the works cited in this chapter, as in the previous one, are by Ellen G. White; therefore, the author's name is given only in the first reference of hitherto uncited works.
is powerless in himself to effect it. White maintains that the limitations imposed by sin have incapacitated him in solving his moral problems. She believes that "education, culture, the exercise of the will, human effort . . . are powerless. They may produce an outward correctness of behavior, but they cannot change the heart; they cannot purify the springs of life."¹

Against this predicament is the possibility that man may achieve the task by submission to, and cooperation with, God. Since godlikeness is the ultimate objective of character development, since God's character is the norm of human character, White maintains that God alone can assist man in shaping his character.² This means that character development is one of "copartnership, a joint operation."³ On the one hand, a divine provision and a divine operative element are involved; on the other, a human response is required. Neither one can act alone. "Human effort avails nothing without divine power; and without human endeavor, divine effort is with many of no avail."⁴

The divine provision

As far as divine provision is concerned, White maintains that it is the work of God's grace. Without the initiative of this

¹Steps to Christ, p. 18. See also Christ's Object Lessons, pp. 64, 96, 97; Desire of Ages, p. 280; Sanctified Life, p. 83.
⁴Prophets and Kings, p. 487; see also Mount of Blessing, p. 19.
grace, man is forever morally and spiritually doomed; \(^1\) "without it all human effort is unavailing." \(^2\)

But what is grace? White explains:

Grace is an attribute of God exercised toward undeserving human beings. We did not seek for it, but it was sent in search for us. God rejoices to bestow His grace upon us, not because we are worthy, but because we are so utterly unworthy. Our only claim to His mercy is our great need. \(^3\)

From this statement two points need to be noted. First, White maintains that grace is God's attribute toward man. Its origin is in God. Because God is gracious, He acts graciously toward man, even though there is nothing in man that commends himself before God. Thus grace is an undeserved favor; it is God's unlimited, all-inclusive, transforming love manifested toward man. Secondly, in this divine initiative of grace and its movement toward man is the answer to man's need—the problem of sin. Within man, there is no corrective or restorative ability to deal with the problem and plight of sin; sin has deadened man's moral perceptions, weakened his will and mind, and depraved his affections and feelings. \(^4\) God's grace has come to man to rectify this problem and empower man to overcome evil.

How has this grace been sent in search for man? White maintains that Christ is the historic revelation and living embodiment of the grace of God manifested toward errant man.

She says:

\(^1\) Testimonies to Ministers, p. 166; Counsels to Teachers, p. 94.
\(^2\) Ibid., p. 538.
\(^3\) Ministry of Healing, p. 161.
\(^4\) See pp. 84-86 above.
In the matchless gift of His Son, God has encircled the whole world with an atmosphere of grace as real as the air which circulates around the globe. All who choose to breathe this life-giving atmosphere will live and grow up to the stature of men and women.¹

The work of Christ. To White, the life and work of Christ constitutes not only a supreme revelation of God's character,² but also the sole provision for man's character development. "In our character building," she says, "we must build on Christ. He is the sure foundation—a foundation which can never be moved."³ Without the power of Christ, no man can overcome his moral deficiency. It is "connection with Christ [which] will result in the purification of the heart, and in a circumspect life and faultless character."⁴ To White, Jesus Christ is God's plan "to restore in man the image of his Maker. None but Christ can fashion anew the character that has been ruined by sin. . . . He came . . . to reshape the marred character after the pattern of His divine character."⁵

This unequivocal position of White on Christ as the sole basis of character development is based on her theological understanding of the person and role of Christ in the history of man. To her, Christ is "God essentially, and in the highest sense."⁶

¹Steps to Christ, p. 68.  ²See pp. 109-111 above.  
⁶Selected Messages, 1:247.
In Him is life "original, unborrowed, underived."⁴ He created all things, upholds all things, and only He can restore man to the perfection with which he was created.² White comments:

Since the divine law is as sacred as God Himself, only one equal with God could make atonement for its transgression. None but Christ could redeem fallen man from the curse of the law, and bring him again into harmony with heaven. Christ would take upon Himself the guilt and shame of sin. . . . Christ would reach to the depths of misery to rescue the ruined race.³

Thus White maintains that the earthly life of Christ constitutes the divine plan for man's restoration. Firstly, she argues that the incarnation of Christ provides man the perfect revelation of God's character. "Christ came to this world as the expression of the very heart and mind and nature and character of God."⁴ In Him stands revealed a knowledge essential for the development of human character.

The knowledge of God as revealed in Christ . . . is the knowledge that works transformation of character. This knowledge, received, will re-create the soul in the image of God. It will impart to the whole being a spiritual power that is divine.⁵

Secondly, by taking the human form, Christ has identified Himself with the needs and interests of man by a tie that is never to be broken.⁶ This tie links the resources of heaven with the needs of humanity.

¹Desire of Ages, p. 530; see also Bible Commentary, 5:1130; Medical Ministry, p. 7; Selected Messages, 1:296.
²Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 34; Desire of Ages, p. 20; Steps to Christ, p. 18.
³Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 63. ⁴Medical Ministry, p. 19.
⁵Testimonies, 8:289. ⁶Ibid., 2:508; Desire of Ages, p. 25.
By His humanity, Christ touched humanity; by His divinity, He lays hold upon the throne of God. As the Son of man, He gave us an example of obedience; as the Son of God, He gives us power to obey.¹

The extent to which this divine-human identification has cemented Christ with the interests of man is a perennial theme in the writings of White. For example, she writes:

Taking humanity upon Him, Christ came to be one with humanity and at the same time to reveal our heavenly Father to sinful human beings. He was in all things made like unto His brethren. He became flesh, even as we are. He was hungry and thirsty and weary. He was sustained by food and refreshed by sleep. He shared the lot of men, and yet He was the blameless Son of God. He was a stranger and sojourner on the earth—in the world, but not of the world; tempted and tried as men and women today are tempted and tried, yet living a life free from sin.

Tender, compassionate, sympathetic, ever considerate of others, He represented the character of God, and was constantly engaged in service for God and man.²

Thirdly, White maintains that the incarnate Christ has given to man an example of perfect character. His life was one of harmony with divine will and purpose. As a man He submitted Himself to the law that has been divinely established as the norm for human conduct, and through perfect obedience developed an "absolutely perfect" character.³ Says White:

Since the law of God is "holy, and just, and good," a transcript of divine perfection, it follows that a character formed by obedience to that law will be holy. Christ is a perfect example of such a character.⁴

¹Ibid., p. 24. ²Testimonies, 8:286.
⁴Great Controversy, p. 469.
In the example of Christ, man is offered a model and a manifestation of what the human submitted to, and combined with, the divine power can accomplish.\(^1\)

Fourthly, the incarnate Christ died to obtain victory over sin. To White, the death of Christ is God's ultimate answer to the problem of sin and restoration of man's character:

[The Cross] is the great center of attraction; for on it Christ gave up His life for the human race. This sacrifice was offered for the purpose of restoring man to his original perfection; yea, more. It was offered to give him an entire transformation of character, making him more than a conqueror.\(^2\)

White sees in the death of Christ man's reconciliation with God. Through the Cross, "man was drawn to God, and God to man," and the life of man is bound up in a "union of divinity and humanity."\(^3\) The gulf brought about by sin between God and man is now bridged by the sacrificial death of Christ. "Under and around the cross of Christ . . . sin shall never revive, nor error obtain."\(^4\) In Christ's death, White sees both pardon for sin and restoration to God:

Christ has made a way of escape for us. He lived on earth amid trials and temptations such as we have to meet. He lived a sinless life. He died for us, and now He offers to take our sins and give us His righteousness. If you give yourself to Him, and accept Him as your Saviour, then sinful as your life may have been, for His sake you are accounted righteous. Christ's character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned.\(^5\)

\(^1\)Selected Messages, 1:260.


\(^3\)Selected Messages, 1:349; Testimonies, 7:59.

\(^4\)Questions on Doctrine, p. 661. \(^5\)Steps to Christ, p. 62.

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Two points need to be noted. (1) White maintains that Christ's substitutionary death in behalf of sinful man has obtained for him forgiveness and acceptance before God. (2) A man who accepts the provision made by Christ is considered by God as though he had never sinned. Man is no longer viewed in terms of his defective self. White believes that the robe of Christ's perfect character has been put around man so that Christ's flawless character becomes his own. It is her stand that through Christ every man becomes "a partaker of the divine nature." "As the graft receives life when united to the vine, so the sinner partakes of the divine nature when connected with Christ. Finite man is united with the infinite God."

Thus in Christ, God has provided for the character development of man. But how is this provision actualized in man? White believes that the actualizing agency is the Spirit of God. "The Spirit was to be given as a regenerating agent, and without this the sacrifice of Christ would have been of no avail. . . . It is the Spirit which makes effectual what has been wrought out by the world's Redeemer."

The work of the Holy Spirit. White does not see the work of the Holy Spirit as totally independent of Christ. The Spirit is so closely identified with Christ that the two are often spoken of

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1 Education, p. 249; Christ's Object Lessons, p. 311.
2 Medical Ministry, p. 208.
3 Testimonies, 4:355.
4 Desire of Ages, p. 671.
However, White distinguishes the Holy Spirit as Christ's personal representative on earth, and it is through the Spirit that Christ becomes real to man and lives in the hearts of His followers. What God has provided in Christ for man's character development is actualized in man through the workings of the Holy Spirit. White emphasizes the point by using the illustration of a vine:

The sap of the vine, ascending from the root, is diffused to the branches, sustaining growth and producing blossoms and fruit. So the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Savior, pervades the soul, renews the motives and affections, and brings even the thoughts into obedience to the will of God, enabling the receiver to bear the precious fruit of holy deeds.

Without the Spirit, White contends, man is totally incapable. Only as the Spirit works in man is he confronted with human predicament and divine demand in character development. It is the Spirit that convicts of sin, brings to light certain facts hitherto unrealized and presents them to the mind and will in such a way that conscience is sensitized, and man discerns defects in his character. It is the Spirit that leads a person to Christ, presents the provision of redemptive activity in Christ, and introduces a new and...

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1Ibid., pp. 245, 805; Steps to Christ, p. 75.
2Ibid.; Selected Messages, 1:251.
4Testimonies to Ministers, p. 144; Evangelism, p. 283; Mount of Blessing, p. 7.
5Bible Commentary, 3:1152.
6Sons and Daughters of God, p. 349.
7Steps to Christ, p. 91. 8Testimonies to Ministers, p. 144.
living principle of life\textsuperscript{1} into man so that within him grows a "familiarity with divine things which will be as a barricade against the temptations" of life.\textsuperscript{2} In the process, the Spirit enlightens the person,\textsuperscript{3} illuminates his cognitive capabilities,\textsuperscript{4} awakens new conceptions, and arouses "hitherto dormant energies to cooperate with God"\textsuperscript{5} so as to fill the human mind "with a desire for holiness" and an ability to distinguish between truth and error.\textsuperscript{6}

Thus the Spirit acts as a regenerating agency that "re-creates, refines, and sanctifies human beings."\textsuperscript{7} The resultant experience is described by White as new birth.\textsuperscript{8}

The Holy Spirit comes to the soul as a Comforter. By the transforming agency of His grace, the image of God is reproduced in the disciple; he becomes a new creature. Love takes the place of hatred, and the heart receives the divine similitude.\textsuperscript{9}

In this experience of new birth, the Spirit creates "new motives, tastes, and tendencies";\textsuperscript{10} awakens new sympathies and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1}Ibid., p. 378; Christ's Object Lessons, p. 96.
\item \textsuperscript{2}Counsels to Teachers, p. 172.
\item \textsuperscript{3}Christ's Object Lessons, p. 408; Counsels to Teachers, p. 172; Great Controversy, p. 9; Testimonies, 4:441.
\item \textsuperscript{5}Acts of the Apostles, p. 520. \textsuperscript{6}Ibid., pp. 52-53.
\item \textsuperscript{7}Gospel Workers, p. 287; see also Christ's Object Lessons, p. 96.
\item \textsuperscript{8}Desire of Ages, pp. 172, 175-76; My Life Today, p. 46.
\item \textsuperscript{9}Desire of Ages, p. 391. \textsuperscript{10}Bible Commentary, 6:1101.
\end{itemize}
tenderness;\(^1\) strengthens the will to direct the battle against evil;\(^2\) softens, melts, and subdues the selfish heart into a new one—sensitive, sympathetic, forbearing and unselfish;\(^3\) writes the law of God in the heart of man so that his activities come under the imperative of divine requirements;\(^4\) and makes love the central principle of life.\(^5\) As this happens man comes in conformity to "the model, Jesus Christ."\(^6\)

Thus the divine provision for character development consists of God's initiative of grace, revealed in the activity of Christ and in the empowering of the Holy Spirit. When man responds to this provision and submits his will to the divine, the Spirit actualizes in man "a new moral taste... a new motive power."\(^7\) White maintains that this operation of the Holy Spirit cannot be fully grasped by the human mind; nor can it be explained by scientific investigation.\(^8\) It is a divine dynamic. Just as the power

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\(^1\) Mount of Blessing, p. 23.


\(^7\) Selected Messages, 1:336.

\(^8\) Testimonies, 4:585-87.
of natural life cannot be fully understood, so is the divine dynamic of the Holy Spirit. Its power reaches deep into the affective, cognitive, and spiritual bases of man and brings about a total change—a liberation from being possessed by the failure of sin and the futility of self-centeredness.

If total understanding is not possible, is the experience in any way less real? White rejects the implication. She emphasizes the decisiveness of the internal change, the transformation, by pointing out that it brings about a decisive change in the external as well. A life transformed by the Spirit is a life filled by the Spirit, a life controlled by the principle of love in all relational and behavioral aspects.1 "To have a new heart," White insists, "is to have a new mind, new purposes, new motives. What is the sign of a new heart?—a changed life. There is a daily, hourly dying to selfishness and pride."2

In short, then, God has acted for man's character transformation and perfection. But what is the human part?

The human response

The divine initiative and activity assure rebuilding and restoration of man's character to its ideal perfection. But the divine provision is of no avail without man's cooperation. God does not "propose to perform for [man] . . . either the willing or the doing. . . . His grace is given . . . never as a substitute

1Christ's Object Lessons, p. 419; Steps to Christ, pp. 59-60.

2Bible Commentary, 4:1164-65.
for [man's] effort."\(^1\) God never forces man against his will.\(^2\)

Consent and cooperation are essential prerequisites for the working of the divine dynamic in man.\(^3\) Says White:

> Humanity is to co-operate with divinity. What human power can do divine power is not summoned to do. God does not dispense with man's aid. He strengthens him, co-operating with him as he uses the powers and capabilities given him.\(^4\)

The cooperative activity on the part of man is summarized by White in one phrase: man chooses God. This choice is of a personal quality, made by the individual. It involves a response of faith, and a decision of the free will, leading to a commitment to the will and plan of God so that man accepts God as the center of his life. Such a theocentric basis assures both the power for, and the fulfillment of, character development.

The response of faith. If grace stands for divine activity toward man, faith signifies the basis of man's response to the divine. As White says, "faith is that mysterious and mighty principle that attracts the soul of man to God"\(^5\) in a trusting relationship that "lightens every burden, relieves every weariness."\(^6\)

Faith is trusting God—believing that He loves us and knows best what is for our good. Thus, instead of our own, it leads us to choose His way. In place of our ignorance, it accepts

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\(^1\)Ellen G. White, "Lessons from the Life of Daniel," *Youth's Instructor* 51 (August 20, 1903):8.

\(^2\)Steps to Christ, p. 44; Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 384.

\(^3\)Mount of Blessing, p. 142.  
\(^4\)Desire of Ages, p. 535.


\(^6\)Prophets and Kings, p. 175.
His wisdom; in place of our weakness, His strength; in place of our sinfulness, His righteousness. Our lives, ourselves, are already His; faith acknowledges His ownership and accepts its blessing. Truth, uprightness, purity, have been pointed out as secrets of life's success. It is faith that puts us in possession of these principles.¹

Through faith, man assimilates Christ into Himself, so that a new relationship, a new unity is created:

He abides in Christ, and draws his nourishment from Him.

This spiritual relation can be established only by the exercise of personal faith. This faith must express on our part supreme preference, perfect reliance, entire consecration. Our will must be yielded to the divine will, our feelings, desires, interests, and honor, identified with the prosperity of Christ's kingdom.²

The implications of this statement are clear. Faith calls for a renunciation of self and an open expression of supreme preference for, and acceptance of, Christ in order to establish a new relationship between man and God, so that in this new relationship of copartnership with God, man becomes a participant in divine nature.³

To White, this faith-based relationship is not a speculation, but involves a practical reality, affecting the mind, the affections, and the will of man. White does not consider that the response of faith is opposed to reason. In fact, she recognizes the role of the mind in the exercise of faith by pointing out that the latter is related to cognitive recognition of man's helplessness and need, cognitive understanding of the objective reality of God's

¹Education, p. 253.  ²Testimonies, 5:229.
³Desire of Ages, pp. 317, 336; Testimonies to Ministers, p. 328.
provision in Christ, and cognitive ability to discriminate the right from the wrong.\textsuperscript{1}

Of course, faith is not merely an accumulation of cognitive certainty or an intellectual assent to truth.\textsuperscript{2} It demands a change of center for the motives, affections, and thoughts of man. Self is renounced as the center, and in its place is the presence of the Infinite.\textsuperscript{3} Consequently, there is a congruity between man and Christ, an identity between divine and human minds. Indeed divine knowledge becomes human knowledge, and the image and character of God are ingrafted in man.\textsuperscript{4} White says:

\begin{quote}
God has given men and women affections and intellect that they may appropriate the character of God as it was revealed in the earthly life of Christ, and through faith in Christ reveal the same attributes.\textsuperscript{5}
\end{quote}

This statement points out that faith through affections and intellect appropriates the character of God and makes it the subject's own—a stand consistent with White's definition of character as including feelings and thoughts. Through the exercise of faith in Christ and the maintenance of that faith-relationship with Him, the motives, feelings, thoughts, and actions take on a Christo-centric base. Repeated and reinforced actions from this base produce Christ-like character. Thus, a Christ-centered life, based

\begin{enumerate}
\item[]\textsuperscript{1}Desire of Ages, pp. 347, 458; Testimonies, 4:28, 5:579.
\item[]\textsuperscript{2}Ibid., 4:28; Desire of Ages, p. 347.
\item[]\textsuperscript{3}Ibid., pp. 317, 336; Messages to Young People, p. 102.
\item[]\textsuperscript{4}Christ's Object Lessons, p. 113.
\item[]\textsuperscript{5}Ellen G. White, "That They All May Be One," Review and Herald 86 (September 30, 1909):8.
\end{enumerate}
on a faith relationship, assures a character resembling that of God. Hence White's stand: "Through faith, every deficiency of character may be supplied, every defilement cleansed, every fault corrected, every excellence developed."\(^1\)

Thus the response of faith is more than recognition and certainty of the divine initiative on man's behalf. If it has to be effective at all, faith moves beyond belief to a commitment—a volitional, freely chosen commitment of trust in, and acceptance of, the divine provision for man. Hence the response of faith—that is, effective faith—is in fact a response of the will.

The response of the will. White considers the will to be the governing sovereign in man's life. It is the center of decision, the spring of all action.\(^2\)

God has given us the power of choice; it is ours to exercise. We cannot change our hearts, we cannot control our thoughts, our impulses, our affections. We cannot make ourselves pure, fit for God's service. But we can choose to serve God, we can give Him our will; then He will work in us to will and to do according to His good pleasure. Thus our whole nature will be brought under the control of Christ.

Through the right exercise of the will, an entire change may be made in the life. . . . A pure and noble life . . . is possible to everyone who will unite his weak, wavering human will to the omnipotent, unwavering will of God.\(^3\)

When man chooses to place his will on the side of God, he is being restored to "perfect manhood,"\(^4\) and there is a reordering of priorities. "A change will be seen in character, the habits, 

\(^{1}\) *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 564.  
\(^{2}\) See pp. 80-82, 90-92 above.  
\(^{3}\) *Ministry of Healing*, p. 176.  
\(^{4}\) Ibid., p. 131.

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the pursuits. The contrast will be clear and decided between" what man has been and what he is. Consequently, self-centeredness gives way to God-centeredness so that man's basis of action is no longer the self but the universal principle of godlikeness, namely, love. Thus the will of man is enabled to act from a theocentric concern, and the end result is that man is freed from innate selfishness, and his habit patterns are governed and dominated by a love orientation.

The response of obedience. White maintains that in character transformation one not only believes, responds, and receives but also lives, obeys, and serves. That is to say, the response of faith and the decision of the will are of no account unless they reveal themselves in appropriate behavior that conforms to the norm of God's law. Without this conformity, faith is weak, cheap, spurious, and dead.

Faith and obedience are "two oars" that are to be used if character development is to sail smoothly toward its destiny.

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1Steps to Christ, p. 57. 2Ibid., pp. 59-61.

3Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 73; Bible Commentary, 6:1073.


5Selected Messages, 1:366.

6Ibid.; Christ's Object Lessons, p. 312; Bible Commentary, 7:936.

7Testimonies, 1:192, 2:657, 3:249.

8Welfare Ministry, p. 316; Selected Messages, 1:139.
The kind of works that White argues for is not simply external behavioral particulars. She concedes that "correctness of deportment," well-ordered life, generous activities, and even a morally compatible life are possible without the divine-human relationship. But where that relationship exists, moral conduct is of a different kind:

In the heart renewed by divine grace, love is the principle of action. It modifies the character, governs the impulses, controls the passions, subdues enmity, and ennobles the affections. This love, cherished in the soul, sweetens the life, and sheds a refining influence on all around.

Love, then, is the internalized principle of man's action in the divine-human dynamic of character development. As an internalized and active principle, love "keeps the good of others continually," and restrains one from inconsiderate or unjust actions. Thus love constitutes the basis of action which leads to habits and character development. It becomes the internalized principle that governs every possible situation of moral choice and comprehends the whole universe of man's moral obligations.

To White, this process of internalization of the love principle is the same as the internalizing of the law of God, since the law is the "embodiment of the great principle of love." Therefore when a divine-human copartnership is formed in man as a result of man's faith and free choice in the Christological

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1 Steps to Christ, p. 58.
2 Ibid., p. 59. See also Christ's Object Lessons, p. 49.
3 Testimonies, 5:124. 4 Steps to Christ, p. 60.
provision, love is internalized as the basis for action and the law of God is written in the heart of man. A complete identity between man's will and God's will is thus brought about, forming a basis for character development.

Emphases in Development

Having noted that the divine-human copartnership forms the basis upon which White envisages the possibility of character development, it is necessary now to turn to certain specific emphases that she ascribes to character development. The issue may be approached from a three-fold concern of White: transformational, holistic, and actional.

Transformational emphasis

White discounts the concept that man in his own power can achieve character development. To speak of human, self-powered, character development is to deceive oneself. Refinement and elevation of character are not natural to man. "Humanity," she says, "has no power to regenerate itself. It does not tend upward, toward the divine, but downward, toward the Satanic."\(^1\)

The work of character development within the divine-human dynamic is described by White not as a natural development, innate to man, but as a transformation—a radical change in the life and style of a person, in the very essence of being, brought about by God.\(^2\) Natural, developmental factors, as will be noted shortly,

\(^1\)Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 73. \(^2\)Testimonies, 4:399.
may help, but to White they do not constitute the basis of character development. That basis must ever be God. For, to White, character development is "not a modification or improvement of the old, but a transformation of nature. There is death to self and sin, and a new life altogether."¹

Transformation means a recreation of the image of God in man so that man is empowered with "purity of life, efficiency in service, and adherence to correct principles."² The change is described as follows:

Those who become new creatures in Christ Jesus will bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." Galatians 5:22, 23. They will no longer fashion themselves according to the former lusts, but by the faith of the Son of God they will follow in His steps, reflect His character, and purify themselves as He is pure. The things they once hated they now love, and the things they once loved they hate. The proud and self-assertive become meek and lowly in heart. The vain and supercilious become serious and unobtrusive. The drunken become sober, and the profligate pure.³

This total transformation, radically affecting the very core of life, is described by White as "God's own method of development,"⁴ "the truest and noblest development of character."⁵

¹Desire of Ages, p. 172; Messages to Young People, p. 157.
²Ministry of Healing, p. 409; see also Education, p. 126; Steps to Christ, p. 62.
³Ibid., p. 58.
⁵Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 222.
The holistic emphasis

The transformation effected in man "revolutionize[s] the entire man."¹ The whole man is renewed so that no aspect of man—physical, mental, moral, or spiritual—falls outside God's method of development.² No activity of life escapes its power.³ Cognitive renewal assures a reordering of the thought patterns, resulting in "a new mind, new purposes, new motives."⁴ The mind no longer need be one-sided or deficient.⁵ The grace of God sweeps through the "chambers of the mind" so that it can develop into full symmetry and completeness.⁶

The affections and emotions are likewise transformed and brought into conformity to God's will.⁷ Freedom from self-indulgence assures self-denial and self-control.⁸ Manners and habits,⁹ appetites and passions,¹⁰ motives and desires,¹¹ and temper and speech¹² undergo a drastic change. The road has taken

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¹ Testimonies to Ministers, p. 185.
² Messages to Young People, p. 152.
³ Christ's Object Lessons, p. 384.
⁴ Ellen G. White, "A New Heart Will I Also Give You," Youth's Instructor 49 (September 26, 1901):297.
⁵ Selected Messages, 1:338. ⁶ Testimonies, 6:170.
⁷ Acts of the Apostles, pp. 53, 120, 134; Messages to Young People, pp. 72, 136.
⁸ Medical Ministry, p. 264.
¹⁰ Counsels to Teachers, p. 505. ¹¹ Ibid.
¹² Messages to Young People, p. 136.
a new and upward turn—from sin to holiness, from inadequacy toward character perfection.¹

The actional emphasis

Transformation of character does not mean that man remains passive and acquiesces to a potent supernatural dynamic. The initiative of grace and the response of faith do not negate the imperative of obedience. White maintains that character transformation inevitably includes behavior. External action is the surest indication of an internal transformation.² Right being is testified by right doing.³ Without observable behavioral change, character has not undergone transformation. "It is God's law that strength is acquired by effort. It is exercise that develops."⁴

In other words, while character development depends on the divine initiative and empowering, it must be noted that the human response to, and appropriation of, the divine provision, are revealed in appropriate and adequate relationships and behavior.⁵ Reference has already been made that the motive and the basis of that relationship and behavior is the principle of love. Under the supremacy of such a principle-oriented life, a twin process that is continual and active takes place in man.

¹Great Controversy, p. 468. ²Testimonies, 4:488.
⁴Education, p. 123. ⁵Desire of Ages, p. 676.
To describe this process, White uses expressions, such as "detachment—attachment,""withdrawal—filling-in,""dispelling—admitting,""casting out—developing,""weeding—nurturing,""restraining—strengthening," and "repressing—encouraging." By the use of these expressions, White underscores that character development is an active process. On the one hand, it requires that one set of behavioral patterns centered in self be detached, withdrawn, dispelled, starved out, repressed, and cast out; on the other, it insists that another set of behavioral patterns centered in unselfish love and service be permitted to dominate the life of man. The transfer from the one to the other is clear:

When the Spirit of God takes possession of the heart, it transforms the life. Sinful thoughts are put away, evil deeds are renounced; love, humility, and peace take the place of anger, envy, and strife. Joy takes the place of sadness and the countenance reflects the light of heaven. As a result of this detachment—attachment process, a man's whole action sphere undergoes a radical change. In everything he does—feelings, thoughts, words, and actions—he does not act alone.

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1 Ibid., p. 173; Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 248; Testimonies, 5:231; Messages to Young People, p. 118.
4 Testimonies, 4:202-03.
5 Ibid., p. 376.
7 Desire of Ages, p. 173.
"In all the works . . . [appears] not the character of finite man, but the character of the infinite God,"¹ so that man loves the things that God loves² and, by implication, hates the things that God hates. Since "God hates the sin, but loves the sinner,"³ the God-centered man cannot do anything less. This love-hatred tension, then, governs the action sphere of the transformed man so that even while continually resisting evil with a divine hatred, he lives, relates, and works on the basis of the internalized love principle.

Perfection of Character

According to White, the ultimate objective of the divine-human dynamic in character development is character perfection. Her reasons for this stand, once again, are theistic. Since God is the origin of man, since godlikeness is the goal to be achieved, and since God is perfect, man is expected to be perfect too.⁴

God will accept only those who are determined to aim high. . . . Moral perfection is required of all. . . . All righteous attributes of character dwell in God as a perfect, harmonious whole, and everyone who receives Christ . . . is privileged to possess these attributes.⁵

Perfection of character is thus a divine expectation and a necessary result of the divine-human unity brought about by the empowering of the Holy Spirit in response to man's continual faith

¹Medical Ministry, p. 185.  ²Selected Messages, 1:336.
³Desire of Ages, p. 462.  ⁴Mount of Blessing, p. 76.
⁵Christ's Object Lessons, p. 330.
in, and acceptance of, the divine provision for character development.\(^1\) It is the privilege of everyone in this dynamic to advance toward perfection.\(^2\) There is nothing to despair: "Moral and spiritual perfection, through the grace and power of Christ, is promised to all. Jesus is the source of power, the fountain of life."\(^3\)

Although perfection is man's privilege, White argues against any claim that man can ever reach in this life a state of sinlessness. Such a claim to absolute holiness is a reflection of pride that is contrary to the spirit of self-denial so essential in character development.\(^4\) A man's life may be beyond reproach, but the horizon of development is ever expanding: the more a man disciplines his mind and the nearer he approaches to the divine image, the more he discerns his own defects and the more deeply he appreciates the distance he has to go to be godlike.\(^5\) Any claim to sinlessness is not only a self-deception but also an indication that the claimant has no room for God;\(^6\) in fact, he dishonors God.\(^7\)

But because White discounts sinlessness, it does not follow that man may continue to live in moral inadequacy. The object of character development is to bring man in harmony with

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\(^1\)Ibid.  
\(^2\)Testimonies, 6:423.  
\(^4\)Testimonies, 5:45.  
\(^5\)Sanctified Life, p. 7.  
\(^6\)Ibid., pp. 50-51; Ellen G. White, "Self-Exaltation," Review and Herald 77 (September 25, 1900):609.  
God's will, which presupposes obedience to His laws, and hence refraining from sin. What is recognized here is a relationship in which the divine-human unity is operative in such a way that man, though sinful by nature, is not sinning in deliberate violation of God's law. In other words, the Christ-man unity has actualized a moral integrity within the person. "As God is holy in His sphere, so fallen man through faith in Christ, is to be holy in his sphere."^1

So, to White, perfection calls for the absence of cherished sin. It suggests the presence of a continual divine-human unity and relationship in man, a relationship marked by a principle-oriented life and growth and maturity.

A principle-oriented life

As already observed, White considers love to be the central principle of action in the ongoing process of character development within the divine-human dynamic. This motivating principle is also a part of the perfection process. The finer the quality of love and the more unselfish its source, the more complete the character development will be. If love continues to remain the central force of one's life, character development reaches a place where "the impulse to help and bless others [will spring] . . . constantly from within," and where one will do "nothing else than good."^2

^1Ibid., p. 559; see also Medical Ministry, p. 253; Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 574; Selected Messages, 1:337.

Growth and maturity

"Onward, ever onward, is the watchword in character development." White does not draw a line as to how far character development can go, for "higher than the highest human thought can reach is God's ideal for His children. Godliness—godlikeness—is the goal to be reached." Stage by stage, brick by brick, every hour and every day, year after year man is expected to grow to a higher, holier phase.

White considers character development to be a long and arduous process. It is not the work of a moment or a day, but of a lifetime. Character perfection in terms of growth and maturity requires diligent effort, "toil, time, perseverance, patience, and sacrifice," "a life of holy endeavor and firm adherence to the right," improvement of every talent and advantage Providence has given, faithfulness in little things, enduring discipline and

1Ibid., 6:29. 2Education, p. 18.
3Testimonies to Ministers, p. 506.
4Gospel Workers, p. 269; Medical Ministry, p. 217.
5Testimonies to Ministers, p. 223; Ministry of Healing, p. 503.
6Testimonies, 3:325. 7Ibid., 8:313.
8Ibid., 3:325, 4:520, 5:500; Ministry of Healing, p. 454.
9Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 223.
10Testimonies, 8:313. 11Testimonies, 8:314.
13Medical Ministry, p. 205.
self-sacrifice,\textsuperscript{1} keener perception and a hatred of sin,\textsuperscript{2} and a continual openness to, and connection with, the source of all power and strength—God.\textsuperscript{3}

Perfection as growth is neither easy nor quick.\textsuperscript{4} It is a process, never a finished product incapable of further growth. Character perfection is a relationship of continual identity of the human with the divine who is the source and cause of all growth and perfection.

White illustrates the concept of growth by turning to nature. A seed is perfect. From the time it is planted to the time it bears fruit, the plant is perfect in every stage of its growth. So long as it maintains growth, it is said to be perfect at each stage. The growth is silent and imperceptible, but nevertheless real and continuous. So in character development:

As in nature, so in grace; there can be no life without growth. The plant must either grow or die. . . . At every stage of development our life may be perfect, yet if God’s purpose for us is fulfilled, there will be continual advancement. . . . As our opportunities multiply, our experience will enlarge, and our knowledge increase. We shall become strong to bear responsibility, and our maturity will be in proportion to our privileges.\textsuperscript{5}

From the above, it is clear that White’s understanding of character perfection insists on maturity. Just as a plant is perfect in proportion to its maturity at any one stage of its growth, so is character perfection measured in terms of maturity. That is

\textsuperscript{1}Testimonies, 9:53. \textsuperscript{2}Great Controversy, p. 570. \\
\textsuperscript{3}Testimonies, 3:188. \textsuperscript{4}Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 331. \\
\textsuperscript{5}Ibid., pp. 65-66.
to say, increased opportunities, cognitive development, enlarged experiences are to be reflected in appropriate character growth. When privilege exceeds maturity, perfection is lacking. But when privilege and maturity are equal and balanced, perfection is assured, and each step of advancement makes the subsequent one easier.

Every resistance of temptation makes resistance more easy. Every denial of self makes self-denial easier. Every victory gained prepares the way for a fresh victory . . . . Every unselfish action gives new strength.¹

Thus, White sees character perfection as a continual and progressive process. Marked by advancement, maturity, and growth, the process leads man to be what God has made it possible for him to be² and to obtain continual victory over the greatest obstacle to character development, selfishness.³ Self ceases to be the center of life; in its place is God. Man's motives, feelings, thoughts, actions, habits—in short, character—have found their true center. The nearer man is to this center, the more integrated is his life, the more principled is his behavior, and the nearer he is toward the ultimate goal of character development—godlikeness.⁴

¹Ellen G. White, "Onward and Upward," Youth's Instructor 50 (June 26, 1902):206.
³Mount of Blessing, p. 141; Steps to Christ, p. 43; Testimonies, 9:183.
⁴Selected Messages, 1:259.
While advancement and growth in character are man's privilege, and while perfection of character is attainable, the reverse is true as well. Man can as easily regress as he can progress. Possibility of development does not negate the possibility of retrogression. In fact, implied in the former is the fact that a failure to advance or a tendency to be static is indicative that the person is likely to retrograde.\(^1\)

What causes retrogression? White believes the primary cause to be a tension in the divine-human unity in man. As a result of this tension, cooperation between the two elements is lessened, the Christo-center is weakened, and self-centeredness asserts itself again. As noted earlier, continual subjection of self to divine priorities is essential for character development.\(^2\) In the absence of a supreme and continual preference for divine centeredness, self-centeredness assumes priority. Consequently, character retrogrades and becomes imbalanced and inconsistent.\(^3\)

White contends that moral strength and efficiency are directly related to man's undisturbed relationship with God.\(^4\) Even one act that disturbs this relationship could have damaging effect on character development: "One reckless movement, one imprudent step, and the surging waves of some strong temptation may sweep a soul into the downward path."\(^5\)

\(^1\) Testimonies, 4:556, 5:534. \(^2\) Ibid., 4:63.
\(^3\) Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 306.
\(^4\) Desire of Ages, p. 520. \(^5\) Prophets and Kings, p. 348.
Further, White adds that character retrogression does not await a major, open break in the individual's moral conduct. One little act or thought has power enough to "neutralize" all the divine initiative for man's character. "Every sinful indulgence strengthens the soul's aversion to God."1

One false step prepares the way for another.2 One weakness leads to another. One sin "contaminates the whole being"3 and "poisons the entire character."4 One failure to resist self-indulgence makes the subsequent one easier.5 One failure can "silence" the Spirit and separate the soul from God.6 One yielding to temptation opens the way for the second, and the repetition lessens man's "power of resistance, blinds his eyes, and stifles conviction."7

To prevent retrogression, White suggests continual denial of self and growth in an integrated, love-principled, God-centered life. Character development involves "hard, stern battles with self."8 In this battle, there is no release; continuous, earnest, persevering effort is required. Man's only safety is constant subjugation of self as the center of life and the continual

1Steps to Christ, p. 34.
3Desire of Ages, p. 313.
4Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 452.
5Medical Ministry, p. 143. 6Sanctified Life, p. 92.
7Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 268.
8Christ's Object Lessons, p. 331.
maintenance of God as the center. So long as the divine-human unity and copartnership are maintained by the denial of self and the cementing of God-centeredness, man can not only resist retrogression, but also proceed in the pathway of growth, maturity, and perfection of character.

Factors Affecting Character Development

The analysis thus far has revealed that White predicates character development to God's self-disclosure and redemptive activity in the person and work of Christ. Christ is the divine answer to the problem of sin and the moral impotency of man. When man accepts Christ, White contends, the Spirit of God transforms him into a new person in whom a divine-human unity becomes operative and in whose life God becomes the integrating center, and love becomes the principle of action. Consequently, man's motives, feelings, thoughts, actions, habits—in short, the entire construct of character—undergo a radical change, reflecting a dynamic harmony and consistency. It is this divine-human unity that assures growth, maturity, and development of character.

Having so defined the nature of character development, it is necessary to consider several factors that White regards as influential on human character both as preparatory to, and nurturing of, the divine-human unity. For convenience of discussion, these factors are grouped under personal and relational categories.

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1Christ's Object Lessons, p. 155; Desire of Ages, p. 370.
Personal Factors

According to White, personal factors that affect human character include adequate self-concept, heredity, environment, health, mind, and dietary and work habits.

Adequate self-concept

As has been noted, a life centered in self is incapable of character development. Selfishness is at the root of all moral and spiritual problems and can only bring moral and spiritual death. Only as man denies self as the center of life and accepts God as the center, can character development take place. "Self must die."^2

Thus while insisting on the need for self-discipline and self-denial in the process of character development, White warns against the error of self-pity, for self-pity is as damaging to human character as self-centeredness.^3 What is needed is a balanced, adequate self-concept that does not indulge in either the luxury of self-flattery and undue self-estimate or the poverty of self-depreciation.^4 While self-flattery makes self the center and prevents the working of the divine center, self-pity destroys human potency. Both extremes hinder the divine-human dynamic of character development.

^1 Testimonies, 2:132.  
^2 Ibid., 2:88; 3:552.  
^3 Education, p. 57; Prophets and Kings, p. 488; Medical Ministry, p. 177.  
^4 Great Controversy, p. 477; Testimonies, 5:332.
Adequate self-concept, therefore, neither glorifies nor depreciates self,\(^1\) neither pampers nor pities self,\(^2\) and as in Christ neither is exalted by success nor devastated by failure.\(^3\) Rather it is possessed by a searching self-examination that leads, on the one hand, to a discovery of one's need, and, on the other, to a fulfillment of that need—both within the divine-human copartnership.\(^4\) "To know one's self is great knowledge. True self-knowledge will lead to a humility that will allow the Lord to train the mind, and mold and discipline the character."\(^5\)

**Heredity**

Character is not inherited,\(^6\) but heredity through its effects on the body and mind has its influence on character development. White believes that certain physical, mental, and moral deficiencies are transmitted through heredity, so that "what the parents are, that, to a great extent, the children will be. The physical condition of the parents, their dispositions and appetites, their mental and moral tendencies, are to a greater or lesser degree, reproduced in their children."\(^7\)

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\(^1\)Ibid., 8:63.

\(^2\)Counsels to Teachers, p. 485; Evangelism, p. 625.

\(^3\)Desire of Ages, p. 330. \(^4\)Testimonies, 2:144.


\(^6\)Christ's Object Lessons, p. 331; Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 223.

\(^7\)Ministry of Healing, p. 371.
Some of the characteristics White mentions as susceptible to be inherited either through heredity or influence are: physical disease and degeneracy,\(^1\) disordered and irritable nerves,\(^2\) perverted appetites,\(^3\) mental deficiencies,\(^4\) irritable temper,\(^5\) debased morals,\(^6\) unholy desires,\(^7\) spiritual depravity,\(^8\) and false ideas of life.\(^9\)

In sum, man inherits a natural bent to evil, and he lacks the physical, mental, and moral strength needed to resist temptation.\(^10\) But the adversity of hereditary factors need not be a source of disappointment. White argues that this is all the more reason why man's quest for character development should begin with a distrust of self and a turning to divine power. Through a faith-relationship with Christ, it is man's privilege to be a partaker of the divine nature. When this happens, "hereditary and cultivated tendencies to wrong are cut away from the character," and man is

\(^1\)Ibid.; Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 306, 561; Testimonies, 3:140.
\(^2\)Ibid., p. 561; Temperance, p. 56.
\(^3\)Ibid., p. 292; Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 306, 561; Testimonies, 3:140.
\(^4\)Ibid., pp. 30-31; Temperance, p. 56; Ministry of Healing, p. 371.
\(^5\)Testimonies, 3:30-31, 5:325.
\(^6\)Ibid., 3:30-31; Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 30.
\(^7\)Ibid., p. 561. \(^8\)Testimonies, 2:62, 391.
\(^9\)Counsels to Teachers, p. 304.
\(^10\)Bible Commentary, 5:1128; Education, p. 28; Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 118; Temperance, p. 173.
made "a living power for good. . . . God works, and man works, that man may be one with Christ as Christ is one with God."

Environment

Environmental surroundings, to some extent, affect the formation of character. To argue her point, White refers to the biblical story of Lot who entered Sodom with the full intention of maintaining moral purity. "But he signally failed. The corrupting influences about him had an effect upon his own faith." Sodom's moral corruption "was so interwoven with the character of his children that they could not distinguish between good and evil, sin and righteousness."

Thus White views city life as placing an undue burden on character formation, particularly in the case of children.

Life in the cities is false and artificial. The intense passion for money getting, the whirl of excitement and pleasure seeking, the thirst for display, the luxury and extravagance, all are forces that, with the great masses of mankind, are turning the mind from life's true purpose. They are opening the door to a thousand evils. Upon the youth they have almost irresistible power.

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1 Ellen G. White, "Christian Perfection," Review and Herald 77 (April 24, 1900):257. See also Christ's Object Lessons, p. 331; Ministry of Healing, p. 176; Prophets and Kings, p. 93; Sons and Daughters of God, p. 365.

2 Great Controversy, p. 318.

3 Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 168.


5 Ministry of Healing, p. 364.
The farther children are removed from cities and the closer they are to the beauties of nature, the less the moral temptations and the more opportunities they will have "to obtain the true knowledge and develop well-balanced characters."^1

Further, social inequities, such as, hunger and lack of adequate clothing and housing, also have an adverse influence on the formation of character. White says:

There are thousands of wretched children, ragged and half starved, with vice and depravity written on their faces. Families are herded together in miserable tenements, many of them dark cellars reeking with dampness and filth. Children are born in these terrible places. Infancy and youth behold nothing attractive, nothing of the beauty of natural things that God has created to delight the senses. These children are left to grow up molded and fashioned in character by the low precepts, the wretchedness, and the wicked example around them.2

White's insistence on adequate environment is derived from her stand, to be stressed later, that the mind, the organ of thought and action, grows on and identifies with what it continually comes in contact with. A morally inadequate environment "operates almost insensibly upon the intellect and heart to poison and to ruin,"3 with the effect that sin ceases to appear as sin.

Therefore, White cautions against voluntarily exposing children to an environment that is surrounded by temptations and is inadequate for character formation.4 At the same time, she maintains

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^2Testimonies, 6:275.  
^3Ibid., 3:125.
^4Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 169; Messages to Young People, p. 419.
that environmental inadequacy is not to be used as an excuse for failure in character development, because the divine-human co-partnership is potent enough to overcome hereditary or environmental deficiencies.¹

Health

White considers the body "the most important medium through which mind and soul are developed for the upbuilding of character."² Whatever promotes the health of the body "promotes the development of a strong mind and a well-balanced character."³

Why does White speak so strongly on health? First, her belief that God's creative and redemptive activities involve the body of man⁴ leads her to assert that the body is the temple of the Spirit of God.⁵ Hence man cannot fulfill his obligation to God unless he fulfills his obligation to his own body.⁶ Keeping the body in good health is as much a moral obligation as obeying the Ten Commandments: to disobey the laws of health is to sin against God.

¹Ibid., pp. 78-80.
²Prophets and Kings, p. 488; see also Ministry of Healing, p. 130; Counsels on Diet, p. 35; Temperance, pp. 61, 102.
³Education, p. 195.
⁴My Life Today, p. 126; Counsels on Diet, p. 16.
⁶Counsels to Teachers, pp. 294-95.
Transgression of physical law is transgression of the moral law, for God is as truly the author of physical laws as He is the author of the moral law. His law is written with His own finger upon every nerve, every muscle, every faculty, which has been entrusted to man. And every misuse of any part of our organism is a violation of that law.¹

Secondly, White argues the importance of health to character development from the standpoint of body-mind relationship. She maintains that brain is the seat of all cognitive functions and source of consciousness.² It is described not only as the organ of the mind³ but also as the moral organ,⁴ because White believes that in the brain originate cognition and freedom of moral choice. Further, she speaks of the "brain nerves" as "the only medium through which heaven can communicate with man, and affect his inmost life."⁵

It is White's argument that health affects the brain,⁶ and this in turn affects the cognitive capacity of man. "The brain," she says, "is the citadel of the being. Wrong physical habits affect the brain, and prevent the attainment . . . of a good mental discipline."⁷ Likewise the mind also has its effect on

³Counsels on Health, p. 586.
⁵Testimonies, 2:347.
⁶Ibid., 3:162, 4:31; Bible Commentary, 3:1162; Counsels to Teachers, p. 199; Counsels on Diet, p. 243.
⁷Counsels to Teachers, p. 299.
bodily health. The relationship between body and mind is so intimate that when one is affected, the other automatically sympathizes with it.\(^1\) Recklessness toward the body is viewed as recklessness toward the mind.\(^2\) Erroneous health habits lead to erroneous thinking,\(^3\) and such defective thinking can hardly be a base for strong characters. Moreover, poor health is viewed as unbalancing the nervous system,\(^4\) lessening the strength of the vital powers, "and the result is a deadening of the sensibilities of the mind."\(^5\)

Thus health is vital to both the spiritual and the cognitive functions of man. And these functions are essential for the divine-human cooperation, on the one hand, and for right thinking and choice, on the other—two elements fundamental to character development.

**Mind**

Since mind is the seat of thought and action, since thought and action are principal parts in White's construct of character, and since through mind God-man contact is made,\(^6\) the strengthening of the mind and maintenance of mental health are vital for the development of character.

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\(^1\) *Ministry of Healing*, p. 241.

\(^2\) *Testimonies*, 7:65; *Counsels on Health*, p. 429.


\(^4\) *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 346.  

\(^5\) *Education*, p. 195.

The mind needs to be disciplined and trained so as to think and act with discrimination. "An ordinary mind, well disciplined, will accomplish more and higher work than will the most highly educated mind."¹

How is mind to be disciplined? First, White argues that the mind is "built up by that which it feeds."² "It is a law of the mind, that it will narrow or expand to the dimension of the things with which it becomes familiar."³ Because of this, White places much emphasis on reading and meditation⁴ as tools of mental growth. The nobler and loftier the reading, the more positive the thoughts and the more balanced the intelligence.⁵ White maintains that the mind adapts itself to the type of reasoning and thought process upon which it feeds and eventually appropriates them as its own.⁶ Thus, if a mind continually feeds upon earthly, sensual, unrealistic, and base subjects, that mind will not rise above it. A person with that kind of mental outlook is unfitted for life's responsibilities, for his moral taste is destroyed and his spiritual vision dimmed.⁷

¹Christ's Object Lessons, p. 335.
²Education, pp. 126, 127; see also Counsels to Teachers, p. 121; Testimonies, 3:507, 8:169.
⁴For White's views on meditation, see pp. 173-76 below.
⁵Education, pp. 126, 127. ⁶Testimonies, 7:203.
The mind is affected in a great degree by that upon which it feeds. The readers of frivolous, exciting tales become un­fitted for the duties lying before them. They lead an unreal life, and have no desire for useful employment. The mind is enfeebled, and loses its power to contemplate the great problems of duty and destiny.1

Second, mind can be disciplined and strengthened by pur­posiveness of thought and action. "One of the chief causes of mental inefficiency and moral weakness is the lack of concentration for worthy ends."2 The direction, purpose, and objective of the thought process either lifts or downgrades the mind. So, in the interest of cognitive strength and its influence on character development, White recommends that the mind be fixed on its originator—God.3 When reason acknowledges "an authority superior to itself," and when intelligence bows down to the divine,4 the mind of man is being in unity with the divine, thus ensuring the development of character.

Dietary habits

White relates diet to character development within the perspective of body-mind relationship. Diet affects bodily vitality, and bodily health affects the functioning of the mind, which in turn plays an important role in moral development.

Indulgence of perverted appetite has a benumbing effect upon the moral faculties of man.5 To White, this is a sin that

1Colporteur Ministry, p. 143. 2Education, p. 189.
3Testimonies, 2:414. 4Ministry of Healing, p. 438.
5Counsels on Health, p. 111.
"destroys the healthy action of the digestive organs, affects the brain, and perverts the judgment, preventing rational, calm, healthy thinking and acting." ¹ She further adds:

There are few who realize as they should how much their habits of diet have to do with their health, their character, their usefulness in this world, and their eternal destiny. The appetite should ever be in subjection to the moral and intellectual powers. The body should be servant to the mind, and not the mind to the body. ²

Since physical and mental functions depend on the energy received from the food, dietary habits are important for the healthy functioning of body and mind. Incorrect habits of eating and drinking not only cause disease, but also continually place an excessive stress on the digestive organs, requiring diversion of energy from other organs to aid the digestive process. ³ This places an undue burden on the nervous system and the brain. ⁴ Consequently, "a disordered stomach is productive of a disordered state of mind." ⁵ An uncertain mind, of course, is incapable of correct thought or action, so necessary in character growth. ⁶

White comments:

A close sympathy exists between the physical and the moral nature. The standard of virtue is elevated or degraded by the physical habits. Excessive eating of the best foods will produce a morbid condition of the moral feelings. . . . Any habit which does not promote healthful action in the human system degrades the higher and nobler faculties. Wrong habits of eating and drinking lead to errors in thought

¹Temperance, p. 138.  ²Ibid.
³Testimonies, 2:414, 428, 3:310.
⁴Ibid., 2:414, 418; Counsels on Diet, p. 243.
⁵Testimonies, 7:257.  ⁶Counsels on Diet, p. 62.
and action. Indulgence of appetite strengthens the animal propensities, giving them the ascendancy over the mental and spiritual powers.\(^1\)

Further, White adds that dietary habits also affect man's spiritual life which is crucial to her divine-human dynamic in character development. "Eating has much to do with religion," she writes. "The spiritual experience is greatly affected by the way in which the stomach is treated."\(^2\) She explains how this happens:

If the stomach is abused by habits that have no foundation in nature, Satan takes advantage of the wrong that has been done, and uses the stomach as an enemy of righteousness, creating a disturbance which affects the entire being. Sacred things are not appreciated. Spiritual zeal diminishes, peace of mind is lost. There is dissension, strife and discord. Impatience words are spoken, and unkind deeds are done; dishonest practices are followed, and anger is manifested—and all because the nerves of the brain are disturbed by the abuses heaped on the stomach.\(^3\)

White maintains that wrong dietary habits may result in an incapacity to comprehend divine realities,\(^4\) a stupefied conscience,\(^5\) and a status in which sin no longer appears as sin.\(^6\) Because of these far-reaching effects of diet on the spiritual and moral condition of man, White warns against specific eating habits. For example, over-eating and irregular eating strain the system to a point where mental functions are affected.

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1\(^{Ibid.}\)  
2\(^{Counsels on Health, p. 577.}\)  
3\(^{Ibid., pp. 577-78.}\)  
4\(^{Temperance, p. 149; Counsels on Health, pp. 38, 566; Testimonies, 3:569.}\)  
5\(^{Ibid.}\)  
6\(^{Counsels on Diet, pp. 56, 425.}\)
Overeating prevents the free flow of thought and words, and that intensity of feeling which is so necessary in order to impress the truth upon the heart of the hearer. The indulgence of appetite beclouds and fetters the mind, and blunts the holy emotions of the soul. The mental and moral powers . . . are enfeebled by improper eating and lack of physical exercise. . . . Overeating stupefies the entire being by diverting the energies from the other organs to do the work of the stomach.¹

Likewise, the use of flesh food is not particularly conducive to physical, mental, and moral vigor. "The intellectual, the moral, and the physical powers are depreciated by the habitual use of flesh meats. Meat eating deranges the system, beclouds the intellect, and blunts the moral sensibilities."²

In the same vein, White argues against alcoholic beverages, stimulants, and narcotics. They create an unnatural exhilaration in the system and benumb the senses so that it is impossible under their influence "to judge calmly or have a clear perception of right and wrong."³

White considers the in-take of liquor a "body-and-soul destroying indulgence." It pollutes the blood,⁴ poisons the body tissues,⁵ clouds the mind,⁶ perverts the reasoning ability,⁷ injures the nervous system,⁸ sensualizes the soul,⁹ and lowers the spiritual

¹[Textimonies, 3:310; see also Ministry of Healing, pp. 303-07.]
²[Textimonies, 2:64.]
³[Desire of Ages, p. 222; see also Temperance, p. 50.]
⁴[Ibid., p. 57.]
⁵[Ibid., p. 36.]
⁶[Education, p. 202.]
⁷[Temperance, pp. 36, 187.]
⁸[Textimonies, 3:562.]
⁹[Education, p. 202.]
standard.\textsuperscript{1} In short, alcohol in any form is said to "weaken the body, confuse the mind, and debase the morals"\textsuperscript{2} to such an extent that White considers liquor a devil's tool\textsuperscript{3} "to deface and destroy the moral image of God" in man.\textsuperscript{4}

Use of unnatural stimulants and narcotics, including tobacco, is also considered destructive to health and harmful to character development. The "benumbing influence" of these narcotics on the brain makes moral and spiritual discernment difficult.\textsuperscript{5}

Therefore, White maintains, giving up all these harmful eating and drinking habits assures a vigorous physical and mental condition so vital to character development. Man has no right, she says, "to indulge in anything that will result in a condition of mind that hinders the Spirit of God from impressing . . . [man] with the sense of . . . [his] duty."\textsuperscript{6}

Work habits

White believes that useful occupation strengthens the body, expands the mind, and develops the character.\textsuperscript{7} Firstly, she argues that the diligence and discipline demanded by an active life are safeguards against temptations.\textsuperscript{8} When the mind and body are active, there is less time and opportunity for self-indulgence.\textsuperscript{9} Secondly,

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textit{Sanctified Life}, p. 28. \hfill \textit{Temperance}, p. 268.
\item \textit{Desire of Ages}, p. 122. \hfill \textit{Temperance}, p. 32.
\item Ibid., pp. 55, 70, 71, 268; \textit{Testimonies}, 1:549, 3:561.
\item \textit{Counsels on Health}, p. 432.
\item \textit{Patriarchs and Prophets}, p. 50. \hfill \textit{Education}, p. 215.
\item \textit{Patriarchs and Prophets}, p. 60.
\end{enumerate}
earning one's livelihood encourages self-support, strengthens self-respect, and thereby promotes adequate self-concept,¹ a vital factor in character development. In addition, a work ethic contributes to self-responsibility and purposiveness. Thirdly, White maintains that an idle life is the source of many socio-economic problems,² which, as noted earlier, contribute to an environmental handicap for character development. Idleness, by providing opportunities for selfish indulgence in impoverishing amusements and entertainment,³ also contributes to moral and spiritual poverty. To White, failure to engage in useful labor is a spiritual disease.⁴ "The religion of Christ," she says, "never sanctions physical or mental laziness."⁵

In short, White maintains that well-regulated, useful work is a blessing provided in the divine plan for man's restoration.⁶ Without honest toil, neither health nor culture nor excellence is obtained.⁷ She insists:

1Ibid., p. 601; Counsels to Teachers, p. 147; Ministry of Healing, p. 177.
2Counsels to Teachers, p. 275.
4Testimonies, 4:235.
6Counsels to Teachers, p. 274; Desire of Ages, p. 72, Testimonies, 3:155.
At the creation, labor was appointed a blessing. It meant development, power, happiness. The changed condition of the earth through the curse of sin has brought a change in the conditions of labor; yet though now attended with anxiety, weariness, and pain, it is still a source of happiness and development. And it is a safeguard against temptation. Its discipline places a check on self-indulgence, and promotes industry, purity, and firmness. Thus it becomes a part of God's great plan for our recovery from the Fall.1

Relational Factors

The phrase "relational factors" is used here to underscore that man does not live in isolation. He lives in a state of relationship. White recognizes two kinds of relationship—man to God, man to man. Factors affecting these relationships are influential in character development. They include the Bible, meditation, and worship on the man to God relation; and peers and service on the man to man relation. From what has been noted at the beginning of this chapter, it is clear that, to White, spiritual relation is not just a factor in character development, but the very basis of it. When man by faith accepts the divine provision made in Christ, enters into a new Spirit-filled relationship with Him, makes God instead of self the center of life, and begins to act out of an internalized principle of love, only then character transformation and growth become possible. According to White this divine-human copartner­ship, this spiritual relationship, is non-negotiable.

It is White's position that "whatever weakens faith in God robs the soul of power to resist temptation."2 Whatever lessens

the love for God increases the love for self, and makes self-control, essential for character development, that much more difficult.\(^1\)

Religion, then, is basic to White's concept of character development. But what kind of religion? White's view of religion is more than intellectual dogma, more than a "system of dry doctrines."\(^2\) It is a practical reality touching the whole of man—his motives, feelings, thoughts, words, actions, appetites, relationships, business, and so forth.\(^3\) It is a "vitalizing, pervading principle, a living, working spiritual energy."\(^4\) It is the basis of a totally new relationship in which God reigns supreme.

The religion of Christ means . . . taking away our sins, and filling the vacuum with the graces of the Holy Spirit. It means divine illumination, rejoicing in God. It means a heart emptied of self, and blessed with the abiding presence of Christ. When Christ reigns in the soul, there is purity, freedom from sin.\(^5\)

This relationship requires constant nurture and care. But what are the nurturing factors? The principal ones that White mentions are the study of the Bible, meditation, and worship.

The study of the Bible

To White the Bible is the Word of God. It contains a revelation of God's character, the norm for human character, and the provision for character development.\(^6\) As such, the mind that dwells

\(^3\) Ibid., 3:538, 4:337, 612; *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 350.
\(^4\) *Prophets and Kings*, p. 234.
\(^5\) *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 419-20.
\(^6\) See pp. 111-12, above.
on its lofty themes is strengthened, enlarged, and is brought in
touch with the Infinite Mind who is the author of the Bible.\(^1\)

There is nothing more calculated to strengthen the in­
tellect than the study of the Scriptures. No other book is so potent to elevate the thoughts, to give vigor to the fac­
culties, as the broad, ennobling truths of the Bible. If
God's word were studied as it should be, men would have a
breadth of mind, a nobility of character, and a stability
of purpose rarely seen in these times.\(^2\)

Because the Bible is the Word of God, White considers it
a principal medium of divine communication with man.\(^3\) To read the
Bible is to hear the voice of God as surely as one hears a human
voice.\(^4\) To receive the Bible is to receive the very life and
character of God.\(^5\) Implantation of biblical principles in the
mind brings about a harmony between God's will and man's will so
that the latter is strengthened in its moral judgment.\(^6\)

The understanding will be quickened, the sensibilities aroused.
The conscience will become sensitive; the sympathies and senti­
ments will be purified; a better moral atmosphere will be
created; and new power to resist temptation will be imparted.
Teachers and students will become active and earnest in the
work of God.\(^7\)

Moreover, the exposure to and assimilation of biblical
principles place continually before man the need to subdue all evil

\(^1\)\textit{Patriarchs and Prophets}, pp. 596, 599; \textit{Education}, p. 124;


\(^4\)Ellen G. White, "Search the Scriptures," \textit{Review and Herald}
80 (March 31, 1903): 8.


\(^6\)\textit{Ministry of Healing}, p. 458; \textit{In Heavenly Places}, p. 144.

\(^7\)\textit{Counsels to Teachers}, p. 357.
remove self-idolatry, acquire new motives, feelings, thoughts, understand the issues of duty and destiny, and lead a principle-oriented life.

Thus the Bible becomes an "infallible guide" to man; a concrete link between the human and the divine, enabling the former to commune and participate with the latter and consequently grow toward godlikeness in character. White affirms:

Received, believed, obeyed, it [the Bible] is the great instrumentality in the transformation of character. It is the grand stimulus, the constraining force, that quickens the physical, mental, and spiritual powers, and directs the life into right channels.

Meditation

Meditation is another important spiritual factor that influences character growth. White contends that "men are changed in accordance with what they contemplate." The process and the object of contemplation set the tone and perspective for mental growth, which in turn affects thoughts, actions, habits, and


4Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 596.

5Ibid., p. 599; Ministry of Healing, pp. 465-66.


7Ministry of Healing, p. 458; see also p. 122; Medical Ministry, p. 124.

8Testimonies, 5:113. 9"The Value of Bible Study," p. 449.
character. "If," for example, "commonplace thoughts and affairs take up the attention, the man will be commonplace." White explains:

It is a law both of the intellectual and the spiritual nature, that by beholding, we become changed. The mind gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is allowed to dwell. It becomes assimilated to that which it is accustomed to love and reverence.

Hence the theme, "By beholding man is changed," is an important one in the writings of White.

It has been noted that character development requires the constant maintenance of the divine-human unity, in which self is continually replaced by God as the center of human life. White argues that meditation can assist in the process. As God becomes the object of meditation, selfish thoughts disappear, and self itself sinks into insignificance. White maintains that a "thoughtful hour" spent each day in contemplation of the life of Christ, letting "imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing scenes," would create a situation in which confidence in divine power would be more constant and the principle of love more active.

As the mind dwells upon Christ, the character is molded after the divine similitude. The thoughts are pervaded with a sense of His goodness, His love. We contemplate His character, and thus He is in all our thoughts. His love encloses us. If we gaze even a moment upon the sun in its meridian glory, when

1Ibid.  
2Great Controversy, p. 555.  
5Desire of Ages, p. 83.
we turn away our eyes, the image of the sun will appear in everything upon which we look. Thus it is when we behold Jesus; everything we look upon reflects His image, the Sun of Righteousness. We cannot see anything else, or talk of anything else. His image is imprinted upon the eye of the soul, and affects every portion of our daily life, softening and subduing our whole nature. By beholding, we are conformed to the divine similitude, even the likeness of Christ. . . . We have become transformed in character.1

Contemplation is not to be restricted to Christ alone. The twin books of God, Bible and nature, which present the broad themes of divine holiness, love, and care, are also appropriate subjects for meditation. White believes that the Bible contains "spiritual wisdom";2 as the mind meditates upon this, the divine wisdom becomes its own, resulting in "a breadth of mind, a nobility of character, a stability of purpose, that is rarely seen in these times."3 Meditating on the Scriptures strengthens the divine-human unity in man, and thereby it "can make man right, and keep him right."4

Nature, too, is a fit subject for contemplation. It bears "God's image and superscription,"5 and it reveals the character of God.6

In the singing bird and opening blossom, in rain and sunshine, in summer breeze and gentle dew, in ten thousand objects in nature, from the oak of the forest to the violet that blossoms at its root, is seen the love that restores. And nature still speaks . . . of God's goodness.7

1Testimonies to Ministers, pp. 388-89.
4Selected Messages, 2:125. 5Education, p. 100.
6Testimonies, 8:265. 7Education, p. 101.
As man meditates upon these themes of nature, his mind is drawn away from the low and the debasing into higher fields of thought.¹ The "spirit is awed, the soul is invigorated by coming in contact with the Infinite through His works,"² and the mind becomes firm in principle.³ As the mind meditates and grasps the working of God in nature, it is imperceptibly changed into the same image.⁴

But meditation alone is insufficient, for White recognizes that man is a creature of both thought and action.⁵ While meditation strengthens the divine-human unity in man, that identity itself is revealed in appropriate behavior. Meditation provides the nourishment. Action provides the necessary exercise. In fact, the spiritual and mental strength acquired through meditation is for the purpose of service, which, as will be seen shortly, is also a factor in character development.

Worship

Worship, both public and private, is also an important spiritual factor in growth. The connection with Christ, so crucial for character transformation, inevitably involves as a first step "a connection with His church,"⁶ which is considered

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¹Testimonies, 4:581, 5:575; Messages to Young People, p. 426.  
³Education, p. 52.  
⁴Selected Messages, 2:356.  
⁵Testimonies, 4:457, 5:113.  
⁶Education, p. 268.
by White as the body of Christ,\(^1\) the representative of Christ on earth,\(^2\) and God's fortress in a world of revolt.\(^3\) By participating in the worship and service activities of the church, the person is giving expression to his Christ-centered life. Such participation also builds a spiritual fellowship and unity with others of the same mind and faith. In such a fellowship, there is a spiritual reinforcement and a mutual strengthening of the participants.\(^4\) "Selfishness is purged from the life, and men and women are drawn to Christ, the great center."\(^5\)

While public worship strengthens and reinforces character through mutual fellowship and participation in the activities of the church, White also suggests that private fellowship in the form of study, meditation, and prayer\(^6\) strengthens and reinforces the direct relationship of the human with the divine, upon which character development rests. "Prayer," says White, "is heaven's ordained means of success" in the daily conflict with evil and in the development of character.\(^7\)

\(^1\)Bible Commentary, 7:985-86; Ministry of Healing, p. 356; Testimonies, 3:414, 8:161.
\(^3\)Acts of the Apostles, p. 11.
\(^4\)Christ's Object Lessons, p. 250; In Heavenly Places, p. 283.
\(^7\)Acts of the Apostles, p. 564.
Prayer does not work a change in God's disposition toward man. It does not bring God downward to man, but it lifts man upward to God and creates an atmosphere of harmony and agreement which is essential for character growth.¹

To White, then, prayer is a conscious acknowledgement of the impotency of self, on the one hand, and the potency of God, on the other.² In the atmosphere of prayer, man strips himself of all pretension of strength, lays bare his total inadequacy, and pleads for divine strength. Self is emptied, to be filled with the power of God.³ With that done, man advances "from the partial obscurity of dawn to the full radiance of noonday" on his quest for character perfection.⁴

In other words, prayer is a means to keep the self constantly under subjection to the divine, thus making the divine-human dynamic of character growth a permanent feature of life. When self is thus kept under guard, holy motivations and pure thoughts are activated to assist in appropriate actions, and these influence habits and character.⁵ In a sense, then, all prayer is to be dominated by "one over-mastering purpose--to seek for transformation of character."⁶

¹Steps to Christ, p. 93; Christ's Object Lessons, p. 143; Messages to Young People, p. 248.


³Desire of Ages, p. 431.

⁴In Heavenly Places, p. 75.

⁵Ibid., p. 85.

⁶Mount of Blessing, p. 144.
Thus, the study of the Bible, meditation, and worship are emphasized by White as factors nurturing the spiritual relationship of man in his quest for character development. But that's not all. White also emphasizes the horizontal relationship of man—his relationship with others—as influencing character growth. Two factors are particularly stressed: peer influence and service.

**Peers**

White maintains that friends and associates exert a subtle but firm influence on character growth.¹ They provide an atmosphere for thought and action that can be either positive or negative. The latter kind is so powerful that White describes its influence as "moral malaria"² with serious and contagious implications for moral development. Associates also provide role models with which identification is almost inescapable, particularly in the case of children.³

The influence of associates, of course, depends upon "the degree of intimacy," "the constancy of the intercourse," and "the love and veneration" one holds for the associates.⁴ In any case, says White, "it is wrong to associate with those whose morals are loose." She continues:

¹*Counsels to Teachers*, p. 221; *Adventist Home*, p. 456; *Messages to Young People*, p. 411.

²*Temperance*, p. 192.

³*Testimonies*, 3:24; *Counsels to Teachers*, p. 220; *Ministry of Healing*, p. 402.

⁴*Adventist Home*, p. 459.
An intimate, daily intercourse which occupies time without contributing in any degree to the strength of the intellect or morals is dangerous. If the moral atmosphere surrounding persons is not pure and sanctified, but is tainted with corruption, those who breathe this atmosphere will find that it operates almost insensibly upon the intellect and heart to poison and to ruin.¹

White entertains no doubt regarding the long-term influence of peer pressure on moral development:

[A person's] tastes and habits may at first be altogether dissimilar to the tastes and habits of those whose company he seeks; but as he mingles with this class, his thoughts and feelings change; he sacrifices right principles, and insensibly yet unavoidably sinks to the level of his companions. As a stream always partakes of the property of the soil through which it runs, so the principles and habits of youth invariably become tinctured with the character of the company in which they mingle.²

Association is thus viewed by White as a first step toward assimilation of thoughts, attitudes, and activities of the peers³ to such an extent that one accepts the peer standard even when it is lower than, or opposed to, one's previous standards of behavior or even the moral law.⁴ Virtue is easily compromised. The cheapening of words, thoughts, and morals may go unnoticed,⁵ and eventually life is marked by moral inefficiency,⁶ so that obstacles are placed against the workings of divine power in man.⁷

¹Ibid., p. 462. ²Counsels to Teachers, p. 221.
³Testimonies, 4:587.
⁴Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 568; Counsels to Teachers, p. 221.
⁵Ellen G. White, "Words to the Young," Youth's Instructor 41 (February 2, 1893):33.
Nothing can have a more subtle and positively dangerous influence upon the mind, and serve more effectually to banish serious impressions, and the convictions of the Spirit of God, than to associate with those who are vain and careless, and whose conversation is upon the world and vanity.\(^1\)

Because "nobility of character is not gained by placing oneself in objectionable society,"\(^2\) and because the influence of such society can be productive of only "moral depravity and ruin,"\(^3\) White argues that one must not "voluntarily expose" oneself to influences unfavorable to character formation.\(^4\) Indeed, one cannot be too careful in choosing one's company:

Let all who would form a right character choose associates who are of a serious, thoughtful turn of mind, and who are religiously inclined. Those who have counted the cost, and wish to build for eternity, must put good material into their building. If they accept of rotten timbers, if they are content with deficiencies of character, the building is doomed to ruin. Let all take heed how they build. The storm of temptation will sweep over the building, and unless it is firmly and faithfully constructed it will not stand the test.\(^5\)

Service

It has been observed that White regards man to be a creature of thought and action. It has also been noted that a transformed character is not an abstract theory, but an active reality. The divine-human copartnership that effects transformation of character creates in man the internalized principle of love which expresses itself in unselfish service, and, in the process, is itself strengthened by it.

\(^{1}\)Ibid., 3:42-43. \(^{2}\)Medical Ministry, p. 43. 
\(^{3}\)Testimonies, 5:111. \(^{4}\)Messages to Young People, p. 419. 
\(^{5}\)Testimonies, 4:588.
To White, service is a "connecting link" that binds man to God, on the one hand, and to his fellow men, on the other.¹ To the extent man gives himself to others, to that extent God gives Himself to man² so that the strength of the divine-human copartner­ship is reflected in the love-oriented service of the human. It is White's argument that man cannot "come in touch with divinity without coming in touch with humanity." As divinity and humanity are combined in Christ, so in man whose life center is Christ: to be connected with the divine implies a commitment to unselfish, love­filled service for fellow men, just as Christ went about "doing good."³ Says White:

Love is the basis of godliness. Whatever the profession, no man has pure love to God unless he has unselfish love for his brother. . . . The completeness of . . . character is attained when the impulse to help and bless others springs constantly from within.⁴

Service is thus not only an inevitable corollary of a divine-human relationship, but also a factor that strengthens the growth of that relationship, and hence of character as well.⁵ Firstly, White suggests that love-based service is an effective antidote for selfishness;⁶ it promotes self-discipline and purpos­iveness. The more self is denied in benevolent service, the

¹Christ's Object Lessons, p. 326. ²Ibid., p. 211.
³Ibid., pp. 384–85. ⁴Ibid., p. 384.
⁶Ibid., p. 68; Christ's Object Lessons, p. 261; Desire of Ages, p. 436; Ministry of Healing, p. 15; Testimonies, 3:476; Testimonies to Ministers, p. 183.
easier it is to maintain its dethronement as life's center and to preserve a theocentric perspective.  

The force of habit in unselfish service tends to "break the force of habit in an opposite direction."  

The life must be cast into the furrow of the world's need. Self-love, self-interest, must perish. And the law of self-sacrifice is the law of self-preservation. The husbandman preserves his grain by casting it away. So in human life. To give is to live.  

Secondly, White considers love-motivated service as a character development factor because it turns one from "exclusive attention" to oneself and places one in a healthy and challenging atmosphere of the other. Mental and heart culture thrive in this atmosphere of sympathetic and unselfish service toward others.  

For example,  

Care and affection for dependent children removes the roughness from our natures, makes us tender and sympathetic, and has an influence to develop the nobler elements of our character. Many are diseased physically, mentally, and morally, because their attention is turned almost exclusively to themselves.  

Thirdly, unselfish service is presented as a contributing factor to mental health and cognitive strength, which, of course, are essential for character growth. "The consciousness of right doing, a sense of duty well done, and the satisfaction of giving happiness to others" imparts a new life to the whole being.  

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1 *Testimonies*, 3:387.  
2 *Adventist Home*, p. 371.  
3 *Desire of Ages*, p. 623.  
6 Ibid., 2:647.  
7 *Ministry of Healing*, p. 257.
Thus, unselfish service keeps the mind and body alert, aids self-discipline and purposiveness, steadies spiritual perceptions, strengthens the power to resist evil, promotes community with one another and constitutes the law of true development.¹

The law of love calls for the devotion of body, mind, and soul to the service of God and our fellow men. And this service, while making us a blessing to others, brings the greatest blessing to ourselves. Unselfishness underlies all true development. Through unselfish service we receive the highest culture of every faculty. More and more fully do we become partakers of the divine nature.²

Responsibility for Character Development

The investigation up to this point in this chapter has focused on the nature of, and factors affecting, character development. It has been shown that White viewed character development from the perspective of the divine-human dynamic which assures not only a transformation of character, but also maturity, growth, and perfection, eventually leading to the goal of godlikeness. It has also been shown that White viewed several factors such as self-concept, heredity, environment, health, intelligence, diet, work, Bible study, meditation, worship, peers, and service as influencing the growth of character.

At this stage, it is appropriate to consider one final question in order to complete the task set out for this chapter. The question, "Who is responsible for character development?" is particularly important when it concerns children. White maintains

²Education, p. 16.
that the primary responsibility rests with the home. School also shares the responsibility as and when it interacts with the child. Parents and teachers by "instruction, discipline, and example" may "direct, educate, and develop" so that at each stage of the child's growth he may reflect appropriate character maturity. As the child grows older into adolescence and adulthood, he increasingly assumes personal responsibility.

Responsibility of the Home

"In the formation of character," says White, "no other influences count so much as the influence of the home." Home is the child's first school. It is here that the mold of the future adult is cast. The home lays the foundation for character formation. Its work cannot be done by proxy.

Parents may lay for their children the foundation for a healthy, happy life. They may send them forth from their homes with moral stamina to resist temptation, and courage and strength to wrestle successfully with life's problems. They may inspire in them the purpose and develop the power to make their lives an honor to God and a blessing to the world.

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1 Testimonies, 5:37. 2 Counsels to Teachers, p. 108.
3 Christ's Object Lessons, p. 83; Counsels to Teachers, p. 141.
4 Education, p. 283.
5 Child Guidance, p. 17; Ministry of Healing, p. 400.
7 Counsels to Teachers, pp. 107-08, 162.
8 Ministry of Healing, p. 352.
Because "every act of the parents tells on the future of the children," and because the parents are the immediate and initial role models, White considers the role of parents pivotal to the work of character development in children. The parental work is a divine trust. Indeed parents stand in the place of God before their children and are responsible for placing before them the divine requirements and provisions for character development.

[God] expects them [parents] to guard and tend carefully the garden of their children's hearts. They are to sow the good seed, weeding out every unsightly weed. Every defect in character, every fault in disposition, needs to be cut away; for if allowed to remain, these will mar the beauty of the character.

In this work of character development, White sees a special role for the mother: "The tenderest earthly tie is that between the mother and her child." During the time of "great susceptibility and most rapid development," the child is entirely dependent on her, and hers is the "opportunity to mold the character for good or for evil." White regards mother's work incomparable:

The king upon his throne has no higher work than has the mother. The mother is the queen of her household. She has in her power the molding of her children's characters. . . . An angel would not ask for a higher mission; for in doing this work she is doing service for God.

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1 Fundamentals of Education, p. 156.
2 Adventist Home, p. 200; Child Guidance, p. 17; Prophets and Kings, p. 425.
3 Ibid., p. 245; Education, pp. 244-45; Ministry of Healing, p. 375; Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 308; Testimonies, 2:361.
4 Adventist Home, p. 200.
5 Ibid., p. 240.
6 Education, p. 275.
7 Adventist Home, p. 231.
Equally important is the father's role. White sees his role in the family as the head and the priest of the household.\(^1\) As such, he is an authority figure, the source of discipline, obedience, order, and support.\(^2\) White suggests that he represents the divine Law Giver and is a collaborer with Him, "carrying out the gracious designs of God and establishing in his children upright principles, enabling them to form pure and virtuous characters."\(^3\)

But when does parental responsibility begin?

Prenatal influence

White believes that parental responsibility for character development begins long before parenthood itself. "Even before the birth of the child," she says, "the preparation should begin that will enable it to fight successfully the battle against evil."\(^4\)

First, there is the factor of heredity. As has been noted, a child inherits the physical dispositions, mental and moral tendencies, and spiritual depravity.\(^5\) This heredity largely influences the potential of each child, and it is part of the parental responsibility to understand the hereditary problems children face.\(^6\)

\(^1\)Child Guidance, pp. 286, 521; Counsels to Teachers, p. 128; Ministry of Healing, p. 390; Testimonies, 1:547.

\(^2\)Ministry of Healing, p. 391.

\(^3\)Ellen G. White, "Parents and Children to be Agents for God," Signs of the Times 20 (September 10, 1894):692.

\(^4\)Ministry of Healing, p. 371. \(^5\)See pp. 156-58 above.

Second, there is the fetal influence. Here, White places a special responsibility upon the mother. "She, by whose life-blood the child is nourished and its physical frame built up, imparts to it also mental and spiritual influences that tend to the shaping of mind and character."¹

While the mother is nurturing the fetus in her womb, whatever affects her spiritual, mental, or physical condition affects also the growing fetus. If the mother is subjected to poor dietary habits, mental or moral stress, anxiety and gloom, or even overwork and physical exhaustion,² her total system is affected, and she "imparts a bad quality of blood" to the fetus. As a result, "the offspring is robbed of its vitality, robbed of physical and mental strength,"³ and robbed of a firm basis for the preservation of a right character.⁴ White adds further:

The thoughts and feelings of the mother will have a powerful influence upon the legacy she gives her child. If she allows her mind to dwell upon her own feelings, if she indulges in selfishness, if she is peevish and exciting, the disposition of her child will testify to the fact. Thus many have received as a birthright almost unconquerable tendencies to evil.⁵

In the above, the reference to selfishness needs to be noted. The role of self, so crucial in character development, has an adverse start in the fetus itself if the mother is inclined to be self-indulgent. This leads White to plead, on the one hand, 

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¹ Ministry of Healing, p. 372.
² Ibid., p. 375; Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 561; Testimonies, 2:383, 391.
⁵ Temperance, p. 171.
for self-control on the part of the expectant mother as a divine obligation, and to denounce, on the other, self-indulgence as a trap of Satan.¹

**Importance of early years**

White considers the early years of childhood as the most impressive period to lay the foundation for all later development, whether in physical, mental, moral, or spiritual areas. "The mother's work," says White, "begins with the babe in her arms,"² and even as she nurses, her disposition influences the infant.³ In another place, she states that the first three years of life is the time "to bend the tiny twig."⁴ She also mentions that the first seven years have "more to do with forming his [child's] character than all that it [child] learns in future years."⁵ The point to be noted is that one cannot start too early in training children for character development. "It is during the first years of a child's life that his mind is most susceptible to impressions either good or evil. During these years decided progress is made in either a right direction or a wrong one."⁶

The emphasis on early childhood in White's writings is underscored by further concerns. First, White believes that what is done

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¹Ellen G. White, "A Lesson for Mothers," Signs of the Times 28 (February 26, 1902):133; Counsels on Diet, p. 219.

²Fundamentals of Education, p. 150.

³Adventist Home, p. 260; Counsels on Diet, p. 228.

⁴Child Guidance, pp. 194, 82-83. ⁵Ibid., p. 193.

⁶Counsels to Teachers, p. 132.
In infancy prepares the "undeveloped man or woman"\(^1\) to cooperate with divine power. Since a child even before the age of one is able to interact with, and understand, his mother, he must not be ignored.\(^2\) If his capabilities and powers are "correctly guided and developed," they "will become the human agencies through whom the divine influences can co-operate."\(^3\) This co-operation, as seen before, is the basis for character transformation.

Second, White underscores the importance of early years by suggesting that basic attitudes and concepts are largely shaped in infancy as the child interacts with his immediate environment, both people and physical world. Attitudes of trust, respect, obedience, reverence, and self-control take their root in these formative years.\(^4\) The mind too is easily impressed, and those early impressions are rarely obliterated.\(^5\) Nutrition and care given at this stage affects the health and related factors important for character growth.\(^6\) Self-concept, so vital in character development, also takes root in early years.\(^7\)

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\(^1\)Fundamentals of Education, p. 263; see also Counsels to Teachers, p. 197.

\(^2\)Child Guidance, p. 91. \(^3\)Fundamentals of Education, p. 263.

\(^4\)Counsels to Teachers, p. 107; Desire of Ages, p. 515.

\(^5\)Child Guidance, p. 194.

\(^6\)Medical Ministry, p. 221; Testimonies, 2:536-37.

\(^7\)Adventist Home, p. 15; Child Guidance, p. 194; Counsels to Teachers, p. 150.
of right and wrong, obedience to authority, love to God, and respect for religious obligations are also laid during infancy.\(^1\)

Third, White considers the early years as crucial in habit formation, which as seen before, is related to character.

What the child sees and hears is drawing deep lines upon the tender mind, which no after circumstances in life can entirely efface. The intellect is now taking shape, and the affections receiving direction and strength. Repeated acts in a given course become habits.\(^2\)

**Parental responsibilities**

Having noted the importance of prenatal and early childhood periods in laying the foundation for character development, it is now appropriate to turn to specific parental responsibilities in the nurturing of the young toward the formation of character. These will be discussed under (1) home atmosphere, (2) modeling, (3) discipline, (4) teaching, and (5) choice making.

**Home atmosphere.** If the surroundings in which a child is reared do not have "any redeeming influence" morally or spiritually, White asks, "what can be expected of the children when they come upon the stage of action but that they will sink lower in the scale of moral worth than their parents?"\(^3\)

Since the home is the first and immediate environment of the child, White argues for parental attention in ensuring suitable home atmosphere as a principal duty of parents.\(^4\) The choice of the

\(^1\) *Child Guidance*, pp. 197, 487; *Ministry of Healing*, p. 460; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 243–44; *Testimonies*, 5:37, 305, 8:320.

\(^3\) *Selected Messages*, 2:422.  
\(^4\) *Ministry of Healing*, p. 396.
home should take into consideration "the moral and religious in-
fluences that surround it." A home in the midst of the beauties of
nature is conducive to better development. Parents should not
voluntarily choose to live in places that exert unfavorable in-
fluence on character.

White is also concerned with the internal atmosphere of the
home:

The looks, the tone of the voice, the actions,—all have their
influence in making or marring the happiness of the domestic
circle. They are molding the temper and character of the
children; they are inspiring or tending to destroy confidence
and love. All are made either better or worse, happy or
miserable, by these influences.

Since a child's early development is so dependent on its
interactions with his family members, it is necessary that the
child feel wanted, loved, and secure at home. The less the distance
between parents and the children and the more the parents enter into
the feelings of their children, the more beneficial parental in-
fluence on children's character will be. So White argues for a
stable emotional and spiritual atmosphere in the home as a con-
tributing influence toward the moral development of the child.

While the extremes of blind affection and harsh measures are to be

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1 Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 169.
2 Counsels to Teachers, p. 124; Testimonies, 4:136.
3 Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 169; see also, pp. 158-60.
4 Testimonies, 7:50. 5 Adventist Home, p. 190.
avoided, the home should be managed by the "twin sisters" of love and duty. Such a management is characterized by genuine affection, kindness and courtesy, patience and tenderness, "appreciation, sympathy, and encouragement," respect for mutual rights, shared responsibilities, and respect for authority. In other words, White argues for a system of home management that respects, involves, and is responsive to children. She says:

In the home training of the youth the principle of cooperation is invaluable. From their earliest years children should be led to feel that they are a part of the home firm. Even the little ones should be trained to share in the daily work and should be made to feel that their help is needed and is appreciated. The older ones should be their parents' assistants, entering into their plans and sharing their responsibilities and burdens. Let fathers and mothers take time to teach their children, let them show that they value their help, desire their confidence, and enjoy their companionship, and the children will not be slow to respond. Not only will the parents' burden be lightened, and the children receive a practical training of inestimable worth, but there will be a strengthening of the home ties and a deepening of the very foundations of character.

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1Ibid., p. 307; Child Guidance, pp. 239, 234-35, 283; Counsels to Teachers, pp. 112, 114; Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 578; Medical Ministry, p. 180.
2Testimonies, 3:439. 3Child Guidance, p. 33.
4Child Guidance, pp. 33, 42; Counsels to Teachers, p. 114.
5Adventist Home, p. 205; Child Guidance, p. 244; Testimonies, 4:142.
8Ibid., pp. 312-13.
9Ibid., p. 18; Prophets and Kings, p. 236.
Home atmosphere is also strengthened by family togetherness. White warns against any influence—economic, social, or even religious—from intruding into family time. Togetherness strengthens love and prompts natural obedience and creates the ideal setup to inculcate religious principles early in a child's life.\(^1\) Neglect in family togetherness creates a vacuum in the child's moral and spiritual atmosphere that will be filled by undesirable influences.\(^2\)

In addition to security and togetherness, home atmosphere should include openness. White maintains that openness within the family not only strengthens family bonds but also encourages frank parent-child interaction on issues bearing on character development. She says:

Parents should encourage in their children a disposition to be open and frank with them, to come to them with their difficulties, and when they are perplexed as to what course is right, to lay the matter just as they view it before the parents and ask their advice.\(^3\)

Modeling. "Parents," writes White, "have to do with the very foundation of habit and character. . . . By their example and teaching, the destiny of their household is decided. The children will be what their parents make them."\(^4\) In childhood, the stage of imitation and the natural tendency of the child to copy the behavioral patterns of those who are significant in the child's life


\(^2\)Adventist Home, p. 324.  
\(^3\)Testimonies, 1:392.  
\(^4\)Ministry of Healing, p. 131.
are most active. White contends that in childhood "minds are plastic and impressions are easily made." Whatever the children see and hear in their parents leaves an authoritative and lasting impression.

Everything leaves its impress upon the youthful mind. The countenance is studied, the voice has its influence, and the deportment is closely imitated by them. Fretful and peevish fathers and mothers are giving their children lessons which at some period in their lives they would give all the world, were it theirs, could they unlearn. Children must see in the lives of their parents that consistency which is in accordance with their faith. By leading a consistent life and exercising self-control, parents may mold the characters of their children.

Parental modeling can significantly increase or decrease the child's self-control. Its power is "well nigh irresistible." A child exposed to aggressive, hasty, and passionate behavior in his parents tends to accept that behavior as normal, and consequently he may be less capable of resisting aggression in his own behavior. "Impatience in the parents excites impatience in the children. Passion manifested by the parents creates passion in the children and stirs up the evils of their nature." White also argues that the imitative capacity of the children is also effective on the positive side. "A godly example," she

1 Child Guidance, p. 215.
2 Testimonies, 4:142, 5:498; Counsels to Teachers, pp. 132, 180.
3 Testimonies, 4:621. 4 Education, p. 150.
6 Ibid., p. 398.
says, "has a power that it is impossible wholly to resist."¹ Parents in whom moral profession and practice are on a high and congruent level provide a modeling which children can imitate.² Acquisition of new responses or modification of an existent one may thus be facilitated. She adds:

Children imitate their parents; hence great care should be taken to give them correct models. Parents who are kind and polite at home, while at the same time they are firm and decided, will see the same traits manifested in their children. If they are upright, honest, and honorable, their children will be quite likely to resemble them in these particulars. If they reverence and worship God, their children, trained in the same way, will not forget to serve Him also.³

Parental modeling includes not only behavior but also attitudes. White maintains that if parents reveal a moral independence to choose the right, the children are likely to cultivate such a trait and become men and women of moral worth with "courage to stand bravely for the right, even against the current of fashion and popular opinions."⁴

Parental modeling, therefore, is considered by White as a divinely ordained responsibility for the character education of children.⁵ For in an ultimate sense, parents represent God to their children. It is they who initially mold those response patterns through which the divine dynamic may function in children, and it

¹ Adventist Home, p. 511. ² Testimonies, 4:121, 7:186.
³ Ibid., 5:319-20.
⁵ Ibid.; Adventist Home, p. 243; Testimonies, 2:536.
is they who are responsible for the religious and moral attitudes formed in childhood.⁰ Hence parental modeling calls for lives that "are a true reflection of the divine."¹

**Discipline.** White maintains that children, left to themselves, are attracted more readily to evil than to good and grow up as moral incompetents,² carrying a heavy burden throughout their lives. White views parental discipline as necessary as "the bending of the sapling" in order that right foundations for character building may be formed.³

The primary objective of discipline in White's thought is "the training of the child for self-government. He should be taught self-reliance and self-control."⁴

A basic trait that should be inculcated in this process of developing self-control is obedience, which, White says, "is one of the first lessons a child needs to learn... Before he is old enough to reason, he may be taught to obey."⁵

By gentle, persistent effort, the habit [of obedience] should be established. Thus, to a great degree, may be prevented those later conflicts between will and authority that do so much to create alienation and bitterness toward parents and teachers, and too often resistance of all authority, human and divine.⁶

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¹ *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 46.
² *Prophets and Kings*, p. 245.
³ *Child Guidance*, p. 302; *Counsels to Teachers*, p. 112.
⁴ *Testimonies*, 4:368–69. ⁵ *Education*, p. 287.

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A child who thus learns obedience in his early years finds a similar response not difficult in later life, particularly in reference to obedience to the law of God, the norm for human character. In fact, obedience may become established as a habit that the child in his adult life will find resistance to self-centeredness that much easier.

Discipline, as related to self-government, should also lead the child to reason from cause to effect. By judicial parental guidance, children are to be shown that they are responsible for their behaviors, and disciplinary measures should be such as to facilitate rational cause to effect understanding on the part of children. Thus while proper discipline may promote self-government and thus be an aid to character development, White warns that improper discipline can cause harm in the developing child.

Children are extremely sensitive to any form of unfairness or injustice in disciplinary procedures. If parents do not recognize the needs and particular problems of the child, if they tend to be dictatorial or arbitrary, if they use discipline as a vent for their own frustration and anger, if they require obedience only to satisfy their own emotional needs of being an authority

1 Testimonies, 6:94.
2 Child Guidance, p. 162; Counsels to Teachers, p. 112.
5 Child Guidance, p. 246; Counsels to Teachers, p. 117.
figure, or if rules are vague and inconsistently applied, parental discipline cannot be an effective agency for character development. Instead, White says, only rebellion may be expected out of such ill-guided discipline:

Rebellion is too frequently established in the hearts of children through the wrong discipline of the parents, when if a proper course had been taken, the children would have formed good and harmonious characters.

In no case should discipline destroy the individuality of the child. The "breaking of the will" by ridicule, humiliation, unsympathetic attitude, or by public censure is viewed by White as not only contrary to the best interests of the child but also as against the divine requisites for child development. Discipline is to direct, not hinder, development, and the direction should be toward initiative and moral independence so that children may be encouraged to "improve their privilege, and cultivate and direct their faculties to accomplish a purpose in life."

How can such a discipline be ensured? White begins with the basic ingredient: love. Any motive other than love for the child's moral and spiritual advancement is unworthy of the name discipline. Proper discipline includes kindness, tenderness,
firmness, prayerfulness, consistency, and trust, and is free from anger, harshness, and resentment.¹

Teaching. Direct involvement of parents in the early childhood education at home is considered by White as essential to character development. The home is the child's first school, and ideally children should be taught by parents till the age of eight or ten² so that correct spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical foundations may be laid for a child's development. Where parents fail "to instruct, guide, and restrain," the children tend to naturally accept "the evil and turn from the good."³

White suggests that parental education interested in character development ought to focus on the whole person of the child:

Upon all parents there rests the obligation of giving physical, mental, and spiritual instruction. It should be the object of every parent to secure to the child a well-balanced, symmetrical character. This is a work of no small magnitude and importance—a work requiring earnest thought and prayer no less than patient, persevering effort. A right foundation must be laid, a framework, strong and firm, erected, and then day by day the work of building, polishing, perfecting must go forward.⁴

What should parents teach their children that would aid in the character development of their children? Since divine-human

¹Ibid., p. 320; Child Guidance, pp. 151, 271; Counsels to Teachers, p. 112; Education, pp. 289–90; Prophets and Kings, p. 236.
²Counsels to Teachers, pp. 79–80; Counsels on Health, p. 177; Fundamentals of Education, pp. 21, 61, 157; Testimonies, 3:137.
³Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 572–73.
⁴Counsels to Teachers, pp. 107–08.
unity is at the center of character transformation, White maintains that cultivating in children an adequate relationship with God should receive foremost priority. Religious training in the impressionable age of early childhood is of supreme importance. White contends that even the little ones can have a meaningful spiritual relationship. She says:

The little children may be Christians having an experience in accordance with their years. This is all that God expects of them. They need to be educated in spiritual things, and parents should give them every advantage that they may form characters after the similitude of the character of Christ.*

Since a relationship with God is essential for character transformation, White argues that the earlier the child is made aware of the importance of such a relationship, the more conducive it will be for the child to respond to the divine dynamic. Therefore, "religion should not be divorced from home education," but it should be made a part of child training in the formative years of his life. She affirms the long-term influence of early religious teaching:

In most cases, it will be found that those who in later life reverence God and honor the right learned that lesson before there was time for the world to stamp its images of sin upon the soul. Those of mature age are generally as insensible to new impressions as is the hardened rock, but youth is impressionable.*

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1 Christ's Object Lessons, p. 84; see also Counsels to Teachers, p. 142.


3 Christ's Object Lessons, pp. 53-54; Testimonies, 6:93.

4 Child Guidance, p. 199.
As the children grow older, "it is probable that there will be a decrease of sensibility to divine things, a diminished susceptibility to the influences of religion." But White believes that through cooperation of the church, the school, and the home, religion may be made attractive to the young. With adequate instruction and identifiable evidence of the influence of religion on parental character, children may be led to develop a faith-relationship with God, which is vital for character transformation.

Parental teaching should also aim at mental, physical, and social development of the child, for a child's relationship in these areas affect his character formation. White particularly mentions that children should be taught discrimination between right and wrong, appreciation of beauty, self-denial and self-control, self-government, health principles, respect for others, sharing responsibilities, appreciation for elevating reading, and so forth.

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5. Ibid., 4:651-52; *Adventist Home*, p. 386; *Counsels to Teachers*, p. 85; *Ministry of Healing*, p. 386; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 562.
7. Ibid., 2:536-37, 7:64-65; *Fundamentals of Education*, pp. 159-60; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 176; *Ministry of Healing*, pp. 384-86.
8. *Child Guidance*, p. 120; *Education*, p. 285.
In other words, parental teaching in early childhood should consist of leading the child toward proper development so that the child would develop adequate relationships in terms of both the immediate and the ultimate. Establishment of such a perspective prepares the heart of the child for the working of the divine power, so necessary in White's understanding of character transformation. White summarizes the role of parental teaching:

Teach your children from the cradle to practice self-denial and self-control. Teach them to enjoy the beauties of nature and in useful employments to exercise systematically all the powers of body and mind. Bring them up to have sound constitutions and good morals, to have sunny dispositions and sweet tempers. Impress upon their tender minds the truth that God does not design that we should live for present gratification merely, but for our ultimate good. Teach them that to yield to temptation is weak and wicked; to resist, noble and manly. These lessons will be as seed sown in good soil, and they will bear fruit that will make your hearts glad.1

Choice making. As has been noted, White defines character in terms of will-power to choose and to value.2 She also points out that character transformation is possible only as man chooses to cooperate with the divine. In view of this, White maintains that the more opportunities a child has for choice making, the more conducive the atmosphere for the strengthening of its will-power. "Every child," she says, "should understand the true force of the will. He should be led to see how great is the responsibility involved in this gift. The will is . . . the power of decision or choice."3

White argues that even the very young need to be respected as persons. A child subjected to authoritative and dictatorial training, without opportunities for free choice, may yield submission and obedience "like well-drilled soldiers; but when the control ceases, the character will be found to lack strength and steadfastness." Such a child, without an active will of its own, is little better than dumb animals. The individuality is destroyed, and it "will ever be deficient in moral energy and individual responsibility."2

White concedes that at times alternatives may be confusing and crippling to youngsters, and children may not be mature enough to choose discriminately. Here parents may have to be the will for the children,3 but the choosing is to be done in such a way as to ensure that the child's will is not destroyed, broken, or hammered to pieces.4 What is needed is to lead, not drive, the will wisely and tenderly5 so that the child's will is molded "until the child comes to years of responsibility."6 In other words, "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."7

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1 Education, p. 288.  
2 Testimonies, 3:132.  
5 Ibid., 5:653; Counsels to Teachers, p. 116.  
6 Ibid.  
7 Education, p. 289.
White maintains that this training in choice making is a vital preparation for the adolescent years when the youth begins to assert selfhood and independence and make personal, social, moral, and spiritual choices that will affect his character development and his entire life. The earlier the child learns to choose with discrimination on the basis of "reason and principle," the easier he will find the cultivation of adequate relationship with God, man, and self—a relationship vital to character development.

Responsibility of the School

As has been noted, White considers home influence peerless in early childhood so far as laying a foundation for character development is concerned. It is at home the child learns the basic concepts, attitudes, and habits upon which the direction of his later life will depend so much. It is at home through parental modeling, teaching and discipline, and choice-making opportunities that the child learns to relate himself adequately. But as the child enters school and spends a large amount of his time outside the home, the responsibility for building upon the early home foundation is to be shared by the school and the home. White argues for a parent-school cooperation so that "the teacher's work should supplement that of the parents."²

White maintains that the responsibility of the school for character development begins at the institution's basic commitment

¹Testimonies, 3:132. ²Education, pp. 283-84.
to an educational philosophy that would consider education to be "more than the pursual of a certain course of study. It [education] has to do with the whole being, and with the whole period of existence possible to man. It is the harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers."¹ From such a commitment will flow an education that will prepare "the student for the joy of service in this world and for the higher joy of wider service in the world to come."² The implications of such a commitment for character development are obvious from the following:

Instead of educated weaklings, institutions of learning may send forth men strong to think and to 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.

Such an education provides more than mental discipline; it provides more than physical training. It strengthens the character, so that truth and uprightness are not sacrificed to selfish desire or worldly ambition. It fortifies the mind against evil. Instead of some master passion becoming a power to destroy, every motive and desire are brought into conformity to great principles of right. As the perfection of His character is dwelt upon, the mind is renewed, and the soul is re-created in the image of God.³

While White is convinced that "the degree of moral power pervading"⁴ an institution is the key to its success, she specifically points out that the school responsibility for character development rests with teachers and the curricular pattern of the institution.

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¹Ibid., p. 13.  
²Ibid.  
³Ibid., p. 18.  
⁴Counsels to Teachers, p. 94.
Influence of teachers

White believes that the teacher is a divine agent in the molding of the character of the youth.¹ Like that of the parents, his work also involves modeling, teaching, discipline, and guiding pupils to make appropriate choices.² The teacher’s work is of great significance:

He who co-operates with the divine purpose in imparting to the youth a knowledge of God, and molding the character into harmony with His, does a high and noble work. As he awakens a desire to reach God’s ideal, he presents an education that is as high as heaven and as broad as the universe; an education that cannot be completed in this life, but that will be continued in the life to come; an education that secures to the successful student his passport from the preparatory school of earth to the higher grade, the school above.³

In view of the crucial nature of the responsibility of the teacher, White wants utmost care to be exercised in the recruitment and selection of teachers on grounds of spiritual maturity and character. What the teachers are is going to influence what their pupils may become.⁴ Mental excellence and mastery of subjects and methods are important for a teacher to possess; but these ought to be matched by spiritual excellence and a holistic understanding of life.⁵

¹Ibid., p. 229; Education, p. 19.
³Education, p. 19.
⁴Counsels to Teachers, p. 47; Fundamentals of Education, p. 58.
⁵Education, pp. 278-79; Testimonies, 6:200-201.
Because there is so much cheapness of character, so much of the counterfeit all around the youth, there is the more need that the teacher's words, attitude, and deportment should represent the elevated and the true. Children are quick to detect affectation or any other weakness or defect. The teacher can gain the respect of his pupils in no other way than by revealing in his own character the principles which he seeks to teach them. Only as he does this in his daily association with them can he have a permanent influence over them for good.¹

White insists on the spiritual and moral maturity of the teacher as an essential part of his responsibility in character development. She argues for teachers who love God and His word,² have high moral qualities and sound faith,³ act out of firmly established principles,⁴ preserve their dignity and self-respect even under trying circumstances,⁵ possess an ultimate vision of life,⁶ exercise perfect self-control,⁷ act with tact and wisdom,⁸ and strive for "order, thoroughness, punctuality, self-control, a sunny temper, evenness of disposition, self-sacrifice, integrity, and courtesy."⁹ In short, teachers with character, teachers who have experienced that divine-human unity which brings about character transformation! White says:

His [a teacher's] principles and habits should be considered as of greater importance than even his literary qualifications. He should be a man who fears God . . . . He should understand the

¹Education, p. 277. ²Testimonies, 6:153.
⁵Counsels to Teachers, p. 93.
⁷Counsels to Teachers, p. 77; Testimonies, 3:135, 4:419.
importance of physical, mental, and moral training, and should give due attention to each. He who would control his pupils must first control himself. To gain their love, he must show by look and word and act that his heart is filled with love for them. At the same time, firmness and decision are indispensable in the work of forming right habits and developing noble characters.¹

Curricular responsibility

In addition to staffing, the major responsibility of the school in character development involves the curricular thrust of the institution. White argues for a curriculum that would develop the whole person and lead the student to the divine power that will mold the character.² She comments on the principal parts of such a curriculum:

Every child and every youth should have a knowledge of himself. He should understand the physical habitation that God has given him, and the laws by which it is kept in health. All should be thoroughly grounded in the common branches of education. And they should have industrial training that will make them men and women of practical ability, fitted for the duties of every-day life. To this should be added training and practical experience in various lines of missionary effort.³

Several points need emphasis here. Firstly, White argues that a curriculum interested in a holistic development including that of character should stress a true knowledge of oneself. Self-knowledge is essential for self-discovery. Such a knowledge, White states, would include what a person is, where he is, and where he is going. In other words, a knowledge of his origin, nature and destiny, of his heredity and environment, and of his aspirations

²Ministry of Healing, p. 401. ³Ibid., p. 402.
and objectives become vitally important. As seen earlier, White believes that a true understanding of self would lead to the realization that one is in a state of sin, in a state of separation from God and alienation from man, and in need of restoration and transformation.

But what is the source of true self-knowledge? White points to the Bible as "the foundation of all true knowledge."\(^1\) In it the origin, nature, and destiny of man is explained. In it the "whole duty of man is defined."\(^2\) It "contains all the principles that men need to understand in order to be fitted either for this life or for the life to come."\(^3\) Its central theme is "the restoration in the human soul of the image of God."\(^4\)

White maintains that through a study of the Bible, the student can obtain a knowledge of self and a knowledge of God and His requirements and provisions for character development. As such, White insists the Bible "should have a place—the first place—in every system of education,"\(^5\) for as an educating power the Bible "is without a rival."\(^6\)

By arguing for Biblical instruction in the curriculum, White is not suggesting that the Bible be "sandwiched in" as one of many courses available to the student.\(^7\) She wants the Bible

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\(^1\) *Counsels to Teachers*, p. 15.
\(^3\) *Education*, p. 123.
\(^6\) *Ibid.*, p. 84.
to be a pervasive influence over all the activities of the school. "The Bible must be made the groundwork and subject matter of education. . . . It should be used as the word of the living God, and esteemed as first, and last, and best in everything." Then will be seen growth in character.¹

Secondly, White maintains that the curricular emphasis in character development should be through maximizing the cognitive potential of students. Through common branches of learning, "let the youth advance as fast and as far as they can in the acquisition of knowledge. Let their field of study be as broad as their power can encompass."² In developing mental capacity to its optimum strength, education is maximizing a God-given gift, the "power to think and to do."³ White relates cognitive strength to character development as follows:

The men in whom this power [of thinking] 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 confining their study to that which men have said or written, let students be directed to the sources of truth, to the vast fields opened for research in nature and revelation. Let them contemplate the great facts of duty and destiny, and the mind will expand and strengthen. . . .

Such an education . . . strengthens the character.⁴

Thirdly, White suggests that a curriculum interested in character development should be purposive, preparing men and women "for the duties of every-day life," including a concern for the

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welfare of others. In other words, a service-oriented education assists in character growth. As already noted, service is an important factor in character development in that it links one with God and with man and acts as an antidote for self-centeredness. 1

As part of her argument for a service-oriented curriculum, White calls for manual training as an integrated "part of a school program." 2 It is her contention that that which trains the hand to helpfulness, and teaches the young to bear their share of life's burdens, is most effective in promoting the growth of mind and character.

The youth need to be taught that life means earnest work, responsibility, care-taking. They need a training that will make them practical—men and women who can cope with emergencies. They should be taught that the discipline of systematic, well-regulated labor is essential, not only as a safeguard against the vicissitudes of life, but as an aid to all-round development. 3

To the extent adequate facilities for training in the practical duties of life are unavailable in an educational institution, to the extent the curriculum is not service-oriented, to the extent the Bible is not a pervasive force in the institution, and to the extent cognitive potential of students is not maximized, to that extent, White believes, that school is failing in its responsibility for providing a holistic development of the student, 4 and to that extent the character development of students is affected.

1 See pp. 168-70, 181-84, above. 2 Education, p. 217.
3 Ibid., p. 215.
Responsibility of Individual

While the home and the school have foundational and structural influences on character formation, White maintains that the ultimate responsibility for character development rests on the individual, especially as he moves away from childhood to assert increasingly his selfhood and freedom. "Life is a problem," says White, "which we must individually work out for ourselves. No one can form a character for another; we each have a part to act in deciding our own destiny. We are God's free, responsible agents."^2

To act as free and responsible, to choose to accept in faith the divine provision for character transformation, and to participate freely in the divine-human unity is the responsibility of the individual. In short,

Each one has a personal battle to fight. Not even God can make our characters noble or our lives useful, unless we become co-workers with Him. Those who decline the struggle lose the strength and joy of victory.^3

Summary

This chapter analyzed White's views on the nature of character development, factors affecting character development, and responsibility for character development.

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^1Adventist Home, p. 199; Counsels to Teachers, p. 222; Messages to Young People, p. 338; Testimonies, 4:33, 8:175.


^3Ministry of Healing, p. 487.
First, White maintains that due to the problem of sin man cannot fully develop his character. She predicates character development to God's self-disclosure and redemptive activity in the person and work of Christ. Christ is the divine answer to the problem of sin and the moral impotency of man. When man accepts Christ by faith, White contends, he is transformed—not modified or naturally developed—into a new person by the empowering of the Spirit of God who radicalizes the whole man and establishes in him a divine-human unity whereby God becomes the integrating center and sovereign of life, and the principle of godlikeness—namely, love—becomes the internalized principle of action. Consequently, man's motives, feelings, thoughts, actions, habits—in short, the entire construct of character—reflect a dynamic harmony and consistency. In this divine-human copartner­ship and congruency, man finds the assurance of growth, maturity, and development of character.

While growth and maturity are involved in perfection of character and movement toward the ultimate objective of godlikeness, failure to grow, or behavioral non-conformity with the love principle, could lead to retrogression. Hence, character development is a battle, a work, of a life time.

Second, White believes that character is affected by several personal and relational factors; the former includes adequate self-concept, heredity, environment, health, mind, and dietary and work habits; the latter include a study of the Bible, meditation, worship, peers, and service.
Third, White places the ultimate responsibility for character development on the individual, for he alone must choose and decide as to how he will relate himself to the divine provision for character transformation. But in a child, the responsibility for character education rests largely on the family. It is at home through prenatal influence and parental modeling, teaching, discipline, and guidance in choice making that the child learns to relate himself mentally, socially, and spiritually. The foundation laid in early years constitutes an agency through which divine influences can cooperate in effecting character transformation.

As the child grows older and enters school, the school is to cooperate with the home in the work of character development. By recruiting teachers who have had the experience of character transformation and who experimentally maintain the divine-human partnership, and by providing adequate character-oriented curricular structure, the school can fulfill its responsibility for character development.
CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The summary deals briefly with (1) the problem and (2) the findings.

The Problem

Character development is a fundamental objective of the Seventh-day Adventist educational system. The purpose of this study was to define the concept of character development found in the published writings of Ellen G. White who has influenced and continues to influence the philosophy and administration of the worldwide system of Seventh-day Adventist schools.

The problem was divided into the following subproblems: (1) the meaning and significance of character, dealing with the definition, importance, and evaluation of character; (2) the nature of character development, dealing with the means of character development, emphases in character development, and perfection and retrogression in character development; (3) factors affecting character development; and (4) responsibility for character development.

The approach to the problem consisted of (1) a careful perusal of the published writings of White, noting every statement.
related to the investigation; (2) subjecting the data thus gathered to inductive analysis and arranging the statements logically into twenty-two categories under seven sections which together constituted the two broad areas of inquiry, namely, the meaning and significance of character, and the development of character; and (3) analyzing and interpreting the data with the use of appropriate hermeneutical principles, and synthesizing the findings in an expository form.

To provide a background against which White's concept may be better understood, a discussion of selected research studies on character development was included. The selected studies, representing major researches carried out particularly on the nature and development of character since shortly after the death of White, are those of Hartshorne and May, Ligon, Peck and Havighurst, Piaget, and Kohlberg.

The Findings

This section summarizes the views of selected theorists and those of White, as presented in chapters IV, V, and VI, in the order of the subproblems stated in chapter I: (1) the meaning and significance of character; (2) the nature of character development; (3) factors affecting character development; and (4) responsibility for character development.

1 The terms "selected research studies," "theorists," "selected theorists," and "researchers" are used in this chapter to refer to the studies in character development surveyed in chapter IV, namely, the studies of Hartshorne and May, Ligon, Peck and Havighurst, Piaget, and Kohlberg.
Meaning and significance of character

Findings in this category include (1) the definition of character, (2) importance of character, and (3) evaluation of character.

Definition of character. Hartshorne and May believe that character is situational, specific, and nonintegrated. To them, there is no such thing as a generalized character that governs or guides the moral action of a person. Character is neither an inner entity nor an outward behavioral consistency. It only describes behavioral responses of a person in a given situation or experience.

Ligon disagrees with the doctrine of specificity. To him character is the test of man's personality and, as such, includes more than behavioral particulars. Ligon defines character as an internalized principle that governs the behavioral responses of a person. This principle is identified as love that expresses itself in unselfishness toward others and self-realization of oneself.

Peck and Havighurst also dismiss the situational approach. They define character as a special aspect of personality in which the fundamental motives underlying and causing behavior are centered. To speak of character is to probe the intent and the reason behind the observable behavior of a person and to place that intent and reason in a perspective of the individual's development in the psychosocial world.

Piaget and Kohlberg, in the tradition of cognitive developmental approach, concern themselves with moral thinking rather than with moral behavior. To Piaget, morality consists of respect for,
and relationship to, a system of rules. He looks at moral development in terms of the type of respect and relationship exhibited toward the rules: either the heteronomous type—in which rules are considered authoritative, inviolable, and objective—or the autonomous type—in which cooperation and codification are seen as the source of rules.

Kohlberg is concerned with moral judgment as distinguished from moral behavior, the former being a necessary condition to the latter. To him, character, insofar as it concerns moral judgment, is a movement toward an internalization of the concept of justice which requires that the person act with a universal sense of right and wrong, duty and obligation, and respect for, and fairness toward, others. The ideal character is achieved when a person reasons and acts according to this internalized universal principle of justice.

White's definition of character is more inclusive. She recognizes the importance of behavioral particulars, the power of unselfish action and self-fulfillment, the strength of intent, the role of moral autonomy, and the need for internalized principle. But she goes beyond to argue that character involves and expresses the whole man. It is a motivating and activating inner principle that reveals itself in the total behavioral and relational responses of man.

White's definition of character recognizes cognitive, moral, and spiritual dimensions. The cognitive aspect is stressed by White in her emphasis that the mind is the seat of thought and
action, and it is the organ that discriminates between right and wrong. As such the thought process is an important element in character. But thoughts are just one part of the character continuum. They are preceded by feelings and motives and followed by action. Repeated actions become habit, and habits form character.

However, cognition in itself does not produce action. Thought is activated into behavior only as the will exercises its volitional power to give content and direction to the thought. Hence White regards the moral dimension of character as consisting of self-control and will power that govern and guide man's capacity to resist, decide, and act.

Furthermore, White adds a spiritual dimension to her definition of character. She views man as a relational creature—in a state of relationship with God, who created him in His image in the first place, and with man. As such human character includes an adequate relationship with God and man, a relationship governed by the internalization of the universal principle of love. To White, then, a man of character is one who loves God supremely and loves his fellowmen unselfishly. This principle of love is seen as transcending and including all other moral principles.

White's definition of character, moreover, is far reaching in that she applies the concepts of integration and ultimacy to character. That is, on the one hand, White contends for a theocentric life as the only guarantor of the development of character. As long as man's life is centered around self, his character will
be limited to that extent. But when he accepts God as the center of his life, his character becomes integrated and principle-oriented. On the other hand, White views man as being destined for something beyond this life. Since he has an ultimate future, a life beyond the present to account for, his character takes on a teleological dimension so that, unlike other theorists, White is not content in describing character in terms of self-realization, immediacy, and social concerns alone; she sees character in terms of man seeking out the ultimate objective of godlikeness.

Thus White defines character not so much as an inventory of actions performed or as a description of moral reasoning, but as a measure of an internalized principle that gives motivation, coherence, consistency, and direction to the total behavioral and relational functions of man in terms of both the immediate and the ultimate.

Importance of character. The importance of character is recognized by all the theorists. Hartshorne and May point out that human civilization has survived on the assumption that moral attitudes and behavior are fundamental to the integrity of society.¹

To Ligon, character is the basic solution to personal and social problems.²

The social importance of character is also stressed by Peck and Havighurst who argue that moral development is not just

¹Hartshorne and May, Studies in Deceit, pp. 20-21.
²Ligon, Psychology of Christian Personality, p. 106.
one among many plausible ways of preserving a sensible society; it is the only way. "Slow moral erosion can insensibly corrupt any society. Indeed, that may be the lesson of most human history, by a statistical count of vanished societies."\(^1\)

Piaget views the importance of moral development in terms of the individual's development toward self-government and autonomy. As the individual moves toward autonomy, he recognizes the need to be aware of the viewpoint of others; thus moral maturity is seen as basic to cooperative function within society.

Kohlberg recognizes the importance of moral development as a personal, educational, and societal objective. Without moral growth and maturity, one can neither achieve a sense of fairness and respect for others, nor possess a universal principle of justice upon which alone human potential can be maximized.

Thus a common denominator in the theorists surveyed is the recognition that character is vital for the growth and survival of man and society.

White does not negate such a stand, but she goes beyond such humanistic and immediate objectives to stress that character has both supernatural and ultimate importance. First, White argues for the importance of character from the standpoint of divine history. Her concept of history as comprising the great controversy between good and evil under the leadership of Christ and Satan, respectively,

\(^1\) Peck and Havighurst, *Psychology of Character Development*, p. 199.
requires the vindication of God's character through the restoration and perfection of human character.

Secondly, character development is viewed by White as the ultimate test of validity and reliability of the Christian faith, for it is her contention that the objective of the Christian gospel is to provide for, and to realize in, man the development of character so that he may reach the ultimate objective of godlikeness.

Thirdly, White regards character as essential for the optimum realization of life's potential and responsibilities and for the fulfillment of human destiny in a life beyond the present. Thus the immediate and the ultimate, the human and the divine, the individual and the global concerns combine to constitute the significance White attaches to human character.

**Evaluation of character.** Although the research studies are not particularly concerned with any ultimate norm or evaluation of character, the issue is of vital concern to White. To begin with she rejects any possibility that the norm for human character can be located within man or his environment. Since godliness is the goal she sets for character development, the norm cannot be anything less than the character of God. This character is revealed in the Bible, in nature, in the life of Jesus, and in the law of God. The summation of God's character is love, and therefore unreserved and unselfish love to God and man, revealed in the life and teachings of Jesus and particularized in the law of God, constitutes the norm for human character.
Second, the concept of ultimate evaluation deeply interests
White. She believes that as a created being, man is held
accountable to God for his character and will face God at the final
judgment when his character as it relates to the divine provision
in Christ will decide his ultimate destiny.

The nature of character development

The findings here are given in the following order: (1) the
means of character development, (2) emphases in character
development, (3) perfection of character, and (4) retrogression
in character development.

The means of character development. The research studies
surveyed locate the means of character development in man and/or
his environment. Hartshorne and May point out that character is
situational and specific, and that any consistency of conduct
present may be due to similarity of situations, previous experience,
awareness of the implications of behavior, and early home training
in relation to moral behavior.

Ligon maintains that character is developed through the
maximization of human potential. A creative interaction of chosen
elements of this potential with the uniqueness of the individual
results in predictable triads which form the strength of character.
Ligon believes that human potential is maximized when it is employed
with "a strength of purpose, breadth and effectiveness of social
influence, and degree of dedication to a philosophy of values."\(^1\)

\(^1\)See p. 41 above.
Peck and Havighurst contend that character development takes place as the motivational base of a person's moral reasoning and behavior changes from egoism to internalized principle that takes into account the interest of the other in view. Development, maturity, experience, and psycho-social interaction assist in the change.

For Piaget and Kohlberg, the means for moral development are to be found in cognitive maturation. Piaget notes that cognitive development is the basis for moral reasoning. He suggests that maturation, experience, socialization, and self-regulation are necessary prerequisites for reaching moral autonomy. Kohlberg also points out that moral reasoning is a necessary condition for moral development. Cognitive disequilibrium in one stage and cognitive attraction of the next higher stage within his six-stage theory largely constitute the means of moral development.

Thus the character theorists have one common factor in their approach to the means of character development: that man is potentially capable of developing his character. White, however, understands the problem differently. She begins by asserting that man is a result of God's creation, and godliness is the goal to be reached in character development. But the problem of sin has incapacitated man in solving his moral problems, and unless this problem is effectively and decisively solved, there can be no character development. White believes that God's self-disclosure and redemptive activity in the person of Christ is the answer to
the problem of sin, and it is this that constitutes the divine pro-
vision for character development. When man in faith freely chooses
to accept this provision, the Spirit of God actualizes in him a
new moral taste, a new motive power, and a new experience of unity
with God's will. The power of the transforming Spirit touches
every aspect of life and brings about a radical change in man—
his relationships and life-style. In this relationship self
ceases to be the center of life, and in its place is God. Such
a theocentric life assures a divine-human unity within man, with
love as the internalized principle of action. Consequently, man's
character reflects a dynamic unity, integration, harmony, and con-
sistency. Thus the divine-human unity in man, expressing itself
in a principled life, constitutes the means of character develop-
ment in the writings of White.

Emphases in development. In addition to the emphasis on
man's native capacity, common to the theorists, each researcher has
his own particular emphasis. To Hartshorne and May, it is the
doctrine of specificity that suggests that character is situational
and nonintegrated. In Ligon, the emphasis is on the teachings and
ethic of Jesus as a source of character norm and objectives and on
the group theory of maximizing human potential as the means of
character development.

Peck and Havighurst emphasize five character types—amoral,
expedient, conforming, irrational-conscientious, and rational-
altruistic—structured "in terms of the control system the
individual uses to adapt his search for satisfaction to the require-
ments of the social world."¹

Piaget's emphasis centers around heteronomy and autonomy
in moral development, with attention on the direction and rate of
movement from the former to the latter.

Kohlberg's emphasis is on cognitive and sequential develop-
ment with six stages to which he claims invariance, universality,
and hierarchiality. Kohlberg also emphasizes principle of
justice as the only valid universal criterion for moral develop-
ment.

The emphasis in White is that character development is
transformational, holistic, and actional. First, the basis for
character development is divine, not human. Her concept of char-
acter development is supernatural and transformational; that is
to say, God in response to man's faith in and acceptance of the
Christological provision for the problem of sin brings about a
radical change in man's life and creates a divine-human unity,
with God as the center of life and love as the activating
principle. Second, character development is holistic; it
revolutionizes the whole man and affects both what he is and what
he does in all the spheres of his existence now and in the here-
after. Third, character development is actional in that the
total behavioral and relational functions of man are in con-
gruence with the divine norm for character. Indeed the norm

¹Peck and Havighurst, Psychology of Character Develop-
ment, p. 4.
Itself is internalized in man as the principle of love becomes the motivating power of relationship and behavior. Thus a principled life, the love-motivated life, becomes the practical evidence of a transformed character.

**Perfection of character.** To White the ultimate objective of the divine-human unity in character development is the perfection of character—the restoration of the image of God in man. This theistic reference to perfection is naturally absent in the theorists surveyed. However, except for Hartshorne and May whose doctrine of specificity precludes any generalization of a distant goal for character development, all the theorists do stress an optimum goal for the process of character development.

Ligon's concern involves the maximization of human potential so as to achieve a completely integrated personality that expresses itself in unselfish service and full self-realization.

Peck and Havighurst aim at the ideal of rational altruism where ego is fully under control, internalized ethical principles become the controlling factor of behavior, and private values and public behavior are congruent.

Piaget stresses the goal of moral autonomy. By this he suggests that moral judgment must move away from the heteronomous tendency of recognizing only the external code to the wider area of human relationships that recognize morality as involving cooperation, motivation, universal sense of rights and needs, justice, and equity.
Kohlberg projects "The Universal Ethical Principle Orientation Stage" as the highest stage in moral judgment—a stage governed by the "universal principle of justice, of the reciprocity and equality of human rights, and of respect for the dignity of human beings as individual persons."\(^1\)

White believes that perfection of character, the state of godlikeness, is the ultimate goal of character development. Because man was created by God in His image and because the restoration of man to his original status is the objective of the divine provision for character development, the goal in character development cannot be anything less than the perfect reflection of God's character in man. White maintains that perfection of character involves the continual maintenance of the divine-human unity within man and is never a completed product incapable of further growth. Rather it is a life-long process, marked by growth and maturity and continual strengthening of, and behavioral conformity to, the internalized principle of love.

**Retrogression in character development.** The possibility of retrogression in character development is not dealt with by Hartshorne and May, Ligon, and Peck and Havighurst. The stage theories of Piaget and Kohlberg do not conceive of true regression in moral reasoning. Kohlberg, particularly, argues for invariant developmental sequence; that is, a person who has reached a higher stage does not normally reverse to a lower stage of moral reasoning.

\(^1\)See p. 64, above.
However, Kohlberg concedes the possibility of behavioral inconsistency; that is, a person's behavior may be of a lower stage than his reasoning.

White maintains that character retrogression is as real as character growth. Any tendency to offset god-centeredness in favor of self-centeredness, any tension in the divine-human unity, any failure to grow, or any tendency toward behavioral or relational nonconformity or inconsistency with the love-principle can lead to retrogression in character development.

Factors affecting character development

Hartshorne and May believe that home environment, peer influence, natural developmental process, level of intelligence, socio-economic background, and early childhood experience are important factors affecting character development. They do not believe, however, that religion and health are necessary factors in character development.

Ligon maintains that every experience a child is exposed to influences his character. In addition to the natural, familial, and social factors stressed by Hartshorne and May, Ligon finds religion, expressed in unselfish love and service to others, as an important factor. To him, religion, as the most important source of values, is an important factor in character development.

Peck and Havighurst stress home and peer influence to be crucial factors. Religion and social status are not stressed.

The role of peer influence is strongly emphasized by Piaget. The role of the adult world, however, is limited to
facilitate the physical, cognitive, and emotional maturation of the child. Piaget maintains that adult restraint in moral matters creates a conducive atmosphere for children to move toward self-regulation and moral autonomy.

Kohlberg finds that internal cognitive development and external cognitive stimulation are the key factors in moral development. Religion and culture do not play any major role, although cultural complexities and socio-economic opportunities are recognized as factors influencing the rate of moral development.

White emphasizes both personal and relational factors as influencing character development. In the first category, she recognizes adequate self-concept, heredity, environment, health, intelligence, and even dietary and work habits, inasmuch as they affect health and purposiveness in life, as factors influencing the growth of character. In the second category, she recognizes factors affecting one's relationship with God, such as Bible study, meditation, worship, and prayer, and factors affecting one's relationship with others, such as peer influence and unselfish service. To White, religion, in so far as it concerns the divine provision for man's character and the internalization of the principle of love as the motivating factor of man's relational and behavioral responses, is not just a factor in character development but the very basis of it.

Responsibility for character development

While all the theorists agree that character development is the responsibility primarily of the individual, the role of the
home and the school are stressed due to their influence during the impressive years of childhood and adolescence.

Hartshorne and May believe that home influence as seen in parental modeling plays a vital role in the development of consistency in a child's conduct. When home and school mutually reinforce each other, the influence on the moral conduct of the child is particularly strong. School influence, especially that of teachers, seems to be important, too.

Ligon defines the responsibility of the home and the school in terms of modeling and guidance in the formation of positive attitudes.

Peck and Havighurst view the school as a crystallizing agent that throws into sharper contrast the need for appropriate behavior. To them the home carries the chief responsibility, for they view character as being "predominantly shaped by the ultimate, emotionally powerful relationship between the child and parents within the family."\(^1\) They point to modeling, discipline, adequate home atmosphere, and trusting relationship within the family as important family responsibilities in character development.

To Piaget, the home and the school best meet their responsibilities by restraining the exercise of their traditional authoritarian roles, by providing for cognitive development, and by promoting relationships that would make the child perceive the need for cooperation and reciprocity.

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\(^1\) See p. 50, above.
Kohlberg is largely concerned with the responsibility of the school. He contends that schools should be reconstructed as little Platonic republics where a spirit of community, consensus, participation, and peer discussion would propel the cognitive-developmental process of moral judgment. Kohlberg argues that the responsibility of the school consists of constant exposure of students to (1) a higher stage of moral reasoning than the one they are in, and (2) situations that create cognitive disequilibrium in children and dissatisfaction in their present stage of thinking.

White's description of the responsibility of the home and the school are quite detailed. She recognizes the home to be a divinely ordained institution for the development of character in children. The responsibility of the parents begins even before parenthood. Prenatal and early childhood periods are stressed as most crucial in character formation, for it is during these formative years the foundation for a child's attitudes and relations are laid. This foundation is viewed by White as an agency upon which divine influences can cooperate in effecting character transformation and guiding character development toward the ultimate goal of godlikeness. White particularizes parental responsibilities in the areas of (1) providing adequate home atmosphere that includes love, security, and openness, (2) parental modeling, (3) purposive discipline, (4) teaching, and (5) guiding children to make appropriate choices.
While most of these areas are also applicable to the school, White delineates two specific responsibilities to educational institutions. First, teachers act as divine agents in the molding of character, and therefore they are to be selected on the grounds of character and spiritual maturity. Second, the curricular thrust of the school should be such that the youth may discover the source of character transformation and the factors that nurture character.

Conclusion

The investigation and analysis of the writings of White reveal that White holds a definite concept of character development. Several elements of her concept have been highlighted in all the character studies surveyed earlier: the importance of character to the individual and societal fulfillment; the influence of learning, maturation, cognition, heredity, environment, and peer relations on character development; and the foundational significance of early childhood training within an atmosphere of love, security, understanding, openness, discipline, and modeling.

Further, White's stand on love as the internalized principle of action and unselfish service as the outward expression of it are argued extensively by Ligon. Her concept of love is inclusive enough to emphasize the need for justice in human conduct which Kohlberg stresses. Her constant plea for the internalization of the love principle dissolves the legalistic issue of obedience to the letter of the law and stresses the concerns of
both moral freedom and moral responsibility of man, aspects of which are pertinent to Piaget.

Yet, White's concept is unique and more inclusive. It differs from other approaches in several areas: the holistic understanding of character; the teleological importance ascribed to character; the location of the norm of character outside the human situation; the idea of ultimate evaluation of character in the context of divine judgment; the means of character development recognizing the divine provision and empowering, on the one hand, and human faith and acceptance, on the other; the importance of spiritual nurture factors, such as study of the Bible, meditation, prayer, worship, and love-oriented service; and the integration of character, with God as the center of life and love as the internalized principle of action.

In short, White's concept of character development is built around her faith and belief that man's moral dilemma can find its ultimate solution only in God's self-disclosure and redemptive activity in the person of Christ. Her concept of character development, then, is distinctly a Christian one, involving what she regards as nonnegotiable fundamentals, namely: (1) man was created by God in His image and is accountable to Him; (2) as a result of sin, man is morally and spiritually depraved and is incapable of achieving character development by his own power; (3) God has provided the answer for man's moral and spiritual problems by answering the problem of sin through the revelation of Christ; and (4) as man accepts by faith this
provision of God, he enters into a new relationship with God, and this God-man relationship becomes the basis of character development.

Thus the concept of character development found in the writings of White recognizes its basis in God's Christological provision, its function in man's response of faith and acceptance, and its verifiability in the love-principled behavioral and relational functions of man. In respect to this concept, the following conclusions are drawn, answering the subproblems presented in the first chapter of this study.

The Meaning and Significance of Character

According to White, character is not just an inventory of actions performed or a description of moral intent, freedom, or reasoning, but the measure of an internalized principle that gives motivation, coherence, consistency, and direction to the total relational and behavioral functions of man. The construct of character includes what a man is—his motives, feelings, and thoughts—and what he does—his actions and habits—in respect to his relational nature that includes his relationship to God, man, and himself. A man's character is coherent, consistent, and ultimately directional only as he possesses an integrating center and a sense of ultimate destiny. White maintains that integration and ultimacy are to be found in a theistic understanding of life, with God as the center of life and godlikeness the ultimate objective of character development.
White considers character to be of supreme importance in that its development is related to the fulfillment of divine purpose in history, the vindication of the ultimate validity of Christian faith through the restoration of human character to divine likeness, the optimum realization of human potential and worth, fitness for life's responsibilities and relationships, and the finality of human destiny in a life beyond the immediate.

Since godlikeness is the goal to be reached in character development, White maintains that the norm for evaluating human character is the character of God, revealed in the life and teachings of Jesus, the Bible, and the law of God. The sum and substance of God's character is love, and this requires the internalization of the love principle. Thus unreserved and unselfish love to God and man, expressing itself in adequate relationship with and service to both as particularized in the law of God, becomes the test of character, the ultimate evaluation of which will be carried out by the judgment of God.

The Nature of Character Development

White maintains that due to the problem of sin man cannot fully develop his character. The only adequate means for character development is found in God's initiative of grace, revealed in the activity of Christ and in the empowering of the Holy Spirit. White believes that God's self-disclosure and redemptive activity in Christ is the answer to the problem of sin. When man responds in faith, and, by the exercise of his will, chooses to accept this provision, his sin problem finds its solution, and he enters into
a new relationship with God. In this new relationship, the Holy Spirit actualizes within man a new moral taste, a new motive power. The transforming power of God's Spirit touches deep into the affective, the cognitive, and the spiritual bases of man and brings about a total change so that man's behavioral and relational functions come under a new discipline under which the priority of self is brought under control in favor of the imperatives of God-centeredness.

White recognizes that this supernatural source and method of operation in character development are beyond human understanding and investigation; nevertheless, she insists that they are real and verifiable in individual experience of faith.

Consequent to this spiritual transformation, a divine-human partnership is established; and a unity between divine will and human will is brought about, so that self ceases to be the center of life and God becomes the integrating center, around which motives, feelings, thoughts, actions, habits—the entire construct of character—are rearranged. As a result of this God-centeredness, man's basis of action is no longer the self, but the internalized principle of godlikeness, namely, love. Thus the divine-human unity brought about as a result of man's faith in, and acceptance of, the divine provision assures man to exist, relate, and function on a principled level, making character development possible.

As man continues to grow and mature in this faith relationship with God, as he continually maintains the divine-human
partnership that has enthroned God as the center of life, and as the internalization of love principle continues to be reflected in his relational and behavioral responses, perfection of character becomes his privilege. But perfection is not the work of a moment. It is a continual and progressive process, the discipline of a lifetime. An interruption in this process can cause retrogression in character development. Interruption may be due to a failure to grow and mature, a tension in the divine-human unity within man, affecting the integrity of God-centeredness, or a tendency to overlook or violate any relational or behavioral demands of the love principle.

Factors Affecting Character Development

While recognizing that character development and perfection are possible only within the perspective of divine provision and human response to that provision, White, nevertheless, points out the influence of several personal and relational factors on character development as preparatory to, and/or nurturing of, the divine-human unity. The personal factors are an adequate self-concept, an understanding of hereditary and environmental influence, health, intelligence, dietary habits, and purposive vocation. The relational factors stress the importance of one's relationship with God and man; under the former, the nurturing factors include Bible study, meditation, worship, and prayer; under the latter, the factors include peer relations and unselfish service. The influence of these factors is viewed in terms of their effect on the maintenance of a healthy body, vigorous mind, and active and adequate
relationship with God and man, thus committing the whole man to the task of character development.

Responsibility for Character Development

The ultimate responsibility for character development rests on each individual who alone must exercise his volition in response to divine provision and requirements for character development, and who alone is personally accountable to God. But White maintains that the home and the school share a major responsibility in character education of children, thus laying a foundation upon which divine influences can operate. The responsibility of parents includes adequate prenatal and early childhood care, positive modeling, purposive discipline, teaching, maintaining loving, secure, and open home atmosphere, and providing adequate choice-making opportunities. The responsibility of the school includes recruitment of teachers, whose commitment to character development is validated by personal experience, and a deliberate, planned, character-oriented curriculum.

Recommendations

Having studied the concept of character development in the writings of Ellen G. White, it is now appropriate to present the following recommendations and suggestions.

1. Inasmuch as the Seventh-day Adventist school system claims to have its philosophy and practice founded and rooted in the writings of White, it is recommended that studies be undertaken to translate White's concept of, and emphasis on, character
development into identifiable curricular particulars for character education at home and school.

2. Inasmuch as White views the significance of character in terms of the fulfillment of the divine plan of history climaxing with the second coming of Christ, and inasmuch as the second coming of Christ is a fundamental doctrine of the Seventh-day Adventist church, it is recommended that the church evaluate its religious educational programs, such as Sabbath Schools, family life programs, early childhood education, youth activities, and Bible teaching in terms of their impact on character development.

3. Inasmuch as White's concept of character is Christian in nature, it is recommended that studies be undertaken to conceptualize a distinctly biblical concept of character so as to further contribute to the formation of a Christian theory of character as a viable alternative or supplement to other theories.

4. It is recommended that investigations be undertaken to examine certain theoretic claims involved in White's concept, particularly her belief that several personal and relational factors (such as, self-concept, heredity, environment, intelligence, health, diet, work, meditation, peer relations, and service) influence character development.

5. Finally, it is suggested that studies be conducted to examine the relationship, if any, between White's concept of character development and her philosophy of education, religion, history, and family living.
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