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Andrews University

School of Education

AIMS OF EDUCATION IN THE WRITINGS OF ELLEN WHITE

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Erling Bernhard Snorrason

June 2005

UMI Number: 3182015

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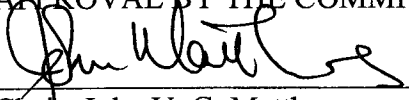
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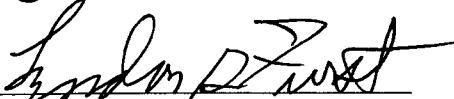
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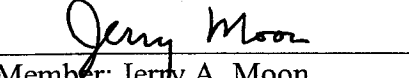
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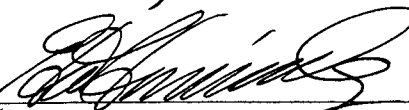
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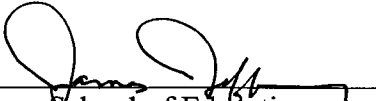
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ABSTRACT

AIMS OF EDUCATION IN THE WRITINGS OF ELLEN G. WHITE

by

Erling Bernhard Snorrason

Chair: John V. G. Matthews

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

School of Education

Title: AIMS OF EDUCATION IN THE WRITINGS OF ELLEN G. WHITE

Name of researcher: Erling Bernhard Snorrason

Name and degree of faculty chair: John V. G. Matthews, Ph.D.

Date completed: June 2005

Problem

Ellen White's educational philosophy and its application to the aims of education have not been systematically or thoroughly addressed within the parameters and demands of a graduate thesis. The present dissertation explores the aims of education, especially the ultimate aims of education, in the writings of Ellen G. White, one of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and could be of value in assessing the present Seventh-day Adventist educational enterprise.

Method

This dissertation is a description and an analysis of Ellen White's concept of education as revealed by her understanding of the aims of education. It is a documentary

study, an attempt to identify, describe, analyze, and evaluate White's statements on the aims of education on the basis of her general philosophy, with a special emphasis on epistemology. For a selected context, the educational ideas of Herbert Spencer, John Dewey, and the Manual Education movements were examined.

Conclusions

The study reveals that the ultimate aims of education in the thinking of Spencer and Dewey were focused on the "complete living" and the maximum development and growth of the individual and society. These were based on their ultimate epistemological aim, namely, science, that is, scientific knowledge obtained by the scientific method. White's ultimate aim of education is the restoration of the image of God in the human being. The chief elements in her concept of the image of God are freedom of choice, dignity, individuality, and a character of love expressed in unselfish service to God and fellow human beings. Such character includes the development of the whole being for service. The ultimate epistemological aim of education, a personal and experiential knowledge of God, is indispensable to the ultimate metaphysical and axiological educational aim, the restoration of the image of God in the human being. This ultimate aim of education is not static, but dynamic. The human being will reflect this image, the glory of God, more and more fully throughout eternity.

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PREFACE

The aims of education, clearly stated, indispensably guide the educational enterprise¹ the way a rudder steers a ship. All educational systems need, and usually have, statements of objectives or mission. Some statements can be comprehensive and include the ultimate aims of education as well as the short- and mid-range goals and objectives. Others may be short, concise, and specifically oriented towards select aspects of the education offered. In both cases, the clearer the aims, the more likely these aims will be reached. The aims and objectives of education not only determine the content of education, they also give direction, motivation, and criteria for the evaluation of the educational enterprise.²

Almost all educational work includes aims for obtaining knowledge. It is difficult to conceive of any educational endeavor which, if not directly engaged in developing and transmitting knowledge, does not at least involve knowledge in some form at some stage. Israel Scheffler noted that “the development and transmission of knowledge are fundamental tasks of education, while analysis of its nature and warrant falls to that

¹George F. Kneller, “The Relevance of Philosophy,” in *Foundations of Education*, 3rd ed., ed. George F. Kneller (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1971), 201-202.

²John S. Brubacher, *Modern Philosophies of Education*, 4th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969), 95.

branch of philosophy known as epistemology, or theory of knowledge.”¹ Thus the epistemological aspects of the aims of education, how knowledge and truth relate to the aims, are of considerable interest and provide a connection between the aims, the curriculum, and the instructional methods.

The philosophy of education necessarily precedes educational psychology, methodology, and sociology. It is crucial for the true success of the educational process. Its primacy is undisputed and its significance cannot be overestimated.² Kneller maintains that “scientific theories do not carry direct educational implications; they cannot be applied to educational practice without first being examined philosophically.”³ The philosophy of education and the educational philosopher are indispensable to a successful educational enterprise in the same way the builder does not successfully build a house without blueprints, and blueprints are not developed without an architect.

The aims of education have been the subject of educational philosophers throughout the history of mankind. In a paper, “Learner Outcomes: Past, Present, and Future,” developed for the National Center for Research in Vocational Education by Kathryn Pearce and others pursuant to a grant with the Office of Vocational and Adult Education, U. S. Department of Education, the authors presented several goals for education. They examined the work of educational researchers such as John Dewey,

¹Israel Scheffler, *Conditions of Knowledge: An Introduction to Epistemology and Education* (Chicago: Scott, Foresman, 1965), 1.

²T. H. B. Hollins, ed., *Aims in Education: The Philosophic Approach* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1964), viii.

³Kneller, 202.

Decker F. Walker, Jonas F. Soltis, TheodoreSizer, John Goodlad, Ernest L. Boyer, Robert Mager, and William Spady, and observed that “throughout history, educators have identified various goals for education: prepare students for life, prepare an elite group of students for entry into higher education, prepare youth for social change, and ensure national purpose.”¹

Since the National Commission on Excellence in Education report, *A Nation at Risk*, in 1983, educators are showing greater interest in the aims of the educational system. According to Pearce and her fellow researchers, Goodlad has identified four divisions of educational goals: Academic, vocational, social and civic, and personal. Sizer sees two distinct goals: Education of the intellect and character education; Walker and Soltis suggest three basic aims of education: Cultivating knowledge, sustaining and improving society, and fostering the well-being of the individual.²

Mildred L. Burns refers to educators such as Henry Giroux, Maxine Greene, and Elliot Eisner stating that they “argue for an orientation toward moral, ethical, and humanistic purpose.”³ This is, however, not necessarily uppermost in the minds of the public. Burns goes on to cite the *Phi Delta Kappan* Gallup Polls where economic

¹Kathryn Pearce et al., “Learner Outcomes: Past, Present, and Future,” in *New Designs for the Comprehensive High School*, vol. 2 (Berkeley, CA: National Center for Research in Vocational Education, 1992), abstract. The group of educators to which Pearce here refers were prominent thought leaders spanning the twentieth century American education, and consequently education all round the world has been significantly influenced by some of these individuals.

²Ibid.

³Mildred L. Burns, *Values Based Planning for Quality Education* (Lancaster, PA: Technomic, 1995), 18.

concerns seem to be very important. The reasons parents stated for wanting their children to get a good education included “job opportunities/better job; preparation for life/better life; financial security/economic stability; and better paying job.” Percentages of parents responding with this series of reasons increased from 1986 to 1988. The percentages were 77 percent in 1986 and 88 percent in 1989.¹

This raises questions such as: How do these aims compare with the educational aims in the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century when the majority of the present-day educational institutions in the United States and Western Europe were established? Have those aims been attained? Are they still valid? Or, are there more important aims?

Among the many respected writers on education in the Western world in the nineteenth century was Ellen G. White (1827-1915) who not only wrote extensively on the matter of education but also played a significant role in the establishment of several colleges in the United States and one in Australia.

White was one of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist church, which now has some 14 million members in 200 countries and operates the largest Protestant school system in the world. The statistics as of December 31, 2004, reveal that this school system comprises 101 colleges and universities, 37 training schools, 1,386 secondary schools, and 5,322 elementary schools—a total of 6,846 schools. The 1,295,532 students

¹Ibid.

are served by faculty and staff of 64,982 individuals.¹

In addition to its educational enterprise, ranging from elementary schools to universities and forming a worldwide system of education, the Seventh-day Adventist Church operates other programs that are educational in nature, such as the Sabbath School, Health and Temperance programs, Home and Family ministries, and Youth societies. Various magazines and journals as well as study guides are an integral part of these programs. A strong publishing work further augments these educational activities.

Since its inception, the Seventh-day Adventist educational system has looked to the writings of Ellen White for guidance and for its philosophy of education. She wrote prolifically on many aspects of education both on fundamental principles and also on its practical and organizational aspects. Considering that her corpus of educational writing created the world's second most extensive Christian parochial educational system after that of the Roman Catholic Church, her views on the aims of education should be of interest to educators in both the Christian community and public sectors.

Statement of the Problem

Although Ellen White is quoted extensively on educational topics, her educational philosophy and its application to the aims of education have not been systematically or thoroughly addressed within the parameters and demands of a graduate thesis in the context of contemporary educational ideas.

¹*Report of the Department of Education* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, 2004), table 1.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of the present study is to identify, describe, analyze, and evaluate the aims of education in the writings of Ellen White, primarily the ultimate aims of education. The study identifies what White considered were the sources and functions of those aims. An important part of the study is to gain an understanding of White's basic philosophy, particularly the epistemological foundations of her educational aims.

Justification of the Study

This study furnishes in a convenient research-based format, not only the normative guidelines of White's writings on education, but also provides an evaluative instrument for assessing the present Seventh-day Adventist educational enterprise.

Scope and Delimitations

This study does not purport to be an exhaustive collection of isolated statements on the aims of education from the writings of Ellen White. It will be a comprehensive presentation of Ellen White's educational concepts with reference to White's general philosophy. No attempt will be made to create a detailed taxonomy of objectives; rather the broad categories of the aims will be identified.

Educational philosophy must be rooted in an overall philosophy and it expresses itself significantly in epistemology because education is intimately bound to knowledge, the nature of truth, how truth and knowledge are attained, and how these affect the learner. Thus the analysis will explore White's basic philosophical outlook and presuppositions, and in particular the relationships between her educational aims and the

nature of her conception of knowledge and truth.

Much educational philosophy takes a normative approach, that is, what should be done in education. Normative theory is about aims, principles, methods, and curriculum. In White's writings one would expect to find mostly normative statements on education rather than descriptive or analytical statements because she saw herself as a guide to the nascent Seventh-day Adventist Church.

In discussing the implications of her educational aims the primary focus will be the student and how education affects his or her life and ultimate destiny. While the investigation will be limited primarily to those writings that contain Ellen White's major statements on education, significant contributions to the topic found elsewhere in her writings will be included. Similarly, the examination of White's basic philosophy will be limited to her major works, although important insights from her other writings will be included.

Methodology and Sources

This dissertation is a description and an analysis of Ellen White's concept of education as revealed by her understanding of the aims of education. It is a documentary study, an attempt to identify, describe, analyze, and evaluate White's statements on the aims of education.

The main ideas of Ellen White on education are found in the following writings, for most of which the original publication dates are earlier than shown here: *The Adventist*

Home;¹ *Child Guidance*;² *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*;³ *Education*;⁴ *Fundamentals of Christian Education*;⁵ *Mind, Character, and Personality*, volumes 1 and 2.⁶ Another source of considerable interest is White's correspondence, especially in the 1890s when she was heavily involved in the establishment of the Avondale College in Australia, a school she regarded as a model school for other Seventh-day Adventist colleges.

For the exploration of White's basic philosophy, three major areas of her writings are particularly fruitful: Her five-volume Conflict of the Ages series: *Patriarchs and*

¹Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home: Counsels to Seventh-day Adventist Families as Set Forth in the Writings of Ellen G. White* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing, 1952).

²Ellen G. White, *Child Guidance: Counsels to Seventh-day Adventist Parents as Set Forth in the Writings of Ellen G. White* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing, 1954).

³Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students Regarding Christian Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1913).

⁴Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1903).

⁵Ellen G. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing, 1923).

⁶Ellen G. White, *Mind, Character, and Personality*, 2 vols. (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing, 1977).

Prophets;¹ *Prophets and Kings*;² *The Desire of Ages*;³ *The Acts of the Apostles*;⁴ and *The Great Controversy*;⁵ her *Testimonies for the Church* in nine volumes;⁶ and her articles in the *Review and Herald*, the *Signs of the Times*, and the *Youth's Instructor*. The Conflict of the Ages series is a monumental work on the history and plan of salvation presented in the light of the great controversy theme, that is, the cosmic conflict between Christ and Satan. The *Testimonies* span Ellen White's entire lifetime ministry for the Church and her articles, as well as the *Testimonies*, reveal the lifelong development of her philosophy. Additionally, White held the view that "in the highest sense the work of education and the work of redemption are one."⁷ This statement is in harmony with her belief that restoring the image of God in the human being "was to be the work of redemption. This is the object of education, the great object of life."⁸ In light of these statements, the books

¹Ellen G. White, *The Story of Patriarchs and Prophets As Illustrated in the Lives of Holy Men of Old* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1958).

²Ellen G. White, *The Story of Prophets and Kings as Illustrated in the Captivity and Restoration of Israel* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1917).

³Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages: The Conflict of the Ages Illustrated in the Life of Christ* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1940).

⁴Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles in the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911).

⁵Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan: The Conflict of the Ages in the Christian Dispensation* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911).

⁶Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9 vols. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific, 1948).

⁷White, *Education*, 30.

⁸*Ibid.*, 16.

Christ's Object Lessons;¹ *Steps to Christ*;² and *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*,³ which deal with the teachings and saving mission of the Redeemer, yield rich material on White's basic ideas on redemption. These ideas provide further understanding of her aims of education.

In order to provide context and background to the present study, the times of Ellen White are surveyed, and the aims of education in America and Western Europe in the period between 1865 and 1915 are selectively explored for comparison and context. Of particular interest are the ideas of John Dewey, Herbert Spencer, and the Manual Training Movement, the Vocational Education Movement, and their roots in the Manual Labor Movement.

Review of Literature

A considerable body of literature, especially articles, on White's educational ideas deals primarily with curriculum, methodology, location of schools, and other practical issues. The aims of education have received scant consideration and when they did they often were in the form of quotations without much analysis. The review that follows identifies the major secondary works that deal with the aims, as well as some that discuss the aims in a wider context.

¹Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1941).

²Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1908).

³Ellen G. White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1956).

E. A. Sutherland, a contemporary of Ellen White, was an educational reformer who emphasized many of the educational concepts of White in his book *Living Fountains or Broken Cisterns*¹ and quoted her several times in his later book *Studies in Christian Education*² without treating her statements on the aims of education in any systematic way.

In 1949 E. M. Cadwallader published his *Principles of Education in the Writings of Ellen G. White*.³ It contains more than nine thousand excerpts from White's writings. These are divided into 208 sections of which one is devoted to the aims of education. The section presents eighteen principles supported by one or more statements from White's writings. Of these some are repetitious and Cadwallader made no attempt to categorize them as to which were immediate and intermediate goals supportive of an ultimate aim of education. The summary at the end of the book is made up of twenty-eight statements that are not grouped in such subdivisions as aims, curriculum, methods, nor is any historical context given. Cadwallader's later book, *History of Seventh-day Adventist Education*,⁴ however, supplies historical context.

Frederick E. J. Harder's doctoral dissertation "Revelation, a Source of Knowledge,

¹Edward A. Sutherland, *Living Fountains or Broken Cisterns* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1900).

²Edward A. Sutherland, *Studies in Christian Education* (Madison, TN: Nashville Agricultural and Normal Institute, 1952).

³Edward M. Cadwallader, *Principles of Education in the Writings of Ellen G. White* (Lincoln, NE: Union College, 1949).

⁴Edward M. Cadwallader, *History of Seventh-day Adventist Education* (Lincoln, NE: Union College, 1958).

as Conceived by Ellen G. White,”¹ is a thorough investigation of a significant element in White’s epistemological concepts. These concepts are important foundational aspects of educational ideas such as sources and nature of knowledge and truth, which, in turn, are closely related to aims of education.

An M.A. thesis by A. Leroy Moore, “A Study of Ellen G. White’s Concept of the Nature of Man as It Relates to the Objective of Bible Teaching,”² is a detailed study of 284 pages which discusses at length White’s understanding of the objectives of Bible teaching. It sheds light on White’s aims and objectives of religious education.

In his doctoral dissertation “Effectiveness of the Curriculum of Seventh-day Adventist Secondary Schools,”³ Reuben L. Hilde discusses basic Seventh-day Adventist viewpoints on education, among these the purpose and aims of education. He relies heavily on White’s writings and states in his summary that “a basic purpose beyond the development of the person is the individual’s commitment to Christian service.”⁴

Andrew N. Nelson and Reuben G. Manalaysay, assisted by students and teachers of Philippine Union College, Mountain View College, and Loma Linda University, edited

¹Frederick E. J. Harder, “Revelation, a Source of Knowledge, as Conceived by Ellen G. White” (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1960).

²A. Leroy Moore, “A Study of Ellen G. White’s Concept of the Nature of Man as It Relates to the Objective of Bible Teaching” (M.A. thesis, Walla Walla College, 1966).

³Reuben L. Hilde, “Effectiveness of the Curriculum of Seventh-day Adventist Secondary Schools” (Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California, 1970).

⁴Ibid., 56.

The Gist of Christian Education.¹ It is basically selections from the writings of Ellen White arranged into twenty-one topical units. One of those units deals with the aims of Christian education and consists of forty-seven excerpts. At the end of the unit there is a ten-point summary. However, no systematic treatment of the goal-statements and no historical context are furnished.

In his book *Adventist Education at the Crossroads*,² Raymond Moore discusses Ellen White's principles of education, mainly the implementation of educational methods and principles that would ensure the harmonious development of the physical, mental, and spiritual powers, which in turn would accomplish the ultimate goal of education, godliness. The book's heaviest emphasis is on a work-study program with preference for agricultural pursuits. The methodology rather than the aims of education are the primary focus of the book.

John M. Fowler's dissertation, "The Concept of Character Development in the Writings of Ellen G. White,"³ is significant as it deals with an important aim of education, namely, character development.

Milton R. Hook's dissertation "The Avondale School and Adventist Educational

¹Andrew N. Nelson and Reuben G. Manalaysay, *The Gist of Christian Education* (Riverside, CA: Loma Linda University, 1971).

²Raymond Moore, *Adventist Education at the Crossroads* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1976).

³John M. Fowler, "The Concept of Character Development in the Writings of Ellen G. White" (Ed.D. diss., Andrews University, 1977).

Goals 1894-1900"¹ gives a fairly detailed account of the educational goals of some of the pioneers of Adventist education, especially those of Ellen White. The goals are carefully discussed in a historical context of the establishment of the Avondale School in Australia, a school which White regarded in its earliest years as a model school for other Adventist schools.

A thesis, "The Educational Writings of Ellen White as a Standard for Adelpian Academy,"² was presented by Robert Rice to Wayne State University in 1979. Practically the whole work is a collection of excerpts from the writings of White arranged topically in 115 sections. One section "Educational Goals, Aims, and Duties of Students" consists of a string of thirty excerpts, with no subheadings or categorization. And, as in so many other works of similar nature, there is no reference to historical context, and no contextual discussion.

In the book, *Myths in Adventism: An Interpretive Study of Ellen White, Education, and Related Issues*,³ George R. Knight devotes a chapter to purposes and aims of education entitled "Myths about Educational Purpose." The discussion about the aims of education centers on statements from the writings of Ellen White. The chapter is neatly organized and divided into four subsections, namely, the central role of purpose in

¹Milton R. Hook, "The Avondale School and Adventist Educational Goals 1894-1900" (Ed.D. diss., Andrews University, 1978).

²Robert Rice, "The Educational Writings of Ellen White as a Standard for Adelpian Academy" (Unpublished thesis, Wayne State University, 1979).

³George R. Knight, *Myths in Adventism: An Interpretive Study of Ellen White, Education, and Related Issues* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1985).

education, and primary, secondary, and ultimate aims of education. The scope of the book, however, does not allow for an in-depth analysis of White's epistemological foundations of the aims of education.

The Department of Education of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists has issued a number of educational leaflets, one of which, no. 47, is entitled "Philosophy and Objectives of Seventh-day Adventist Education."¹ It deals with objectives of education both general and specific educational objectives. More up-to-date treatment of the same can be found in the various education codes of the several union conferences of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Western world. A good example of these is the "Lake Union Conference Education Code"² prepared by the Office of Education of the Lake Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. It discusses extensively the philosophy, basic assumptions, and aims of education. Both the leaflet and the Education Code refer to the writings of Ellen White. These leaflets from the General Conference Department of Education and the various Education Codes of the Unions are excellent sources of how the Seventh-day Adventist Church has officially viewed, understood, and applied the educational philosophy of Ellen White and her aims of education. These leaflets and Education Codes are, however, not written as scholarly studies on White's educational concepts.

¹General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Department of Education, *Philosophy and Objectives of Seventh-day Adventist Education* (Washington, DC: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Department of Education, 1952).

²Lake Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Office of Education, *Lake Union Conference Education Code* (Berrien Springs, MI: Lake Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Office of Education, 1992).

Articles touching upon the aims of education have also appeared from time to time in the official organ of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the *Adventist Review* (formerly the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, often referred to, for short, as the *Review and Herald*), as well as the *Journal of Adventist Education* and other periodicals. These articles and the Education Codes frequently quote the writings of Ellen White. Although they do not treat the aims of education in a systematic way, they do reflect the understanding Adventist educators have of White's educational objectives. Examples of such articles are: "The Challenge of Change";¹ "Shaping Curriculum in an Adventist College";² and "Goals of the Undergraduate Experience: A Christian Perspective."³

In 1988 the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America launched Project Affirmation. The purpose of this project was to establish clear guidelines for the future of Adventist education, and also to initiate plans to achieve the proposed agenda. Besides the report of the Project Affirmation taskforces, *Risk and Promise*,⁴ there are reports of the Valuegenesis Study launched in 1989.⁵ According to its subtitle, the Valuegenesis

¹Frederick E. J. Harder, "The Challenge of Change," *Journal of Adventist Education* 47 (1985): 13-14, 48-49.

²Frederick E. J. Harder, "Shaping Curriculum in an Adventist College," *Journal of Adventist Education* 50 (1987): 4-6, 31.

³Betty Howard, "Goals of the Undergraduate Experience: A Christian Perspective," *Journal of Adventist Education* 50 (1987): 26-27, 39.

⁴Marilyn J. Thomsen, *Risk & Promise: A Report of the Project Affirmation Taskforces* (Silver Spring, MD: Seventh-day Adventist Church North American Division Office of Education, 1990).

⁵See Peter L. Benson and Michael J. Donahue, *Valuegenesis: Report 1: A Study of the Influence of Family, Church, and School on the Faith, Values, and Commitment of*

study was “a study of the influence of family, church and school on the faith, values and commitment of Adventist youth.” The reports do speak about the aims of Adventist education, but the greatest emphasis is on assessing the effectiveness of home, church, and school to transmit the spiritual heritage and nurture the faith. On education, the important issue was ensuring academic quality along with developing character and religious faith and preparing for a successful life of service.

Many of the studies and documents reviewed above treat parts of the topic of the present study. None of them do so to the extent the present study does. Some of the studies are comprehensive, but lack depth, context, and analysis. Others have more depth and provide historical context, but have a narrow focus. Still others touch upon the aims as a part of a bigger discussion. As there is currently no comprehensive, in-depth analysis and contextual treatment of Ellen White’s aims of education the proposed dissertation is hopefully a significant contribution to the field of education and to Adventist education in particular.

Design of the Study

The study will be organized both chronologically and topically. The selective historical overview of the aims of education in the United States and in Western Europe will be organized chronologically. The main body of the research, that is, Ellen White’s philosophy and worldview, the aims of education in the writings of Ellen White, and the

Adventist Youth (Minneapolis, MN: Search Institute, 1990) and, idem, *Valuegenesis: Report 3: A Study of the Influence of Family, Church, and School on the Faith, Values, and Commitment of Adventist Youth* (Minneapolis, MN: Search Institute, 1991).

evaluation and conclusions, will be organized topically.

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CHAPTER I
A SKETCH OF THE LIFE AND
TIMES OF ELLEN WHITE

Introduction

Educational aims presuppose a philosophy or a worldview comprised of beliefs about the nature of reality, concepts of truth and knowledge, and of ethical principles and aesthetic values. Usually, an individual's worldview comes through observation and analysis, and is influenced by parental and societal norms, values, and belief systems. A brief look at White's life and times will furnish a valuable background to the development of her worldview.

Early Hometown Environment

The environment of White's childhood and youth was New England, specifically, Portland, Maine. She was born Ellen Gould Harmon, November 26, 1827, in Gorham, Maine, but as a child she moved with her parents to Portland, Maine,¹ which was her hometown until her marriage to James White in 1846.²

¹Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1915), 17.

²Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, vol. 1, *The Early Years: 1827-1862* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1985), 22-113.

In a concise essay, Frederick Hoyt gives informative glimpses of Portland, a busy and rapidly growing seaport which in 1840 had a population of over 15,000. The city had a progressive public school system with eight primary schools, “all taught by women, and with women principal-teachers,” four “monitorial,” schools, two for girls and two for boys, and an English high school for young men. The curriculum of the English high school included “reading, spelling, writing, arithmetic, geography, English grammar, natural philosophy, bookkeeping, algebra, geometry, surveying, Latin, Greek, history, and chemistry.”¹

Religion played a significant role in the lives of Portland’s citizens. In the 1840s one could find several churches and chapels in town, even a “Second Advent” congregation of Millerites. Besides the benevolent activities of the churches, Portland had charitable organizations that assisted widows, orphans, the poor, and the sick. Temperance organizations were numerous and Portland, with a significant African-American population (about one tenth), was decidedly anti-slavery. This may have been a reflection of the city’s Puritan heritage, although that heritage had waned by the 1840s. By that time “local newspapers regularly contained announcements and advertisements for a variety of entertainments and amusements.”²

The public lecture was popular, both as entertainment and as a form of culture and enlightenment. Of particular interest to the present study are the ideas presented in

¹Frederick Hoyt, “Ellen White’s Hometown: Portland, Maine, 1827-1846,” in *The World of Ellen G. White*, ed. Gary Land (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1987), 14-16.

²*Ibid.*, 20-22.

lectures on “the gospel of Grahamism.” They advocated, among other things, vegetarianism; the use of whole-grain products; abstaining from coffee, tea, alcohol, tobacco, and drugs; eating simply and moderately without the use of spices; exercise and frequent bathing; fresh air and sunshine; and dress reform.¹ Later, in her health reform messages, White held similar views.

In and around Portland, the main sources of livelihood were “agriculture, lumbering, fishing, shipbuilding, maritime trade, and a variety of small industries and businesses.”² As the largest city in the state, the main port and center of commerce, Portland was far from a quiet country town. It was bustling with shipping and trade, and was exposed to the high risks of maritime activities, including fishing. The North Atlantic was a dangerous workplace. Every year not a few lost their lives at sea. Hoyt pointed out that this was “dramatically illustrated by the shocking number of widows these men left behind.”³

Concluding his essay on Ellen White’s hometown, Hoyt characterized her immediate and New England environment as harsh and one of “religious fervor, a passionate search for truth, stubborn independence, Spartan toughness, resourcefulness, frugality, sturdy individualism, and a propensity to adopt and fight for unpopular causes.”⁴

¹Ibid., 22.

²Ibid., 29.

³Ibid., 30-31.

⁴Ibid., 31.

The Religious Landscape

Early in the nineteenth century, the Eastern United States was engulfed in the great revival called the Second Great Awakening (preceded by the Great Awakening of the 1730s and 1740s). Following the establishment of the United States of America came the disestablishment of the churches. Some feared that churches would not prosper without the support of the state. Religion, however, was soon found to be alive and well. Jonathan Butler stated that “under the experiment of religious freedom, Protestantism thrived and triumphed in establishing itself as the culture-shaping religious force in American life. Between 1800 and 1835 the nation’s church membership doubled as a result of the revivals.”¹

The Congregational, Presbyterian, and Episcopalian churches were the dominant churches during the Colonial period. But this would change in the nineteenth century. An important part of the revival was to reach the common people. Also, the need of frontier people could not be met by aristocratic churches using formally trained clergy because of the cost and the time the formal training took. This gave rise to the “people’s churches—especially the Methodists and Baptists. . . . By midcentury the Baptists and the Methodists would be by far the largest Protestant denominations in America. . . . It was truly a century for the expansion of the common people’s religion.”²

Although these denominations varied in doctrinal beliefs and organizational

¹Jonathan Butler, “When America Was ‘Christian,’” in *The World of Ellen G. White*, ed. Gary Land (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1987), 100-101.

²George R. Knight, *Ellen White’s World: A Fascinating Look at the Times in Which She Lived* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1998), 51-53.

structure, they were united in their efforts to “Protestantize” America. The revival spread through various avenues, such as missionary organizations, Bible and tract societies, education societies engaged in building colleges and seminaries for the training of missionaries, and humanitarian groups working toward moral and social reforms. The camp meeting was one of the most powerful instruments in the earlier stages of the Awakening, and the circuit-riding Methodist missionary was probably the greatest proof of the evangelistic zeal of the times.¹ William Miller’s premillennial message and the Millerite crusade were “the final segment of the Awakening,” or, at least “an extension of it.”² Miller expected Christ’s advent, or second coming, in 1843-44. His meetings in the evangelical churches in the late 1830s and early 1840s revived “the sagging evangelistic thrust of the Second Great Awakening.” Its peak, or “the maximum point in gains (of church members in several denominations) occurred at the exact time that Miller expected Christ’s advent.”³

The second half of the nineteenth century saw the rise of Mormonism and modern spiritualism, adding a new and distinct flavor to the religious scene. The influx of Catholic immigrants from Ireland and Germany was the beginning of the erosion of the Protestant domination both ethnically and religiously.⁴ Anti-Catholicism increased as the Catholic Church grew from being the fifth-largest denomination in the United States in

¹Butler, 101-102.

²Knight, 23.

³Ibid., 23.

⁴Butler, 105.

1840, to being the largest in 1850.¹ At the same time, the Seventh-day Adventist Church was coming upon the stage.

After the American Civil War, there were even greater changes in the demographic landscape. “By 1900, out of a population of 75 million, one third of Americans were either of foreign birth or children of foreign-born parents. Most of these new Americans were Catholic, Jewish, or Eastern Orthodox.”² The Protestant domination was not only further eroded, but other changes were taking place that would fundamentally alter the Protestant religion. The intellectual climate shifted radically as Darwinism, in one form or another, became generally accepted, not only by the intellectuals and secular people, but also by the churches. In addition, the so-called “higher criticism” followed with its critical or scientific study of the Scriptures. The view that the Bible is divinely inspired was rejected by significant numbers of the intelligentsia and it was regarded as just another human work to be studied and analyzed. These new ideas were not accepted by all the churches, but they paved the way for Protestant liberalism.

Liberal Protestants believed that God worked through natural, evolutionary processes, and they rejected miracles, the incarnation and resurrection of Jesus, as well as his substitutionary sacrifice. They downplayed doctrines and creeds, but emphasized ethically correct conduct. They believed that human nature was basically good, and that evils in personal and corporate behavior could be corrected through education and social

¹Knight, 65.

²Butler, 104.

reforms, which were the mission of the church and would bring in the kingdom of God.¹

The conservatives held their ground in significant factions of many denominations. They believed in the inerrancy of the Bible and accepted those teachings of Scripture which higher criticism and liberalism had rejected in order to accommodate the science and culture of the day.

Ideas, Culture, and Society

In the first half of the nineteenth century, Americans in general were optimistic. New states were entering the Union, and steamboats and railroads greatly facilitated expansion and commerce. Life was improving for the masses. Technological developments boosted the belief in progress. Most of the reforms assumed that humanity was basically good. With the decline of Calvinistic Puritanism and its emphasis on predestination and human sinfulness, optimism soared; humanity could achieve greatness, even perfection. George Bancroft, who began publishing his ten-volume *History of the United States* in 1834, “presented America as God’s chosen nation to lead all men toward fulfillment of man’s potential.” And to many Americans, President Andrew Jackson, “a frontiersman who was close to nature, . . . represented American superiority to an overcivilized Europe.”²

The same perspective could be seen in American literature before the Civil War. In discussing the romantic writers of the era, Delmer Davis pointed out that they rejected

¹Knight, 94-95.

²Gary Land, “Ideas and Society,” in *The World of Ellen G. White*, ed. Gary Land (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1987), 209-213.

traditional Christianity and “in place of man as fallen and a universe blighted by evil, . . . tended to see humanity as basically good in an evolving universe where the only constant was motion and change—movement toward ever-greater fulfillment and perfection.”¹ Although the romantic movement in America was influenced by European ideas, it had its own distinctive ingredient, “an emphasis upon the imagination as man’s supreme guide to fulfillment and truth . . . a sure guide to the eternal realities.”²

In 1870, Henry Ward Beecher, a romantic, liberal preacher asserted in a sermon “that the Bible ‘employs not the scientific reason, but imagination and the reason under it.’ Imagination, central to faith, discerns ‘clearly invisible truth in distinction from material and sensuous truth.’”³ The romantic ideals were imagination, sublimity, sentiment, and truth of the heart.

The most influential and creative group among the American romantic writers, the transcendentalists, led by Ralph Waldo Emerson, probably did more than any in promoting belief in the goodness of humanity. According to Land, transcendentalism was “at heart a religious quest” that “sought to break away from the cold intellectualism of Unitarian theology, the dominant belief among New England thinkers.” Here is an example of Emerson’s transcendentalism: “Standing on the bare ground—my head bathed

¹Delmer Davis, “Literature for the Nation,” in *The World of Ellen G. White*, ed. Gary Land (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1987), 195.

²*Ibid.*, 194.

³George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism: 1870-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 23.

in the blythe air, and uplifted into infinite space, all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or parcel of God.”¹

By the end of the century, the ideals of the transcendentalists dominated “the goals, if not the practices of educated American culture.”² According to Davis, those ideals and concerns were “the sanctity of individuality and self-reliance; the dignity of human labor; the mystical beauties and resources of nature; the horrors of materialism; the need of social and intellectual reform in education and race relations and in the relative place of women in society.”³

Besides the educated American culture, there was the popular American culture dominated by the sentimental novel. Although there were critics who condemned fiction because they believed “that such reading degraded morals and weakened the intellect,” by the end of the nineteenth century, “even such a conservative group as the Methodists . . . had accepted the novel as a worthwhile artistic and moral force.”⁴

Not everyone was happy with emotionalism and sentimentalism. To most people in the North, the slavery in the South was disturbing, and the darker side of industrialism and capitalism was all too apparent. There were fears and suspicions regarding Catholicism. In the South people felt threatened by the industrial and urban

¹Emerson quoted by Land, 212-213.

²Davis, 195.

³Ibid., 195-196.

⁴Ibid., 198-201.

developments in the North, and also by the attacks on slavery. Their response was to defend “the agricultural way of life in general and the slave system in particular. In doing so they revealed a deep-seated pessimism about man and society.” The most extreme defenders of slavery “attacked the idea of progress, belief in the goodness of man, and natural rights—in short, the values upon which Northern society was based.”¹

In the second half of the nineteenth century, realism replaced romanticism in serious literature. Again we find a rejection of traditional Christianity. Most of the realists viewed the universe as mechanistic, “determined by chance, biology, and chemistry, devoid of divinity, and somewhat accidental in its direction.”² Realism was a reaction to romanticism. The goal was to describe life as it was, in an open and honest way, without personal judgment.

And again we find optimism, this time fueled not by romantic belief in the goodness of man, but by evolutionary science, evolutionary progress. Evolutionary thinking had been around for most of the century, but it was Darwin’s *Origin of Species* (1859) and *Descent of Man* (1871) that brought the theory of evolution to prominent attention, not the least through the controversy it caused. Darwinism became a main intellectual influence in the United States after the Civil War.

Darwinism and Intellectual Revolution

Darwinism and the evolutionary paradigm gave impetus to religious liberalism,

¹Land, 215.

²Davis, 205.

but it also occasioned a strong reaction and defense by the conservatives. To the conservatives, the evolutionary hypothesis came to be seen not only as a serious threat to religion but also to civilization itself.¹ But times were changing. Liberal Protestantism appealed to the prosperous New England middle class. A prophet of the New Theology, Henry Ward Beecher, published in 1885 his *Evolution and Religion*, an “avowed and complete adoption of evolution in its full extent.” An intellectual revolution was in the making that affected theology and its epistemology. Indeed, “theology was no longer viewed as a fixed body of eternally valid truths. It was seen rather as an evolutionary development that should adjust to the standards and needs of modern culture.”² There were new ways of thinking about truth and knowledge. They were in harmony with Darwinism, which rejected knowledge through revelation, and focused on scientific inquiry. Marsden remarked that “even the highest ideals, truths of the heart, moral sentiments, and the religious experiences through which some Christians said God was known, were often viewed as largely the product of historical developments.”³ For the liberal wing of Protestantism, naturalism and historicism had profoundly changed basic religious epistemological tenets. Supernaturalism was rejected, in particular the idea “that history was determined by a cosmic struggle between the armed forces of God and Satan,” and that the kingdom of God was supernatural, in the future, and otherworldly. The liberals “moved the site of the kingdom to this world where its progress could be

¹Marsden, 4.

²Ibid., 24-25.

³Ibid., 48.

seen in the divinely inspired developments of everyday life.”¹ Conservative premillennialists were profoundly opposed to the new trend of Liberalism. For them the Bible was absolutely trustworthy and, as a general rule, to be taken literally. The kingdom of God was indeed supernatural, wholly in the future, and not to be realized “in the natural development of humanity.”² The conflict between liberal, modern thinkers and the conservative premillennialists centered on basic opposing assumptions in regard to history, namely, whether history was shaped by human and natural forces, that is, natural development and evolution, or by supernatural forces, that is, warfare between God and Satan. Marsden points out that this conservative supernaturalist view would seem “less eccentric if placed in the context of the whole development of Western historiography. The conflict between God and Satan and the centrality of Scripture for understanding the past had long been basic to Western thought.”³

There was no doubt, however, who was emerging victorious in the conflict. Around the turn of the century the liberal reformers of the Progressive movement had adopted many of the ideas that were popular in intellectual circles. According to the evolutionary view of reality, nothing was fixed or absolute. Therefore, “society could be changed through human effort.”⁴ In John Dewey’s pragmatism, there were no absolutes. Ideas were valued, but only to the extent that they worked in bringing about desired social

¹Ibid., 50.

²Ibid., 51.

³Ibid., 63.

⁴Land, 223.

change. Ideas, however, are not only instruments in effecting social change, they are also normative in shaping the general worldview. Since all absolutes were rejected by pragmatism, the guiding ideas were speculative hypotheses from the evolutionary arsenal. The intellectual revolution of the second half of the nineteenth century, inspired by Darwinism, gave the Western world a relativistic worldview of accidental direction instead of a purposeful universe of a personal Creator. The conflict between biblical and relativistic worldviews would form the backdrop for the competing theories of Spencer, Dewey, and Ellen White.

Formation of White's Personal Worldview

As noted above, White was born in 1827 in Gorham, Maine, but grew up in Portland, Maine. Born to devout Methodist parents, Ellen's personal worldview was profoundly shaped by "three major events or circumstances . . . that directly affected and focused the rest of her life—her physical trauma at age nine; the preaching of William Miller; and her profound religious experience."¹

The Accident

At the age of nine, Ellen Harmon had a serious accident. A stone was thrown that hit her in the face and knocked her unconscious. She was confined to bed for weeks, and regained strength slowly. She was advised by her teachers to leave school. Discussing that great disappointment in her life she stated that "it was the hardest struggle of my

¹Herbert E. Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord: The Prophetic Ministry of Ellen G. White* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1998), 48.

young life to yield to my feebleness, and decide that I must leave my studies, and give up the hope of gaining an education.”¹

William Miller

In 1840, four years after the accident, Ellen White experienced another life-changing event. William Miller came to Portland and presented his lectures on the prophecies of the book of Daniel. Miller impressed the audience with the nearness of Christ’s return to this earth. Miller, in fact, told them that Christ would come again in 1843. Ellen attended the meetings and was deeply affected. Describing the meetings, White stated that “no wild excitement attended the meetings, but a deep solemnity pervaded the minds of the people who heard. . . . Mr. Miller traced down the prophecies with an exactness that struck conviction to the heart of his hearers.”²

Ellen felt unprepared for the second coming of Christ. She felt she “could never become worthy to be called a child of God,” and felt “a terrible sadness” resting on her. She did not feel she could seek advice and help from her friends and therefore she “wandered needlessly in darkness and despair.”³ But a turning point was coming for the young girl.

Conversion

The following year, Ellen, then fourteen years old, went with her parents to a

¹Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches*, 19.

²Ibid., 20-21.

³Ibid., 21.

Methodist camp meeting, with a great longing for the forgiveness of her sins and the hope and peace that she had been told comes to the believer. The message of righteousness by faith comforted her, and she began to see her “way more clearly, and the darkness began to pass away.”¹ Later, in a prayer meeting, she felt the presence of the Savior and that her sins were forgiven. She had experienced conversion and soon joined the Methodist Church.

But doubts came to her in regard to her personal Christian life. She was perplexed about sanctification, and even more in regard to the doctrine of eternal punishment. Her heart sank with fear as the horrors of an eternally burning hell were ever before her.²

Two dreams, one about the terrible feeling of being eternally lost, the other of seeing Jesus and His majesty and inexpressible love, led her to confide to her mother all her “sorrows and perplexities.” Her mother advised Ellen to go to a godly pastor for counsel, which Ellen did. After hearing her relate the two dreams as well as all her fears and perplexities, Elder Stockman said: “Ellen, you are only a child. Yours is a most singular experience for one of your tender age. Jesus must be preparing you for some special work.”³ Of this pastoral visit, White later wrote: “During the few minutes in which I received instruction from Elder Stockman, I had obtained more knowledge on the subject of God’s love and pitying tenderness, than from all the sermons and exhortations

¹Ibid., 23.

²Ibid., 31-32.

³Ibid., 36.

to which I had ever listened.”¹ This experience caused Ellen to surrender herself totally to God. That same evening she attended a prayer meeting where, according to her account, the Spirit of God rested upon her with such power that she was unable to go home that night. “When I did return home, on the following day, a great change had taken place in my mind.”² It was probably the greatest turning point in her life:

My peace and happiness were in such marked contrast with my former gloom and anguish that it seemed to me as if I had been rescued from hell and transported to heaven. I could even praise God for the misfortune that had been the trial of my life, for it had been the means of fixing my thoughts upon eternity. Naturally proud and ambitious, I might not have been inclined to give my heart to Jesus had it not been for the sore affliction that had cut me off, in a manner, from the triumphs and vanities of the world.³

And here is her personal testimony to her new concept of God:

Faith now took possession of my heart. I felt an inexpressible love for God, and had the witness of His Spirit that my sins were pardoned. My views of the Father were changed. I now looked upon Him as a kind and tender parent, rather than a stern tyrant compelling men to a blind obedience. My heart went out toward Him in a deep and fervent love. Obedience to His will seemed a joy; it was a pleasure to be in His service. No shadow clouded the light that revealed to me the perfect will of God. I felt the assurance of an indwelling Saviour, and realized the truth of what Christ had said: “He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” John 8:12.⁴

This newfound view of God shaped all her subsequent presentations on the subject and motivated her seventy years of ministry.

White tells us that she was converted at the age of eleven, and baptized and

¹Ibid., 36-37.

²Ibid., 38.

³Ibid., 39.

⁴Ibid.

accepted into the Methodist Church when she was twelve years old. At thirteen, she heard William Miller deliver his lectures on the second advent. A year later, in 1842, she “constantly attended the second advent meetings in Portland, Maine, and fully believed that the Lord was coming.”¹ In December 1844, at the age of only seventeen years, White (then Ellen Gould Harmon), in her own words, “was wrapped in a vision of God’s glory . . . and was shown something of the travels of the Advent people to the Holy City.”² Her reaction to this her first vision was one of “unspeakable awe . . . that I, so young and feeble, should be chosen as the instrument by which God would give light to His people.”³ About a week later, in a second vision, her call to be a messenger of the Lord was confirmed. Thus began a prophetic ministry of seventy years.

Ellen White, however, never claimed the title of a prophet. When asked if she was a prophet, her response was always the same: “I am the Lord’s messenger.” And she gave two reasons why she had not claimed to be a prophet: “Because in these days many who boldly claim that they are prophets are a reproach to the cause of Christ; and because my work includes much more than the word ‘prophet’ signifies.”⁴

¹Ellen G. White, *Early Writings of Ellen G. White* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1882), 11.

²*Ibid.*, 13.

³White, *Life Sketches*, 68.

⁴Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages from the Writings of Ellen G. White*, book 1 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1958), 32. One of the fundamental beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists deals with the gift of prophecy. Their *Church Manual* states that “One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is prophecy. This gift is an identifying mark of the remnant church and was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White. As the Lord’s messenger, her writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provide

Her duties were indeed broad and varied. She was instructed to guide the Seventh-day Adventist Church in such matters as evangelism, publishing work, church organization, health and temperance, and education. Woven in between these major developments were very personal messages to leaders, workers, and members of the church. She also found time to take care of orphans, the sick, and the afflicted. But fundamental to all of these duties were the revelations given to her in visions, where she was instructed to ““make known to others what I have revealed to you,””¹ to ““deliver the messages faithfully and endure to the end.””² Some of these messages were delivered orally, but most of them were in written form, that is, as letters, articles, and books.

These writings of Ellen White were the main sources investigated for the present study. But first, for a contemporary context, the educational ideas, specifically the aims of education, of Herbert Spencer in England and of John Dewey in the United States, will be examined.

for the church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction. They [her writings] also make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested.” General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 16th ed., rev. (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 14-15. See also a discussion of the belief in Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . . A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines* (Washington, DC: Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1988), 216-229.

¹White, *Life Sketches*, 69.

²White, *Selected Messages*, 1:33.

CHAPTER II

AIMS OF EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES AND WESTERN EUROPE 1865-1915: A SELECTED FOCUS

General Introduction

This chapter includes an overview of the development of Western Education and a discussion of the aims of education in the writings of Herbert Spencer and John Dewey, and explores the Manual Education Movements in the Western World. This is intended as background and context for a discussion of the educational ideas of Ellen White.

Greek and Hebrew Roots

Western civilization traces its cultural roots to ancient Greece, particularly to the classical period of Hellenistic culture in the fifth and the fourth centuries B.C. Education in ancient Greece was reserved for the citizens of the Greek city-states, and its chief aim was to produce strong, loyal citizens for their defense, as well as citizens well versed in Greek philosophy and literature. The former was stressed in Sparta where military strength was considered of paramount importance. Consequently physical fitness was a principal aim of education. In Athens more emphasis was placed on intellectual development, the study of ideas, words, logic, poetry, and art. The Athenians recognized, however, the importance of physical soundness obtained through military training,

gymnastics, and sports. Manual labor was not a part of classical Greek education.

“Greek civilization rested on a basis of slavery, the slaves outnumbering the citizens.

Trade and manual work, regarded as degrading, were left to slaves and Greek education did not, therefore, include technical and commercial studies.”¹

When credit is given to ancient Greece as the definitive influence shaping Western civilization and education, the Judeo-Christian contribution is often overlooked. The Hebrew foundations of Christian culture are also a significant part of Western civilization. Perhaps the most important aspects provided by the Judeo-Christian tradition are the moral and ethical principles based on the revelations in the Old and the New Testaments. The emphasis of a vertical relationship between man and a personal Creator of love and justice has had a profound effect on Western culture for nearly two millennia.

The Hebrews placed primary emphasis on instruction in the Torah—the law. The principles of love and justice were embodied in the Law—the law of God, and the will of God as revealed in the writings of the Old Testament—but practical, vocational preparation for life was also important; in fact, it came next to instruction in the Law. It was as much a duty of the father to teach his son a trade as it was to teach him the law. The Jews believed in the dignity of labor, its social value as well as its beneficial influence upon intellectual pursuits. Rabbis who devoted equal parts of the day to study,

¹William O. L. Smith, “Education, History of: I. The Western World,” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 1971, 7:983-990.

prayer, and labor were worthy of special honor.¹

We see here two radically different attitudes towards manual labor--the Greek and the Hebrew. One despised it; the other exalted it. One saw it as beneath the dignity of the citizenry; the other as an honor bestowing dignity on the human race.

The Hellenic civilization with its emphasis on language, literature, and rhetoric spread throughout ancient Rome and, indeed, the whole Western world. Language and literature were the main fare in the Roman grammar schools. With the emergence of Christianity in the early Christian centuries came catechetical schools that provided religious instruction for those who wanted to be baptized. Some schools, like the one in Alexandria, also offered instruction in Greek science and philosophy.

During the early Middle Ages, the primary instruction given in the bishop's schools and also in the monastic schools was religion and Latin. Although not considered part of the curriculum, manual labor was a significant element of life in the monasteries. There were "prescribed hours for labor, for reading, for worship, for rest."² Outside of the monasteries was the system of apprenticeship, a training in the various crafts through manual labor--learning by doing.

In the medieval universities and grammar schools of Western Europe, the authority of the medieval Church was accepted not only in regard to questions of theology or doctrines but also in matters of conduct, and the curricula of the schools. It is,

¹Charles A. Bennett, *History of Manual and Industrial Education up to 1870* (Peoria, IL: Manual Arts Press, 1926), 13-14.

²*Ibid.*, 20.

therefore, not surprising that religion and Latin were all-important.

Renaissance and Reformation

With the Renaissance in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries came renewed interest in the learning and literature of ancient times, specifically of Greece and Rome. Also along with the cultivation of the mind came games and physical exercise in harmony with the Greek ideal of a sound mind in a sound body. The humanism of the Renaissance was a transition period from the Middle Ages to the modern era. “Man and his world rather than God and His heaven became the focal point of human interest.”¹

Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466-1536) was one of the most famous and influential humanists of all times, and a true classicist. His aim of education would be the development of the intellect. He “believed that man was the measure of all things. As such, man’s nature is fundamentally good, in contrast to the Reformation teachings of total depravity.”² The root of this belief and a core concept in humanism is the Platonic doctrine that people will do what is good and right if they only know what it is. Therefore, education was of greatest importance.³ The mark Erasmus left on European education by strengthening classical studies was decisive and “allowed ancient

¹Kenneth O. Gangel and Warren S. Benson, *Christian Education: Its History and Philosophy* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), 120.

²*Ibid.*, 128.

³W. Stevenson, *The Story of the Reformation* (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1959), 25.

philosophy to dominate the humanities until the beginning of the 19th century.”¹

The Renaissance was a transitional period. Ancient learning and literature were introduced to the minds of those who were reared in the faith of the medieval Church and it challenged their worldview. They were walking away from the dogmas and the worldview of the Church, yet culturally many stayed with the Church.

The Reformation that came at the beginning of the modern era greatly affected schools and universities in countries that accepted Protestantism. Martin Luther (1483-1546), the German reformer and by many considered the founder of Protestantism, advocated comprehensive education supported by the state for all children. The curriculum, however, did not change much. It was still the classical languages, Latin and Greek, logic, mathematics, music, history, and some science. But, like the ancient Hebrews, Luther wanted school and manual labor to go hand in hand. He wanted studies to occupy one or two hours and then the rest of the day to be devoted to learning a trade at home.²

Luther has been hailed as one of the greatest educators of his time. He wrote and spoke extensively on educational matters, and his translation of the Bible into the common language of the people was of tremendous educational value. So were his two Catechisms which were “manuals in religious education of permanent value.”³

¹Robert Ulich, “Erasmus,” in *A History of Religious Educators*, ed. Elmer L. Towns (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1975), 102.

²Bennett, *History of Manual and Industrial Education up to 1870*, 31.

³Gustav M. Bruce, *Luther as an Educator* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1928), 293.

Luther tirelessly pointed out the fundamental importance of Christian education. He looked upon it holistically “and therefore regarded religious and secular education simply as integral parts of a complete and well-rounded Christian education.”¹ The practical education that Luther promoted prepared the student for everyday life, both its duties and experiences. Education was not to be a drudgery but an interesting and happy experience. Indeed, Luther encouraged the idea that children should have time to play.

The Bible was to occupy a central place in education. “It was to be the primary source of all religious and moral instruction”² or, as Francis Schaeffer expressed it, “the Reformation centered in the infinite-personal God who had spoken in the Bible.”³ The primary goal of Lutheran education was “eternal life with God,” and the chief means to that end was “the divine plan of salvation revealed in the Holy Scriptures and in the Sacraments of Holy Baptism and in the Lord’s Supper.”⁴ The concrete human part in this was cooperation through domestic training. Luther “argued that bringing up children in the fear and knowledge of God was more efficacious than pilgrimages, masses, or the building of churches.”⁵

In spite of the new directions heralded by the Renaissance and the Reformation,

¹Ibid., 294.

²Ibid., 298.

³Francis Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?* (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1976), 84.

⁴Allan Jahsmann, *What Is Lutheran Education* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1960), 48.

⁵Gangel and Benson, 139-140.

classical education was far from dead. As noted earlier, the curriculum in the Protestant schools was largely classical and in the Catholic universities it was purely classical, so it continued, mostly unchallenged throughout the sixteenth century with elements of the classical education lasting into the early twentieth century. But during the seventeenth century, voices began to be heard criticizing the bookish, classical education and pointing to new emphases in subject matter and methods. Among the voices were those of Bacon (1561-1626), Comenius (1592-1670), Milton (1608-1674), Locke (1632-1704), and later Rousseau (1712-1778), Pestalozzi (1746-1827), von Fellenberg (1771-1844), and Froebel (1782-1852).

During this same time fundamental changes were taking place in Western Europe and North America. Among them were developments often referred to as the Industrial Revolution. These were primarily changes in technology and in economy that greatly shaped culture and society. A predominantly agricultural society was being transformed into an increasingly industrial society. Other changes were just as radical. The dawn of democratic societies replacing the rule of kings and nobility was on the horizon by the second half of the nineteenth century. Evolution was embraced by intellectuals, science and inventions were advancing rapidly, and secondary education was becoming universal in the 1800s. At the same time Latin became less important as the language of learning, reflecting the thought that classical education was not adequate to meet the new issues. Masses were migrating from the Old World to the New leaving behind the cultures that had operated for centuries. They looked and hoped for a new and better future.

A natural consequence of these developments was the re-examination of the

purpose of education. The classical curriculum had become less relevant to the times, so what should the aims of education be? Now that the masses as well as the upper classes were to be educated, what should constitute that education? It was not difficult to see the necessity of practical education, but what fundamental issues would shape that education? Christianity had dominated classical education. Would it continue its leadership as the academic system changed? How would the theories of evolution, naturalism, liberalism, and humanism influence the educational thinking? What was the nature of human beings? What was the nature and purpose of society and how could its progress best be secured? What were the ends and means of the individual's development? Most importantly, what knowledge was of greatest value? These issues were the focus and concern of educational philosophers.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth century we encounter Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) of England and John Dewey (1859-1952) of the United States, whose educational ideas have been chosen as the selected background to the present study of Ellen White's philosophy of education. The reason for this selection is Spencer's and Dewey's radical break with classical educational philosophy and their emphasis on practical, naturalistic, and non-religious education for the common people. They also fall within the period of White's educational activities from 1865-1915. This background provides not only a comparison but also a sharp contrast between Ellen White and significant contemporaries.

White emphasized both manual labor and practical, utilitarian education. It is, therefore, also of interest to examine the Manual Training Movement of the last part of

the nineteenth century as well as the Vocational Education Movement of the first part of the twentieth century. These movements had their roots in the Manual Labor Movement of the early nineteenth century which will also be of interest.

Herbert Spencer

Introduction

Herbert Spencer, an English sociologist and philosopher, lived in the Victorian era. He grew up in a middle class family as an individualistic, rebellious, non-conformist. “That the spirit of non-conformity is shown by me in various directions, no one can deny: the disregard of authority, political, religious, or social, is very conspicuous.”¹ In his work on Herbert Spencer, Hugh Elliot noted that Spencer “had many and striking mental resemblances to his father, and none whatever discernible to his mother.”² Describing Herbert Spencer’s father, Elliot said “he would never address his correspondents as ‘Esquire’ or ‘Reverend,’ but always as ‘Mr.’; nor would he ever take off his hat to anyone, of whatever rank.” And further that he was “a man of aggressive independence and much ability and originality,” and also “keenly interested in abstract questions of science and politics.”³

Spencer grew up in a family where contemporary issues were discussed freely and critically. In describing Spencer’s childhood, William Henry Hudson, a friend of Spencer

¹Herbert Spencer quoted by Andreas M. Kazamias, *Herbert Spencer on Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1966), 3.

²Hugh Elliot, *Herbert Spencer* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1970), 12.

³*Ibid.*, 11.

and at one time his private secretary, observed:

At a time when most children are being taught before all things to rely upon tradition, Spencer was already habituated to the freest and keenest atmosphere of discussion, and to the bold and direct criticism of even the most time-honoured beliefs. There was thus naturally strengthened his already unmistakable tendency towards original investigation, and his corresponding pronounced hatred of accepting any statement upon mere authority, no matter how good in itself that authority might be.¹

Spencer's Basic Ideas

Herbert Spencer was one of the earliest thinkers of the nineteenth century to present a theory of evolution—even before Charles Darwin. In 1852 he published the article “The Development Hypothesis” and in 1857, “Progress: Its Law and Cause.” Both presented his ideas of general evolution. The famous phrase “survival of the fittest” long associated with the theory of evolution was coined by Spencer.² To Spencer, evolution was inevitable, and he opposed whatever might hinder it. It also fit well with his individualism and dislike of authority.³

Obviously Spencer's ideas of evolution were incompatible with a belief in a special creation. This he made clear in his article “The Development Hypothesis” published in 1852. Almost half a century later Spencer wrote:

The Development Hypothesis was of fundamental significance. It shows that in 1852 the belief in organic evolution had taken deep root, and had drawn to itself a

¹William H. Hudson, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Herbert Spencer, with a Biographical Sketch* (New York: Haskell House, 1974), 7.

²David Duncan, *The Life and Letters of Herbert Spencer* (London: Methuen, 1908), 559.

³Kazamias, 3-4.

large amount of evidence—evidence not derived from numerous special instances but derived from the general aspects of organic nature, and from the necessity of accepting the hypothesis of Evolution when the hypothesis of Special Creation has been rejected. The Special Creation belief had dropped out of my mind many years before, and I could not remain in a suspended state: acceptance of the only conceivable alternative belief was peremptory. This distinct and public enunciation of the belief was but a giving definite form to thoughts which had been gradually growing, as was shown in *Social Statics*.¹

In his *Autobiography* Spencer tells us that he was “averse to ecclesiasticism,” that the “creed of Christendom” was “alien” to his nature, and that religious worship yielded no “pleasure.”² Christianity in England during the Victorian era was far from being a united and universally accepted religion. There were dissensions and challenges. Anglicanism was divided into high, low, and broad Anglicanism; there was the Oxford Movement; and Catholicism and Nonconformity were growing. The greatest challenge came from the advances of science and, in the words of Kazamias, “from a naturalistic and evolutionary interpretation of morality.”³ The greatest shock to Victorian religion came in the 1860s. The theory of evolution had been gaining ground in intellectual circles for some time, and with the publication in 1859 of Darwin’s *Origin of Species* the war between evolution-based science and religion exploded. Spencer was heavily involved in the advancement of the theory of evolution and did not hide his agnosticism.

Spencer’s idea of evolution included not only all natural phenomena but also society, culture, and religion. These ideas can be found as early as 1857 in his essay

¹Duncan, 543.

²Kazamias, 6.

³Ibid.

“Progress: Its Law and Cause,” first published in the *Westminster Review* and later in *Essays on Education, Etc.*, in 1911. After comparing the development or progress of individual organisms to the development of “a seed into a tree” or “an ovum into an animal” “by endless . . . differentiations” finally producing “the adult animal or plant,” Spencer declared: “This is the history of all organisms whatever. It is settled beyond dispute that organic progress consists in a change from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous.” From this conclusion Spencer proceeded to embrace all other phenomena from the development of the Earth itself to life upon its surface, the development of society, government, industry, commerce, language, literature, science, or art.¹

Spencer was first and foremost concerned with social evolution and has even been called “the arch-Social Darwinist.”² Social evolution forms the basis for understanding Spencer’s educational ideas. To him evolution was all but inevitable. Progress was worshiped by the Victorians, and it was inconceivable to them that the evolutionary process could be checked or reversed.³ What was the end result of such a process? According to Spencer’s ideas, differentiation is followed by integration or “equilibration.” At this stage, in the words and interpretation of Kazamias, “the individual has attained

¹Herbert Spencer, *Essays on Education Etc.* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1911), 154.

²James G. Kennedy, *Herbert Spencer* (Boston: Twayne, 1978), 7.

³Kazamias, 35.

perfect 'equilibration' or 'individuation.'¹ Keeping in mind Spencer's fierce hatred of authoritarianism and his extreme ideas of individual freedom, it may well be that

Kazamias was right when he continued his assessment of Spencer's ideas:

Under such circumstances, the individual automatically behaves as he ought to behave, and hence there is no need for any compulsion or regulatory action. Spencer's social ideal, therefore, becomes one of complete anarchism, where the individual reigns supreme, and where freedom is ensured by an inner moral commitment rather than by government regulation.²

The following quotation from Spencer's *The Filiation of Ideas* points, if not to complete anarchism, then at least to inconsequential government and to individual freedom that is not threatened by any outside interference: "The highest types of society are those in which the coercive governmental organization has dwindled, and corporate action, with its correlative structures, gives place to individual action, having directive structures of a relatively non-coercive kind."³ It seems like Spencer had great faith in the human race being able to discipline itself.

Spencer's last major writing was *The Filiation of Ideas*, completed in 1899 some four years before he died. The final paragraph in that work with its noble sentiments will serve as a transition to considering Spencer's aims of education:

In the final division "Positive Beneficence," not passive altruism was enjoined, but active altruism. In the chapter on "The Evolution of Conduct," [in *The Principles of Ethics*] it was shown that the highest life, and consequently the highest happiness, can be reached only when "all the members of a society give mutual help in the achievements of ends"; and, by implication, can be reached only when they give

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., 35-36.

³Duncan, 570.

mutual help in the avoidance of evil. In this final division it was contended that, while there is an indirect obligation on each to maintain and improve that social state which gives him the facilities of living he enjoys, he gains by cultivating the feelings which cause fulfillment of this obligation; since the sympathy which prompts alleviation of others' pains is the same sympathy which makes possible the participation in others' pleasures, and therefore exalts personal happiness.¹

Aims of Education

Early in his experience of schooling, Spencer exhibited strong convictions that remained embedded in his philosophy throughout his life and influenced his ideas on education. In a short biographical sketch of Spencer, Hudson indicated that Spencer “early exhibited a marked repugnance to the ordinary routine of school curriculum . . . and . . . evinced a profound dislike to accepting statements merely because they happened to be set down in books.”² Kazamias observed that he “shunned the prevalent curriculum of formal schooling because it encouraged ‘*submissive receptivity* instead of *independent activity*’; he considered it artificial, dogmatic, constraining for intellectual development, and based on authority.”³ In harmony with this independence of mind, Hudson noted that in school Spencer “soon showed himself markedly superior to all the other boys of his age in matters demanding observation, thought, and reasoning power.”⁴

Although Spencer is better known for his sociological theories than his educational philosophy, there is no doubt that his influence in the educational debate of

¹Ibid., 576.

²Hudson, 5.

³Kazamias, 11.

⁴Hudson, 5.

the day was considerable. Especially was this true of his insistence on the supremacy of science in the curriculum. The best known of Spencer's educational essays, "What Knowledge Is of Most Worth," was first published in 1859 in the *Westminster Review* and later included in *Education: Intellectual, Moral and Physical*, published both in the United States (1860) and in England (1861).

Spencer did not think very highly of the education offered in his day. The contents of the education were not determined by "what knowledge is of most real worth," but "what will bring most applause, honour, respect—what will most conduce to social position and influence—what will be most imposing."¹ He deplored that the relative worth of the various kinds of knowledge had barely been discussed. Spencer realized that not all knowledge was worth spending time on, and also that people's limited life span did not allow all worthy knowledge to be pursued. Therefore, "the true measure of value" was "the first requisite" and should be demonstrated "by showing its bearing upon some part of life."²

For Spencer the essential issue was "how to live," the right conduct under all circumstances, that is, how we treat the body and mind, how we earn a livelihood, discharge our duties as parents and citizens—in short, how to live to the fullest. "And this being the great thing needful for us to learn, is, by consequence, the great thing which education has to teach. To prepare us for complete living is the function which education

¹Spencer, 4.

²Ibid., 6.

has to discharge.”¹ These considerations led Spencer to classify the main activities in human life. He arranged them as follows:

1. those activities which directly minister to self-preservation; 2. those activities which, by securing the necessities of life, indirectly minister to self-preservation; 3. those activities which have for their end the rearing and discipline of offspring; 4. those activities which are involved in the maintenance of proper social and political relations; 5. those miscellaneous activities which fill up the leisure part of life, devoted to the gratification of the tastes and feelings.²

These activities were listed in order of importance, yet were not to be seen as separate or isolated activities. “They are,” said Spencer, “intricately entangled with each other, in such a way that there can be no training for any that is not in some measure a training for all.”³ Spencer’s ideal was “complete preparation” for all of these activities. He realized, however, that that was not probable or practical, and therefore “the aim should be to maintain a *due proportion* between the degrees of preparation in each” division.⁴

Spencer closed his general discussion of these subdivisions of the great aim of education, namely, complete living, by pointing out that “acquirement of every kind has two values--value as *knowledge* and value as *discipline*.”⁵ By knowledge Spencer meant primarily the acquisition of facts from the laws of nature and evolution, which were

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., 7.

³Ibid., 9.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., 10.

valuable “for guiding conduct.” By discipline he meant that the acquisition of facts was also valuable “as mental exercise.”¹

Mental discipline was greatly admired in the traditional education of the Victorian era and the study of the classics was believed to be the best way to strengthen the mind. Spencer, however, along with other proponents of scientific education “sought to prove that science afforded mental training or discipline as well as the classics.”² Replacing the classics with science was a shocking idea to the educational establishment.

However, mental discipline was not Spencer’s main concern. To him a very definite kind of knowledge was more important, “the acquisition of that knowledge from which the doctrine of evolution is an eventual outcome.”³ Spencer’s major concerns were quite clear--scientific culture and scientific knowledge in harmony with the theory of evolution.

The All-Important Aim of Education: Securing Direct Self-Preservation

Spencer maintained that Nature herself took care of a great part of this section of education. The chief contribution of the guardians and the schools was not to thwart Nature in its work with the children “in all these actions by which the muscles are developed, the perceptions sharpened, and the judgment quickened, a preparation for the

¹Ibid.

²Kazamias, 29.

³Ibid., 121.

safe conduct of the body among surrounding objects and movements.”¹ Besides these defenses “against mechanical damage or destruction,” as he called it, which were mostly cared for by Nature, Spencer saw an important field that the educator should cultivate. Education was needed with regard to disease and death caused by breaking the law of physiology by, among other things, “unwise habits.” All other activities were dependent upon the health and energy of the individual. Spencer waxed eloquent in illustrating the evil results of ignoring a knowledge of the laws of health, and then posed the question: “Is it not clear that the physical sins—partly our forefathers’ and partly our own—which produce this ill-health, deduct more from complete living than anything else?”²

Spencer drove the point further. Poor health and wrong habits would not only “to a great extent make life a failure and a burden instead of a benefaction and a pleasure”³ but also cut it short. He saw this deterioration and shortening of life as an immense loss and concluded “that as vigorous health and its accompanying high spirits are larger elements of happiness than any other things whatever, the teaching how to maintain them is a teaching that yields in moment to no other whatever.”⁴ Spencer stated concisely that “for self-preservation, or the maintenance of life and health, the all-important knowledge is—Science.”⁵ Next in order, but of equal value, was the indirect self-preservation.

¹Spencer, 11.

²Ibid., 13.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., 42-43.

**Indirect Self-Preservation:
The Gaining of a Livelihood**

In this section Spencer addressed what he called industrial activities, that is, “the production, preparation, and distribution of commodities.” And, he maintained, efficiency in these areas depended on the methods used, which in turn depended on “adequate acquaintance with their physical, chemical, or vital properties, as the case may be; that is, it depends on Science.”¹ Having laid down these premises, Spencer launched into a lengthy discussion of the necessity of mathematics, mechanics, physics, chemistry, astronomy, geology, biology, and finally what he called “the Science of Society” or what is today known as sociology.

In all of these areas of scientific knowledge, Spencer’s emphasis was on its usefulness in the manufacturing industry; its buildings, machines, and tools; and in the distribution of the goods requiring commerce and transportation, which in turn was dependent upon scientific technology. Spencer’s “science of society” referred to understanding the actions and conditions of society, including weighing the likelihood of war and how it would impact prices, the market, supply and demand. Spencer was convinced that the continued and increased prosperity of England was dependent on scientific knowledge, replacing to a large extent the traditional classical education. The good life enjoyed by the English nation was due to “increasing acquaintance with the laws of phenomena” and gave “the common labourer comforts which a few centuries ago kings could not purchase.” Such an advance was not to be credited to the prevailing

¹Ibid., 14-15.

educational aims. In Spencer's opinion, it was the result of "a knowledge that has got itself taught in nooks and corners; while the ordained agencies for teaching have been mumbling little else but dead formulas."¹ The easier means of gaining livelihood was credited to science and the practical application of science.

Training for Parenthood: "The Bringing Up of Children"

Spencer found that in the educational system of his day no preparation whatsoever was made for this "third great division of human activities," that is, "the rearing and discipline of offspring."² He used strong language to express his disgust for the indifference to and ignorance of what he called "the laws of life." "Is it not monstrous that the fate of a new generation should be left to the chances of unreasoning custom, impulse, fancy—joined with the suggestions of ignorant nurses and the prejudiced counsel of grandmothers?"³ He continued: "To tens of thousands that are killed, add hundreds of thousands that survive with feeble constitutions, and millions that grow up with constitutions not so strong as they should be; and you will have some idea of the curse inflicted on their offspring by parents ignorant of the laws of life."⁴

By the "laws of life" Spencer was referring to the laws of physiology governing the physical well-being of the individual. He was speaking of how the children were

¹Ibid., 20.

²Ibid., 20, 7.

³Ibid., 21.

⁴Ibid.

dressed and nourished. He was also talking about parents not discerning the physiological causes of sickness, who attributed the condition to supernatural agencies, or “a visitation of Providence.”

Spencer was not only referring to physiology but also to what he termed moral and intellectual principles. Looking for moral training in the schools that might benefit a young girl and a future mother, Spencer found none, only that “her memory was crammed with words, and names, and dates, and her reflective faculties scarcely in the slightest degree exercised.”¹ Spencer deplored her ignorance of the emotions and a lack of knowledge of mental phenomena. He painted a dark picture of the young mother having had no training for her parental duties:

Deeds which she thinks it desirable to encourage, she gets performed by threats and bribes, or by exciting a desire for applause: considering little what the inward motive may be, so long as the outward conduct conforms; and thus cultivating hypocrisy, and fear, and selfishness, in place of good feeling. While insisting on truthfulness, she constantly sets an example of untruth by threatening penalties which she does not inflict. While inculcating self-control, she hourly visits on her little ones angry scoldings for acts undeserving of them.²

As to parents’ intellectual training, Spencer again appealed to the knowledge of laws. And for Spencer a knowledge of laws was the same as a knowledge of science which was the thrust of all his arguments throughout the essay. Intelligence and its development, or “evolution” as Spencer put it, was governed by laws, and he contended that “education cannot be rightly guided without a knowledge of these laws.”³ In the

¹Ibid., 22.

²Ibid., 23.

³Ibid.

opinion of Spencer, this knowledge was not offered in the schools and as might be expected, he did not spare his withering criticism: “While the right class of facts is withheld, the wrong class is forcibly administered in the wrong way.”¹ Here Spencer had in mind the prevailing formal, book-based instruction, highly abstract, and to him boring and dull. He maintained that this type of instruction thwarted nature’s order, that of discovery through the study of cases. “Intellectual progress is of necessity from the concrete to the abstract,” not the other way around.²

**Proper Social and Political Relations:
The Functions of the Citizen**

Again Spencer leveled criticism at the educational system of his day, but not as severe as in the areas already treated. He conceded that the knowledge needed for the citizen to function had not been “wholly overlooked.” Of the courses offered that touch upon political and social duties there was a glimmer of hope in the “prominent place [given to] . . . History.”³ But Spencer was not totally happy with the contents of these courses. There was little about the “right principles of political action,” and “familiarity with court intrigues, plots, usurpations, or the like” did “little in elucidating the causes of national progress.”⁴ Detailed accounts of wars and the fate of generals and armies did not impress Spencer at all. How would these narratives help anyone’s conduct as a citizen,

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., 24.

³Ibid., 26.

⁴Ibid.

was his query. He concluded that the bulk of historical facts presented in the schools were “facts from which no conclusions can be drawn—*unorganisable facts*; and therefore facts of no service in establishing principles of conduct, which is the chief use of facts.”¹

In the area of political and social relations, Spencer was most concerned with “the phenomena of social progress,” “the nature and actions of . . . governments” at all levels, “the structure, principles, methods, prejudices, corruptions, etc., which it exhibited.”² He also included information about “the control exercised by class over class,” the customs, the superstitions, “the relations of the sexes, and the relations of parents to children.” And the list goes on: the industrial system, the division of labor, employee-employer relations, distribution of commodities, product quality, means of communication, and “the intellectual condition of the nation . . . not only with respect to the kind and amount of education, but with respect to the progress made in science, and the prevailing manner of thinking.”³ Finally, Spencer called for the description of the “æsthetic culture, as displayed in architecture, sculpture, painting, dress, music, poetry, and fiction . . . a sketch of the daily lives of the people—their food, their homes, and their amusements.”⁴

In concluding this section of his essay, Spencer drove home his underlying thesis that all depended upon science and that “in the absence of the generalisations of biology, and psychology, rational interpretation of social phenomena is impossible. . . . All social

¹Ibid., 27.

²Ibid., 28.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., 28-29.

phenomena are phenomena of life . . . and can be understood only when the laws of life are understood.”¹

The Enjoyment of Nature, Literature, and the Fine Arts

When Spencer spoke of activities in this fifth and last of his divisions, he used expressions such as “activities which fill up the leisure part of life, devoted to the gratification of the tastes and feelings,” “the relaxations and amusements filling leisure hours,” and “the enjoyment of Nature, of Literature, and of the Fine Arts.”² Even though Spencer ordered the activities by priorities, he did not value the fine arts any less than the other spheres of human life. For him it was a natural ordering. In Spencer’s own words, “a florist . . . knows it would be folly if, in his anxiety to obtain the flower, he were to neglect the plant.”³ He criticized the traditional educational system for emphasizing literature and fine arts, while neglecting knowledge necessary for self-preservation, the gaining of livelihood, and the discharge of parental and social duties. Again turning his gaze upon this scene, Spencer did not mince his words: “And here we see most distinctly the vice of our educational system. It neglects the plant for the sake of the flower. In anxiety for elegance, it forgets substance.”⁴

Spencer discussed in detail how scientific knowledge was an indispensable

¹Ibid., 29-30.

²Ibid., 7, 30.

³Ibid., 31.

⁴Ibid.

foundation for the aesthetic culture. He pointed out that “art-products,” as he called them, represented phenomena, and for art to be good it had to “conform to the laws of these phenomena.” Consequently the artist must have a knowledge of these laws.¹ The laws were present, for example, in perspective, light and shadows, musical phrases and melodies, and metaphors and poetic rhythms. For all his love of science, Spencer was quick to point out that he did not believe for a moment “that science will make an artist. . . . [An] artist of every type, is born, not made.” “But,” said Spencer, “innate faculty cannot dispense with the aid of organized knowledge. Intuition will do much, but it will not do all. Only when Genius is married to Science can the highest results be produced.”²

Not only the artist needed science, but the audience—“the spectator, listener, or the reader”—needed it too. “Science is necessary,” said Spencer, “not only for the most successful production, but also for the full appreciation, of fine arts.”³ The more a person was aware of the laws of natural phenomena the more that person would appreciate the various art forms representing those phenomena. Such things as a drop of water, lightning, a snow-flake, a rock, or a fossil held far greater interest for Spencer than the intrigues of Mary Queen of Scots or a Greek ode. Spencer closed his discussion of this fifth division of human activities by stating that not only was science “the handmaid to all forms of art and poetry, but that, rightly regarded, science is itself poetic.”⁴ This certainly

¹Ibid., 32.

²Ibid., 35.

³Ibid., 36, 35.

⁴Ibid., 37.

is an interesting view by one who rejected creation and design in nature.

Summary

Spencer focused on the here and now, the concrete, the practical, the tangible. He was concerned with natural phenomena, with what he considered their evolution, their empirical, scientific laws and reality. He had great faith in the human spirit and progress. He revered nature and what he referred to as the mysteries of the universe and its Cause, yet he rejected Christianity and the biblical account of special creation.

In his concern for the betterment of society, his emphasis on the five divisions of human activities for which education should prepare the students is logical enough. But his insistence that scientific knowledge is the all-sufficient foundation and ingredient seems a little narrow. That science “alone can give us true conceptions of ourselves and our relation to the mysteries of existence,” and that science as conceived by Spencer “shows us all which can be known,” and “shows us the limits beyond which we can know nothing” state unequivocally Spencer’s central epistemological theses.¹ Those statements also explain his belief that the knowledge is of most worth “is–Science. This is the verdict on all the counts.”²

John Dewey

Introduction

Herbert Spencer’s works were read not only in Europe but also in America. His

¹Ibid., 42.

²Ibid.

Education: Intellectual, Moral, and Physical, consisting of four essays and published in 1860, was probably the most popular of all his publications. Lawrence A. Cremin, referring to the four essays, stated that “their uncompromising insistence on science as the essence of a modern curriculum found ready acceptance among those seeking to reform American schools and colleges.”¹ Cremin further maintained that Spencer’s *Synthetic Philosophy* “profoundly shaped the ways in which scholars came to conceive of educational enterprise and its role in society.”²

John Dewey was well acquainted with the works of Herbert Spencer,³ if for no other reason than that he taught the philosophy of Spencer for several years while at the University of Michigan.⁴ To what extent Dewey built on Spencer may be difficult to determine. That Dewey was influenced by Spencer’s ideas, however, is almost certain.

John Dewey is America’s best-known philosopher. He was one of the founders of pragmatism, an American philosophical movement that Dewey himself preferred to call instrumentalism. From one of his major works, *Democracy and Education*, it is clear that Dewey saw the philosophy of education as the heart of all philosophy, not just one of its branches. Education certainly was his passion. While liberal educators in his day praised Dewey for progressive educational thinking, conservatives blamed him for disregarding

¹Kazamias, vii.

²Ibid.

³Arthur G. Wirth, *John Dewey as Educator: His Design for Work in Education (1894-1904)* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1966), 90.

⁴Ibid., 13-14.

academic excellence and the intellectual tradition.¹

The latter part of the nineteenth century was a time of great change in philosophical thought. In 1859, the year Dewey was born, Darwin published his *Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*. That work was largely responsible for the fermentation of liberal thought throughout the Western world that led many to abandon faith in religious dogmas, tradition, and the supernatural. This was also a time of great change in the fabric of American society. At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, the time of America's largest immigration, many serious social and economic problems arose along with the rapid advances of industry and urban development, business corporations, and capitalism in general. But this was also a time of great optimism about the possibilities of almost limitless resources, inventions, and the ideals of democracy. Dewey grew up amid these influences and soon was in the vanguard of the liberal, progressive movement that idealized democracy as the hope of the common person.²

The writings of Dewey are not the easiest to read. Many have complained that he was a poor writer—dry and difficult. The fact is that Dewey was a serious writer not intending to entertain. But the complexity of his ideas made his style, at times, awkward. In the view of Alan Ryan, “the problem was that he wrote all too exactly as his subject matter dictated. His short polemics were brisk and clear; the more complicated his

¹Alan Ryan, *John Dewey and the High Tide of American Liberalism* (New York: W. W. North, 1995), 340.

²Steven Rockefeller, *John Dewey: Religious Faith and Democratic Humanism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 3.

subject, the more his prose wound around and about to follow it.”¹

His prose is not the only difficulty encountered by the reader. Often his ideas seem to be vague to those who are looking for absolute, final answers. Dewey rejected all absolute ideas and dogmas. Everything was subject to investigation and experiment. From the perspective of the progressives, “no idea, law, or institution is a fixed absolute, above criticism and beyond alteration.”²

Ryan highlighted another problem in looking at a man of Dewey’s stature and voluminous writings. In the preface of his 1995 work on John Dewey, he commented on the views of two eminent scholars who each published a book on Dewey in 1991: “I have not tried to point out the innumerable occasions when ‘their’ Dewey looks different from ‘mine.’”³ Different writers look at Dewey from different perspectives and each contributes to the composite picture of Dewey which then, in all likelihood, is closer to the ‘real’ Dewey than any one description. The inclusion of the views of other writers in this study may, therefore, come closer to a fair picture of Dewey than the observations of only one. It is also of interest to this study to see how Dewey, through his writings, impressed other researchers.

Basic Philosophy of Education

Dewey’s basic philosophy is pragmatic or instrumental. In most traditional

¹Ryan, 20.

²Rockefeller, 222.

³Ryan, 13.

schools of philosophy, one branch is a philosophy of education. In Dewey's thinking, the educational philosophy is not a branch, it is the trunk of practical philosophy. He indicated that philosophy may be "defined as *the general theory of education*," provided we are willing to see education as "the process of forming fundamental dispositions, intellectual and emotional, toward nature and fellow men."¹ Dewey had no use for a system of philosophy that was merely symbolic, or verbal, or arbitrarily dogmatic. It had to be practical, it had to accomplish something in society, inspire progress and growth. It had to take a critical look at past experience, have its set of values, and "take effect in conduct."² Philosophy indicates what is desirable, but education and other social institutions and agencies are the effective means to translate the desirable into social reality. The first step required the modification of "mental and moral attitudes," the next step involved continuous and varied experience, development, and growth. This close relationship between philosophy and education is no surprise when Dewey virtually equated philosophy with the general theory of education.

According to Dewey, it is the business of such a philosophy to evaluate existing aims, discard the obsolete ones, and point out those of value for the present. Education becomes the tool of implementation, "for philosophic theory has no Aladdin's lamp to summon into existence the values which it intellectually constructs. . . . Education is the laboratory in which philosophic distinctions become concrete and are tested."³

¹John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1916), 383.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., 384.

It is of interest to this present investigation that Dewey, in an essay entitled “The Need of a Philosophy of Education,” proposed that the philosophy of education “is an attempt to discover what education *is* and how it takes place.”¹ He did not seem to subscribe to the idea that philosophy should tell us what education *should* be. That may have been uncomfortably close to what pragmatism rejects, namely, traditional authoritarian concepts. He nevertheless acknowledged this normative function that educational philosophy is expected to fulfill. Responding to that expectation, he saw only one way in which to find out what education should be, namely, “discovery of what actually takes place when education really occurs.”² That conclusion is in harmony with pragmatism and the use of the scientific method. The problem, however, is that finding out how something *should* be, usually implies that it is not known *a priori*. Once one knows how it should be, one can look for it and perchance recognize it when it occurs.

Undaunted, Dewey stated that the need for a philosophy of education was “fundamentally the need for finding out what education really *is*,” and he immediately indicated how to go about it: “We have to take those cases in which we find there is a real development of desirable powers, and then find out how this development took place.”³ In other words, Dewey already knew before he went looking that education should be, or is, “a real development of desirable powers,” and he presumably also knew

¹John Dewey, “The Need of a Philosophy of Education,” in *John Dewey on Education: Selected Writings*, ed. R. D. Archambault (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 3.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., 4.

what powers were desirable. All he needed to know was “how this development took place,” which suggests the cardinal concepts of Dewey’s instrumentalism, namely, process as the substance of education, and the scientific method as the intelligent method of discovery.

Dewey reiterated this by asking the question: “What then is education when we find [an] actual satisfactory specimen of it in existence?” And his answer was: “In the first place, it is a process of development, of growth. And it is the *process* and not merely the result that is important.”¹ If Dewey had already decided that education is development and growth, it is not surprising that that is what he found when he searched for it.

Then Dewey asked: “Just what do we mean by growth, by development?” In his answer we find two significant elements. First, it was not enough for development to be natural, that is, interacting with whatever condition might be in the environment. Development needed to be guided by wise teachers. The young were not to be “left at the mercy of all the unorganized and casual forces of the modern social environment.”² They had to be guided to interact with the most favorable conditions by a teacher who operated “not as a magistrate set on high and marked by arbitrary authority but as a friendly co-partner and guide in a common enterprise.”³ Second, the kind of development that Dewey considered desirable was individual development, but strongly tied to society.

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., 9.

³Ibid., 10.

“As the material of genuine development is that of human contacts and associations, so the end, the value that is the criterion and directing guide of educational work, is social.”¹

The social end of education was uppermost in Dewey’s mind. He expressed his magnanimous and democratic ideal of education as follows:

The acquisition of skills is not an end in itself. They are things to be put to use, and that use is their contribution to a common and shared life. They are intended, indeed, to make an individual more capable of self-support and of self-respecting independence. But unless this end is placed in the context of services rendered to others, skills gained will be put to an egoistic and selfish use, and may be employed as means of a trained shrewdness in which one person gets the better of others. Too often, indeed, the schools, through reliance upon the spur of competition and the bestowing of special honors and prizes, only build up and strengthen the disposition that makes an individual when he leaves school employ his special talents and superior skill to outwit his fellows without respect for the welfare of others.

What is true of the skills acquired in school, is true also of the knowledge gained there. The educational end and the ultimate test of the value of what is learned is its use and application in carrying on and improving the common life of all.²

Dewey accepted Darwin’s theory of evolution. How Dewey could harmonize these lofty ideals with evolution may not be easy to understand. It is not unlikely that they came from the progressives’ optimism, but had their origin in the Christian ideals that were part of Dewey’s upbringing and early adult years. He differed from Christianity, however, by placing his faith in humanity. He believed humankind could accomplish its own salvation and bring about a just and good society by itself. In *My Pedagogic Creed*, he stated his faith in education as “the fundamental method of social progress and reform,” and towards the end of his *Creed* he stated that “when science and art thus join hands the most commanding motive for human action will be reached, the

¹Ibid., 11.

²Ibid.

most genuine springs of human conduct aroused, and the best service that human nature is capable of guaranteed.” In the final paragraphs he declared the teacher to be “a social servant set apart for the maintenance of proper social order and the securing of the right social growth,” and to be “the prophet of the true God and the usherer in of the true kingdom of God.”¹

Dewey used religious language even though he had abandoned a traditional faith in God and Christianity. Dewey’s idea of the kingdom of God was “no more and no less than a community of free persons bound together in their practical activities by common interests and shared values.”²

Dewey talked about “the organism of grace” and saw it at work in all forms of life, ennobling individuals and uniting them in harmony. “Political, domestic and industrial institutions have become in fact an organized Kingdom of God on earth, making for the welfare of the individual and the unity of the whole.”³

Rockefeller’s observation of Dewey’s attitude towards God and Christianity is a concise contribution to the discussion:

There is no explicit affirmation of belief in the God of absolute idealism in *The Study of Ethics* (1894) or Dewey’s other published writings thereafter. . . . He had rejected all the traditional metaphysical conceptions of God.

It is actually a short, even if critically important, step from Dewey’s neo-Hegelian

¹John Dewey, “My Pedagogic Creed,” in *John Dewey on Education: Selected Writings*, ed. R. D. Archambault (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 437-439.

²Rockefeller, 210.

³John Dewey, “Reconstruction,” in *John Dewey: The Early Works, 1882-1898*, ed. J. A. Boydston and F. Bowers (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1971), 4:102.

panentheism and social mysticism to a thoroughgoing humanism and naturalism. The immanent God need only be interpreted quite simply as the human community and those aspects of nature that support it. . . . Dewey was traveling in this general direction. . . . He left the church in the name of human community, abandoned the idea of special revelation in the name of truth and morality, and eventually rejected the God of the church theologians in order to overcome humanity's alienation from its own essential goodness and in order to realize the spiritual meaning inherent in ordinary human relations.¹

Dewey had no need for divine revelation. His faith in the scientific method was absolute, strange as the word "absolute" must sound when speaking of Dewey. The following is from an address before the Students' Christian Association of the University of Michigan in the Spring of 1894:

Science as a method of inquiry, as an organized, comprehensive, progressive, self-verifying system of investigation has come into existence. The result has been an almost boundless confidence in the possibility of the human mind to reach truth. We feel that our instruments are so ample and so mighty that, given time, nothing can resist them. . . . It is assumed, however unconsciously, that all truth which promises to be of practical avail in the direction of man's life, may be gotten at by scientific method.²

How could Dewey appeal to science and the scientific method as the only source of truth and intellectual authority and still safeguard morality? Dewey not only believed that this could be done, he also believed that humanism and naturalism could be the new religion of humanity. This is evident from his writings in the twentieth century. Coming to this conclusion about Dewey, Rockefeller observed that "some of his critics in both the church and the community of scientific agnostics undoubtedly felt this was a case of a

¹Ibid., 216.

²Dewey, *The Early Works*, 102.

man trying to have his cake and eat it at one and the same time.”¹

Dewey did not accept the Christian notion of supernatural truth through revelation and inspiration. Speaking of the Scriptures and whether their record in Genesis and elsewhere could be reconciled with science and historical and philological research, Dewey expressed his astonishment “that large bodies of men should think themselves at liberty to ignore or to defy the established results of physical and historical science.”² But Dewey was even more disturbed by their failure to “recognize how completely science has changed the conception of the concrete relation of truth to human action.”³ Dewey went on to tell the church that truth was not from above, it was on earth in human experience. His advice to the church reveals a significant tenet of his epistemology:

It is because science represents a method of truth to which, so far as we can discover, no limits whatsoever can be put, that it is necessary for the church to reconstruct its doctrines of revelation and inspiration, and for the individual to reconstruct, within his own religious life, his conception of what spiritual truth is and the nature of its authority over him. Science has made real to us, and is bound to make still more real, the actual incarnation of truth in human experience and the necessity of giving heed to it.⁴

At some stage, all educational work involves obtaining knowledge in some form. Therefore, ideas held with regard to truth and knowledge, and especially the origin of truth and knowledge, will inevitably determine to a large extent the general aims of education, the ultimate aims in particular.

¹Rockefeller, 217.

²Dewey, *The Early Works*, 103.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

Aims of Education

Democracy and Education, published in 1916, is Dewey's most important and comprehensive statement on educational philosophy. Of his many works it is ideally suited for this present purpose of identifying his aims of education.

As stated in his preface, the book is “an endeavor to detect and state the ideas implied in a democratic society and to apply these ideas to the problems of the enterprise of education.”¹ It is of interest to this discussion that immediately following this opening statement, Dewey pointed out a major concern of the book, namely, “the constructive aims and methods of public education as seen from this point of view.”²

As the title of the book suggests, it is about the relationship between democracy and education. It is about the growth of democracy through education. Dewey saw education as the method of developing a democratic community.³ Fundamental to Dewey's philosophy of democracy and education are three issues enunciated in the preface: “the development of the experimental method in the sciences, evolutionary ideas in the biological sciences, and the industrial reorganization.”⁴ This again has implications for the curriculum and method of education and is also discussed in the book.

The book was undoubtedly developed within the years under discussion, 1865 through 1915. Although it was first published in March of 1916, the preface was written

¹Dewey, *Democracy*, v.

²*Ibid.*

³*Ibid.*, 376.

⁴*Ibid.*, v.

in August 1915. The writing of the book prior to that was likely the fruition of many years of philosophical thought. Furthermore, Dewey acknowledged years of gestation when, at the end of the preface, he said: “I am also greatly indebted to a long line of students whose successive classes span more years than I care to enumerate.”¹ The essential features may extend as far back as 1897 when Dewey published *My Pedagogic Creed*, and perhaps even further.²

A Necessary Foundation for Discussing Aims of Education

Chapters 8 and 9 in Dewey’s book are devoted to the discussion of the aims of education. Those chapters are immediately preceded by a chapter entitled “The Democratic Conception in Education,” which generally is regarded as the central chapter of the book. “It has always been seen as a privileged statement of Dewey’s understanding of both democracy and education.”³

In the discussion of education in the first chapters of the book, the aims of education are assumed to be “to enable individuals to continue their education” or “continued capacity for growth.” These aims, however, cannot be realized except in a democratic society,⁴ hence the discussion of the ideal society in chapter 7. How does Dewey determine the ideal society? He does not accept any external decree or

¹Ibid.

²John Dewey, “Introduction,” in *John Dewey on Education: Selected Writings*, iv.

³Ryan, 183.

⁴Dewey, *Democracy*, 117.

supernatural authority. “We must,” he said, “base our conception upon societies which actually exist, in order to have any assurance that our ideal is a practicable one.” The remaining task then is to select the good and eliminate the bad found in existing society.¹

According to Dewey, the standards or criteria for the good society were the number of common interests within the community, and the freedom and fullness of interaction with other social groups.² Later in the chapter, Dewey gave this concise definition of a democratic society: “A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience.”³

Dewey proceeded in the chapter to give a brief historical survey of educational and social philosophy. First, he considered Plato. He agreed with Plato’s ideas that the capacities and qualities of the individual should be discovered and developed for the well-being of both the individual and society. However, he criticized “the superficiality of Plato’s lumping of individuals and their original powers into a few sharply marked-off classes.”⁴

Similarly, Dewey looked at the eighteenth-century educational philosophy which advocated “education in accord with nature,” emphasizing “the diversity of individual talent” and “the need of free development of individuality in all its variety.”⁵ The

¹Ibid., 96.

²Ibid., 96-97, 115.

³Ibid., 101.

⁴Ibid., 105.

⁵Ibid., 107, 106.

eighteenth-century concept of society, however, was very broad. It was nothing less than humanity itself—cosmopolitanism. The capabilities of the individual would find freedom in being a member of humanity rather than a citizen of a state. The shortcoming of this “individualistic” ideal was that it had no agency to implement it. “Leaving everything to nature” would not work. There was no method, and no administration.

Turning his attention to nineteenth-century Europeans, especially the Germans, Dewey saw a change taking place. The philosophy of the previous century had not worked. As a result, there was a change in the model for society. Humanity was replaced by the state, and instead of cosmopolitanism came nationalism. “To form the citizen, not the ‘man,’ became the aim of education.”¹ But the ideals of the “individualistic” philosophy persisted and led to an attempt to reconcile the cultural ideal of individual development for the sake of humanity and the utilization of individual capacities for the state’s sake. Dewey put it this way: “The individual in his isolation is nothing; only in and through an absorption of the aims and meaning of organized institutions does he attain true personality.”² Dewey’s conclusion about the implementation of this philosophy was that the interests of the state overshadowed the humanistic, social ideal “and reintroduced the idea of the subordination of the individual to the institution.”³

Dewey’s own concepts were presented against the backdrop of this historical review of three educational philosophies. He thought of education as “a social process

¹Ibid., 109.

²Ibid., 110.

³Ibid., 116.

and function,” but for that idea or conception to have any concrete meaning, the type of society in which it would serve or operate had to be determined. That is why Dewey broadly surveyed the educational and social philosophies of Plato, and of the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. And he concluded the chapter by reiterating what he said in the beginning. He wanted a society that had a great number of varied interests in common that would bind the people together. He also desired a society that provided for full and free association and interaction of all its members both among themselves and with other groups on equal terms. Communication of experience was important as was flexibility of the social institutions to allow desirable social changes. This, in short, described a democratic society.

Having defined the kind of society he saw as ideal, Dewey could now give a definite meaning to his conception of education as a social process.¹ In the summary at the end of the chapter, Dewey seemed to be mostly concerned with control and changes in society through education: “Such a society must have a type of education which gives individuals a personal interest in social relationships and control, and the habits of mind which secure social changes without introducing disorder.”² Just before the summary, however, Dewey dealt with specifics. He demanded that the schools be given the means needed to eliminate “the effects of economic inequalities,” and he also wanted “equality of equipment for [the youth’s] future career.” In order for this to be accomplished, he called for changes in subject matter and methods, even “supplementation of family

¹Ibid., 112.

²Ibid., 115.

resources” if needed in order to “retain all the youth under educational influences until they are equipped to be masters of their own economic and social careers.”¹

To Rockefeller, such lofty ideals seemed impossible, given the vagaries of human nature. But the progressive movement was characterized by extraordinary optimism. It believed in social progress through the development of the human being’s own power, reason, intelligence, scientific methodology, and technology. These may go a long way to alleviate wrongs but the source of evil in human nature itself may make realization impossible.²

The Nature and Function of Aims in Education

After laying the philosophical foundation for education in a democratic society, Dewey, in chapter 8 of *Democracy and Education*, discussed the nature, function, and criteria of good aims, and their application in education. At the outset Dewey established a fundamental tenet of his pragmatism: Aims should not be “determined by an external dictation.” Rather, they should “arise from the free growth of their [the social group’s] own experience.”³

Dewey had a peculiar concept of aims. He saw them as “ends-in-view” and as “a foreseen end,” “foresight of possible consequences.”⁴ He was not willing to separate the

¹Ibid., 114.

²Rockefeller, 221-222.

³Dewey, *Democracy*, 117.

⁴Ibid., 123, 119, 125.

aim or the end from the means. “Every means is a temporary end until we have attained it. Every end becomes a means of carrying activity further as soon as it is achieved.”¹ A little later in the chapter he stated the same idea in even stronger terms. “The aim is as definitely a *means* of action as is any other portion of an activity.”² In *My Pedagogic Creed*, Dewey stated plainly, “I believe that education must be conceived as a continuing reconstruction of experience; that the process and the goal of education are one and the same thing.”³

Dewey suggested three criteria for good aims. First, the aim must be “an outgrowth of existing conditions.”⁴ Dewey’s basic concern here was to exclude aims external to the activities at hand. His arguments against what he called “externally supplied ends” were strange. He defined such aims as “something for which we *ought* to act.” One would think that that would not be detrimental to activities, but here again Dewey showed his hostility to anything “imposed by some authority.” He said that “such ‘aims’ limit intelligence.”⁵ They were contrary to Dewey’s naturalism.

Second, an aim must be flexible, adaptable to changing circumstances. Dewey considered external aims as fixed and rigid. He saw such aims as abstract and remote.

¹Ibid., 124.

²Ibid., 124. See also John Dewey, “The Continuum of Ends-Means,” in *John Dewey on Education: Selected Writings*, 97.

³Dewey, “My Pedagogic Creed,” in *John Dewey on Education: Selected Writings*, 434.

⁴Dewey, *Democracy*, 121.

⁵Ibid., 122.

According to his thinking, “the aim . . . is experimental, and hence constantly growing as it is tested in action.”¹

Third, Dewey talked about the aim representing “a freeing of activities.” The activity had to be purposeful and a successful process. The aim could not be a “thing in isolation.” Here Dewey avoided accepting anything that resembled an external aim that was independent of the natural, free activity growing out of the ongoing experience.

When Dewey contrasted his concept of aims with what he saw as a static aim “imposed from without the activity,”² his criticism focused on the activity, the means for attaining the desired end. He maintained that the activity was then only “a necessary evil; something which must be gone through before one can reach the object which is alone worth while.”³ In trying to understand what Dewey meant by an external aim, it is useful to look at one example he gave. In the example, the teacher dictated every activity of the student and determined the sequence of the activities by assigning lessons. The directions were given by the teacher. Dewey said it was nonsense to talk about an educational aim under these circumstances.⁴

One would think that the teacher could have had very definite and worthy aims towards which she was working regardless of whether she was going about reaching those goals in an effective and practical manner or not. But in Dewey’s mind this would

¹Ibid., 123.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., 123-124.

⁴Ibid., 118-119, 122.

be separating the ends from the means. This would exclude aims as growing out of the existing conditions of the student; it would dismiss the idea of the aims being experimental.

Natural Development as an Educational Aim

In *Democracy and Education*, Dewey discussed natural development as an educational aim and he did so with reference to Rousseau's writings on the subject, "since no one has stated in the doctrine both its truth and falsity better than Rousseau."¹

Dewey saw statements of aims as an emphasis on what was needed by way of remedies. They were a response to "the defects and needs of the contemporary situation."² Rousseau's emphasis on nature and the natural development of the individual was seen as opposition or reaction to authoritarian domination in society.

Dewey agreed with Rousseau about the development of "the natural, or native, powers," but not independently of their usefulness. He maintained that "the native activities *develop*, in contrast with random and capricious exercise, through the uses to which they are put."³ Nor did Dewey agree with Rousseau that all natural tendencies were intrinsically good. In Dewey's view they were neither good nor evil "but become one or the other according to the objects for which they are employed."⁴

¹Ibid., 131.

²Ibid., 130.

³Ibid., 133.

⁴Ibid., 134.

Dewey saw several “elements of truth” in Rousseau’s writings. He discussed four such desirable elements that he felt were indicated by Rousseau’s general aim of natural development. The first was health and vigor. Natural development pointed to the development of the physical body, and Dewey considered it foundational for what he called “normal development” and “educational efficiency.”¹ The second one indicated by natural development was “respect for physical mobility.”² Here Dewey was talking about physical movements in games and plays, investigating and exploring by physically touching and handling. And Dewey went further. He saw physical exercise as an instrument in developing the mind. The third element that Dewey found to be implicit in the general aim was “regard for individual differences among children.”³ Simply by observing the “native powers” it should be obvious that there were great differences in different individuals. The fourth factor was to be aware of preference and interests as they manifested themselves in the child and to “strike while the iron is hot” because these, in the words of Dewey, “wax and wane.” He saw this as very important as evidenced by the following statement: “More than we imagine, the ways in which the tendencies of early childhood are treated fix fundamental dispositions and condition the turn taken by powers that show themselves later.”⁴ The childhood development, therefore, will influence later social efficiency.

¹Ibid., 134-135.

²Ibid., 135.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., 136.

Social Efficiency as an Educational Aim

The second aim of education discussed by Dewey in his ninth chapter of *Democracy and Education* was social efficiency. Before dealing with specific aims Dewey voiced concern regarding a predictable reaction to natural development, namely, that society would call for “subordination of natural powers to social rules.”¹ Dewey wanted social efficiency to be “attained not by negative constraint but by positive use of native individual capacities in occupations having a social meaning.”²

Social efficiency included two specific subsets of education, namely, industrial or vocational efficiency and good citizenship or civic efficiency. The basic element of the first one was the ability to earn a living, not only for self but also for dependent children. Dewey emphasized the need to guard against the temptation of using education for the benefit of certain classes or strata in society. He was a foe of inequities in society and an enemy of oligarchy. Industrial or vocational efficiency, then, meant more than just the ability to earn a living. It meant equal economic opportunities. Industrial education was not to serve “class authority.” “It is the aim of progressive education,” said Dewey, “to take part in correcting unfair privilege and unfair deprivation, not to perpetuate them.”³

The second specific subset, civic efficiency or good citizenship, concerned the individual as a citizen, specifically as a participant in the political processes. “It denotes ability to judge men and measures wisely and to take a determining part in making as well

¹Ibid., 138.

²Ibid., 139.

³Ibid., 140.

as obeying laws.”¹ Dewey warned against a narrow interpretation of this goal. He stressed the “capacity to share in a give and take of experience.” Speaking of the ultimate social efficiency Dewey stated that “it covers all that makes one’s own experience more worth while to others, and all that enables one to participate more richly in the worthwhile experience of others.”² Again and again Dewey came back to this central idea in his philosophy of “making experiences more communicable.” This to him was the essence of a democratic society, the antithesis of a selfish division of society into classes that perpetuated themselves and looked out for themselves while disregarding the well-being of others. The socialization Dewey had in mind when speaking of social efficiency was the “breaking down [of] the barriers of social stratification which make individuals impervious to the interests of others.”³ What Dewey really was talking about when he stressed the concern for others was not just a feeling of sympathy. He called it “intelligent sympathy,” and it concerned two of Dewey’s fundamental convictions, unity and commonality of a social group on the one hand and individual freedom on the other. “Sympathy as a desirable quality . . . is a cultivated imagination for what men have in common and a rebellion at whatever unnecessarily divides them.” It is “an endeavor to free them so that they may seek and find the good of their own choice.” Dewey, in fact, calls “intelligent sympathy” the “chief constituent” of social efficiency.⁴

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., 141.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

Culture as an Educational Aim

In Dewey's estimation a worthy society is a group of individuals possessing "complete development of personality," that is to say, distinctive, unique, and significant personal qualities. "It is cultivation with respect to appreciation of ideas and art and broad human interests." It is "identical with the true meaning of social efficiency."¹ Social efficiency was not to be limited to supplying a "quantity of material commodities" which Dewey also called "external products." Here again he was opposing class division in which the upper class enjoyed exclusively the personal development in art and ideas while the lower classes toiled at menial tasks. In the words of Dewey, "if democracy has a moral and ideal meaning, it is that a social return be demanded from all and that opportunity for development of distinctive capacities be afforded all."²

And again Dewey went deeper. He tied social efficiency with experience. It had to achieve "a distinctively valuable experience," otherwise it would become materialistic. Also, it had to "connect with others," it could not be something "purely 'inner' What one is as a person is what one is as associated with others, in a free give and take of intercourse."³ This, in Dewey's opinion, went well beyond merely producing material goods or exclusive personal cultivation. For Dewey, social efficiency and personal culture go together; in fact he called them "synonyms" in the sense that serving others

¹Ibid., 142.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., 143.

(social efficiency) was indeed serving oneself (personal culture) at the same time. Dewey felt that in society at that time there was this dualism, pitting one against the other. This was to Dewey “a product of a feudally organized society with its rigid division of inferior and superior,”¹ and diametrically opposed to his idea of democracy.

Summary

John Dewey embraced evolutionary social progressivism, centered his philosophy in individual and social experience, and rejected external authority including Christianity. In his epistemology, he put an explicit faith in the scientific method. The education he envisioned could only be realized in a democratic society of common but varied interests, of full and free association and interaction, and with a positive attitude towards desirable social changes.

The aims of a democratic education were social progress growing out of the social group’s experience. These would include natural, physical development respectful of individual differences yet beneficial to society; industrial, vocational, and civic efficiency for social and political equality and regard for others; and culture, both personal and societal, that is, “appreciation of ideas and art and broad human interests”.

Aims and means, however, were inseparable parts of the process of education. They were never external or static, but always a dynamic, experimental process. They suggested a curriculum very different from the never changing curriculum of classical education.

¹Ibid., 142.

Dewey's epistemological answer to the classical curriculum of his time may not stand out in his writings in one sentence. It is quite clear, nevertheless, that the scientific method is the answer to all knowledge and truth seeking, and that the search for truth is not to be wasted on the supernatural or any authoritarian dogma or revelation. Rather it should be exclusively guided by the evolutionary world view of humanism and naturalism. Dewey's ideas are often lofty and noble, but totally grounded in what is; and he categorically rejects any external norms.

Manual Education

The Manual Labor Movement: History and Decline

The latter part of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century was a period of increased interest in employing education for the benefit of the common people. Anderson in 1913 mentioned three main causes for this awakening: "political revolutionary movements in Europe and America, the progress of the industrial revolution in England and elsewhere, and the teachings of the great political philosophers and economists."¹ He credited educational leaders such as Christian Gotthilf Salzmann (1741-1811), Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827), and Philip Emanuel von Fellenberg (1771-1844) on the continent and Robert Owen (1771-1858), George Birkbeck (1776-1841), and Henry Brougham (1778-1868) in Britain.² The fruit of the

¹L. F. Anderson, "The Manual Labor School Movement," *Educational Review* 46 (1913): 369.

²Salzmann was a German educator interested in training in manual tasks as a part of good education; Pestalozzi was a famous Swiss educational reformer who developed the ideas of Jean-Jacques Rousseau; von Fellenberg was also an influential Swiss

enthusiasm and vigor of these and others was that “infant schools, monitorial schools, mutual improvement societies, mechanics’ institutes, societies for the diffusion of knowledge, and lyceums multiplied rapidly both in England and America.”¹ Among these were the American manual labor schools.

Herbert G. Lull had no doubts concerning European influence on the manual labor movement: “Like many another educational movement, the chief inspiration establishing the manual labor movement came to the United States from Europe. The movement originated with the so-called DeFellenberg schools at Hofwyl, Switzerland, about 1805.”² Anderson was of the same opinion, namely, that “it was . . . the Swiss educators, Pestalozzi and Fellenberg, whose influence in initiating and developing the manual labor movement was most direct and powerful.”³ In his doctoral dissertation on education through manual labor, Gordon L. Schimmel pointed out that Fellenberg made manual labor an integrated part of his school program, and further observed that “because it was the chief characteristic of his institutions, his methodologies were eventually widely copied and gave considerable momentum to the development of the agricultural school,

educator who believed in practical education (he established the renowned Hofwyl school); Owen was influential in Britain through the schools he established at New Lanark; Birkbeck helped found the Glasgow Mechanic’s Institution and the London Mechanic’s Institution; and Brougham, a member of the British Parliament, was interested in providing practical education for the working classes.

¹Ibid.

²Herbert G. Lull, “The Manual Labor Movement in the United States,” TMs (photocopy), p. 375, Center for Adventist Research, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

³Anderson, 371-373.

the manual-labor school and the industrial reform school.”¹

Despite European influences there were distinct American roots. Lull referred to Wheelock, the first president of Dartmouth College, as having urged his students as early as 1771 “to turn the course of their diversions and exercises for their health to the practice of some manual arts, or cultivation of gardens and other lands, at the proper hours of leisure and intermission from studies.” Lull also mentioned that Benjamin Rush of Philadelphia, as early as 1790, advocated “agricultural and mechanical pursuits in educational institutions,” and claimed that “in 1796, the first manual labor school was founded in Abbeyville county, S.C.”²

Frederick C. Waite maintained that the introduction of the manual labor system in schools in the United States was “not derived from the Pestalozzian method.” Rather it originated in a compromise between two different philosophies in the Baptist Church concerning the education of their ministers. One group believed that ministers should be well educated, the other that “if a young man was ‘called’ to preach, God would provide him with the needed ability and no formal education was necessary.” Those, however, who believed they were called, “were usually poor and could not afford to go to college.”³

¹Gordon L. Schimmel, “Education Through Manual Labor: A Comparative Study of Selected Self-help Schools in the United States and Africa” (Ph.D. diss., University of Massachusetts, Amherst, 1982), 39.

²Lull, 378.

³Frederick C. Waite, “Manual Labor, an Experiment in American Colleges of the Early Nineteenth Century,” in *Association of American Colleges Bulletin* 36, TMs (photocopy), p. 392, Center for Adventist Research, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

The compromise was to earn one's way through college by means of manual labor.

Waite divided the schools incorporating manual labor in their curriculum into "three distinct types of institutions . . . [arising] in the United States before 1830."¹ The first type discussed by Waite were the Baptist manual labor schools, the first of which was the Maine Literary and Theological Institute founded in 1814. It later became Waterville College and then Colby College. The second type of manual labor schools was tuition-charging vocational schools mostly in rural communities. There students received training in carpentry, working with iron, weaving, and milling. Usually a farm was connected with the school for the purpose of raising products to feed the students. The third type was institutions of higher learning where there was "a grafting of a small amount of manual labor on the current curricula of colleges of arts, classical academies and a few professional schools."²

Among the chief promoters of the manual labor movement were Stephen H. Tyng of Philadelphia, editor of the *American Quarterly Register*, Elias Cornelius, secretary of the American Education Society, and Theodore D. Weld, secretary of the Society for Promoting Manual Labor in Literary Institutions. The promotion of manual labor in seminaries and literary institutions had its roots in religion. Cornelius was himself a clergyman. After graduating from Yale College in 1813, he studied theology, became a missionary among the Indians and later a pastor in Salem, Massachusetts. In 1826 he became the secretary of the American Education Society, which originally was the

¹Ibid., 391.

²Ibid., 393.

American Society for Educating Pious Youth for the Gospel Ministry, founded in 1815 in Boston.

Cornelius's appeal to "the friends of education, and especially the friends of the Redeemer," is an example of the religious character of the Manual Labor Movement. The appeal was to adopt some plan of manual labor in connection with education "to prevent the waste of health, and life, and usefulness, which the church of Christ has for years sustained, to the ruin of some of the fairest and brightest prospects which have opened around her."¹ The manual labor system at Andover Theological Seminary, one of the better known schools incorporating manual labor in the educational program, owed its existence to Cornelius.²

The Society for Promoting Manual Labor in Literary Institutions was organized in 1831 in New York and soon thereafter Weld was hired as its general agent. Weld traveled extensively in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Alabama, "prosecuting his inquiries, and calling public attention to the Manual Labor System."³ Weld gathered data and testimonies for about a year and then reported to the Society.

¹Elias Cornelius, "Union of Study with Useful Labour," *Quarterly Register and Journal of the American Education Society*, 2, (1829): 67-68 (photocopy), Center for Adventist Research, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

²Waite, 3.

³Theodore D. Weld, "Mr. Weld's Report to the Executive Committee," *First Annual Report of the Society for Promoting Manual Labor in Literary Institutions, Including the Report of Their General Agent, Theodore D. Weld* (New York: S. W. Benedict, 1833), vii.

After some preliminaries, Weld laid the foundation for his report with the following statement:

God has revealed his will to man upon the subject of education, and has furnished every human being with a copy of the revelation. It is written in the language of nature, and can be understood without a commentary. This revelation consists in the universal consciousness of those influences which body and mind exert upon each other—influences innumerable, incessant, and all controlling; the body continually modifying the state of the mind, and the mind ever varying the condition of the body. These two make up the compound which we call man; not the body alone, not the mind alone, but both conjoined in one by mutual laws. *These mutual laws form the only rational basis for a system of education.* A system based upon anything else is wrong in its first principles; its combinations are incongruities, its tendencies are perversions, and its results, ruin. True, the body has no value intrinsically, but its connection with the mind gives it infinite worth. Every man who has marked the reciprocal action of body and mind surely need not be told that mental and physical training should go together.¹

There is a clear reference here to God's revelation; also an understanding of the body and mind affecting each other, and further, there is a holistic view of the individual. Weld saw the body as "the mind's servant."²

In Pennsylvania the interest was such that in 1832 the House of Representatives asked its Committee on Education to look into establishing a Manual Labor Academy "for the instruction of teachers for the public schools." The state would pay the expenses, including the tuition, and in return have the graduates teach in some of the state's public schools or else pay the cost of their education that was not covered by their labor.³ In 1836, a resolution was offered in the United States Senate that the Committee on Public

¹Ibid., 10-11.

²Ibid., 11.

³Anderson, 379.

Lands be directed to look into the feasibility of “making a grant of lands to one or more colleges in each of the new states for educating the poor upon the manual labor system.”¹

It is evident that the concerns for giving the poor opportunity for education was not confined to philanthropic or religious organizations. Not only did it reach the legislative halls of the country on educational grounds, it may even have been politically motivated. Lull pointed out that the manual labor movement occurred about the same time as the beginnings of the American public high school, and that the forces behind it were inspired by democratic motives: “There was a growing opinion that the seminaries, fitting schools, and finishing schools of the time were aristocratic. The manual labor movement was in part an attempt to check the growth of that opinion, and to correct the aristocratic tendency wherever it existed.”²

The height of popularity of the manual labor system was in the early 1830s. It is estimated that before 1836 more than 200 schools used the system at some time.³ But the decline was already in the making. The movement lost its greatest promoter when Cornelius died in 1832, and Weld resigned from the Society for Promoting Manual Labor in Literary Institutions in 1833, after only one year as its agent. In his article, Waite noted that “marked decline began in the late eighteen thirties and increased steadily until nearly all institutions had abandoned it by 1850.”⁴

¹Ibid.

²Lull, 381.

³Waite, 397.

⁴Ibid.

Waite mentioned some of the difficulties, which in his words “should have been anticipated but which were appreciated only after sad experience.” These were, first, a financial burden resulting from great capital expenses at the beginning. A farm had to be bought, buildings and shops were needed, and implements, tools, and livestock must be acquired. Second, good, qualified superintendents of both farm and shops were hard to find, and sometimes efficient ones were fired because “the educated professors of Greek, Latin, mathematics and philosophy resented the payment to the superintendent of shops, an uneducated craftsman, of a salary equal to their own.” Third, student labor wages, based on the amount needed to pay board and room were too high compared with that of experienced craftsmen. Fourth, the quality of the products in the shops was often poor and therefore not competitive, which resulted in losses in the operation of the shops. Fifth, insurance rates were high for wooden buildings if there were shops on the campus. Shavings were inflammable and sometimes not only the shop burned down but also nearby classroom buildings. Sixth, there was a problem with the discipline of students. They were fined for breaking or damaging tools, spoiling material, or engaging in unnecessary conversation. Those fines sometimes cut heavily into their wages. Seventh, Waite mentioned that most students did not like the manual labor system, especially when some schools “required the student to work at manual labor from five to seven in the morning before breakfast.”¹

The situation that developed in the Alabama Institute of Literature and Industry provides an insight into why the manual labor system failed in the United States:

¹Ibid., 398-399.

The impracticability of the manual labor system soon became apparent. . . . A hundred hands were to be employed by the superintendent for two or three hours. The most of these had never been taught and they often did more harm than good. Implements and work shops in corresponding numbers had to be provided, these to lie idle three-fourths of every day, and often the fields would scarcely be reached before the bell would summon them to return, and that too often at a time when the care of the crop required immediate and prolonged attention. It was soon discovered that a full corps of regular hands had to be employed in addition to the students. But the students had to be paid for their labor, for the subscribers and patrons had been led to expect that in this way a student could meet the greater part of his expenses. Board and tuition had to be put at scarcely more than nominal rate. Board was \$1.25 per week, and tuition \$10.00 per session of five months.¹

Educational Aims

A fundamental purpose of the manual labor system, according to Weld, was to remedy the defects of the present system of education. The first part of Weld's report in 1833 to the Society for the Promotion of Manual Labor in Literary Institutions was devoted to pointing out some of the evils of the present system. It was a system that neglected the physical aspect of the students and was concerned solely with the development of the mind.

When Weld proceeded with five indictments of the educational system of his day, he had in mind the cardinal tenets of the manual labor system, that is, bodily exercise through manual labor preserves health and helps defray the cost of education. His five points were that the present system of education (1) "makes fearful havoc of health and life"; (2) "effeminates the mind"; (3) "is perilous to morals"; (4) "produces an indisposition to effort and destroys habits of activity and industry"; (5) "is so expensive

¹Lull, 384-385.

that its practical effects are anti-republican.”¹ For the most part these assertions were backed up by testimonies only. In spite of that fact, the testimonies are powerful and are in themselves facts of the mood and convictions abroad in the nation during that time. One could also reasonably conclude that many of the testimonies were based on some kind of reliable observations and data.

Anderson agreed with Weld. After reviewing the literature of the manual labor movement, he concluded that the aims of the movement “were chiefly two: first, to bring secondary or higher education more within the reach of the poorer classes and, secondly, to promote the physical health and vigor of students.”² We shall briefly look at these and a few other goals of the manual labor movement.

Affordable Education

There were many worthy and talented youth among the poorer classes who could not afford the higher education of the day. Through manual labor at an institution of higher learning these young people from the poorer classes would be able to defray the cost. Affordable education would also facilitate another goal, namely, democracy and republicanism.

Democracy and Republicanism

The promoters of the manual labor system saw the cost of education that only the wealthy could afford as a cause of division in society. Weld feared that the “laboring

¹Weld, 17, 27, 34, 39-40.

²Ibid., 385.

classes [would] become hewers of wood and drawers of water for the educated.” He believed the chasm between the classes would be bridged “by bringing the education within the reach of the poor.”¹ In 1831, the American Lyceum passed a resolution stating that manual labor in schools would promote “mutual regard and sympathy between the different portions of society in a republican government.”²

Rendering Labor Useful and Respectable

The Manual Labour Academy in Germantown, Pennsylvania, was, like so many other such institutions, engaged in the education of young men for the gospel ministry. Preachers willing to go west to new territories or states were especially needed. They needed to be acquainted with the common tasks and occupations vitally important in pioneer communities. In addition, the ministers had to deal with the reality that many uneducated people were prejudiced against a life of absolutely no manual labor. In order to break down this prejudice, it was necessary for the young missionaries to take part in manual labor. The American Lyceum, therefore, emphasized manual labor or some mechanical skills as “desirable to every individual, as . . . a resource in case of difficulty, and especially as a means of rendering labor respectable in the eyes of all.”³

Promoting Health

President Cossitt of Cumberland College, Kentucky, said “that at least nine out of

¹Weld, 41.

²Lull, 381.

³Lull, 381.

ten, among diligent, industrious students, have, in a greater or less degree, suffered the loss of health, by intense application to study, and a want of proper exercise.”¹ Miller of Princeton Theological Seminary agreed. Speaking of “injudicious neglect of exercise,” he stated: “I doubt whether one in six, or even one in eight, brings to the public service of the sanctuary an unimpaired constitution. This loudly calls for some effectual remedy.”² The remedy was manual labor. The aim was not merely to prevent loss of health and life among students in literary institutions, but to ensure the best possible condition of the body in order for the mind to be in optimal condition. Yet another goal of vigorous health was to enable young ministers heading west to new territories to “endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ.”³

Promoting Morality and Character Development

This aim was to be achieved by manual labor preventing idleness, making the students useful, invigorating the mind, and “regulating the feelings and restraining the passions of youth which are so often excited by a sedentary life.”⁴ Manual labor would occupy “the idle time of the students . . . deterring them from devising mischief or indulging in such sinful pursuits as checkers, backgammon and games of cards.”⁵

¹Weld, 17-18.

²Ibid., 21.

³Cornelius, 67.

⁴Lull, 381.

⁵Waite, 395.

Although great emphasis was placed on manual labor in the literary institutions that adopted the movement's ideals, it was never considered the school's main objective. This was made very clear by the Society for Promoting Manual Labor in Literary Institutions: "We should deprecate, therefore, as a great calamity, any plan of manual labor, or any scale of graduating the amount of time and care bestowed upon it, which would give to this the appearance of being the leading object. We would have the cultivation of the mind the leading object in literary institutions, and labor introduced only as a useful auxiliary."¹

The main purpose of manual labor in schools of higher learning, either through preservation of health or through financial benefits, or through both, was to make the primary academic purpose of the institution possible.

The Manual Training Movement

History

The earliest system of training needed for trade and trade skills was the system of apprenticeship. In America, it was "the most used educational scheme until 1830."² But by 1860, it had almost completely disappeared with no adequate substitute. According to Arthur B. Mays, "America entered the great industrial expansions of the seventies and

¹Anderson, 385.

²Merle E. Strong and Carl J. Schaefer, *Introduction to Trade, Industrial, and Technical Education* (Columbus, OH: Merrill Publishing, 1975), 3.

eighties with no program of industrial education.”¹ Change, however, was coming as the emphasis in manual education shifted from mainly desiring health and financial benefits to focusing on the needs for practical manual training. That change led to industrial and technical education, and the vocational education movement in the early twentieth century. This shift came as the United States and Europe were changing to an economy based predominantly on industry rather than on agriculture. Businessmen, industrial leaders, philanthropists, and educational and social reformers were calling for a more practical curriculum.²

The manual training movement caught the attention of the nation after the Centennial Exposition of 1876 in Philadelphia where a new method of instruction in the use of tools was demonstrated by Victor Della-Vos, director of the Moscow Imperial Technical School. Della-Vos organized instruction shops that were separate from the construction shops. In the instruction shops the tool practice was analyzed “into its elements,” and then the elements were taught “abstractly to a class.” In the hands of the Russians, said Woodward, “manual tool instruction has become a science. . . . Here is the point where the best manual-training schools differ radically from the ordinary system of apprenticeship.”³ Immediately upon returning from the Centennial Exposition, John D.

¹Arthur B. Mays, *Essentials of Industrial Education* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1952), 51.

²Marvin L. Lazerson and W. Norton Grubb, *American Education and Vocationalism: A Documentary History 1870-1970* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1974), 3.

³Charles A. Bennett, *History of Manual and Industrial Education 1870 to 1917* (Peoria, IL: Manual Arts Press, 1937), 15, 322.

Runkle, president of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, recommended that MIT establish instruction shops. This was voted in the same year, establishing a “shopwork department” for the young engineers. More significantly, it was also voted to develop a new secondary school where special emphasis would be given to “manual education for those who wish to enter upon industrial pursuits rather than to become scientific engineers. This new school was named ‘School of Mechanic Arts.’”¹

Calvin M. Woodward, who has been called “the great American champion of manual training,” had a vision to place shopwork “on the same educational plane with other school subjects. He saw the mechanic arts analyzed, pedagogically organized, and taught under the guidance of the same principles that have influenced methods of teaching the sciences, mathematics, and even the languages.”² Woodward did not intend this to be a teaching of trades. The products were not to have any market value and the shop was to be run and supported like a science laboratory.³

In the 1880s there was controversy in educational circles about the general educational value of manual training. Defenders of the classical education questioned whether manual training belonged in the schools. Some ridiculed it saying, “There is no information stored up in the plow, hoe handle, steam engine, but there *is* information stored up in books.”⁴ Woodward defended the place of manual training in the schools by

¹Ibid., 322.

²Ibid., 317-318, 337.

³Ibid., 337.

⁴Ibid. 361.

pointing out how the workshop stimulated and increased the students' interest in mathematics, physics, and chemistry. He further noted that "no one can learn from a book the true force of technical terms or definitions nor the properties of materials. The obscurities of the textbooks (often doubly obscure from the lack of proper training on the part of the author) vanish before the steady gaze of a boy whose hands and eyes have assisted in the building of mental images."¹

In the United States as well as in several European countries the question was whether the shopwork instruction should be motivated by general educational aims or economic and industrial interests.

Educational Aims

Comparing the manual training systems of Russia and Sweden, Bennett observed that in no respect was there a greater contrast between these two systems "than in the aim of the work."² The Russian system aimed at training "skillful, intelligent mechanics." In other words, it had vocational purposes. The Swedish system, on the other hand, was part of the general education. It was considered valuable and educationally enriching for every child. Otto Salomon (1849-1907), the author of the Swedish system, stated his aims in pedagogical terms, and divided them into two groups he called formative aims and utilitarian aims. They are as follows:

In the first group were:

¹Ibid., 362.

²Ibid., 67.

1. *“To instil a taste for, and a love of, labor in general.” . . .*
2. *“To instil respect for rough, honest, bodily labor.”*
3. *“To develop independence and self-reliance.” . . .*
4. *“To train in habits of order, exactness, cleanliness, and neatness.” . . .*
5. *“To train the eye and sense of form; to cultivate dexterity of hand and develop touch.”*
6. *“To cultivate habits of ‘attention, industry, perseverance, and patience.’”*
7. *“To promote the development of the physical powers.”*

In the second group of aims were:

1. To directly give dexterity in the use of tools.
2. To execute exact work.¹

In France, when it came to manual training in the schools, there was not much sympathy for purely educational aims that ignored “the industrial condition of the country.” The aim was “a knowledge of and a preparation for industrial pursuits.”²

The question so often grappled with by the promoters of the manual training movement, namely, whether the aims were educational development or vocational training, stems from the two sources of the movement. On the one hand it grew out of the old apprenticeship system, which was fundamentally vocational in purpose. On the other hand it was influenced by the educational ideas of Pestalozzi, Friedrich A. W. Froebel (1782-1852), German educator and founder of the kindergarten system, and Johann F.

¹Ibid., 67-68.

²Ibid., 107.

Herbart (1776-1841), a German philosopher and educationist, namely, that manual training or manual education was not just a preparation or “training for a life work, but . . . the best form of object teaching as well.”¹

In England, the manual training idea was introduced in the 1880s. At first, the manual work in the elementary schools was meant for boys who would follow industrial pursuits. Around 1886 John Lubbock (1834-1913) a naturalist and Philip Magnus (1842-1933), the director of the City and Guilds of London Institute, introduced a different view. Instead of manual training simply being for economic and vocational ends, it should be regarded as a form of education. Lubbock maintained that “the one treats the school as subordinate to the workshop, and the other takes the workshop and makes it a part of the school. The one seeks to make a workman, the other to train up a man.”² Magnus said “that the object of workshop practice, as a part of general education, is not to teach a boy a trade, but to develop his faculties and to give him manual skill.”³

In the United States, manual training developed much along the same lines as in Europe. In the last part of the nineteenth century, instruction in mechanical arts was given in high schools and in the upper grades of many elementary schools. At the same time some trade schools and technical schools were training skilled workmen. But these were not able to meet the greater needs of an increasingly industrial society. Vocational schools supported by the public treasury were needed, but the general assumption was

¹Ibid., 169-170.

²Ibid., 238-239.

³Ibid., 239.

that “the teaching of trades should not be done at public expense.”¹ It seemed that the time was right for a new movement.

The Vocational Education Movement

“The vocational education movement in the United States,” according to Bennett, “began in 1906 with the report of the Douglas Commission to the Massachusetts Legislature and the organization of the National Society for the Promotion of Industrial Education.”² The Commission held public hearings and found that there was widespread interest in vocational training; that there was a lack of skilled, intelligent, industrial workers; that “the public schools were considered too exclusively literary in spirit, scope, and methods . . . not fully meeting the need of modern industrial and social conditions”; that people in general felt that the State should bear the cost of the industrial education, if not completely, then at least in part.³

There were initially some problems between manufacturers and trade unionists, the latter being suspicious of the former wanting to create and maintain a surplus of cheap labor. There were also differences on the matter of control. Both the manufacturers and the trade unionists wanted to decide who should be admitted to the schools, and what kind of instruction should be given. Both agreed that the schools should be funded by the public treasury. Eventually, laws were passed to that effect, not only in the East but also

¹Ibid., 511.

²Ibid., 507.

³Ibid., 513-514.

in the Midwest. Furthermore, “largely because the laws contained provisions for the development of agricultural and home-economics education as well as industrial education,” it also spread “to the far West and to the South.”¹

The aim of vocational education, according to the congressional Commission on National Aid to Vocational Education, was to “prepare boys and girls over fourteen years of age for useful or profitable employment in agriculture and in trades and industries.” In all-day schools, the aim was to use half of the time for “actual practice for a vocation on a useful or productive basis.” In part-time schools the goal was to “extend either their vocational knowledge or give preparation for entrance to a vocation, or extend the general civic or vocational intelligence of the pupils.” The evening schools were to “extend the vocational knowledge for mature workers over sixteen years of age.”²

In Germany, during the period under discussion, the primary aim of all the industrial schools was vocational rather than general. Of special interest is the influence of Georg Kerschensteiner from Munich, who attracted great attention both in Europe and America. His ideas concerned vocational education after the completion of elementary school. The first aim of education for those leaving the elementary school should be “the development of trade efficiency and love of work, and with this the development of those elementary virtues which effectiveness of effort and love of work immediately call forth—conscientiousness, diligence, perseverance, responsibility, self-restraint, and dedication to a strenuous life.” The second aim, he said, should be “to gain an insight

¹Ibid., 518-521, 540.

²Ibid., 547.

into the relations of individuals to one another and to the State, to understand the laws of health, and to employ the knowledge acquired in the exercise of self-control, justice, and devotion to duty, and in leading a sensible life tempered with a strong feeling of personal responsibility.”¹

Kerschensteiner’s philosophy of work and education may be indicated in these words: “All honest work is in itself a school of morality,” and “this moral education can be given only by cheerful work in the service of others.”²

Summary

The manual education movements were idealistic and progressive movements for the betterment of humanity. The earlier movements were mainly promoted by reform societies and religious and philanthropic organizations. They were concerned with health, vitality, morality, ministry, and service. The spirit of these movements was democratic, often focusing on the needs of the common people, the poorer classes—the masses.

In opposition to the classical education so often associated with the upper classes, the advocates of the various strains of the manual education movements were asking the question of the times: What knowledge or training is of most worth?

When comparing the manual labor movement in the earlier part of the nineteenth century with the rise of industrial manual training schools or agricultural and mechanical

¹Ibid., 198.

²Ibid.

colleges in the latter part of the century and the early twentieth century, we see an important distinction. The manual labor system was a means of healthy exercise and/or a means of defraying educational expenses. In the later schools of industrial and agricultural training, manual labor was, maintained Anderson, “employed for purely educational purposes.”¹ Although there was an important difference in basic purposes, both movements had practical goals dictated by the current needs in society. Again, the often unspoken, but paramount question of the rapidly changing times was: What knowledge, what education is of most worth?

How did Ellen White, who grew up, lived, worked, and wrote surrounded by the same intellectual and societal influences, answer this question? What was her world view? What did she see as the ultimate and the immediate aims of education?

A Brief Review

Ellen White’s worldview, her concepts of knowledge, reality, and morality were shaped in the middle and late nineteenth-century America, but from very different premises than those of Spencer and Dewey and the proponents of the manual labor and vocational training movements. Consequently, she reached radically different conclusions regarding the ultimate aims of education. Therefore, before exploring White’s worldview and select philosophical concepts in chapter 3, a brief review of Spencer, Dewey, the manual labor movement, as well as the vocational education movement, explored at length in this chapter, is helpful.

¹Anderson, 386.

Both Spencer and Dewey came to the conclusion that the knowledge of greatest value was the knowledge of science. The source of this knowledge was nature and natural law, and the unerring method for acquiring this knowledge was the scientific method. Spencer and Dewey acknowledged no supernatural or transcendental knowledge or truth. Not only did they reject religious dogmas, but they had little use for the classical curriculum contained for the most part in books. They focused instead on the unique needs of their times and sought the solution in humanistic, naturalistic, and scientific ideas that were making rapid advances in their day.

Two competing emphases or aims dominated the vocational education movement in the last two decades of the nineteenth century: educational development emphasizing moral values on the one hand and primarily vocational training on the other. In both cases the knowledge esteemed to be of the highest value involved manual skills, industrial arts, and mechanical arts.

The vocational training movement of the early twentieth century was focused entirely on vocational training for the job market. The most important knowledge was practical knowledge needed for the world of work.

This quest for the most desirable knowledge arose in the second half of the nineteenth century for several reasons. The great industrial expansion both in America and Western Europe brought about immense changes in almost every area of human life. The basic human needs were put in a new perspective by rapid advances in industrialization, transportation, communication, and urbanization. These were driven by a flood of inventions and progress in technology, as well as by economic

developments such as capitalism in general and big corporations in particular. All branches of industry called for skilled workers and leaders.

But these were not the only changes. The masses, awakened to ideas of progress through liberty and democracy, demanded increased freedoms. The old worldview dominated by tradition and dogma was no longer accepted by the majority of educated people in the Western world. The emerging new worldview of democracy, progress, and freedom clashed with the old. Secular humanism, liberalism, naturalism, and Darwinism clashed with authoritarianism and clericalism, as well as with the traditional beliefs of Christianity. Emphasis on reason and scientific thinking challenged religious faith, supernaturalism, and the dogmas of the Church.

America had the added challenge of assimilating masses of immigrants into society. The second half of the nineteenth century saw a great increase in migration from Europe to America. These immigrants helped settle the new frontiers in the West but they also found employment in the growing industrial cities in the East. There was a change, however, in the early 1880s that grew stronger into the first decade of the twentieth century. Between 1890 and 1914, fifteen million immigrants arrived, as many as in the previous seventy-five years, 1815-1890.¹ They settled mostly in the cities.²

In view of these radical changes in society, leaders and thinkers were searching for

¹Maldwin Allen Jones, *American Immigration*, 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 152-153.

²See Roger Daniels's discussion on Eastern European immigrants in his book *Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1990), especially p. 213.

an answer to the pressing needs of both individuals and society as a whole. One of the first institutions to be scrutinized was the educational system. That focus brought to the forefront the question Spencer had articulated: What knowledge is of most worth?

Much of the school curriculum in the second half of the nineteenth century was devoted to mental training through such formal disciplines as language, logic, and philosophy. In the last decades of the century, schools were severely criticized for their irrelevance. Lazerson pointed out four problem areas: inadequate integration to the new industrial economy; failure to sufficiently assume the responsibility for social problems; negligence in effectively teaching patriotism to the foreign-born; and uneconomical and inefficient administrative structures.¹ Discussing the rise of the Manual Training Movement, Melvin C. Baker mentioned “the growing opposition to the traditional ‘bookish’ education.”² With the disappearance of the apprenticeship system and the emergence of factories and workshops utilizing unskilled laborers, manual education was needed “to teach individuals the values of honest labor—industriousness, thrift, and self-pride.”³ By the beginning of the twentieth century, however, vocational education was favored over manual education. For example, in Massachusetts “school reformers argued for vocational education rather than manual training: their expressed goal was to prepare the individual for particular jobs in the economy rather than to teach a set of moral

¹Marvin Lazerson, *Origins of the Urban School: Public Education in Massachusetts, 1870-1915* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), xii.

²Melvin C. Baker, *Foundations of John Dewey’s Educational Theory* (New York: Atherton Press, 1966), 101.

³Lazerson, *Origins of the Urban School*, x.

values.”¹ Both were needed, but here knowledge and training for materialistic ends received preference over emphasis on moral values.

If the school reformers in America were critical of the classical education of the time, Spencer was even more so of the classical education in England. He found the knowledge offered mostly useless in meeting the needs of the day, as it was not determined “by what knowledge is of most real worth,” but “what will bring most applause, honour, respect—what will most conduce to social position and influence—what will be most imposing.”² Spencer focused on the practical knowledge that would aid and not hinder the natural progress of evolution, that is to say, social evolution. He was primarily concerned with what he called “complete living,” or “how to live.” It involved a hierarchy of human activities: those that directly and indirectly ministered to self-preservation such as proper care of body and mind, and earning a livelihood; the appropriate discharge of the duties of parents and citizens; and finally, the enjoyment of fine arts, literature, nature, and such things that would gratify the tastes and the feelings. In all of these areas, solutions were sought through science.

Whereas Spencer was mainly concerned with sociology and social philosophy, Dewey was more involved in matters relating to educational philosophy. Early in his philosophical development, Dewey was influenced by George S. Morris and Hegel’s idealism. Later he embraced the evolutionary theory and Darwinian naturalism, and

¹Ibid.

²Spencer, 4.

developed his instrumentalism.¹ Here he rejected fixed and immutable moral laws and authoritarian truths and knowledge. Truth and knowledge resided in the process of experience. An idea was true if it was experienced as a solution to a problem. The solution was best obtained by natural, scientific thinking applied to the experimental methods of science. Science was the answer to all the needs of individuals and society since “all truth which promises to be of practical avail in the direction of man’s life, may be gotten at by scientific method.”²

Here Dewey emphasized the practical nature of truth. He was true to his epistemology that truth is what works. That, however, raises the question of who or what determines what works. Dewey’s answer was that it was determined by what people desired. Bruce Kuklick points out that Dewey’s critics may be right when they claim that Dewey did not consider whether what was desired *ought* to be desired. In Kuklick’s words: “Once the theorist worked out the consequences of alternative decisions and learned which ones people desired, Dewey believed moral dilemmas were solved. There was no further issue of whether something genuinely ought to be done.”³ In other words, Dewey rejected all external authority. There was no authoritative source of knowledge or truth, only what people desired. He “assumed there was no criterion of what ought to be

¹See Morton G. White, *The Origin of Dewey’s Instrumentalism* (New York: Octagon Books, 1964); also Bruce Kuklick, *A History of Philosophy in America 1720-2000* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), 179-197.

²John Dewey, “Reconstruction,” in *John Dewey: The Early Works, 1882-1898*, 4:102.

³Kuklick, *History of Philosophy*, 187.

desired beyond its experimentally validated tendency to lead people to consequences they in fact desired.”¹

There are several reasons why both Spencer and Dewey opted for science, that is to say, scientific knowledge, as the answer to the needs of their time. First, they rejected all external authority, including Christianity. They rejected supernatural knowledge or revelation with its guidance and directions in human affairs. This left them with knowledge obtained solely from the natural, secular world. Second, they embraced the evolutionary hypothesis which also pointed exclusively to the natural world as a source of knowledge. Third, they rejected classical education as traditional and authoritarian, but also as mostly useless, at least for industrial, urban society.

Philosophical and humanistic ideas and convictions certainly played a role in pushing both Spencer and Dewey into the corner of science, but so also did the demands of industrialization and urban development. Neither classical education nor clericalism nor superstition could meet the needs of the day. Hard realities called for practical, reliable solutions. Spencer and Dewey were convinced that science provided not only these solutions, but pointed to a brighter future in harmony with the optimistic, progressive spirit of the times. They looked to sources of authority and knowledge no further than the secular, natural world.

Proponents of the manual and vocational education movements looked no further either. They also saw the need for something more than classical education. They also responded to the secular, progressive ideas of the times, as well as to the demands of

¹Ibid., 187-188.

industrialization and urbanization. The educational and developmental values of manual training yielded to the growing demands for training and skills for economic and vocational ends.

How did Ellen White respond to the needs of her time? What did she consider the knowledge of most worth, and what did she say about that knowledge? That is the subject of chapter 3 and a basis for exploring her educational ideas in chapter 4.

CHAPTER III

THE PHILOSOPHY OF ELLEN WHITE:

AN EPISTEMOLOGICAL FOCUS

Introduction

Space does not permit an exhaustive treatment of Ellen White's philosophical views. Rather, the purpose of this chapter is to provide an insight into the basic concepts on which she based her educational ideas. The focus will be an epistemological one, that is to say, when examining metaphysical and axiological issues the emphasis will be on knowledge. It is reasonable to assume that the knowledge White considered more important than any other knowledge would be strongly linked to the ultimate as well as secondary aims of education.

The chapter opens with White's ideas of what constitutes the knowledge of most worth. The discussion will then take a closer look at this knowledge in the context of selected metaphysical issues and axiological ideas as well as White's general concepts of knowledge and truth, including the fundamental basis for these concepts.

The Knowledge of Most Worth

There were two main characteristics of the knowledge that White considered of greatest worth and importance: First, this knowledge responded to the greatest need of the

human family; second, this knowledge extended beyond scientific knowledge.

White's Response to Humanity's Fundamental Need

Because society often focuses on humanity's materialistic and social needs rather than on its spiritual needs, education looks to scientific knowledge, as well as to vocational skills to improve the human condition. White was in favor of such an education and practical knowledge, but she knew that humanity's fundamental problem demanded a different kind of knowledge than that offered in even the most modern and most progressive schools of the day.¹

White pointed to a more powerful knowledge, a knowledge of God, the Creator, and His love in response to humanity's most basic need, the restoration of God's moral image in the soul. In White's view, humanity in and of itself was not able to bring this about; therefore a supernatural intervention involving a revelation of God was necessary for restoring in human beings the image in which humanity was created.² Science and vocational skills, though important, would not suffice. This restoration, White maintained, was a matter of moral values rooted in a correct knowledge of the Creator of humankind.

Science and Vocational Skills

Ellen White came to a radically different conclusion from that of Spencer and

¹White, *Steps to Christ*, 18. In this chapter all references to 'White' refer to Ellen G. White.

²Ibid., 17-22; Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1942), 426.

Dewey, and proponents of the manual training and vocational education movements, regarding the knowledge of most worth. Spencer and Dewey promoted scientific knowledge as essential, while others focused on manual training and vocational education. White did not believe that understanding of the natural or social sciences, or of manual skills and trade was the most important kind of knowledge. It would not meet humanity's greatest need—the regeneration of the human nature.¹ Here, White called for a divine, spiritual knowledge, of such importance that everything paled in comparison. Indeed, White maintained that beside this knowledge “all else is vanity and nothingness.”²

This is not to say that White ignored or devalued scientific knowledge. She acknowledged its importance and understood its value.³ She recognized the significance of scientific knowledge in fields such as agriculture, physiology and health, the practice of medicine, food production, and the study of nature in general.⁴ Similarly, she promoted the benefits of, and the need for, manual labor and vocational training for both

¹White, *Education*, 29.

²White, *Ministry of Healing*, 426.

³White, *Education*, 225; see also *idem*, *Testimonies*, 5:545.

⁴See, for example, Ellen G. White, “How Parents Should Discipline Their Children,” *Signs of the Times*, 13 August 1896, 8; *idem*, *Counsels on Health and Instruction to Medical Missionary Workers* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1951), 38; *idem*, *Testimonies*, 4:566; and *idem*, *Desire of Ages*, 70. In her book *Education* White devoted a whole chapter to the importance of the study of physiology, stating in the opening paragraph that “a knowledge of physiology and hygiene should be the basis of all educational effort” (195).

students and professionals.¹ She emphasized the dignity of labor, seeing the laborer as a coworker with God, and regarded manual labor as a means of valuable discipline and a most healthy exercise. Furthermore, she viewed knowledge and mastery of a wide variety of trades as essential. There was hardly a line of practical knowledge and skill she did not advocate.²

Yet, she clearly believed that the knowledge obtained through the natural and social sciences, manual labor and experience in useful trades would not solve the deepest problems of the human race because they would not change humanity's fallen nature or re-create human beings in the image of God. White stated unequivocally: "Our hearts are evil, and we cannot change them. . . . Education, culture, the exercise of the will, human effort, all have their proper sphere, but here they are powerless."³

Morality: A Matter of the Heart

Like other thought leaders of her time, White recognized society's poverty, ignorance, sickness, and suffering, as well as its indifference, greed, selfishness, and crime. But where Spencer and Dewey saw science as the ultimate answer to these problems, White looked deeper than merely materialistic or rationalistic solutions. Where the vocational movement saw skills and practical knowledge as the solution, White saw that moral and ethical issues were central to any endeavor that took upon itself

¹White, *Education*, 214-222.

²Ibid., 218.

³White, *Steps to Christ*, 18.

the name of education. In looking deeper, she saw the root of the problem as residing in human nature and character.

In 1875 White observed that “moral impurity and gross iniquity abound everywhere.”¹ Fifteen years later she painted a darker picture of society where, in her view, the majority of the youth were “fond of amusement and averse to work,” lacking self-denial and self-control. She went on, speaking not only of the youth but of “very many in every age and station of life” being “without principle or conscience” who are “rushing into vice and are corrupting society, until our world is becoming a second Sodom.”² To White these conditions in society were evidences both of humanity’s most basic problem—a selfish character arising out of a sinful nature, and of its most fundamental need—a new heart. Solving these problems required knowledge outside and beyond the scope of science.

Knowledge Beyond Science

From White’s perspective, the solution to this basic problem was more fundamental than mere physical relief or human science. A spiritual solution was needed. White noted that when Christ “attempted no civil reforms,” it was “not because He was indifferent to the woes of men, but because the remedy did not lie in merely human and external measures. To be efficient, the cure must reach men individually, and must

¹White, *Testimonies*, 3:564.

²Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Diet and Foods: A Compilation from the Writings of Ellen G. White* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1946), 120.

regenerate the heart.”¹ White also referred to this regeneration as the restoration of the image of God in humanity.²

White argued that a significant part of the solution to this fundamental human need was to be found in a correct knowledge of God. This regeneration of the heart required that the human being have a true knowledge of God, especially as the Creator and Redeemer.³ White saw this knowledge as an inseparable part of the solution, because the root problem of humanity—an evil heart, deformed character, and sinful nature—was an epistemological one, not in a strictly philosophical sense, but rather in a deeply spiritual sense, as it stemmed from a willful rejection of faith in, and knowledge of God’s character of love. The parents of the human race “had chosen the knowledge of evil.”⁴ Again, White was speaking here not of a theoretical, philosophical knowledge, but of a concrete, experiential, deadly knowledge of sin and all its consequences—hardship, heavy burdens, disappointments, bitterness, sorrow, pain, anguish, and death.⁵

White equated a correct knowledge of God and His character with “the knowledge of good”⁶ in the context of “the knowledge of good and evil.” The rejection of this

¹White, *Desire of Ages*, 509.

²White, *Education*, 15-16.

³White, *Ministry of Healing*, 409-426.

⁴White, *Education*, 25.

⁵*Ibid.*, 23.

⁶*Ibid.*, 26.

knowledge of good brought into the world a knowledge of evil,¹ and this rejection was threefold: It consisted of distrusting God's goodness, disbelieving His word, and rejecting His authority.² This threefold rejection was, in fact, a single act of denying faith in God, the key of knowledge. In describing that fateful encounter of Eve with Satan at the tree of knowledge of good and evil, White stated that Eve "cast away faith, the key of knowledge."³ In order to reverse this rejection of God and its fateful consequences, a true knowledge of God through faith was vital.

This was White's response to secular, atheistic society's dreams of progress through its own scientific, rationalistic efforts. She could hardly have expressed it more clearly than in the following statement: "In vain are men's dreams of progress, in vain all efforts for the uplifting of humanity, if they neglect the one Source of hope and help for the fallen race. 'Every good gift and every perfect gift' (James 1:17) is from God."⁴

In summary, the inquiry into the knowledge of most worth in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century was in response to the temporal needs of society. Although White saw value in scientific knowledge as well as in manual and vocational skills, she responded primarily to what she considered the fundamental, spiritual need of humanity, namely, the restoration of God's image in the human being. White wrote extensively about God's response to that need—the revelation of Himself and His love.

¹Ibid., 25.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., 24.

⁴White, *Steps to Christ*, 21.

This, in the view of Ellen White, was the knowledge of most worth. The discussion will now turn to the main aspects of this knowledge. These will be in sharp contrast to the limitations of secular science and the scientific method.

The Knowledge of God

Ellen White made it clear that the knowledge of God, in the context of the great controversy between truth and error, is vital for mankind and thus of the greatest importance to the educational enterprise. The great controversy, White claimed, is about God's character, His law, and His government. The eternal safety and happiness of all created beings are dependent upon the vindication of God's character of love and the justice of His administration.¹ Her writings clearly show that the ultimate aims of education cannot be attained without the knowledge of God.²

White devoted whole chapters to her concept of the knowledge of God, several of which comprise an entire section of her *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8 entitled "The Essential Knowledge."³ A shorter section by the same title, appearing in her book *The Ministry of Healing*,⁴ draws on the material published a year earlier in the *Testimonies*. The first chapter in the section is entitled "A True Knowledge of God." *Steps to Christ*

¹White, *Great Controversy*, x, xii, 678. By the "great controversy" White meant the cosmic conflict between God and Satan.

²White, *Education*, 15-16; idem, *Ministry of Healing*, 425.

³White, *Testimonies*, 8:255-335.

⁴White, *Ministry of Healing*, 407-466.

also includes a short chapter entitled “A Knowledge of God.”¹

Additionally, articles on the topic appeared in such periodicals as *Review and Herald*, *Signs of the Times*, and *Youth’s Instructor*. Aside from chapters and articles specifically addressing the knowledge of God, expositions on various facets of the knowledge of God saturate the writings of Ellen White. She dealt extensively with many aspects such as His character of love, goodness, holiness, righteousness, justice, and wisdom, His majesty and power, will and purposes, and laws and government. This is not surprising as the knowledge of God was to her “the most wonderful knowledge that men can have.”²

In these articles and chapters White also emphasized several characteristics which provide a general understanding of her concept of the knowledge of God. No attempt has been made here to present an exhaustive study of this matter. Rather, only major elements have been selected to provide a basis for exploring and understanding White’s aims of education, the subject of chapter 4.

Characteristics of the Knowledge of God

Ellen White touched upon certain characteristics of the knowledge of God, such as how it is made known, to what extent it can be known, and its effects upon human beings. These will now be explored briefly.

¹White, *Steps to Christ*, 85-91.

²Ellen G. White, “Meetings at South Lancaster, Mass.,” *Review and Herald*, 5 March 1889, 146.

Revealed Knowledge

White believed that human beings can know God only to the extent that He reveals Himself. Both chapters on the knowledge of God, referred to above,¹ open with the fundamental concept that God makes Himself known in various ways, such as through His created works, His providence, the work of His Spirit, and His Word.² And it is precisely as He reveals Himself that human beings must know Him,³ not through their own reasoning or speculations. White warned that speculative theories concerning the nature and attributes of God were dangerous and forbidden ground similar in nature to the desire of Adam and Eve to obtain knowledge God would not grant them.⁴ It was not White's understanding that any such efforts or speculations would yield valid results. She denied that humans could come to a knowledge of God by their own research and reasoning. Here, human reason must acknowledge its limitations.⁵ Human beings depend upon God's revelation of Himself.

This revelation of Himself that God has granted the human race, however, is not complete. Our knowledge is partial and our understanding of God is limited not only because of our finite minds, but also because, in the words of White, "only that which He

¹White, *Ministry of Healing*, 409-426; idem, *Steps to Christ*, 85-91.

²White, *Steps to Christ*, 85-91.

³White, *Ministry of Healing*, 409.

⁴Ibid., 427.

⁵Ibid., 438.

sees fit to reveal can we comprehend of Him.”¹

Mediated Knowledge

In White’s view, Christ is “the only Mediator between God and humanity.”² Only through Christ is the knowledge of God revealed to human beings. Whether through nature, God’s dealings with individuals or nations, the influence of the Holy Spirit, or the written word of God,³ Christ, the Word of God,⁴ Christ the Creator and Redeemer is the One through whom the revelation of God is given.⁵

The revelation of God in nature is through Christ, the Creator of nature.⁶ There is evidence in nature, White maintained, of God’s power, His glory, and His love of beauty, as well as testimony to His goodness, mercy, love and care for His creatures.⁷ There is, however, a revelation of God that nature is not capable of giving clearly, namely, God’s personality and character. When God, through Christ, created men and women in His own image, God was revealed as a personal God and, as beings created in the image of

¹Ibid. For extensive discussion of revelation and knowledge in White’s writings, see Frederick E. J. Harder, “Revelation, a Source of Knowledge, as Conceived by Ellen G. White,” where White’s concepts are compared to those of Thomas Aquinas, John Calvin, Friedrich Schleiermacher, Augustus Strong, and Emil Brunner.

²Ellen G. White, “The Word Made Flesh,” *Review and Herald*, 5 April 1906, 8.

³White, *Steps to Christ*, 85, 87.

⁴White, *Desire of Ages*, 19-21.

⁵Ibid., 388.

⁶White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 18.

⁷White, *Steps to Christ*, 85-87

God, men and women were to be a revelation of God.¹ They were the “crowning work of His creation,” and, stated White, God designed that they “should express His thought and reveal His glory.”² The supreme revelation of God’s personality and character, however, was given in the person of Jesus Christ. To that end God sent His Son “to manifest, so far as could be endured by human sight, the nature and the attributes of the invisible God.”³

This supreme revelation of God in Christ is preserved in the written word of God, the Bible. White held that Christ is revealed, and reveals God, not only in the New Testament, but also in the Old Testament. These revelations include records of the acts of Christ in the creation of the universe and all it contains; His acts in the history of the patriarchs, prophets, and kings; His teaching and acts while on earth; and finally through the writings of His apostles. It is precisely in the Scriptures, White maintained, that “a knowledge of God is most clearly revealed to fallen man.”⁴

The fact that the revelation of God comes only through Christ does not mean that something is lacking. Not only is Christ “a perfect revelation of God,”⁵ but He also

¹White, *Ministry of Healing*, 415.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., 419.

⁴White speaks of Christ being manifest in the Old Testament through the patriarchs, the sacrificial service, the law, and the prophets; in the New Testament through His life, death, resurrection, and by the Holy Spirit. She calls the Bible “the treasure house of the unsearchable riches of Christ.” White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 126.

⁵Ellen G. White, “Prepare to Meet Thy God,” *Review and Herald*, 20 July 1897, 449.

provided all the knowledge of God that individuals would ever need or be able to grasp. In the context of salvation, White stated that “all that man needs to know or can know of God has been revealed in the life and character of His Son.”¹

Measureless Knowledge

The knowledge of God revealed through the Son of God, Jesus Christ, the word of God, is vast and measureless. Attempting to express the infinity of the knowledge of God, White turned to the vastness of creation: the extensive oceans, the height of the heavens, and limitless space. It is, she exclaimed, “as a great ocean, without bottom or shore”² and “as high as heaven and as broad as the universe.”³ Human beings, so to speak, stand on the shore and gaze up into the starry sky and realize that at best their knowledge of God is “partial and imperfect.”⁴

Yet this “partial and imperfect” knowledge of God is part and parcel of the great fabric of the vast and perfect totality. Just like a fjord or a bay is only a part of the great ocean, it nevertheless shares in all the characteristics of the saline water of which the entire ocean is constituted. It is possibly in this sense, as far as human beings are concerned, that “the knowledge of God is the knowledge of all truth, and is the beginning

¹White, *Testimonies*, 8:286.

²Ellen G. White, “The Knowledge of God,” *Signs of the Times*, 26 July 1905, 473.

³White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 42.

⁴White, *Ministry of Healing*, 420.

of all understanding.”¹ Further, according to White, the redeemed ones will acquire new knowledge “throughout eternal ages,” suggesting the limitlessness of the knowledge of God. There will never be a time when there is no new knowledge to be discovered.²

Powerful Knowledge

At the center of White’s concept of the knowledge of God is the idea that God’s revelation of Himself in and through Christ is a purposeful act intended to meet humanity’s greatest need, redemption. White referred to this divine purpose as the plan of salvation, the essential core of which is the restoration of the image of God in which human beings were created. She saw revelation of God as a powerful knowledge. It would accomplish the purpose for which it was given. White concluded her chapter “A True Knowledge of God” in *The Ministry of Healing* with these significant statements:

The knowledge of God as revealed in Christ is the knowledge that all who are saved must have. It 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. . . . This is the knowledge which God is inviting us to receive, and beside which all else is vanity and nothingness.³

White did, indeed, differ radically from Spencer, Dewey, and the manual training and the vocational education movements about the knowledge of most worth. She was concerned, not only for the affairs of the present life but also for the hereafter.⁴ No

¹White, “The Knowledge of God,” 473.

²White, *Education*, 15.

³White, *Ministry of Healing*, 425-426.

⁴White, *Education*, 13.

concern was of greater importance than preparation for the life to come. Matters of eternal interest were at stake in the quest for the knowledge of most worth. This life was only a period of probation and preparation. In a secular, atheistic worldview, death is the final end of the individual's existence. Neither Spencer nor Dewey discussed the possibility of individuals having life after death, whereas White believed that human beings were created for existence "throughout eternal ages."¹

The vision of Spencer and Dewey for humanity through the knowledge of science falls short of White's vision for humanity through the knowledge of God. The individuals in the evolutionary chain would eventually be gone and forgotten, whereas a redeemed individual, partaker of the divine nature,² and, in the words of White, "cleansed from sin, with all its noble powers dedicated to the service of God, is of surpassing worth"³ and will have "a life which measures with the life of God."⁴

So far this revealed, mediated, measureless, and powerful knowledge of God has been presented from an epistemological perspective, that is to say, the emphasis has been on *knowledge* rather than *God*. It has dealt with the nature and characteristics of this knowledge. It will now be explored further in the areas of metaphysics, ethics, and aesthetics, focusing on the characteristics of God.

¹Ibid., 15.

²White, *Testimonies*, 6:456.

³White, *Steps to Christ*, 126.

⁴White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 296.

The Nature and Attributes of God

Ellen White dealt often with metaphysical issues, ethics, and aesthetics, though not systematically. She wrote extensively about God, His nature and attributes, His creation, including the human race, His Sovereignty as the Creator, His laws and government, as well as God's creation of beauty. Those discussions were almost always in the context of the theme of the great controversy between truth and error, and the plan of salvation. In all of these areas, White's central theme is the knowledge of God and its bearings on the plan of salvation, which is God's solution to "the great problem of evil" and a resolution of the "great controversy between truth and error."¹ This knowledge of God, in the sense of knowing God, is fundamental to achieving the ultimate aim of education. It involves not only knowing certain revealed facts about God, such as who God is, but more importantly, knowing God by experience and through communion with Him for the purpose of coming into harmony with His will and character, whereby the image of God is restored in the soul.

White did not engage in speculations about the nature of God; in fact, she warned against such speculations, claiming that such efforts would be in vain and fruitless. She stated that "no human mind can comprehend God. None are to indulge in speculation regarding His nature. Here silence is eloquence."² She referred to God's revelation of Himself in His word as the proper source of understanding the nature of God.³ The

¹White, *Great Controversy*, xii.

²White, *Ministry of Healing*, 429.

³Ibid.

following are some of White's significant observations, rooted in God's word, regarding the nature and attributes of God.

The Godhead

White believed the God of the Bible to be three distinct Persons. She did not use the term "trinity," but rather referred to the Godhead as "three living Persons of the heavenly Trio," or as "the three great Powers—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit," and also as "the eternal heavenly Dignitaries—God, and Christ, and the Holy Spirit."¹ She believed in the unity of the Godhead and argued that each member of the Godhead was fully God, each possessing "all the fullness of the Godhead."² Speaking of Christ, White stated that He "was one with the eternal Father—one in nature, in character, in purpose."³ Commenting on the unity between Christ and His disciples described in John 17:20-21, she stated that this unity did "not destroy the personality of either. They are one in purpose, mind, and character, but not in person. It is thus that God and Christ are one."⁴ It is clear from the context that by "God" White was here referring to God the Father. In the very next sentence White substituted "Father" for "God."⁵ White held that the Father

¹Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1946), 615-616.

²*Ibid.*, 614-615.

³Ellen G. White, *The Story of Patriarchs and Prophets as Illustrated in the Lives of Holy Men of Old* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1958), 34.

⁴White, *Testimonies*, 8:269.

⁵See, e.g., *Desire of Ages*, 745-756, where White uses the terms God and the Father interchangeably in describing Christ's final hour on the cross.

and the Son were also “one in power and authority.”¹ As to the third Person of the Godhead, White often referred to the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of God, and the Spirit of Christ.² It would, therefore, seem safe to conclude that White included the Holy Spirit in the oneness of God the Father and God the Son. The extent to which White agreed with the orthodox formula of “one substance, three persons” is not relevant to this study.³

God Is Eternal

Ellen White often referred to God as “the Eternal One,” or as “the Infinite One.”⁴ She did not use these terms simply as superlatives to impress upon her readers the majesty of God. Eternity, a time without beginning as well as a time without an end, may be incomprehensible to the human mind. This, however, is precisely what White meant when she stated that God was “the eternal God.”⁵ Of the two, a time without beginning and a time without end, the former might, for finite, human beings, be the more difficult

¹White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 37.

²The terms “the Spirit of God” and “the Spirit of Christ” occur literally hundreds of times in White’s writings, i.e., her books, articles, manuscripts, and compilations.

³For a concise treatise on the history of the doctrine of the Trinity in Christianity, including White’s position on the Trinity, see Woodrow Whidden, Jerry Moon, and John W. Reeve, *The Trinity: Understanding God’s Love, His Plan of Salvation, and Christian Relationships* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 2002), especially chapter 14. The authors characterized White’s concept of the trinity as “a simple, biblical view of the Trinity, as contrasted with traditional views based on the presuppositions of Greek philosophy,” which they saw as “incompatible with the biblical data” (219).

⁴White, *Education*, 178, 63.

⁵White, *Desire of Ages*, 313.

to comprehend, but White maintained that “there never was a time when God was not.”¹

God Is Self-Existent, Uncreated

In her belief that God is eternal and has always existed, White included her conviction that God is the Ultimate One. All there is owes its existence to God, but He owes His existence to none. While He is the Creator of all there is, He Himself is the uncreated One. White expressed this in one succinct yet comprehensive statement when commenting on the first of the Ten Commandments. She stated that God is “the eternal, self-existent, uncreated One, Himself the Source and Sustainer of all.”²

God Is Omnipresent

White believed that God was everywhere. She spoke of God’s omnipresence in the context of knowing all things, even the thoughts, intentions, and purposes of people’s hearts.³ She saw a direct link between God’s omnipresence and His omniscience, serving His purpose of holding everyone accountable. After enumerating various actions of everyday life observed by God such as business transactions, words spoken, statements of slander and falsehood, public as well as private acts, White concluded that “to every word and action of our lives, the holy, sin-hating God stands as a witness. We cannot escape

¹Ellen G. White, “Spiritual Growth,” *Signs of the Times*, 12 June 1901, 371.

²White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 305

³Ellen G. White, “The Sin of Licentiousness,” *Review and Herald*, 24 May 1887, 321.

our accountability to him, for God is everywhere.”¹ Here, White seems to suggest that God’s omniscience is in part due to His omnipresence. She did, indeed, express the thought that it is precisely the Omnipresent One who knows everything that happens in any part of the universe.²

An analysis of the theology of the Trinity, as it relates to God’s omnipresence, is outside the scope of this present study; however, two references by White to God’s omnipresence and the role of the Holy Spirit are noteworthy. In her book *Education*, while discussing science and the Bible, and possibly speaking of God the Father, White stated that “the greatness of God is to us incomprehensible. ‘The Lord’s throne is in heaven’ (Psalm 11:4); yet by His Spirit He is everywhere present.” Here it seems White is suggesting that God the Father dwells in the headquarters of the universe, but through the Holy Spirit He is everywhere present.³ Likewise, White believed that Christ was omnipresent through the Holy Spirit. “Cumbered with humanity,” White stated, “Christ could not be in every place personally. . . . He would represent Himself as present in all places by His Holy Spirit, as the Omnipresent.”⁴

¹Ellen G. White, “The Council at Gibeah,” *Signs of the Times*, 14 September 1888, 562.

²Ellen G. White, “Victory at Last,” *Signs of the Times*, 14 July 1881, 301. The statement reads as follows: “Nothing can happen in any part of the universe without the knowledge of Him who is omnipresent. Not a single event of human life is unknown to our Maker.”

³White, *Education*, 132.

⁴Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases: From the Files of the Letters and Manuscripts Written by Ellen G. White* (Silver Spring, MD: E. G. White Estate, 1993), 14:23.

God Is Omniscient

Besides referring to God as the Omniscient One,¹ White spoke of God as the All-seeing One,² all-wise,³ and infinite in knowledge.⁴ Not only does God know everything that happens throughout the vast universe, He also knows “every single event of human life” and even the very thoughts and purposes of the human heart.⁵

White held that not only does God have “an intimate knowledge” of all the beings He has created, He also has a “personal interest” in them. He is their “infinite Friend” who loves them.⁶ But White also pointed out that God is an “All-seeing Judge”⁷ and “Infinite Justice”⁸ who has “an accurate knowledge” of our daily lives on the basis of which everyone’s eternal destiny will be decided.⁹

White also believed that God knows the future. Not only did she see God’s

¹White, *Testimonies*, 8:279.

²Ibid., 5:652.

³White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 78.

⁴White, *Steps to Christ*, 97.

⁵Ellen G. White, “Victory at Last,” 301; see also idem, “The Council at Gibeah,” 562, and idem, *Testimonies*, 2:560.

⁶White, *Education*, 132-133.

⁷White, *Testimonies*, 4:334.

⁸White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 495.

⁹Ellen G. White, “An Address to the Young,” *Signs of the Times*, 11 September 1884, 545.

knowledge as intimate and accurate, but also infinite.¹ A significant aspect of White's concept of God's foreknowledge is the view that God knew before the world was created that sin would arise, that Adam and Eve would fall, and what it would cost heaven. But that did not cause God to abandon His purpose to create the world and mankind.² Furthermore, White categorically rejected the idea that God in any way may have needed or wanted sin to arise to serve His purposes. "God did not," stated White, "ordain that sin should exist, but He foresaw its existence, and made provision to meet the terrible emergency."³

God Is Omnipotent

In White's view God's omnipotence is an infinite, limitless power,⁴ revealed to the inhabitants of this world as a power of love, of protection, and redemption. Speaking of Christ's baptism, White pictured Christ as reaching out His hand to take hold of the hand of God the Father whom she referred to as "the Omnipotent Love."⁵ When she described the repeatedly unsuccessful attempts of Balaam to curse Israel, encamped on the borders of Moab, White attributed Balaam's failure to the fact that Israel, being

¹White, *Desire of Ages*, 606: "He [God] sees the end from the beginning."

²Ellen G. White, "The Purpose and Plan of Grace," *Signs of the Times*, 25 April 1892, 390.

³White, *Desire of Ages*, 22.

⁴White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 442; idem, *The Sanctified Life* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1937), 75.

⁵White, *Desire of Ages*, 111.

faithful to God, were enjoying the safeguard of their God, “the omnipotent Protector.”¹

White saw God’s omnipotence employed in the advancement of His work in the earth, in His care for His people. In her *Testimonies for the Church* she penned the following encouragement:

To the omnipotence of the King of kings, our covenant-keeping God unites the gentleness and care of a tender shepherd. Nothing can stand in His way. His power is absolute, and it is the pledge of the sure fulfillment of His promises to His people. He can remove all obstructions to the advancement of His work. He has the means for the removal of every difficulty, that those who serve Him and respect the means He employs may be delivered. His goodness and love is infinite, and His covenant is unalterable.²

White never doubted that God was a God of both infinite power and boundless love and mercy, united for the good of His creation. She encouraged believers to have faith in the unity of God’s power and love for the welfare of His people. They may not always understand all of God’s providence and purposes but, stated White, “We can understand as much of His purposes as it is for our good to know; and beyond this we must still trust the hand that is omnipotent, the heart that is full of love.”³

God Is Immutable

God’s immutability was a cornerstone in White’s concept of God, His nature and attributes. It was precisely because God was unchangeable, “infinite in wisdom and

¹White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 451.

²White, *Testimonies*, 8:10.

³White, *Steps to Christ*, 106.

goodness,”¹ that His law, purposes, and decrees were immutable.² Infinity as a quality suggests perfection. That which is perfect would be less than perfect if changed, therefore, it maintains its property of perfection through the quality of immutability.

White held that God’s word, His principles of truth, righteousness, justice and holiness, as well as His principles of love and goodness, were also immutable.³ She declared that these attributes were part of God’s “immutable and unchangeable”⁴ character, regarding which White stated: “In the character of God, are wisdom, purity, truth, goodness, and mercy combined, immutable and complete.”⁵ In harmony with this immutable character of God the very gospel itself “is a divine, immutable principle.”⁶

God Is Love

Of all God’s attributes, White considered love to be the most fundamental, indeed, the very nature of God. Speaking of God as gracious, compassionate, long-suffering, and patient toward the sinner, White stated that “God is, in Himself, in His essence, love.”⁷

¹Ellen G. White, “God’s Purpose toward Israel Unchanged,” *Signs of the Times*, 9 December 1880, 545.

²White, *Early Writings*, 65.

³Ibid.

⁴Ellen G. White, “The True Standard of Righteousness,” *Review and Herald*, 25 August 1885, 529.

⁵Ellen G. White, “The Birth of Samuel,” *Signs of the Times*, 27 October 1881, 469.

⁶White, *Manuscript Releases*, 21:152.

⁷Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1923), 265.

“God is love” is a central theme in the writings of Ellen White. In her five-volume work, *The Conflict of the Ages Series*,¹ White traced the history of the conflict between good and evil, between truth and error, from its beginning in heaven to the final end of sin and rebellion. This history, White claimed, is “a demonstration of God’s unchanging love.”² It is interesting to note that the very first words in the first chapter of the first volume in the series are “God is love,”³ and so are the last words of the last chapter of volume 5.⁴ The whole treatment of the Conflict of the Ages theme is within the framework of this fundamental concept of God.

White emphasized again and again throughout her writings that love is a principle, not merely a sentiment, a feeling, or an emotion.⁵ She called it “an amazing principle,” “a positive and active principle,” and “a living principle.”⁶ By these designations White meant that love resulted in actions, acts of goodness and mercy. This principle, she stated, “works in a mysterious and wonderful manner to secure the salvation of the race.”⁷

¹These volumes, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (vol. 1), *Prophets and Kings* (vol. 2), *The Desire of Ages* (vol. 3), *The Acts of the Apostles* (vol. 4), and *The Great Controversy* (vol. 5), are commonly known as *The Conflict of the Ages Series* and so entitled on the spine of each volume in certain editions.

²White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 33.

³Ibid.

⁴White, *Great Controversy*, 678.

⁵Ellen G. White, “The Love of God: How Manifested,” (*Australian*) *Union Conference Record*, 1 June 1900, 3.

⁶Ellen G. White, “The Truth Revealed in Jesus,” *Review and Herald*, 8 February 1898, 85.

⁷Ibid.

White understood this principle of love to be not only the basis for God's grace and mercy but also the foundation of God's government,¹ His justice, and His throne. Discussing the accomplishment of Christ's death on the cross White stated that "God's love has been expressed in His justice no less than in His mercy. Justice is the foundation of His throne, and the fruit of His love."² It is not difficult for most people to understand that mercy is an expression of love, but when God's justice also is said to be an expression of, and a fruit of love, that concept may not be as easily grasped.³ In a society where law and order are the rule, justice and mercy are generally seen as opposed to each other. Not so with God, White claimed. God's love expressed in self-denial and sacrifice unites them, upholding God's law and at the same time pardoning the transgressor. In her claim White put forth a threefold argument. "The very fact" she argued, "that Christ bore the penalty of man's transgression is a mighty argument to all created intelligences that the law is changeless; that God is righteous, merciful, and self-denying; and that infinite justice and mercy unite in the administration of His government."⁴

In an interesting description of the unique blending of justice and mercy at the cross, White personified Justice and Mercy as initially standing apart, "in opposition to each other, separated by a wide gulf." Then God the Son, our Lord and our Redeemer,

¹White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 34.

²White, *Desire of Ages*, 762.

³For a profound, but readable exposition of God's *justice* as deriving from His love, see Jennifer Jill Schwirzer and Leslie Kay, *A Deep but Dazzling Darkness* (Sacramento, CA: Amazing Facts, 2004).

⁴White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 70.

became man, and after having lived a perfect and righteous life, “planted His cross midway between heaven and earth.” His sacrifice accomplished both forgiveness (mercy), and the paying of the penalty (justice). The cross drew “both Justice and Mercy across the gulf. . . . There it [Justice] saw One equal with God bearing the penalty for all injustice and sin. With perfect satisfaction Justice bowed in reverence at the cross, saying, It is enough.”¹ In another place White used no metaphor, but spoke plainly: “God bowed his head. Now justice and mercy could blend. Now he could be just, and yet the Justifier of all who should believe on Christ.”² Of the deep impression which the love of God made on her, White wrote:

All the paternal love which has come down from generation to generation through the channel of human hearts, all the springs of tenderness which have opened in the souls of men, are but as a tiny rill to the boundless ocean when compared with the infinite, exhaustless love of God. Tongue cannot utter it; pen cannot portray it. You may meditate upon it every day of your life; you may search the Scriptures diligently in order to understand it; you may summon every power and capability that God has given you, in the endeavor to comprehend the love and compassion of the heavenly Father; and yet there is an infinity beyond. You may study that love for ages; yet you can never fully comprehend the length and the breadth, the depth and the height, of the love of God in giving His Son to die for the world. Eternity itself can never fully reveal it.³

This union of justice and mercy in the nature and character of God is an interesting feature of White’s concept of God. She did speak of these two attributes as in opposition to each other, at the same time that she saw them as united. She stated that

¹Ellen G. White, “Christ Our Example,” *General Conference Bulletin*, 1 October 1899, 102.

²Ellen G. White, “The Price of Our Redemption, IV,” *Youth’s Instructor*, 21 June 1900, 195.

³White, *Testimonies*, 5:740.

Christ's "object was to reconcile the prerogatives of justice and mercy, and let each stand separate in its dignity, yet united."¹ White held that all of God's attributes were united in perfect harmony. The attributes that had separate, if not "opposite," functions in God's administration as the Sovereign of the universe were blended in His character through the love of God as the active, pervasive principle supremely revealed in the cross of Christ. White proposed that "when we study the divine character in the light of the cross we see mercy, tenderness, and forgiveness blended with equity and justice."² Indeed, White claimed that "all righteous attributes of character dwell in God as a perfect, harmonious whole."³

God, the Creator

White believed that God is an all-powerful Creator who created all there is, and One who intimately and personally cares for all of His creation. She rejected the notion that God used evolution to bring about the world as we know it; rather she portrayed a God in total control of time and process. This aspect of who God is, is a significant and important part of the great controversy theme. It is also significant to the image in which human beings were created, and thus the ultimate aim of education.

White based her concepts of the Creator on the teaching of the Bible, the creation

¹White, "Christ Our Example," *General Conference Bulletin*, 102.

²White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 333.

³White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 330.

account, and such texts as Pss 33:6, 9, and 104:5; John 1:1-3; Col 1:16; and Heb 1:2.¹

She believed God the Father created all there is, including the angels of heaven and all the beings inhabiting “all the worlds that He had created,”² through Christ, the Son.³ By virtue of being the Creator of all there is,⁴ He is the only true God, and alone worthy of worship.⁵

God Spoke and It Came to Be

White rejected the evolutionary theory as an explanation of the origin of life on our planet. In her view, the world was created in six literal days, each day consisting of twenty-four hours.⁶ White did not venture to explain how God created the world in six days. She declared that “just how God accomplished the work of creation in six literal days, he has never revealed to mortals.”⁷ She was certain, however, that “in the formation of our world, God was not indebted to pre-existing matter.”⁸

¹White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 34, 44; idem, *Desire of Ages*, 281; idem, *Selected Messages*, 1:293.

²White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 34, 36, 41.

³Ibid., 34.

⁴White, *Education*, 132-133.

⁵White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 305, 336.

⁶White, *Testimonies to Ministers*, 136.

⁷Ellen G. White, “The Great Controversy between Christ and His Angels and Satan and His Angels; Chapter Eight; Disguised Infidelity,” *The Signs of the Times*, 20 March 1879, 90.

⁸White, *Testimonies*, 8:258.

Furthermore, White maintained that nature is separate and distinct from her Creator. Nature is not God; rather it is an expression of God's thought and character.¹ "Nature," White stated, "is the servant of her Creator."² She also held that nature did not operate on its own by its own inherent energy. Rather, she asserted that "the same creative energy that brought the world into existence is still exerted in upholding the universe and continuing the operations of nature."³

God Cares for His Creation

White did not see God as a Creator who created all there is and then left it to its own devising, nor did she picture Him as a Sovereign of the universe who was indifferent to the well-being of its inhabitants. All of God's acts of creation as well as every action of His administration of the universe were for the good of His creatures. She declared that "every manifestation of creative power is an expression of infinite love. The sovereignty of God involves fullness of blessing to all created beings."⁴ God, White maintained, is not only the Source of all, He is also the Sustainer of all,⁵ and has "a personal interest" in all He has created.⁶

¹Ibid., 263.

²White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 114.

³White, *Counsels to Parents*, 185.

⁴White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 33.

⁵Ibid., 305

⁶White, *Education*, 132.

There was no doubt in White's mind that the earth had been called into existence for human beings, "the crowning work of the Creator." They were to have dominion over the earth, rule over it as representatives of God,¹ and they were to reflect the glory of their Maker in whose image they were created.² All of creation was to be an expression of God's infinite love and care.³

The conviction that the Creator and Supreme Being created everything, including the human race, as an expression of infinite love, and that He has a personal interest in all human beings, imparts a great sense of security. If this conviction is true then the universe is a friendly universe. If the universe is ruled by a Creator God who is not only just and holy, but also omniscient and omnipotent, it must be ultimately a safe universe for its inhabitants.

White saw the knowledge of God as of utmost importance for education. She maintained that it was "the foundation of all true education and of all true service,"⁴ and thus the fundamental basis in which were rooted the ultimate aims of education.

The knowledge of God includes knowledge of human nature in its sinless state since human beings were created in God's image. The ultimate aims of education are directly and inseparably connected with the restoration of sinful human nature to its original condition at creation for which the knowledge of God is fundamental.

¹White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 44-45.

²White, *Education*, 15.

³White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 33.

⁴White, *Ministry of Healing*, 409.

Human Nature

Human beings were created in the image of God, their Maker, for the purpose, White maintained, of reflecting that image as free, moral agents ever more fully as they grew in the knowledge of God. Understanding human nature, both unfallen and fallen, in the light of this concept, is imperative “in order to understand what is comprehended in the work of education,”¹ White claimed.

Created in the Image of God

White described the first human beings on this earth, Adam and Eve, whom she also called “our first parents,” as “graceful and symmetrical in form, regular and beautiful in feature.”² Created in the image of God, they bore, according to White, the likeness of their Maker in their physical nature as well as in their mind and soul. They were richly gifted both mentally and spiritually, able to investigate and understand God’s visible creation and also “comprehend moral responsibilities and obligations.”³ White saw this image of God in the human being as a dynamic image. Every human being was to have the ability to think and reason; to observe and evaluate; to plan and perform; to lead out in enterprises and shoulder responsibilities. White stated this simply: “Every human being, created in the image of God, is endowed with a power akin to that of the

¹White, *Education*, 14-15.

²Ibid., 20.

³Ibid., 15, 20.

Creator—individuality, power to think and to do.”¹

Reflecting the Image of God

Ellen White also discussed God’s purpose in creating human beings in His image, which gives further insight into their nature. It was God’s purpose that human beings should reveal His image and reflect His glory. By the “glory of God” White is here most likely speaking about God’s character. Several times she wrote of God’s glory as His character.² In order to reflect God’s character, God would grant human beings a “face-to-face” and “heart-to-heart” communion with Him. This communion would be the means of personal development, of clearer understanding and appreciation of God’s wisdom, power, and love, and of happiness and joy.³ White stated that human beings were “created for fellowship with God,” and that only in such fellowship could they find “real life and development” and their “highest joy.”⁴

White was careful to point out that although human beings were created in the image of God, it did not mean that they were totally like God. “Christ alone,” White

¹White, *Education*, 17.

²Ibid., 15. Even though White spoke of the glory of God in physical terms, e.g., as the Shekinah (see White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 584, where she mentions “the unspeakable glory of the Shekinah, the visible symbol of the most high God”), she also spoke of it as God’s character. In an article in 1902 White stated that “the glory of God is His character,” citing Exod 33:17-34:7. In that same article, White, referring to Christ’s intercessory prayer in the 17th chapter of the Gospel According to John, equates the glory of God with His character. See Ellen G. White, “Let This Mind Be in You,” *Signs of the Times*, 3 September 1902, 2.

³White, *Education*, 15.

⁴Ibid., 124-125.

stated, “is the ‘express image’ (Hebrews 1:3) of the Father; but man was formed in the likeness of God.”¹ White explained that likeness in terms of spiritual, mental, moral, and physical aspects, stating that before sin entered the world the nature of human beings was “in harmony with the will of God”; their minds “capable of comprehending divine things”; their affections “pure”; and their appetites and passions “under the control of reason.”²

A Free, Moral Agent

A most important part of the nature of human beings, in Ellen White’s view, was their freedom of choice, without which humans would be mere automatons and not intelligent beings. Without the freedom of choice there would be no development of character, and obedience to God would not be motivated by love and appreciation of God’s character.³ White stated clearly that “man was created a free moral agent.”⁴ This means that although God created Adam and Eve, “our first parents,” holy and innocent, they had the power to either obey or disobey God’s requirements and law.

To White, the law of God was first and foremost a law of love, and happiness and life itself depended upon God’s created beings’ unswerving obedience to that law. White stated that “the law of God is as sacred as God Himself,” and described it as “a revelation

¹White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 45.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., 331-332; 49.

⁴Ibid., 331-332.

of His will, a transcript of His character, the expression of divine love and wisdom.”¹

White believed that perpetual and perfect obedience to this law was the condition of an eternal life of joy and happiness. Adam and Eve were free moral agents and capable of appreciating God’s character of love and justice, therefore, their loyalty, their obedience, faith, and love must be tested “before they could be rendered eternally secure.”²

A Fallen Sinful Nature

As White portrayed the events at the dawn of this world’s existence, Adam and Eve were enjoying the bountiful gifts of God in the garden of Eden, as well as the freedom of choice. They had been instructed concerning God’s law and His government and also warned about the intentions of Satan, the rebel angel, who was plotting their destruction. Yet, they failed the test, and through disobedience to God’s explicit commands their nature was changed, no longer innocent and holy. Their disobedience brought upon the human race “the guilt and penalty of sin.”³

As White saw it, by this transgression of God’s law, Adam and Eve transferred their allegiance from the Creator to Satan, the deceiver.⁴ Human nature was now fallen and sinful.

In her book *Steps to Christ*, White gives a graphic description of the fallen, sinful

¹Ibid., 52.

²Ibid., 48-49.

³Ibid., 52.

⁴Ellen G. White, “If My Words Abide in You,” *Signs of the Times*, 28 December 1891, 119.

nature in which selfishness replaces love; holiness has no attraction or communion with God; and the thoughts, the interests, and the motives of the sinful heart are opposed to those of sinless beings. White went so far as to state that, for the wicked, heaven would be “a place of torture.”¹ Not all human beings, however, are wicked or evil. White made a distinction between what she called “the natural man” or even “evil men,” on one hand, and those who received Christ as their Saviour on the other. Of the former she stated that “the natural man is in transgression, and his nature is in harmony with that of the first transgressor. There is no natural enmity between fallen men and fallen angels; both are partakers of the same spirit through indulgence in evil.”² Of those who received Christ as their Saviour she wrote: “The enmity that exists in the heart against evil has no natural existence, but is an enmity that has been created through the agency of the Holy Spirit.”³

How serious White considered this change in human nature is evident throughout her writings. She wrote extensively about humanity’s lost condition, the plan of salvation, and the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Christ, the Saviour of the world. In *Steps to Christ*, she observed that:

It is impossible for us, of ourselves, to escape from the pit of sin in which we are sunken. Our hearts are evil, and we cannot change them. . . . Education, culture, the exercise of the will, human effort, all have their proper sphere, but here they are powerless. They may produce an outward correctness of behavior, but they cannot change the heart; they cannot purify the springs of life. There must be a power working from within, a new life from above, before men can be changed from sin to

¹White, *Steps to Christ*, 17-18.

²Ellen G. White, “Harmony with Apostate Powers a Sign of Enmity to God,” *Signs of the Times*, 11 June 1894, 483.

³Ibid.

holiness. That power is Christ. His grace alone can quicken the lifeless faculties of the soul, and attract it to God, to holiness.¹

White believed that through repentance and faith in Christ the nature of man would be restored to the likeness of God, that through the grace of Christ human beings would again be sinless, innocent, and holy. She believed that “the sacrifice of the Son of God was made that human nature might be elevated, and restored to its original purity.”² White realized that material and scientific solutions would not suffice. Education must work hand in hand with God’s plan of redemption. In her book *Education*, White clearly stated that every human being has received from Christ “some ray of divine light,” and that “a perception of right, a desire for goodness exists in every heart.”³ Yet, there is, White maintained, in the human nature a force, a tendency to evil, that human beings are unable of themselves to resist. For that there is only one power—Christ. Therefore, in the context of education and redemption White held that “co-operation with that power is man’s greatest need,” and proposed that in all educational efforts cooperation with that power should be the highest aim.⁴ Educational aims are rooted in anthropological concepts.

God’s Moral Law and Government

God’s moral law and government impact directly the well-being of His creation,

¹White, *Steps to Christ*, 18.

²Ellen G. White, “Revealing Christ,” *Review and Herald*, 15 July 1909, 8.

³White, *Education*, 29.

⁴*Ibid.*

ensure their happiness and safety, but above all, reveal the character of God. Again, God's moral law and government are fundamental part of the great controversy, and reveal a basic aspect of who God is. The moral law is an integral part of the gospel and thus of all religious education.

Human societies, in order to function as such, have moral codes of conduct and at least some form of government, however primitive. For this reason the educational enterprise must take moral law and government into account for the support and perpetuation of an orderly society. It is, therefore, necessary for the present study to explore White's ideas in this area of philosophy. She discussed various areas of God's law, such as the laws of nature, as well as physical, mental, and moral laws governing human beings. Because of limited space the emphasis here will be on the moral law and the government of God.

In an article entitled "The Moral Law," White argued that any government requires a governor, and that the governor of this world is the God of the universe. She added that God's government is a moral one "based upon a distinction between right and wrong." She also stated that moral law is universal and must be immutable, whereas positive laws could be changed or repealed at the will of the lawgiver.¹

The Standard of Moral Principles

For White the great standard of morality was not found in society or with the

¹Ellen G. White, "The Moral Law," *Signs of the Times*, 5 June 1901, 355. A note on positive law: *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* (1966) defines positive law as "1: the aggregate of legal precepts established or recognized by the authority of the state as contrasted with natural law or a body of ideal precepts" (s.v. "positive law").

experts of moral theory. “The Bible,” she stated, “is the great standard of right and wrong, clearly defining sin and holiness.”¹ More specifically, White stated that God’s mind and will, His law and His character, are the standard of “the ethics inculcated by the Gospel.”²

White viewed God’s moral standard as reaching deeper than just the public or outward aspects of human conduct. She held that God’s law was to be applied not only to the “outer life,” which does not reveal all there is in a person’s character, but also to what she called “the deep secrets of man’s moral nature” where it judges the thoughts, the motives, and the purposes, and condemning “the dark passions” and “the evil deeds” dwelt upon “yet never executed for want of opportunity.”³

Scripture contains a moral code known as the Ten Commandments. White called them “God’s great moral standard,” and the only standard by which to test character.⁴

The Ten Commandments

In the chapter “The Spirituality of the Law,” in her commentary on Christ’s sermon on the mount entitled *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, Ellen White dealt with the far-reaching claims of God’s law, the moral law of the Ten Commandments proclaimed from Mount Sinai. That law was timeless, universal, and changeless. She

¹Ellen G. White, “What the Word of God Is to Us,” *Signs of the Times*, 25 June 1902, 402.

²White, “Let This Mind Be in You,” 562.

³White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 424.

⁴Ellen G. White, “Purifieth Himself,” *Signs of the Times*, 20 June 1895, 372.

referred to the Ten Commandments by such names as “the great law of life,” “God’s law of love,” “the law of heaven,” and “the laws of eternal rectitude.”¹

This law, White maintained, existed before the creation of our earth,² and therefore, before sin entered our world. After Adam and Eve sinned, White asserted, the principles of the law were not in any way changed, “but additional precepts were given to meet man in his fallen state.”³ Adapted and given to all mankind,⁴ the law of Ten Commandments “was of universal obligation.”⁵

The Nature of the Moral Law

When writing about the law of God, White often repeated a central theme, namely, that this law is “a revelation of His will, a transcript of His character,”⁶ and its fundamental basis is love.⁷ In view of this concept, God’s law, because it is an expression of His very nature, must necessarily also be eternal, perfect, unchangeable, immutable, and holy. White stated it succinctly when she claimed that “the law of God is

¹White, *Mount of Blessing*, 49-51.

²Ibid., 48.

³Ellen G. White, “The Law and the Sabbath,” *Signs of the Times*, 10 June 1880, 253.

⁴White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 305.

⁵Ellen G. White, *Sons and Daughters of God* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1955), 44.

⁶See, e.g., White, *Great Controversy*, 434; idem, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 52; idem, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 305; idem, *Testimonies*, 6:10, 350; 8:63, 207; 9:229.

⁷White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 305.

as holy as He is holy, as perfect as He is perfect. It presents to men the righteousness of God.”¹ White described the moral law as it is expressed in the Ten Commandments as “brief, comprehensive, and authoritative,” covering “the duty of man to God and to his fellow man.”² As the foundation of the law is love, so its fulfillment is love.³

The Purpose and Function of the Moral Law

White stated the purpose of the law in simple, basic terms: “that we may have rules to govern our conduct.”⁴ This may sound arbitrary, but none of the requirements of God’s law are arbitrary,⁵ as White saw it. On the contrary, since the conduct of human beings is rooted in the character, its development could not take place under arbitrary rules. White stated quite clearly that “it is not by arbitrary law or rule that the graces of character are developed.”⁶ Character is precisely what God’s law is all about, since it is the expression of God’s character. These rules, each and every commandment of the law, White stated, were for “the good and happiness” of God’s created beings.⁷

Beyond its purpose for the good of human beings, White pointed out the function

¹See White, *Mount of Blessing*, 54.

²Ibid.

³Ellen G. White, “The Necessity of Co-Operation with God,” *Review and Herald*, 1 November 1892, 673.

⁴Ellen G. White, “The Book of Books,” *Review and Herald*, 21 August 1888, 530.

⁵White, *Education*, 76.

⁶Ibid., 237.

⁷Ibid., 52.

of the law in defining sin. She maintained that the only definition of sin is the one given in the Bible, that sin is the transgression of the law.¹ Therefore, at the end of time, in the day of judgment, the law will have yet an additional function. It will be “revealed as the rule of judgment,” as “the standard of character in the judgment,” White held.²

White maintained that the law had a dual function in the present life of the believer. Not only does the law “reveal sins to us,” but it also “causes us to feel our need of Christ and to flee unto Him for pardon and peace by exercising repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.”³ In this respect White felt there was perfect harmony and cooperation between the law and the gospel. Not only does the law point the sinner to the gospel, that is, to Christ for forgiveness, but the gospel points the sinner to the law as the standard of a righteous life. White explained it in the following statement: “The gospel points to the moral code as a rule of life. That law, by its demands for undeviating obedience, is continually pointing the sinner to the gospel for pardon and peace.”⁴

The Government of God

White’s writings on the government of God parallel the three branches of government, executive, legislative, and judicial, which are known in democratic societies.

¹White, *Great Controversy*, 493.

²*Ibid.*, 639, 436.

³White, *Selected Messages*, 1:234.

⁴Ellen G. White, “The Exalted Position of the Law of God,” *Review and Herald*, 27 September 1881, 209.

As the Creator, God is “the supreme Ruler of the universe,”¹ the Lawgiver and the Executive, who “makes and executes His laws.”² He is also the “Supreme Judge.”³ Here are the three branches of government, the executive, the legislative, and the judicial. They are not, however, separated but united in One who in the Bible “is presented not only as a Being of mercy and benevolence, but as a God of strict and impartial justice.”⁴ The three branches of God’s government can safely reside in the One Supreme Being who in the cross of Christ demonstrated infinite love for the human race, and at the same time upheld strict and impartial justice. The law of God could not be changed to meet mankind in its fallen condition, because it is a revelation of God’s immutable character. Therefore, stated White, “God did not change His law, but He sacrificed Himself, in Christ, for man’s redemption.”⁵

Early in her book *Patriarchs and Prophets*, White discussed her view of the government of God. She stated that every being and everything, including the operations of nature, are under “fixed laws, which cannot be disregarded.” To be under law is a non-negotiable condition of the very existence of human beings.⁶ White also pointed out

¹Ellen G. White, “The Character of the Law of God,” *Signs of the Times*, 15 April 1886, 225.

²Ellen G. White, *Last Day Events* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1992), 241.

³Ellen G. White, “The Present Crisis,” *Review and Herald*, 1 January 1889, 1.

⁴Ellen G. White, “The Last Words of Moses,” *Signs of the Times*, 24 March 1881, 133.

⁵White, *Desire of Ages*, 762.

⁶White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 49, 52.

consequences for breaking the law. Penalty was necessary, White maintained, for without penalty the law would be without force.¹ Furthermore, the issue of penalty was not only concerning justice being served in regard to the sinner. The wider issue was the stability of God's government. White argued that "were there no justice, no penalty, there would be no stability to the government of God."²

White discussed another threat to the stability of God's government, the rebellion of Lucifer, the most exalted of God's angels, who attempted to overthrow the government of God.³ God could have destroyed Lucifer (Satan) and all his followers in an instant, but that would have "given a precedent for the exercise of force," stated White. Nothing was to be done by force or compulsion. Truth was to be "the prevailing power."⁴ Yet another crucial reason why Satan was not destroyed at the beginning of his rebellion, White maintained, was that God wanted to let Satan develop his plans so the true nature of his principles of government could be seen by all. Thus, the whole universe would witness the nature and results of sin and God's law and government would be vindicated.⁵ At the end of the great controversy between God and Satan, according to White, Satan's own

¹Ellen G. White, "What Shall I Do to Inherit Eternal Life," *Signs of the Times*, 14 July 1890, 413.

²Ellen G. White, *God's Amazing Grace* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1973), 70.

³White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 33-43.

⁴Ellen G. White, "The Great Controversy," *Review and Herald*, 7 September 1897, 561. See also idem, *Desire of Ages*, 22, where White stated that "the exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God's government."

⁵White, *Desire of Ages*, 759, 764.

works will have condemned him and God's wisdom, justice, and goodness will stand fully vindicated.¹

It is evident in White's writings that happiness and safety are paramount in all God's dealings with His created beings. Every command issued by the government of God, throughout Scripture, was based on two great principles of love—love to God and love to man. These “two great principles of the law,” White stated, are the “two principles of God's moral government,” upon which “hang all the law and the prophets.”²

White declared that God's law was a revelation of His will and character, “the expression of divine love and wisdom.”³ Thus, God's law contributes significantly to the knowledge of God and how He operates. The functions of a society of beings created in the image of such a God must reflect the principles of that law of divine love and wisdom. These principles, then, must inform the aims of education in that society. Included in that education is yet another aspect of who God is, namely, the Divine Artist.

God, the Divine Artist

Knowledge of God, according to White, included His love of beauty, the purpose of which was to point to the most excellent of all that is beautiful—a beautiful moral character. It is thus a significant component of moral education.

¹White, *Great Controversy*, 670.

²Ellen G. White, *Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 3, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan: The Death, Resurrection and Ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press, 1878; reprint, Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1969), 51 (page citation is to the reprint edition).

³White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 52.

White was attracted to beauty in nature as well as beauty in the mental and the spiritual realm, and it constituted an important part of her educational ideals. Her writings on beauty dealt with the source, the purpose, and the principles of beauty. Beauty was an integral part of God's creation and its purpose was in harmony with the fundamental purposes of God in creating the universe and its inhabitants. It is, White held, yet another revelation of God.

The Source of Beauty

Describing the earth at creation, Ellen White stated that it was "exceedingly beautiful," and that the whole world was dressed in "the garb of beauty."¹ Adam and Eve, "the crowning work of creation,"² White described as "graceful and symmetrical in form, regular and beautiful in feature."³ The Creator of all this beauty, she declared, is "the Author of all beauty, Himself a lover of the beautiful."⁴ When speaking of the beauty of God's creation, White referred to the Creator not only as God but as "the great Master Artist," and "the divine Artist."⁵

In her admiration of the beauty in nature, White wrote about the trees and the

¹Ibid., 44, 47.

²Ibid., 52.

³White, *Education*, 20.

⁴Ibid., 41.

⁵White, *Desire of Ages*, 313; idem, *Steps to Christ*, 124.

hills, the light glowing on mountains and meadow.¹ She spoke of the beautiful sunsets, the “finest paintings” of “the great Master Artist . . . hung out on the shifting canvas of the heavens.”² She also was fond of the birds singing their happy songs, and the “delicately tinted flowers” filling the air with perfume.³ Although White never tired of pointing to the beauty in nature, she saw much beauty in other areas of God’s gifts. She was impressed with “the beauty, pathos, and power” of music,⁴ “the beauty of poetic genius,”⁵ “the beauty and loveliness of His word,”⁶ and “the beauty and majesty of truth.”⁷

For White, physical beauty was inherently appealing and attractive to the ear and to the eye. Speaking about music she expressed her delight in “glorious harmony,” and “clear, soft tones,” as opposed to “harshness and shrillness that offend the ear.” Speaking of what she called “natural loveliness” for the eye to look upon, White made an interesting aesthetic observation, namely, that it consisted “in symmetry, or the

¹White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 641.

²Ellen G. White, “Seek First the Kingdom of God,” *Review and Herald*, 27 October 1885, 657.

³White, *Steps to Christ*, 10.

⁴White, *Testimonies*, 4:71.

⁵Ellen G. White, “The Stone of Witness,” *Signs of the Times*, 26 May 1881, 229.

⁶Ellen G. White, “Notes from General Conference,” *Review and Herald*, 7 May 1901, 296.

⁷White, *Testimonies to Ministers*, 378.

harmonious proportion of parts, each with the other.”¹

Ellen White recognized the beauty created by gifted artists, yet, to her it was no match for natural beauty. “Art,” she stated, “can never attain to the perfection seen in nature.”² In her comments on the flowers of the field, she declared that “the most gorgeous attire produced by the skill of art cannot bear comparison with the natural grace and radiant beauty of the flowers of God’s creation.”³

When White discussed the beauty of poetry, she entered the transitional realm where the physical beauty of sound and expression gives form and structure to the mental and the spiritual, to ideas and emotions. One example is the theme of Christ’s second coming, of which White stated: “[It] has inspired the most sublime and impassioned utterances of the sacred writers. The poets and prophets of the Bible have dwelt upon it in words glowing with celestial fire.”⁴

Moral Beauty

Beauty exists throughout God’s creation, but above all else, White claimed, God values the moral beauty which White equated with the perfection of Christ’s character.⁵

¹Ellen G. White, “Simplicity in Dress,” *Review and Herald*, 6 December 1881, 354.

²Ellen G. White, “Christian Recreation,” *Review and Herald*, 25 July 1871, 43.

³White, *Steps to Christ*, 124.

⁴White, *Great Controversy*, 300.

⁵Ellen G. White, *In Heavenly Places* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1967), 367.

In the context of 1 Pet 3:3-4 Ellen White said: “It is right to love beauty and to desire it; but God desires us to love and seek first the highest beauty, that which is imperishable.”¹ This imperishable, highest beauty was the beauty of character. White stated that “above all that is outwardly attractive He [God] loves beauty of character,”² and this is the beauty that will never perish but last through all eternity.³

It is interesting to notice how White expressed the moral beauty of character in similar terms as what she called “natural loveliness.” It is as if natural loveliness echoes, or in a way reflects, the moral beauty of character. She defined natural loveliness as “symmetry, or the harmonious proportion of parts,” and spiritual loveliness as consisting in “the harmony or likeness of our souls to Jesus.”⁴

The Purpose of Beauty

Beauty and the love of the beautiful, White held, were given to human beings for their benefit and happiness.⁵ The profusion of beauty was also an expression of God’s love for His earthly children. He has filled creation with beauty, White wrote, “to tell you of His loving thought for you.”⁶ The purpose of the gift of beauty was to remove any

¹White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 523.

²White, *Steps to Christ*, 85.

³Ellen G. White, *My Life Today* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1952), 270.

⁴White, “Simplicity in Dress,” 357.

⁵White, “Christian Recreation,” 43.

⁶White, *Mount of Blessing*, 96.

doubt that God's loving kindness included caring for every need of His children. White pressed this message home: "If He has lavished such infinite skill upon the things of nature, for your happiness and joy, can you doubt that He will give you every needed blessing?"¹

The great purpose of beauty was to attract human beings to the highest beauty, the beauty of God's character. In surrounding them with the beautiful scenery of nature, White argued, "it is His design that we should associate the glories of nature with His character . . . that we may have correct views of His character."²

White loved to dwell on the beauty of the flowers. It appears that she appreciated the beauty of flowers more than any other beauty in nature, as a means of pointing to the character of Christ. Again and again White spoke of the lilies mentioned by Christ in His sermon on the mount. In that context she stated that "through the flowers, God would call our attention to the loveliness of Christlike character. He who has given such beauty to the blossoms desires far more that the soul should be clothed with the beauty of the character of Christ."³

To minister to others, White wrote, is "the law of life for the universe." This ministry was the life of Christ, "a joyous service, a tide of love . . . representing the character of the great Giver."⁴ And God intended, White maintained, that beauty should

¹Ibid., 96-97.

²White, "Christian Recreation," 43.

³White, *Mount of Blessing*, 97.

⁴White, *Desire of Ages*, 21.

teach human beings that they are “to make life bright and joyous and beautiful with the love of Christ—like the flowers, to gladden other lives by the ministry of love.”¹

Beauty, another revelation of God’s nature and character, serves the same purpose as all other revelations of God, namely, to draw human beings to an appreciation of God’s character of love. This is in harmony with White’s philosophy of the knowledge of God: that wherever and however He reveals Himself, He reveals Himself as a God of infinite love. This is the knowledge of most worth, without which the true and ultimate aim of education, according to White, cannot be attained.

Concepts of Truth and Knowledge

Although I have, up to this point, explored White’s answer to the question What knowledge is of most worth? it is necessary to return, briefly, to her concepts of truth and knowledge in general. White’s fundamental concepts and perspectives regarding truth and knowledge were broad and comprehensive, yet very focused. They included the ultimate source and nature of truth and its standard, as well as various types of knowledge. These will broaden the understanding of White’s epistemological concepts and show how these relate to her educational ideas and her call for “a broader scope, a higher aim,”² in education. Her epistemological focus remained the knowledge of God.

Truth

White’s great interest was finding, understanding, and accepting truth that would

¹White, *Mount of Blessing*, 97.

²White, *Education*, 13.

reveal humanity's greatest need and the solution to that need. She did not deal in theoretical definitions of truth. Truth is generally understood as any proposition, statement of an idea, belief, theory, or even an opinion which is consistent with or directly describes reality and which can be examined as to its correctness or truthfulness.¹ At the time when Ellen White was developing her thinking about the nature of truth, several theories of truth were circulating. Historically, some of the more important theories are the correspondence theory of truth, the coherence theory of truth, and the pragmatic theory of truth. Proponents of the correspondence theory of truth maintained that that which is true must correspond to reality; that is, it is a truth to claim that London is in England because the statement corresponds to reality. Proponents of the coherence theory of truth argued that all statements of truth must agree internally; comments or observations which contradicted accepted views of reality must be discarded or resolved. The pragmatic theory of truth, in its simplest form, holds that that which has desirable practical consequences must be true.²

Though these definitions were popular, White did not concern herself with such technical, philosophical theories. The theorists of her day were concerned with working out a mechanism for identifying and describing a truth, whatever that truth was. White was unconcerned with the mechanism of defining truth; she cared, instead, only about

¹See, e.g., Richard L. Kirkham, *Theories of Truth: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 41-48.

²For a concise overview of these and other theories of truth see *Encyclopædia Britannica*, s.v. "truth." For a more in-depth treatment of the subject see, e.g., Kirkham, *Theories of Truth*.

finding that truth by which one might live according to the will of God. From this perspective, her writings contain significant statements on the nature of reality from which her concepts of truth emerge. In order to understand Ellen White, it is important to consider the fundamental basis of her concepts.

The Fundamental Basis

The theorists and philosophers of White's day were, no doubt, aware of, and influenced by each other's work. Although White was not ignorant of the contemporary field of educational writings she looked, instead, to the Holy Scriptures of the Christian faith as the fundamental basis of her concept of truth. To her they were an authoritative, divine, and infallible revelation of truth regarding God's will and plan for humanity. She believed that the Scriptures were inspired by God's Spirit and that they pointed to God as their Author. She declared the Holy Scriptures to be not only "the standard of character, the revealer of doctrines, and the test of experience,"¹ but "the perfect standard of truth."²

For White, the Scriptures were synonymous with truth; consequently, White had complete confidence in the Bible, both in its origin and its preservation throughout the centuries. Discussing the relationship of the Bible to history and prophecy, White expressed her faith in God's written Word. "It came," she asserted, "fresh from the fountain of eternal truth, and throughout the ages a divine hand has preserved its purity."³

¹White, *Great Controversy*, v-vii.

²White, *Education*, 17.

³*Ibid.*, 173.

For a confirmation of scriptural trustworthiness, White pointed to the evidence of personal experience. God in His Word invites human beings to prove to themselves “the reality of His Word, the truth of His promises,” and this, White asserted, never fails, and “never can fail.”¹ On the basis of such personal experiences, born-again Christians could say that they “found it [the Bible] to be the voice of God” to their soul, and thus, White stated, “we may have the witness in ourselves that the Bible is true.”²

When an individual becomes convicted of the truth of the Scriptures, it is, White maintained, because of the work of the Holy Spirit operating on the individual, and there is always a perfect agreement between the Spirit of God and the Word of God.³ In this matter White issued a warning: The teaching of the Spirit of God could never contradict the teaching of the Scriptures for the very reason that they were inspired by that same Spirit. Any claim to an enlightenment by the Holy Spirit contrary to the Word of God should be rejected. The spirit behind that claim would not be the Spirit of God.⁴ Any claim must agree with the claims of the Scriptures. Whether or not she was aware of the work of coherence theorists, her convictions on the work of the Holy Spirit were consistent with the general principle of the coherence theory.

Personal convictions, experiences, and impressions of God’s Spirit were not the only reasons for White’s faith in the Bible. She held that God had given sufficient

¹White, *Steps to Christ*, 111.

²Ibid., 112.

³White, *Great Controversy*, vii.

⁴Ibid.

evidence in the Scriptures themselves of their divine character.¹ Difficulties and mysteries in the Bible were examples of such evidence. These mysteries, like the character of God Himself, White held, could never fully be understood by finite human beings.² If everything in the Bible was easily understood by finite minds it would testify against its divine origin. On the contrary, “the grandeur and mystery of the themes presented” were evidence that it was God’s Word.³

Another example, which White characterized as “one of the strongest evidences of the truth of Scripture,” is the fact that Scripture records the faults and sins of “good people” even more faithfully than their virtues. Here, White is referring to major characters in the Bible who were favored by God but who were not necessarily the most exemplary of individuals. Uninspired writers, White stated, “would no doubt have presented the characters of its honored men in a more flattering light.”⁴

Secular theorists may have criticized religious interpretations of truth as intellectually weak, but in discussing her convictions in regard to the Scriptures, White clearly employed her reasoning powers. She made observations regarding the content and style of the Bible and came to logical conclusions.⁵ She warned, however, against deifying reason. Rather, one should come to the revelation of God in humility and

¹White, *Steps to Christ*, 106, 111.

²*Ibid.*, 106.

³*Ibid.*, 106-107.

⁴White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 238.

⁵White, *Great Controversy*, vi; cf. *idem*, *Selected Messages*, 1:19-21.

reverence, where “reason must acknowledge an authority superior to itself, and heart and intellect must bow to the great I AM.”¹ In fact, White was convinced that anyone sincerely seeking for truth with an attitude of reverence and faith would accept the Bible as “the word of the living God.” The more it was studied, the deeper the conviction of its divine authorship, and the greater the realization that human reason is insufficient and must bow before “the majesty of divine revelation.”²

The Scriptures were a fundamental philosophical bedrock for White, not only in regard to religious views but also with reference to the natural, physical world. This foundation existed in what White regarded as the indissoluble bond between the Bible and nature. Both have the same author, the Creator of the universe. White stated that “the Author of nature is the Author of the Bible. Creation and Christianity have one God. God is revealed in nature, and God is revealed in His word.”³

The Bible does not pretend to be a textbook in natural science. But although it primarily deals with the human condition and the divine plan of salvation offered to mankind, it does give an account of the origin of the world. In this connection it is worth noting that during Ellen White’s lifetime, the Western world was gradually rejecting a long-standing biblical world view of divine creation. White, however, did not reject this view. She saw no dichotomy between the natural and the spiritual. She stated that “the book of nature and the written word do not disagree; each sheds light on the

¹White, *Steps to Christ*, 110.

²Ibid., 107-108.

³White, *Counsels to Parents*, 395.

other.”¹ She further stated, which may hint at the correspondence theory of truth, that “it may be innocent to speculate beyond what God’s word has revealed, if our theories do not contradict facts found in the Scriptures.”² In other words, the propositions of the theories had to correspond to the facts presented in the Bible. In the same context, discussing scientific inquiries, she made a statement paralleling views of coherence theorists: “All truth, whether in nature or in revelation, is consistent with itself in all its manifestations.”³

The most exalted revelation of truth in the written word of God is “the complete revelation of the attributes and will of God, in the person of Jesus Christ,”⁴ who is “Jesus Christ, the Word of God,”⁵ who is also “Christ, the Truth.”⁶ Of Him, White wrote that “the truth as it is in Jesus reaches heaven, and encompasses eternity,” and “in Him is the complete system of divine truth.”⁷ White’s characterization of divine truth as a “complete system” is reminiscent of coherence theorists who speak of truth in terms of systems, all elements of which must be consistent with each other.

¹Ellen G. White, “Science and the Bible in Education,” *Signs of the Times*, 20 March 1884, 177 .

²White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 113.

³Ibid., 114.

⁴Ellen G. White, *The Upward Look* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1982), 187.

⁵Ellen G. White, “Opinion and Practice to Be Conformed to God’s Word,” *Review and Herald*, 25 March 1902, 177.

⁶Ellen G. White, “Christ or Barabbas,” *Review and Herald*, 30 January 1900, 65.

⁷Ellen G. White, “Have You Oil in Your Vessels with Your Lamps?” *Review and Herald*, 17 September 1895, 594.

For White, God's revelation in Scripture was the ultimate referent for truth, for "He is the author of all truth."¹ This excluded all other claims to ultimate truth. No miraculous manifestations could supersede God's written Word,² nor would the Spirit of God ever be given to supersede the Bible.³

As to the interpretation of biblical statements, White held to the fundamental rule that Scripture is to be compared with Scripture.⁴ One text would "unlock" other texts, and by comparing different texts on the same subject one would arrive at the true meaning and message of Scripture.⁵ This would be a logical corollary of a coherence understanding of truth.

In the final analysis, White maintained, "the Bible is its own expositor."⁶ It is the final court of appeal.

The Source of Truth

In general, when Ellen White discussed or referred to truth, she was speaking of divine truth, the truth of God. Frequently, in her writings, the terms "truth" and "the Word of God" were interchangeable. When Christ came to sow "the seeds of truth," He

¹White, *Fundamentals*, 375.

²White, *Selected Messages*, 2:48. See also *idem*, *Manuscript Releases*, 19:54.

³White, *Great Controversy*, vii.

⁴White, *Education*, 190.

⁵White, *Fundamentals*, 187.

⁶*Ibid.*

was sowing “the seed of the word.” When Christ came as “a teacher of truth,” He was “teaching and preaching . . . the word of God,” the Scriptures.¹

In the widest sense of the term, “the word of God” referred to three distinct aspects of God’s communication: Scripture, nature, and experience. “The great storehouse of truth,” White declared, “is the word of God—the written word, the book of nature, and the book of experience in God’s dealing with human life.”²

White made it clear that the ultimate Word of God, the ultimate source of truth, is Christ. In one of the most significant epistemological declarations about the revelatory relationship between God the Son and God the Father, White wrote:

What speech is to thought, so is Christ to the invisible Father. He is the manifestation of the Father, and is called the Word of God. God sent His Son into the world, His divinity clothed with humanity, that man might bear the image of the invisible God. He made known in His words, His character, His power and majesty, the nature and attributes of God. He was the embodiment of the law of God, which is the transcript of His character.³

Considering how White identified Christ with God the Father, it is not surprising that, having stated that God is “the author of all truth,”⁴ she also stated that “Christ is the

¹White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 38-39.

²*Ibid.*, 125.

³“E. G. White Comments—John 1:18.” *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*. Edited by F. D. Nichol. Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1953-1957, 5:1131.

⁴White, *Fundamentals*, 375.

Author of all truth.”¹ White plainly identified Christ as the Author of the Bible,² as the Creator,³ as well as the Redeemer. Therefore, in view of this, Christ is the Author of the three “books” comprising the great storehouse of truth: the Book of books, the Book of nature, and the Book of experience. He is the Word of God in its broadest sense, not only the revelation of truth but also the source of truth.

The Nature of Truth

From the investigation of White’s position on the ultimate epistemological reality and source of truth, the following may be asserted: Truth is divine and has its origin in God, and like God Himself, “truth is eternal.”⁴ Closely related to eternity is infinity, another characteristic of truth. In the opening paragraph of an article on the shortcoming of worldly wisdom, White stated that “the truth of God is infinite, capable of measureless expansion.”⁵ In other words, God’s truth is not static. To human beings it is “continually unfolding, expanding, and developing.”⁶

¹Ellen G. White, “Christ Revealed the Father,” *Review and Herald*, 7 January 1890, 1.

²White, *Fundamentals*, 308.

³White, *Desire of Ages*, 288; idem, “Take the Cup of Salvation,” *Review and Herald*, 19 May 1896, 305.

⁴Ellen G. White, “Blessings of Bible Study,” *Signs of the Times*, 6 February 1893, 214.

⁵Ellen G. White, “The World by Wisdom Knew Not God,” *Review and Herald*, 15 December 1891, 769.

⁶Ellen G. White, *Our High Calling: The Morning Watch Texts with Appropriate Selections Compiled from the Writings of Ellen G. White* (Washington, DC: Review and

The fact that the truth is “continually unfolding, expanding, and developing,” does not mean, however, that it is changing, and not absolute. Eternal and immortal¹ truth never ceases to exist, and if it is also changeless it must be absolute. Ellen White rarely used the word absolute when discussing truth, but she did speak of the word of God as “the only fixed, changeless thing that the world knows.”² The same idea was expressed by White in 1905: “When the power of God testifies as to what is truth, that truth is to stand forever as the truth.”³ This also is in harmony with God’s nature. He does not change.

White was consistent in her concept of truth. Truth is inseparable from the very nature, character, law, and government of God. It is perfect and absolute, infinite, immutable, and eternal. The oneness of God and truth is complete, for He who “possesses absolute, invariable, and immutable independence,” is “truth itself,” He is “invariable, invincible truth.”⁴

Truth’s invincibility and triumph over all opposition suggests another major characteristic of truth in White’s writings, namely, power—the power of truth, the power of God’s Word. White described the truth presented in Scripture, as “clothed in elevated

Herald, 1961), 211.

¹White, *Testimonies*, 2:490.

²Ellen G. White, “Preach in Regions Beyond,” *Bible Echo*, 28 May 1894, 164.

³Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Writers and Editors: A Grouping of Messages of Counsel Addressed to Writers and Editors* (Nashville, TN: Southern, 1946), 31.

⁴Ellen G. White, “God’s Law Immutable,” *Signs of the Times*, 12 March 1896, 6-7.

language, which exerts a fascinating power over the mind.”¹ Of course, literature of human origin, superbly written, can also fascinate and impress the mind, and have, to a greater or lesser extent, power over the mind. This power of the truth of Scripture, however, has the effect of directing the thoughts from worldly matters to the glorious future of immortal life. When discussing this aspect of truth, that is, the “elevated language,” White exclaimed, “What wisdom of man can compare with the grandeur of the revelation of God?”²

The power of the truth, however, reaches much further and deeper than merely the power exerted by the beauty and grandeur of language. It is intimately connected with what White considered the very central theme of God’s Word, namely, the plan of salvation, the restoration of God’s image in the human being. The truth of God’s Word brings life to the soul “with a spiritual power that is divine,”³ and nothing less than the creative energy that called the universe into existence. This power, this energy is in God’s Word.⁴ And this Word, God’s truth, “imparts power; it begets life. . . . It transforms the nature and re-creates the soul in the image of God.”⁵

Seeking truth is a fundamental concern of education. It is an essential element of the ultimate aims of education. It has been important, therefore, to understand White’s

¹White, “The Book of Books,” 529.

²Ibid.

³White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 132.

⁴White, *Education*, 126.

⁵Ibid.

concept of truth, its basis, source, and function. For the same reasons it is important also to understand her concept of knowledge.

Knowledge

Throughout her writings Ellen White dealt with various kinds of knowledge and their relationships to the knowledge of God and His will within the framework of the great controversy theme. She dealt with everyday, practical, and useful knowledge as well as deep, far-reaching spiritual knowledge. She looked at the values as well as the dangers of theoretical knowledge, and warned against speculative knowledge, all from the perspective of the great conflict between truth and error, which revealed God's character and His loving will and purpose for mankind. This conflict touches every human being, and continues until "all the facts" are known and "every question of truth and error" has been made plain, until "the longstanding controversy" will be settled, and God will be fully vindicated.¹

In this cosmic controversy between true and false knowledge, White recognized the value of theoretical knowledge as long as its limitations and potential dangers were duly acknowledged. She believed that all true and worthwhile knowledge was practical and purposeful, and that there was divine power in spiritual knowledge. White regarded speculative knowledge, at best, as innocent if it did not contradict Scripture; and at worst, as imperiling the soul.

¹White, *Great Controversy*, 670-671. See also "The Importance of Seeking True Knowledge," a chapter in White's book *The Ministry of Healing*, 451-457; and "Our Spiritual Warfare," *Review and Herald*, 19 July 1887, 449.

Theoretical Knowledge

White made a sharp distinction between mere theory or theoretical knowledge for its own sake on the one hand, and theoretical knowledge applied to the heart on the other. She considered theoretical knowledge by itself of no value, whereas the theory of truth brought home by the Holy Spirit and embraced by the heart and will was invaluable.¹

In the latter category White regarded the theory of the truth or theoretical knowledge of the truth as essential.² It was important to have an intellectual understanding of all the doctrinal positions of the faith, and it was one of the duties of the minister “to present the theory of the truth.”³ Indeed, White had great respect for the theory of the truth proclaimed by her church. She spoke of it as “precious pearls of priceless value.”⁴ She and other pioneers had earnestly prayed for this knowledge of the truth and understanding of God’s word. In one of her testimonies for the church where she deplored the prevailing cold formalism among the people, she found “no fault with the theory of the truth,” because it was “perfectly clear and harmonious”; but she lamented what she saw as a lack of a practical heartfelt appreciation of its value.⁵ Truth

¹White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 408-411; idem, *Desire of Ages*, 455-456.

²Ellen G. White, “The Sin of Licentiousness,” 321.

³White, *Testimonies*, 4:315.

⁴Ibid., 446.

⁵Ibid., 445.

must be accompanied by vital and true godliness, she maintained.¹ It must be brought home to the heart. White expressed the same thought when she stated that “it is not enough to have a theoretical knowledge; we must have a living experience in the things of God.”² Theoretical knowledge, therefore, is essential and good, but only of value when appreciated and applied to the heart by the Spirit of God.

Ellen White recognized a serious danger posed by a solely theoretical knowledge. In the days of Christ, a mere theoretical knowledge of truth coupled with external ceremonies was the essential element of pharisaical righteousness, as White saw it.³ To her, the danger lay in believing that “a mere assent to the truth constitutes righteousness,” which then inevitably would lead to neglecting to bring “the truth into practical life.”⁴

White described the serious consequences of such a neglect, stating that if the truth does not make those professing faith in the truth, “sincere, kind, patient, forbearing, heavenly-minded, it is a curse to its possessors, and through their influence it is a curse to the world.”⁵ It is clear from the context that White spoke of the knowledge of the truth.⁶

Indifference is another kind of danger connected with a merely theoretical

¹Ibid.

²Ellen G. White, “Union with God,” *Review and Herald*, 12 July 1887, 433.

³White, *Desire of Ages*, 309.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., 310.

⁶Here, White made no distinction between “knowledge of the truth” and “the truth.” See White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 408, where White equated “knowledge of His [God’s] word” with “the theory of truth.”

knowledge of the truth. The consequences are dramatic as it denies the power of an experimental knowledge of the truth. A good example of her concern about this issue is found in one of her testimonies to the believers:

Experience is knowledge derived from experiment. . . . “Taste and see that the Lord is good.” Some—yes, a large number—have a theoretical knowledge of religious truth, but have never felt the renewing power of divine grace upon their own hearts. These persons are ever slow to heed the testimonies of warning, reproof, and instruction indited by the Holy Spirit. They believe in the wrath of God, but put forth no earnest effort to escape it. They believe in heaven, but make no sacrifice to obtain it. They believe in the value of the soul and that ere long its redemption ceaseth forever. Yet they neglect the most precious opportunities to make their peace with God.

They may read the Bible, but its threatenings do not alarm or its promises win them. They approve things that are excellent, yet they follow the way in which God has forbidden them to go. They know a refuge, but do not avail themselves of it. They know a remedy for sin, but do not use it. They know the right, but have no relish for it. All their knowledge will but increase their condemnation. They have never tasted and learned by experience that the Lord is good.¹

White’s concept of the knowledge of the truth is clear and direct. She maintained that the true seeker of truth can exhibit no halfheartedness, no indifference, no superficiality, and no compromise with error: “He who desires to know the truth must be willing to accept all that it reveals.”² Theoretical knowledge of the truth is necessary, essential, and important. Merely subscribing to it, however, does not constitute righteousness. By its very nature it is of value only when it is applied to the heart and received into the soul.³

¹White, *Testimonies*, 5:221-222.

²White, *Desire of Ages*, 312.

³*Ibid.*, 455-456.

Practical Knowledge

By practical knowledge White meant knowledge of facts and principles useful in securing and maintaining physical health, in earning a livelihood, and in fulfilling the everyday practical duties of life.¹ The most important practical knowledge was in the realm of spiritual truth.

For physical health White strongly advocated practical knowledge of physiology, and how to eat, dress, and work in a healthy way. This would prevent disease, promote happiness, and “glorify God in our bodies.”² The health reform advocated by Ellen White called for practical knowledge.³ In addition to intelligent, common-sense knowledge of basic healing remedies, White advocated knowledge of preventive agencies such as fresh air, water, and sunlight, abstemiousness and temperance, purity of life, rest and exercise, proper diet, and cleanliness. She also stressed the importance of cheerful, happy, grateful thoughts; a healthy, pure, and sound mind; and the happiness and joy that comes from being a blessing to others. Most importantly, she included an unwavering trust in God.⁴

When a person truly understands these principles and intelligently puts them into

¹See White, *Education*, 195-201 and 214-222, and idem, *Child Guidance*, 357-358.

²Ellen G. White, *Health Reformer* 1 (August 1866), cited in White, *Counsels on Health*, 37-41.

³White, *Counsels on Diet and Food*, 455.

⁴White, *Ministry of Healing*, 127-128; idem, *Testimonies*, 5:443; idem, *Selected Messages*, 3:274, 280-281.

practice, that person has practical, useful knowledge.¹ Students gaining their knowledge of facts and theories mostly from the study of books, without putting that knowledge into practice, were, White stated, “novices, so far as experimental knowledge is concerned.”² In other words, knowledge of facts and theories when put to a practical use would yield experimental knowledge, a practical knowledge of real value.

White’s concepts of the nature of practical knowledge also applied to vocational skills and what she often referred to as “lines of useful and productive labor” and “the practical duties of everyday life.” Practical knowledge is gained from practical work, which impacts knowledge in a number of ways. Summarizing its benefits, epistemological and otherwise, White said: “Practical work encourages close observation and independent thought. Rightly performed, it tends to develop that practical wisdom which we call common sense. It develops ability to plan and execute, strengthens courage and perseverance, and calls for the exercise of tact and skill.”³

White believed that putting practical knowledge to use or applying it in the life involved two elements: faith and obedience. Knowledge put into practice is knowledge obeyed. For it to be truly obeyed, however, it must be believed, thus genuine faith leads to true obedience.⁴ This principle is especially important in spiritual matters. Here White

¹White, *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, 196. See also idem, *Testimonies*, 3:158, where she stated: “To cook well, to present healthful food upon the table in an inviting manner, requires intelligence and experience.”

²White, *Counsels on Health*, 257.

³White, *Education*, 220.

⁴Ibid., 200.

identified the same elements of faith and obedience needed to put knowledge of spiritual things into practice. Here, practical knowledge is to know God's will and to perform it,¹ to believe the truth and to practice it.² Speaking of God's commands, that is, the knowledge of His will, White was direct and emphatic: "they should be received with implicit faith, and obeyed with cheerful exactness."³ Through faith and obedience theoretical knowledge becomes practical knowledge. What one at first knows only as a theory becomes that which one knows by experience.

White took this matter of practical knowledge a step further. In her thinking, practical knowledge was not merely useful knowledge which *could* be put to use. It meant not only knowledge which *actually was* practiced and experienced, but knowledge which brought about a decided and radical change in the person. When she spoke of a knowledge of biblical truth, she meant a practical knowledge of God, of Christ, and of the Holy Spirit. This meant a practical knowledge of God's will and of genuine faith in God. It also meant practical knowledge of Christ, His gospel, His righteousness, in short, "the truth as it is in Jesus Christ." It included as well the operations of the Holy Spirit in the conviction of sin and in conversion. All of this would fit under the umbrella of what White called "a practical knowledge of Bible truth."⁴ In 1887 White penned the

¹Ellen G. White, "Humility before Honor," *Review and Herald*, 8 November 1887, 689.

²Ellen G. White, "The Light of the World," *Bible Echo*, 4 January 1897, 4.

³White, "Humility," 689.

⁴White, *Testimonies*, 3:254.

following succinct statement regarding this matter:

A theoretical knowledge of the truth is essential. But the knowledge of the greatest truth will not save us; our knowledge must be practical. God's people must not only know his will, but they must practice it. Many will be purged out from the numbers of those who know the truth, because they are not sanctified by it. The truth must be brought into their hearts, sanctifying and cleansing them from all earthliness and sensuality in the most private life.¹

This brings up White's emphasis on experience which she considered the essence of practical knowledge. In an article entitled "Abide in Me," White stressed that a practical knowledge of a union with Christ is a deeply spiritual experience. It is the experience of "the constant exercise of faith," which "binds our souls to Him, and makes us partakers of the divine nature." Upon this faith also depends our experiencing "spiritual growth, . . . peace, . . . steadfastness, [and] our constant obedience to the words of Christ."² The experience of being tested by God also yields useful knowledge in the spiritual life. It translates into practical knowledge of God's will. That experience, White claimed, was much needed in the believer's life.³

Speculative Knowledge

While she recognized the value of both theoretical and practical knowledge, White warned strongly against a category of knowledge which she called speculative knowledge. Most of White's major statements on speculative knowledge were in regard to speculative theories about the nature of God, although she also referred to fanciful

¹White, "The Sin of Licentiousness," 321.

²Ellen G. White, "Abide in Me," *Signs of the Times*, 23 March 1888, 177.

³White, *Testimonies*, 4:116-117.

ideas some believers had on various topics.¹ White felt that time spent in consideration of such speculative knowledge imperiled the soul.

At the outset of a chapter on the subject,² White pointed out some aspects of these speculations about God such as unwarranted reliance on human reasoning,³ and attempts to form judgments about God and His creation on the basis of imperfect, scientific knowledge.⁴ In this chapter White addressed pantheistic theories, among them the idea that “God is an essence pervading all nature.”⁵ On another occasion she called it “the doctrine of an impersonal god diffused through nature.”⁶ White was clear about the dangers of this idea which she considered deceptive, misleading, and dishonoring to God. It would debase those who accepted it and separate them from God, resulting in their ruin. White saw these pantheistic theories as spiritualistic in nature. If God was dwelling in all human beings they would only need to develop the power within them in order to become holy and sinless. In effect, human beings would become their own savior, eliminating

¹Ellen G. White, “Beware of Fanciful Doctrines,” *Review and Herald*, 21 January 1904, 9. See also idem, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1948), 313-314.

²The chapter entitled “Danger in Speculative Knowledge,” is in her book *The Ministry of Healing*, 427-438.

³In fact, White called this tendency to “exalt human reasoning above its true value and its proper sphere,” “one of greatest evils that attends the quest for knowledge.” *Ibid.*, 427.

⁴White, *Ministry of Healing*, 427.

⁵*Ibid.*, 428.

⁶White, “Beware of Fanciful Doctrines,” 9.

any need for the atonement and sweeping away the whole plan of salvation.¹ The word of God would be regarded as fiction and God would no longer be regarded as the great and majestic Sovereign. Human beings, then, having rejected God's word and His power to save, and depending instead upon their own human power, would not attain to holiness, but sink into degradation and sin, and lose their souls.²

Interestingly, in a chapter on the danger of speculative theories in regard to God, over half of the chapter is devoted to gaining true knowledge about God from the Scriptures. The first half of the chapter is divided evenly between, on the one hand, explaining the danger of speculative theories, and on the other, showing why there are divine mysteries that even "men of the greatest intellect cannot understand."³ The remainder of the chapter deals with the majesty and power of God as revealed by the Holy Spirit through the prophets. Thus, White not only pointed out the danger of speculations in regard to God, but directed the reader to the revelation that God has given of Himself in His word:

This we may seek to understand. But beyond this we are not to penetrate. The highest intellect may tax itself until it is wearied out in conjectures regarding the nature of God, but the effort will be fruitless. This problem has not been given us to solve. No human mind can comprehend God. None are to indulge in speculation regarding His nature. Here silence is eloquence. The Omniscient One is above discussion.⁴

¹White, *Ministry of Healing*, 428.

²Ibid., 428-429.

³Ibid., 431.

⁴Ibid., 429.

White held that merely theoretical knowledge is worthless and that speculations regarding God are not only worthless, but also dangerous. The knowledge of supreme worth is the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ “expressed in character.” It is practical, experiential knowledge.¹ Such knowledge is a power for good because it is connected with true godliness and is energized by the Spirit of God.²

In her own writings, White was true to these concepts. She was, first and foremost, interested in a true knowledge of God which resulted in a Christlike character and unselfish service to others. What she stated about Christ is very much evident throughout her own writings: “He [Christ] did not deal in abstract theories, but in that which is essential to the development of character, that which will enlarge man’s capacity for knowing God, and increase his power to do good.”³

Ellen White’s concepts of knowledge are important for understanding her ideas on education. Knowledge is a primary ingredient in education and thus in aims of education. In religious education, an understanding of the great controversy between truth and error is essential, for this controversy touches every person and their daily life. The resolution of this controversy for the good of God’s creation is a fundamental purpose of life. For this resolution both truth and correct and practical knowledge, particularly a true knowledge of God, are crucial. Redemption and education have the same ultimate aim.⁴

¹Ibid., 457.

²White, *Counsels to Parents*, 38.

³Ibid., 34-35.

⁴See White, *Great Controversy*, xii, and idem, *Education*, 15-16.

Scripture, Its Authority, Value, and Power

White saw in the Bible a complete system of religious and divine truth. This system of truth was Christ Himself.¹ Christ in His work of redemption, Christ crucified, was the “one great central truth” detailed in the Gospel itself, and found in the Old as well as in the New Testament.² Scripture, the bearer of this system of truth, therefore, has the authority of Christ, a “divine authority.”³

Describing Christ’s ministry here on earth, White often spoke of Him as a teacher of truth, presenting the word of God, pointing out to the people that the Scriptures were “of unquestionable authority.”⁴ Speaking of this truth as it relates to the end of time, White claimed that “the system of Bible truth . . . is a system of authority and power.”⁵ The Bible, therefore, is to be regarded as the supreme authoritative source of divine truth and spiritual knowledge.

In her book *Education*, in the chapter entitled “Mental and Spiritual Culture,” White discussed the value of studying the Bible, its principles, themes, and truths. The chapter is divided fairly evenly between mental development and spiritual development. At the outset White emphasized that development and strength of mind, soul, and body

¹White, *Selected Messages*, 3:198.

²Ellen G. White, *That I May Know Him* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1964), 208.

³White, *Steps to Christ*, 107.

⁴White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 39.

⁵White, *Manuscript Releases*, 10:314.

come about through effort and exercise, and for that development God has, in His word, provided the means.¹ The word of God is so designed that the treasures of its “great system of truth” cannot be discerned or obtained by superficial or halfhearted effort; “a diligent research and continuous effort” are required.²

White indicated that the design and structure of the Bible was highly intentional, as “every principle in the word of God has its place, every fact its bearing.”³ And to search out and study the relationship between the various aspects of biblical truth would call the powers of the mind “into intense activity.”⁴ But White went further. For the greatest growth and development of the mind nothing would equal “the effort required to grasp the themes presented. . . . No other study can impart such mental power as does the effort to grasp the stupendous truths of revelation.”⁵ In fact, she ultimately claimed that “as a means of intellectual training, the Bible is more effective than any other book, or all other books combined.”⁶

The basis for such claims regarding the Bible, its structure and design, the nature of its truths as well as its power for mental development, rests on its divine origin. Not only was the Bible created in a way in which “no mind but that of the Infinite could

¹White, *Education*, 123.

²Ibid. See also White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 111.

³White, *Education*, 124.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

conceive or fashion,” but through its earnest and close study, White maintained, “the mind . . . [is] brought in contact with the thoughts of the Infinite.”¹ White acknowledged that the “God-given truths” of the Bible were “expressed in the language of men,” and “written by human hands,” “yet it is the testimony of God,” and “the Bible points to God as its author.”²

Though the Bible is unrivalled as a means of mental development and intellectual training, this alone was not why the Bible, in White’s opinion, was the source of the knowledge of most worth. Although she considered the Bible, in the areas of history, biography, government, philosophy, and poetry, as “immeasurably superior in value to the productions of any human author,”³ that still, by itself, did not qualify it as that source. That distinction is due to the fact that it is the supreme source, the ultimate textbook, for the science of all sciences—the science of redemption.⁴

White considered the plan of redemption, which is “the restoration in the human soul of the image of God,” to be “the central theme” or “the grand central thought” of the Bible.⁵ White emphasized the importance of this preeminent science by stating that it is “the only knowledge which can lead to true and eternal happiness . . . the crown of glory,

¹Ibid.

²White, *Great Controversy*, v-vi.

³White, *Education*, 125.

⁴Ibid., 126. See also White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 107.

⁵White, *Education*, 125.

and the life which measures with the life of God.”¹ She also stated that it is “the highest study in which it is possible for man to engage.”²

This study of God’s word, White claimed, if done in sincerity and with a teachable spirit, if done with honest intentions to understand its truth, will reveal its power in the “development of the spiritual nature.”³ The power in God’s word is nothing less than “the creative energy that called the worlds into existence.”⁴ If the word of God is, White claimed, “accepted by the will, received into the soul, it brings with it the life of the Infinite One. It transforms the nature and re-creates the soul in the image of God.”⁵

An amplification of this thought is found in the following statement by White:

The perception and appreciation of truth, He [Christ] said, depends less upon the mind than upon the heart. Truth must be received into the soul; it claims the homage of the will. If truth could be submitted to the reason alone, pride would be no hindrance in the way of its reception. But it is to be received through the work of grace in the heart; and its reception depends upon the renunciation of every sin that the spirit of God reveals. Man’s advantages for obtaining a knowledge of the truth, however great these may be, will prove of no benefit to him unless the heart is open to receive the truth, and there is a conscientious surrender of every habit and practice that is opposed to its principles. To those who thus yield themselves to God, having an honest desire to know and to do His will, the truth is revealed as the power of God for their salvation.⁶

For this reason White stated that even though the Bible writings are

¹Ellen G. White, “Christ Our Hope,” *Signs of the Times*, 24 August 1891, 269.

²White, *Education*, 126.

³*Ibid.*, 124-125.

⁴*Ibid.*, 126.

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶White, *Desire of Ages*, 455-456.

“immeasurably superior” to any literature by human authors, when considered in their relation to the plan of salvation, they are “of infinitely wider scope, of infinitely greater value.”¹ Indeed, White emphasized: “the Bible contains all the principles that men need to understand in order to be fitted either for this life or for the life to come. And these principles may be understood by all.”² She furthermore claimed that the Bible was to be regarded as God’s revelation of eternal matters, “the things of most consequence for us to know.”³ The wisdom of this book, White declared, “is the wisdom of an infinite mind.”⁴

Summary

This chapter opened with White’s conviction that humanity’s greatest need was a moral regeneration, the restoration of the image of God in which human beings were created. It was a far deeper understanding of mankind’s predicament, and a much broader vision of its future than envisioned by Herbert Spencer, John Dewey, or the manual and vocational movements of White’s time. All agreed that education played a vital role in meeting the needs of the human race and that the most important knowledge was at the center of that education. Again, White looked farther and higher. A powerful, spiritual knowledge, a correct knowledge of God, was of more worth than merely scientific knowledge or technical skills.

¹White, *Education*, 125.

²Ibid., 123.

³White, *Counsels to Parents*, 443.

⁴Ibid.

White held that the knowledge of God was a revealed knowledge through Christ, infinite and measureless, but most importantly, powerful. The knowledge of God, especially the knowledge of His character of infinite love demonstrated in the sacrifice of Christ, would draw men and women to His salvation. This love of God was demonstrated in His acts of creation and His care for His creation; in creating human beings in His image as free, moral agents; in His moral laws and government of the universe; and in lavishing beauty on all His creation, not the least the beauty of His own character in the lives of those who would desire it.

The chapter closed with White's concepts of truth and knowledge in general and how those related to the knowledge of God and His authoritative revelation in the Scriptures. White based her concepts of truth and knowledge on the Scriptures. She held that the Scriptures were the standard of truth divinely inspired by God. Truth was of God, divine, eternal, infinite, and immutable. It was this truth White was interested in for the eternal welfare of human beings.

Ellen White recognized the importance of theoretical knowledge, but only as applied by the Holy Spirit to the heart and practiced in the daily life. White encouraged practical knowledge for everyday living as well as knowledge derived from experiences. These were of the utmost importance in spiritual matters, and it was in this arena that White warned against speculative knowledge regarding God, His nature, attributes, and prerogatives. The only safety, White maintained, was in submitting to the authority of the word of God, the Scriptures, and accepting wholeheartedly the truth and knowledge of God for the restoration of the image of God in the human soul.

This chapter has explored Ellen White's philosophical ideas focusing on epistemological concepts. Her concepts of truth and knowledge and especially the knowledge she considered of greatest importance, namely, the knowledge of God, are important foundations for her aims of education. "In the knowledge of God," White stated, "all true knowledge and real development have their source."¹

On the basis of White's world view and philosophical concepts, especially the epistemological ones, her educational ideas will now be explored in chapter 4.

¹White, *Education*, 14.

CHAPTER IV

AIMS OF EDUCATION

Introduction

The aims of education are, by their very nature, normative, thus making education a purposeful and deliberate enterprise. Not only do they give direction to the educational process, they also motivate and provide criteria for evaluating the educational program. Thus, aims of education are of primary importance. But who should set those aims?

Since education is undertaken by and for individuals and their society, logically the norms of society should establish the aims of education.¹ John S. Brubacher explored several ideas of how society might determine these aims: by a historical analysis of social institutions; a sociological analysis of current life; a comparative analysis of children and adults, noting children's mistakes and errors to be corrected through education; by job analyses of various adult occupations for which education should provide preparation; or by psychological studies of the nature of human beings indicating the aims of education?²

No matter the methodology used, the result will be the discovery and description of what individuals and society do in fact value and desire, not necessarily what they

¹Brubacher, 95.

²Ibid., 95-97.

ought to desire and value. Fact-finding disciplines such as sociology and history can describe, but not prescribe.¹ Nations, societies, and individuals do not necessarily at all times agree on what ought to be desired. They follow philosophers, dictators, charismatic leaders, heroes, or their own personal convictions and desires. The history of mankind does not appear to support the acceptance of an inherently compelling and authoritative compass to guide in the selection of the ultimate aims of life or education.

Is there, then, an authoritative source of educational aims? Those who believe in a Creator, the ultimate reality and source of all things, would look to this Creator as the source of education and its aims.

The Source of Education and Educational Aims

In her writings, White maintained that the ultimate source of all, the Creator, must be the ultimate source of both education and its aims. Quoting Scripture, Ellen White stated that God, “the Infinite One,” is the source of true education. It is He, in whom “are hid all the treasures of wisdom,” who “hath counsel and understanding.”² More specifically, White stated that “in a knowledge of God all true knowledge and real development have their source.”³

White’s description of the practical sources of Jesus’ own education is significant as she claimed that Jesus followed what she called “the divine plan of education.” Ellen

¹Ibid.

²White, *Education*, 13.

³Ibid., 14.

White pointed out four concrete “Heaven-appointed sources” of education: useful work, the study of the Scriptures, the study of nature, and experiences of life. She called them “God’s lesson books, full of instruction to all who bring to them the willing hand, the seeing eye, and the understanding heart.”¹ These would provide for physical development, health, and strength as well as knowledge of a trade or profession securing one’s livelihood. They would also encourage mental and spiritual knowledge, especially a knowledge of God both from Scripture and nature, as well as knowledge of God’s creation; and finally, social development and a knowledge of God through His dealings with the human family, including their own individual personal experiences.

Though it does not ignore practical preparation for life, religious education ultimately concerns itself with God’s purpose in creating human beings, their nature and destiny. Very likely this is what White had in mind when she maintained that we could not understand what is comprehended in the educational work unless we considered the following four areas: First, “the nature of man,” second, “the purpose of God in creating him,” third, “the change in man’s condition through the coming in of a knowledge of evil,” and finally, “God’s plan for still fulfilling His glorious purpose in the education of the human race.”² In short, these areas involve the nature of human beings, both the original nature and the sinful nature; and God’s purpose in creating humans, both the original purpose and the redemptive purpose. To accomplish the ultimate aims of education, these four areas must be taken into account. The same applies to intermediate

¹Ibid., 77.

²Ibid., 14-15.

and short-term goals which should be in harmony with, and contribute to, God's ultimate plans and purposes for the human race.

The discussion will now turn to the ultimate aims of education. They are, in the words of White, "higher than the highest human thought can reach."¹

The Ultimate Aims of Education

White believed that the ultimate aims of education had to do with the nature of human beings and God's purpose in creating them. As noted earlier, White held that the first parents of the human race were created in the image of God, with freedom of choice. In their physical, mental, and spiritual nature, they bore "a likeness to . . . [their] Maker."² Furthermore, White believed it was the God's purpose "that the longer man lived the more fully he should reveal this image—the more fully reflect the glory of the Creator."³ This purpose, however, was interrupted. White maintained that "while God was seeking man's good, Satan was seeking his ruin."⁴ When tested, Adam and Eve "chose to listen to the deceiver rather than to Him who is Truth, who alone has understanding."⁵ They became transgressors through "distrust of God's goodness, disbelief of His word, and

¹Ibid., 18.

²Ibid., 15.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., 24.

⁵Ibid., 25.

rejection of His authority,”¹ thereby acquiring a sinful, fallen nature. But God did not abandon His purpose in creating the human race. White held that God’s plan was to redeem and restore. She stated it in these words: “To restore in man the image of his Maker, to bring him back to the perfection in which he was created, to promote the development of body, mind and soul, that the divine purpose in his creation might be realized—this was to be the work of redemption. This is the object of education, the great object of life.”²

The context in which this humanly impossible aim of education is given, is soteriological. Attaining this aim, White noted, is “the work of redemption.” Therefore, White claimed, “in the highest sense the work of education and the work of redemption are one.”³ It follows, then, that when White spoke of education “in the highest sense,” she was speaking of religious, redemptive education, specifically Christian education.

This, however, does not mean that White dismissed education in the common sense of the word. Aside from what she referred to as religious education, White spoke of physical, mental, and moral education,⁴ as well as what she called “useful branches of education,”⁵ by which she meant education in matters of healthful living, household duties, and other practical lines of work. When referring to religious education she

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., 15-16.

³Ibid., 15-16, 30.

⁴White, *Testimonies*, 3:132.

⁵Ibid., 2:537.

mostly meant thorough knowledge of the Scriptures,¹ devotional time in the home,² and individual religious experience and communion with God.³ She made a clear distinction between religious education and formal education in the schools when, in 1863, she stated that “some parents have failed to give their children a religious education and have also neglected their school education.”⁴ Many years later, in her diary, November 22, 1889, after the establishment of her church’s college in Battle Creek, White raised this question: “Are we, as Seventh-day Adventists, doing what we should do in combining religious education—which is science—with the education of science in our schools?”⁵ Later, in the same diary entry, she expressed her approval of the youth reaching “the highest standards in intellectual acquirements” as long as it was “balanced by the sanctification of the Holy Spirit.” She further stated that “the fear and knowledge of God are to be combined with all their education.”⁶ It is important to recognize that, generally, when White used the term education without qualifying it, she was speaking of comprehensive education which included both the common understanding of education and also the education of “a broader scope,” and “a higher aim,” by which she meant

¹Ellen G. White, “The Sabbath School,” *Review and Herald*, 8 August 1878, 1.

²White, *Testimonies*, 1:397.

³White, *Testimonies to Ministers*, 486.

⁴White, *Testimonies*, 1:398.

⁵White, *Manuscript Releases*, 11:109.

⁶*Ibid.*, 110.

redemptive education, the restoration of the image of God in the human being.¹

White believed that conversion was fundamental to redemptive education. For the image of God to be restored in a human being, that person must first experience conversion, must first believe in Christ. Then the restoring of God's image in the soul could begin.² White exhorted teachers to consider the conversion of their students as all-important so "that they may have a new heart and life,"³ that is, God's image restored in the soul. Conversion, in the biblical sense, therefore, is a *primary* aim of education, a pre-requisite for the *ultimate temporal* aim of restoring in the human being the image of God, "that the divine purpose in his creation might be realized."⁴ This restoration of the image of God involved, White believed, the cooperation of the human being in the "development of body, mind and soul."⁵ She made it clear that the highest development of every power, the physical, the mental, and the spiritual, results from loving God with all one's strength, mind and heart.⁶ For this to happen a wholehearted conversion is an

¹White, *Education*, 13-16; see also idem, *Special Testimonies on Education* (n.p., 1897; reprint, Payson, AZ: Leaves-of-Autumn Books, 1978), 240, where White defined "the true philosophy of education" in the form of a question: "What shall I do to be saved?"

²White, *Fundamentals*, 429-430. In *The Great Controversy*, White stated that "the work of sanctification is progressive. When in conversion the sinner finds peace with God through the blood of the atonement, the Christian life has but just begun" (470).

³White, *Fundamentals*, 436.

⁴White, *Education*, 15-16.

⁵Ibid., 16.

⁶Ibid.

indispensable pre-requisite, that is to say, this work of development and restoration cannot take place in an unconverted person.

The restored image of God in the soul, which includes the physical, mental, and moral powers harmoniously developed, is a temporal aim in the sense that it is the ultimate aim in this life for human beings to “regain their first perfection, and stand complete in Christ.”¹ This ultimate temporal aim is, in turn, a pre-requisite for attaining the *ultimate eternal* aim to “more fully reflect the glory of the Creator,” throughout eternity.² The term “more fully” implies further development. Speaking of Adam, created in the image of God, “in the glory of sinless manhood,” White stated that “all his faculties were capable of development; their capacity and vigor were continually to increase.”³ White then spoke of vast fields of research, the mysteries of God’s visible creation, and a personal communion with the Creator, and throughout eternity human beings “would have continued to gain new treasures of knowledge, to discover fresh springs of happiness, and to obtain clearer and yet clearer conceptions of the wisdom, the power, and the love of God, . . . more and more fully have reflected the Creator’s glory.”⁴

The very essence of the image of God is the moral image of God, that is, His character.⁵ And this character is always revealed and expressed in service. White stated

¹White, *Education*, 13; see also idem, *Special Testimonies on Education*, 21.

²White, *Education*, 13, 15.

³Ibid., 14-15.

⁴Ibid., 15.

⁵Ibid., 18.

that in Jesus we can see “that it is the glory of our God to give,” to minister and to serve; it is “the law of life for the universe . . . representing the character of the great Giver.”¹

Such a character, a Christ-like character, White saw as the center of the ultimate aim of education. It is the very likeness of God. She expressed it in these words: “As the perfection of His character is dwelt upon, the mind is renewed, and the soul is re-created in the image of God. What education can be higher than this? . . . Higher than the highest human thought can reach is God’s ideal for His children. Godliness—godlikeness—is the goal to be reached.”²

White did not see these aims of education as static or finite. She did not believe that there would be a time when there was nothing more to do. These aims are dynamic, ever presenting higher ground. White stated that the education guided by those aims was “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.”³ If this education lasts as long as White claimed, namely, “the whole period of existence possible to man,”⁴ then, in the case of redeemed individuals, it means that education will continue throughout eternity.⁵

These, then, are the primary and the ultimate aims of education: the conversion of

¹White, *Desire of Ages*, 21.

²White, *Education*, 18

³Ibid., 19.

⁴Ibid., 13.

⁵Ibid.

the individual¹ and the restoration of the image of God in the human being, including the development of all the powers of the individual in the preparation for service in this life and in the life to come so that God's purpose in creating human beings may still be fulfilled. This White declared to be "the object of education, the great object of life."² The education which pursues these aims is, in its truest sense, also the work of redemption leading the student throughout eternity to reflect more fully the image of God.

It is appropriate now to take a closer look at these aims. A cornerstone of Ellen White's philosophy of education is found in her work *Education*. At the outset she presented a comprehensive yet concise definition of true education which described the scope and the aim of education. A concise statement of what has been discussed above reads as follows:

True education means more than the pursual of a certain course of study. It means more than a preparation for the life that now is. It 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. It prepares the student for the joy of service in this world and for the higher joy of wider service in the world to come.³

Here White acknowledged that education does include the study of certain disciplines. Having granted that a significant aim of education is preparation for this life, White rejected all narrow definitions. Not only did she advocate a holistic education, the

¹This concept will be discussed in the next section.

²Ibid., 16.

³Ibid., 13.

development of all the powers of the human being, but she saw it as a life-long enterprise and thus an education in the broadest sense. She did not limit education to a school setting, but rather advocated its continuation by all proper means available at any and all stages of life. And this continuous development of all the powers, an important aim in itself, facilitates another equally important aim, namely, joyful service not only in the life that now is but also in the world to come. For all of this to take place in a manner acceptable to God, the education must be a religious, a redemptive education. It means that the student must experience a new birth, also referred to by White as a conversion.¹

Conversion

Throughout her writings White speaks of conversion, its evidences, and its fruits. In a chapter entitled “Modern Revivals,” in her book *The Great Controversy*, White contrasted some popular revivals of her time with what she called “manifestations of divine grace which in earlier days followed the labors of God’s servants.” In this chapter White presented a number of the characteristics of a true conversion, as contrasted with superficial or false conversion.²

The first evidence of a conversion taking place, in White’s view, is a deep conviction of sin, righteousness, and judgment to come. With faith and humility sinners accept the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, His grace, the forgiveness of their sins, and they experience a complete change in the direction of their lives. As White described it,

¹White, *Great Controversy*, 467.

²Ibid., 461-478.

“the things they once hated they now loved, and the things they once loved they hated. The proud and self-assertive became meek and lowly of heart. The vain and supercilious became serious and unobtrusive. The profane became reverent, the drunken sober, and the profligate pure.”¹

As she developed the contrast between modern revivals and genuine conversion, White pointed out that those who are truly converted heed the warnings of God’s word, deny self, and turn away from the world. This turning around or conversion White also referred to as a new birth, which she called a “mighty change” in the life of the sinner. This change, already described above, White saw as the heart of the sinner being brought into harmony with God, “as it is brought into accord with His law.” Here she defined conversion and the new birth as it relates to God’s law. When sinners pass from sin to holiness they are passing, in the words of White, “from transgression and rebellion to obedience and loyalty.”² Thus she saw conversion as a crucial component in the great controversy between God and Satan regarding God’s law and character. The human being is switching sides, transferring his or her loyalty from Satan to God. It is vital for any teacher and parent to understand this radical change in a student’s life.

In an article on genuine conversion, White wrote in one paragraph a clear and concise definition and description of genuine conversion:

¹Ibid., 462.

²Ibid., 468. See also a significant article on conversion in *The Youth’s Instructor*, 26 September 1901, entitled “A New Heart Also Will I Give You.” The same article appears also in Ellen G. White, *Messages to Young People*, (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing, 1930), 71-74.

Conversion is a change of heart, a turning from unrighteousness to righteousness. Relying upon the merits of Christ, exercising true faith in Him, the repentant sinner receives pardon for sin. As he ceases to do evil and learns to do well, he grows in grace and in the knowledge of God. He sees that in order to follow Jesus he must separate from the world . . . fighting against natural inclinations and selfish desires and bringing the will into subjection to the will of Christ. Daily he seeks the Lord for grace. . . . Self once reigned in his heart, and worldly pleasure was his delight. Now self is dethroned and God reigns supreme. His life reveals the fruit of righteousness. The sins he once loved he now hates. Firmly and resolutely he follows in the path of holiness. This is genuine conversion.¹

Finally, White emphasized several times that conversion must be maintained by daily experiences in the spiritual life, by experiencing conversion every day.² “There is,” she claimed, “a positive necessity for a daily conversion to God, a new, deep, and daily experience in the religious life.”³

White stressed, however, that the Christian life involved more than conversion. In plain words she asserted: “Let no one suppose that conversion is the beginning and end of the Christian life. There is a science of Christianity to be mastered. There is to be growth in grace, that is constant progress and improvement. The mind is to be disciplined, trained, educated . . . to do service for God.”⁴ White dwelt at length on this subject under the heading “The Necessity of Doing Our Best.” Not being a systematic philosopher or an educational theoretician, she spoke of several practical things: development and cultivation of the higher and nobler powers of the mind for service; temptations, conflicts,

¹Ellen G. White, “Genuine Conversion,” *Review and Herald*, 7 July 1904, 7.

²White, *Testimonies*, 2:505

³*Ibid.*, 4:559.

⁴Ellen G. White, *Christian Education* (Battle Creek, MI: International Tract Society, 1893), 122.

and victories over sin; growth in grace and progress in the divine life; and the work given to human beings of preparation for eternal life.¹ Conversion was the daily foundation of this “constant progress” and it ties into the lifelong process of sanctification, the restoration of the image of God in the soul.

Restoration of the Image of God

Once conversion takes place, education continues with restoration of the image of God. It is to be restored in the whole being—the body, the mind, as well as the soul.² In White’s mind this restoration of the image of God in the human being was a daily, continuous process of sanctification, which White maintained was the work of a lifetime.³ Speaking at the General Conference Session of the Seventh-day Adventist Church held in Battle Creek, Michigan, in April of 1901, White indicated that the sanctification “of body, soul, and spirit” was the same as the restoration of the moral image of God in the human being and included the development of the “physical, mental, and moral capabilities.”⁴ Eleven years later, at the age of 85, White wrote an article entitled “Changed into His Image” where, speaking of Enoch, she stated that “his [Enoch’s] association with Christ day by day transformed him into the image of him with whom he was so intimately connected. Day by day he was growing away from his own way into Christ’s way, the

¹Ibid.

²White, *Education*, 16.

³White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 560. See also idem, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 65.

⁴Ellen G. White, “Notes from General Conference,” *Review and Herald*, 30 April 1901, 281.

heavenly, the divine, in his thoughts and feelings. . . . This,” she declared, “is genuine sanctification.”¹ The restoration of the image of God in the human soul, like sanctification, therefore, is a daily, continuous process. It cannot take place without a genuine conversion.

Ellen White mentioned several aspects of the image of God such as dignity, individuality, freedom of choice, and a character of love. These will now be explored briefly.

The Image of God—Freedom of Choice

In her writings White frequently used the term “free moral agents” to refer to human beings created in the image of God, with freedom of choice. They were intelligent beings endowed “with high intellectual powers,”² free to obey God’s will or transgress His law. Otherwise they would be mere automatons and, therefore, unworthy of the image of God in which they were created.

Among the intellectual powers is what White called “the reasoning power” given to human beings by the Creator so that they might understand the requirements of God’s law. He also gave them a conscience that they might “feel the guilt of transgression and the peace and joy of obedience.”³ Thus reason and conscience work together, enabling

¹Ellen G. White, “Changed into His Image,” *Review and Herald*, 5 December 1912, 3.

²White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 49.

³Ellen G. White, “The Life of John an Illustration of True Sanctification,” *Review and Herald*, 1 March 1881, 129.

the human being to realize the sacred claims of God's law. These and all other powers and faculties of the mind, White maintained, reflected the image of God.¹ The human mind itself, with its powers in moral matters freely to choose between right and wrong, was created in the image of God.² He made human beings "free moral agents," White stated, "capable of appreciating the wisdom and benevolence of His character and the justice of His requirements, and with full liberty to yield or to withhold obedience."³

This liberty, this freedom of choice, gave the human person possibilities that otherwise would not have been there, the most important of which was the development of character. Without a moral character there would be no moral or spiritual image of God in the human being. It is precisely, in the words of White, when "the attributes of the character of Christ are imparted" to the human soul that "the image of the Divine begins to shine forth."⁴ The relationship between exercising one's freedom of choice and developing a moral character is such that one does not exist without the other. A moral character is developed through obeying or disobeying the will of God, which is possible only through exercising one's freedom of choice. Conversely, the actions of obedience or disobedience will necessarily result in the development of a moral character. According to Ellen White, without this freedom to obey or disobey, that is, "without freedom of

¹Ellen G. White, "Marriages, Wise and Unwise," *Youth's Instructor*, 10 August 1899, 437.

²White, "The Character of the Law of God," 225.

³Ibid., 48.

⁴White, *Desire of Ages*, 312.

choice . . . there could have been no development of character.”¹

White emphasized the importance of the power of the will required to exercise the freedom of choice. She called it “the governing power in the nature of man, the power of decision, or choice,” a gift from God to “every human being possessed of reason,” a power to choose what is right, to choose to obey God, to choose by God’s help to form a character of honesty and rectitude, and to live a useful life.² In the freedom and power of choice lie some of the greatest possibilities and responsibilities of education, and they impact directly the ultimate aim of education, which is the restoration of the image of God in the human soul.

The Image of God–Dignity

White pointed out that human beings owe their dignity to the dignity of God, because they are created in His image. Christ, who is “equal with God in . . . dignity,”³ discerned, White stated, “dignity in every soul, because of the image of God which it bears.”⁴

Exploring this subject, “the dignity of . . . origin” seems a proper place to start. White rejected the ideas that human beings evolved slowly from lower forms of life.

¹White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 49.

²White, *Education*, 289.

³Ellen G. White, “Christ Our Complete Salvation,” *Signs of the Times*, 30 May 1895, 328.

⁴Ellen G. White, “The Mother’s Work,” *Review and Herald*, 15 September 1891, 561.

These ideas, White held, served to “degrade man and defraud him of the dignity of his origin.” God created the human being in His own image. Although formed from the dust of the ground, “Adam was,” White declared, “the son of God.”¹

In addition to the mere fact of origin, White stated that in the beginning the parents of the human race were “invested with dignity,”² physical, mental, and moral, of which the chief constituents were self-control and what White referred to as a “God-given manhood.” By “God-given manhood” White meant nobility, “soundness of mind and body,” freedom “from the bondage of any appetite or passion.”³ Possibly White’s best explanation of what a “God-given manhood” meant is given in the context of restoring in the human being God’s moral image. That restoration could not happen without the cooperation of humans in keeping their bodies healthy. “He who cooperates with God,” White stated, “in the work of keeping this wonderful machinery in order, who consecrates all his powers to God, seeking intelligently to obey the laws of nature, stands in his God-given manhood, and is recorded in the books of heaven as *a man*,”⁴ that is, human.

Mental and moral dignity were evident in elevated and ennobled thoughts and a

¹White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 45.

²Ellen G. White and James White, *Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene* (Battle Creek, MI: Good Health Publishing, 1890), 146.

³White, *Counsels of Health*, 323.

⁴Ellen G. White, “Co-operation,” *Review and Herald*, 28 May 1908, 8. In White’s time the masculine form of the personal pronoun commonly referred to mankind, inclusive of men and women. White, however, quite often spoke of womanhood, and for that matter of childhood, boyhood, and girlhood. See, e.g., White, *The Adventist Home*, 288.

purified heart while physical dignity radiated physical strength, health, and beauty.¹ All of this involved self-control. Much of this dignity, however, was lost when humanity sinned, abandoning their self-control. Through perverting the appetite and exciting and strengthening the passions, Satan had, in the words of White, “defaced and almost obliterated the image of God in man. His physical and moral dignity were in so great a degree destroyed, that he bore but a faint resemblance in character and noble perfection of form to dignified Adam in Eden.”²

In Ellen White’s view, when human beings have been restored to the dignity of their origin, to being sons and daughters of God, they will have reached the highest dignity possible. Quoting 1 John 3:1 (“Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God”), White declared: “It is not possible for humanity to rise to a higher dignity than is here implied.”³ This elevation of finite human beings to fellowship with God, White maintained, is possible only through Christ, His merits and power.⁴ This dignity bestowed by Christ is in harmony with His

¹White and White, 146. A concise description by White of what might well constitute physical dignity may be found in the following portrait of Daniel and his three Hebrew friends at the court of Babylon: “In physical strength and beauty . . . they stood unrivaled. The erect form, the firm, elastic step, the fair countenance, the undimmed senses, the untainted breath—all were so many certificates of good habits, insignia of the nobility with which nature honors those who are obedient to her laws.” White, *Prophets and Kings*, 485.

²Ellen G. White, “The Temptation of Christ,” *Review and Herald*, 28 July 1874, 51.

³Ellen G. White, “Sanctification,” *Review and Herald*, 18 January 1881, 33.

⁴*Ibid.*

divine character of meekness, gentleness, and sympathy. “A possession of the gentleness of Christ,” White declared, “means the possession of true dignity.”¹ It is the opposite of worldly dignity inspired by pride of possessions and power. White held that sons and daughters of God “should have a conscious dignity of character, in which pride and self-importance have no part.”²

Integral to the aim and effort of true Christian education, therefore, is the cooperation with Christ in the plan of salvation,³ restoring in human beings the image of God, of which true Christian dignity is an important part. White believed that Christ meant to give the human being nobility and dignity by the sanctifying power of the truth,⁴ a belief which has clear implications for Christian education. Biblical truth must occupy a central position in the curriculum.

The father of the human race, Adam, possessed the dignity of divine origin, as well as the physical, mental, and moral dignity invested in him at his creation. This dignity God intends to restore, not just in Adam, but in the human race. It is part of the great controversy between truth and error; it is part of the plan of redemption; it is part of Christian education, the aim of which is the restoration of God’s image in the human being.

¹Ellen G. White, “Blessed Are the Meek,” *Signs of the Times*, 22 August 1895, 4.

²Ellen G. White, “Nothing Is Hidden,” *Review and Herald*, 27 March 1888, 194.

³White, *Education*, 29.

⁴Ellen G. White, “Christ’s Sacrifice for Us,” *Signs of the Times*, 24 September 1902, 2.

The Image of God—Individuality

White emphasized individuality as another aspect of the image of God in which human beings were created. She saw it as a powerful attribute similar to that of the Creator, and involving independent, creative and clear thinking, planning and acting, directing enterprises, accepting responsibilities, and demonstrating moral courage and leadership.¹ The mind, will, judgment, and conscience constitute the heart of this power, the individuality of a person.² In the writings of White, individuality is essentially an independent mind, that is, independent of any other human being's control, but intelligently and willingly, not blindly, subject to the will of God.³ The mind is free to be creative and original, yet never out of harmony with God, His character and will.

White maintained that the will was the crucial instrument for preserving a person's God-given individuality. The will governs all the powers of the individual and, rightly directed, is expressed in firmness and decision, that is to say, in independent action guided by reason and firm principle. Though this process develops self-reliance and self-control, it does not happen naturally. The will must be trained not to do the bidding of the lower nature or the natural inclinations of sinful human beings, but "to obey the dictates of reason and conscience."⁴ This requires the pre-requisite to the

¹Ibid., 17-18.

²White, *Adventist Home*, 47; idem, *Testimonies*, 3:134.

³White, *Testimonies*, 3:134, 144, 160.

⁴Ellen G. White, "Thoughts on Education," *Review and Herald*, 10 January 1882, 17.

restoration of the image of God, conversion—a surrender to God and the impartation of the “new heart.”

Therefore, the reason and conscience that White approved of in her writings are sanctified reason and conscience enlightened by the Holy Spirit. She spoke of “the kingly power of sanctified reason, controlled by grace,”¹ and “surrendered wholly to God.”² Ever mindful of the power of the truth in the Bible, White pointed to Scripture as a guide for reason and conscience. “With your Bibles open before you,” she advised, “consult sanctified reason and a good conscience.”³ When the image of God in the human soul is at stake, reason and conscience, if not sanctified, are unreliable. Therefore, it is imperative that the will obey sanctified reason and enlightened conscience. “It is not enough,” White stated, “that man follows the dictates of conscience. The mind must be enlightened as to what is God’s will, and then an enlightened conscience will be an enlightened, intelligent will.”⁴ Individuality, the ability to think and to act,⁵ will then be exercised in harmony with the will of God.

White held that a person’s individuality, which she also referred to as a person’s

¹Ellen G. White, “Ruling the Spirit,” *Review and Herald*, 31 October 1907, 8.

²White, *Testimonies*, 7:214.

³Ellen G. White, “Seek First the Kingdom of God,” *Review and Herald*, 7 February 1893, 81.

⁴White, *Manuscript Releases*, 17:168 (MS 33, 1891).

⁵White, *Education*, 17.

identity, was distinct and separate from that of all others.¹ No one's mind was to be subjected to another person's will and domination. White was especially concerned about such "submerging" of the individuality of children and wives into that of their teachers and husbands, respectively.² Individuality was to be sacredly guarded and preserved as part of the image of God in which men and women were created, for "God," stated White, "has given each one, men and women, an identity, an individuality, that they must act in the fear of God for themselves."³ Not only did White call for each person to sacredly guard his or her individuality, she also called for each to respect the individuality of mind and conscience of fellow human beings.⁴

The Image of God—Character of Love

Scriptures declare that God is love and so did White. God's nature, His law, and His character are love.⁵ White maintained that both nature and God's word testify that

¹White, *Testimonies to Ministers*, 422-423. See also idem, *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, 56.

²White, "Thoughts on Education," 17; idem, *Testimonies*, 7:45.

³Ellen G. White, *Testimonies on Sexual Behavior, Adultery, and Divorce* (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1980), 25.

⁴Ellen G. White, "Right Relations in the Work of God," The Paulson Collection of Ellen G. White Letters, n.d. (1985), 398. Center for Adventist Research, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

⁵See 1 John 4:16; "'God is love.' 1 John 4:16. His nature, His law, is love. It ever has been; it ever will be." White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 33; "God is love, and His law is love." Idem, *Great Controversy*, 467.

God is love.¹ This love of God, therefore, is fundamental to the image of God.

The moral image of God is His character as revealed in the character of Christ.² All the glorious attributes of God, according to White, are expressed in Christ's character.³ This image of God was perfectly revealed in Christ, who was the express image of God,⁴ and He revealed it by "presenting the love of God in its exhaustless fulness."⁵

God's character of love revealed in Christ is a constant theme in White's writings. In one instance she described it in these words: "Tender, compassionate, sympathetic, ever considerate of others, He [Christ] represented the character of God, and was constantly engaged in service for God and man."⁶ Love, White stated, "cannot live without action."⁷

Christ's constant ministry of love culminated on the cross, the center of the revelation of God's love for mankind. The fulness of this love surpasses anything the human mind can grasp. In the words of White, "its full significance tongue cannot utter,

¹White, *Steps to Christ*, 9-15; idem, *Great Controversy*, 678.

²Ellen G. White, "Special Instruction Relating to the Review and Herald Office, and the Work in Battle Creek," Pamphlet PH080 (1886), 27. Center for Adventist Research, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

³White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 115.

⁴Ibid.

⁵White, *Desire of Ages*, 205.

⁶White, *Ministry of Healing*, 423.

⁷White, *Testimonies*, 2:135.

pen cannot portray, the mind of man cannot comprehend.”¹ The cross reveals the principle of God’s character which is, White maintained, “the principle of self-sacrificing love.”² In the light of her emphasis on the knowledge of God, White insisted that one has to accept this principle in one’s own life in order to know God.³ Thus, the experiential acceptance of the principle of self-sacrificing love is necessary in order to gain a knowledge of God as revealed in Christ which, in turn, is part of the plan of salvation. Therefore, when this knowledge is accepted and received, it will transform the character and “re-create the soul in the image of God. It will impart to the whole being a spiritual power that is divine.”⁴

These concepts have profound implications for the educational enterprise and the attainment of the ultimate aim of education. The teacher must cooperate with heavenly agencies in directing the students to look at Christ and Him crucified, encouraging them to accept His principle of self-sacrifice in their own lives. That way the students will come to know who God is in reality. Then the transformation and recreation of the soul in the image of God will take place, and the human being will reflect the glory of God.⁵

White equated God’s glory with His character.⁶ “The glory of the attributes of

¹White, *Ministry of Healing*, 423

²White, *Mount of Blessing*, 25.

³Ibid.

⁴White, *Ministry of Healing*, 425.

⁵White, *Education*, 15.

⁶White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 576. See also idem, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 414.

God,” White claimed, “is expressed in His character.”¹ Thus, when she stated that human beings were “endowed with high mental and spiritual gifts,” and that “every faculty of mind and soul reflected the Creator’s glory,”² it was God’s character that was reflected. And that character is always expressed in ministry, in service.³

An inseparable part of the ultimate aims of education of restoring in the human being the image of God is what White termed “the development of body, mind, and soul,” or “the harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers.”⁴ The discussion will now turn to Ellen White’s ideas in this realm.

The Development of All the Powers

Harmonious Development

In 1872, Ellen White wrote her first major treatise on education. It was published as Testimony no. 22.⁵ Subsequent writings on education were largely an amplification of the fundamental principles presented in “Proper Education,” as this testimony was entitled. The following discussion is primarily based on “Proper Education” with input from her other writings.

¹White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 115.

²White, *Education*, 20.

³Christ’s ministry was a revelation of God’s glory. In *Prophets and Kings*, White stated that “in word and in deed the Messiah, during His earthly ministry, was to reveal to mankind the glory of God, the Father. Every act of His life, every word spoken, every miracle wrought, was to make known to fallen humanity the infinite love of God” (696).

⁴White, *Education*, 16, 13.

⁵White, *Testimonies*, 3:131-160.

In her writings on education, White repeatedly emphasized the need for the harmonious development of all the powers of the individual. She did however recognize individual differences, that “some are qualified to exercise greater intellectual strength than others, while others are inclined to love and enjoy physical labor.”¹ Still, she insisted that “moral, intellectual, and physical culture should be combined in order to have well-developed, well-balanced men and women.”² In order to achieve this balance it was necessary that individuals should work on their weaknesses without neglecting their strengths. They should, White emphasized, “seek to improve where they are deficient,” and the reason given was “that they may present to God their entire being, a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to Him, which is their reasonable service.”³

In her concern for the balance between the mental and the physical White stated that “a sound body is required for a sound intellect.” Furthermore, White made it clear that the mind should rule the body, and the body should serve the mind.⁴ “The mind is the capital of the body,” she stated, and “every organ of the body was made to be servant to the mind.”⁵

The same concern for a holistic, harmonious, and balanced education was evident

¹Ibid., 3:157.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴White, *Ministry of Healing*, 399: “The faculties of the mind, as the higher powers, are to rule the kingdom of the body.”

⁵White, *Testimonies*, 3:136.

when White spoke about the qualifications of the teacher of children and youth; and she saw this quality as part of true Christianity. She maintained that a sincere Christian teacher would “feel the necessity of having an equal interest in the physical, mental, moral, and spiritual education of his scholars.”¹ In fact, White claimed that “the highest development of every power” is an integral part of the restoration of the image of God in the human being. This image is to be restored “in the whole being—the body, the mind, as well as the soul.”² Therefore, as White saw it, the development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers is an integral part of the ultimate aims of education.³

The Mental Powers

At the outset in her discussion of what she termed proper education, Ellen White directed her attention to the “capital of the body,” the mind. She was concerned with the most essential needs of the mind, and how to “direct the developing intellect, the growing thoughts and feelings of youth.”⁴ One of the first needs of the mind, according to White, was for it to be taught self-control, and to rule the human being. More specifically, the “intelligent will” should control all the power of the human being. The aim was for the youth to have “moral energy and individual responsibility,” and be able to “move from reason and principle,” that is, think, act, and decide for themselves, rather than be

¹Ibid., 3:135.

²White, *Education*, 16.

³Ibid., 13.

⁴Ibid., 3:131.

controlled by another's mind. White maintained that for their minds to be properly developed and strengthened, children should be "thrown upon their own judgment as fast and as far as practicable." Thus, they will have confidence in their own judgment, and in "having an opinion of their own." This would give them "stability of character."¹

However, this did not mean that the young should not listen to their parents and teachers. They should be taught "to respect experienced judgment and to be guided by their parents and teachers," not blindly, but in such a way that they could "see the propriety of heeding their counsel." Such a balanced way of directing the young to think and act for themselves, the opposite of bringing them "into subjection by force or through fear," would give them "growth of thought, feelings of self-respect, and confidence in their own ability to perform."²

Impressing the minds of young children with lessons from nature was another important educational aim for the development of the mind. Love for the beauty of nature (whether in scenery, flowers of various colors and forms, or any other attractive and delightful things in nature) was a means to lead the mind to the Creator and awaken in the hearts of the young "a love for their heavenly Father, who has manifested so great love for them."³

In her criticism of current educational practices, Ellen White touched upon several desirable aspects of the cultivation of the mind which she felt were rarely seen in her day.

¹Ibid., 3:132-133.

²Ibid., 3:133.

³Ibid., 3:137.

Among these were what she called “an inward love of thought”; “an ambition to acquire knowledge”; and “habits of reflection and investigation.” Also in short supply, White maintained, were “close reasoners and logical thinkers.”¹

Another concern of White’s was the permanence of early training and habits. She maintained that the habits formed in younger years would grow and strengthen as the years went by. She was especially troubled over the superficiality of her times. Instead of the mind ruling the body, appetite, passion, and love of pleasure controlled the mind, testifying to a lack of self-denial and self-control. Habits formed in youth would quite likely be seen in later years. Therefore, the minds of youth “should be carefully and tenderly trained in childhood.”²

In addition to these significant aspects of the developing mind, such as self-control and good mental habits, White pointed out an important quality of the human mind, namely, purposefulness. She held that God intended the mind to be active in usefulness and in accomplishing good in this life. She maintained that the minds of children needed to be impressed with the dangers of forming wrong habits and following inclination instead of being controlled by principle. If the minds were focused purposefully on usefulness and developing sound characters, “we should see a great change in society for the better,”³ White claimed. In the realm of spirituality White pointed out the “high and holy purpose” for which “God has given us our reasoning

¹Ibid., 3:142.

²Ibid., 3:143.

³Ibid., 3:147.

powers,” namely, “that we may grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”¹ The purposeful occupation of the mind ranges from the practical, useful betterment of society to intellectual and spiritual growth in knowledge.

Discussing the need of proper education for young men about to enter the work of evangelists, White stated: “Ignorance will not increase the humility or spirituality of any professed follower of Christ. The truths of the divine word can be best appreciated by an intellectual Christian. Christ can be best glorified by those who serve Him intelligently.”² And it was in this context that Ellen White spoke of education enabling students to use their God-given powers in a way that would best represent the religion of the Bible and promote the glory of God. This she declared to be “the great object of education.”³ In other words, while Ellen White strongly advocated the highest intellectual achievements, she affirmed that they could not be divorced from true religion. God, she declared, approves of “the highest culture of the mind,” of reaching “the highest point of intellectual greatness,” if it is “balanced by religious principle,” and “sanctified through the love and the fear of God.”⁴

The development of the mental powers has its source, White held, in a knowledge of God revealed in the physical, the mental, and the spiritual domain. When the mind is directed to investigation in any field sincerely seeking truth, it is, in the words of White,

¹Ellen G. White, “Self-Culture,” *Youth’s Instructor*, 17 August 1899, 446.

²White, *Testimonies*, 3:160.

³Ibid.

⁴Ellen G. White, “Christ an Educator,” *Review and Herald*, 21 June 1877, 193.

“brought into communion with the mind of God.” This communion facilitates the highest education, according to White, and it is “God’s own method of development.”¹ Having established these first principles of development early in her book *Education*, she presented the practical means of this development, namely, the Bible. After pointing out that it is a law established by God “that strength is acquired by effort,” and that “it is exercise that develops,” she stated that “in harmony with this law, God has provided in His word the means for mental and spiritual development.”² Further, White noted that “the great system of truth” in the Scriptures is not grasped by hasty or thoughtless reading, for many of the treasures of the Bible “lie far beneath the surface, and can be obtained only by diligent research and continuous effort.”³ Such was White’s regard for the Scriptures as means of mental development that, in her mind, nothing equaled it:

As . . . a stimulus to development, nothing else can equal the study of God’s word. As a means of intellectual training, the Bible is more effective than any other book, or all other books combined. The greatness of its themes, the dignified simplicity of its utterances, the beauty of its imagery, quicken and uplift the thoughts as nothing else can. No other study can impart such mental power as does the effort to grasp the stupendous truths of revelation. The mind thus brought in contact with the thoughts of the Infinite cannot but expand and strengthen.⁴

The discussion will now turn to White’s conception of the physical powers, the physical body, the servant of the mind. White considered a healthy body indispensable to a sound mind.

¹White, *Education*, 14.

²*Ibid.*, 123.

³*Ibid.*

⁴*Ibid.*, 124

The Physical Powers

Ellen White consistently argued that health is “a great treasure . . . the richest possession mortals can have” and that “the first and constant care of parents should be to see that their children have firm constitutions, that they may be sound men and women.”¹

Besides proper diet, the development of the physical powers, having a strong constitution, and enjoying good health, is accomplished through physical exercise, preferably in the form of useful labor. In fact, White maintained that “it is impossible to attain this object [of having firm constitutions] without physical exercise,” and that “it is impossible for us to enjoy health without labor.”²

Besides the obvious reason of physical health, Ellen White gave other reasons for her emphasis on physical exercise and physical labor: First, the body is “a servant to the mind,” and a sustained mental effort calls for a strong “physical constitution.”³ Daily, systematic labor as part of the education of young people would result in “elasticity of spirit and vigor of thought,” and the students would be able to “accomplish more mental labor in a given time than they could by study alone.”⁴ Second, White saw physical labor by students as a preventive measure. It would “balance a person and prevent the mind from being overworked.” By exercising the muscles the wearied brain would be

¹White, *Testimonies*, 3:150-151.

²Ibid., 3:151, 155.

³Ibid., 3:136-137.

⁴Ibid., 3:159.

relieved.¹ It would also prevent “an almost uncontrollable desire for change and exciting amusements,” resulting from enfeebled nerves caused by “a constant strain upon the brain while the muscles are inactive.” Third, physical exercise and labor are essential for “moral good.” White maintained that if children were to have “pure and virtuous characters they must have the discipline of well-regulated labor, which will bring into exercise all the muscles.”² The satisfaction of being useful and a help to others, she saw as a blessing. It would also prevent young men and women from acquiring “habits of indolence,” which in turn could lead to young men “lounging about stores, smoking, drinking, and playing cards,” and to young ladies wasting time on “novel and storybook reading,” building air-castles, “living in an unreal, an imaginary world.”³ Fourth, knowledge and thorough understanding of useful labor would not only be beneficial for the mind and the morals, but also for “future usefulness.” It would qualify the youth for “practical life.”⁴ When speaking of usefulness and the practical life, Ellen White had in mind agriculture, manufacture, common household duties, learning a trade, and having a knowledge of what she called “practical business life.”⁵ Thus, if they were taught to

¹Ibid., 3:152.

²Ibid., 3:151.

³Ibid., 3:151-152.

⁴Ibid., 3:150.

⁵Ibid., 3:153. In a testimony regarding the Australian Avondale School Farm, White gave a long list of what should be included in training in industrial lines. It is interesting to note that accounting heads the list: “The keeping of accounts, carpentry, and everything that is comprehended in farming. Preparation should also be made for teaching blacksmithing, painting, shoemaking, cooking, baking, laundering, mending,

work, the young people would not only be “prepared for any emergency,” but they would enjoy physical health and good morals “even if there is no necessity so far as want is concerned.”¹

Just as the body is to serve the mind, so the mind is to serve God. Indeed, “He must be served,” White claimed, “with the whole mind, heart, soul, and strength.”² Such undivided service, unreserved consecration, and wholeness in the service of God constitutes true holiness.³ This kind of dedication calls especially for the development of the spiritual powers of the human being. White’s concepts in that area will now be explored.

The Spiritual Powers

Quoting Solomon’s advice to “train up a child,” White stated that this meant “to direct, educate, and develop,” and included much more than “merely having a knowledge of books.” It included the whole spectrum of moral and spiritual values: “It takes in everything that is good, virtuous, righteous, and holy. It comprehends the practice of temperance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love to God and to one another.”⁴

Underlining the broad scope of this educational aim, she went on to declare that “in order _____
 typewriting, and printing.” Ibid., 6:182.

¹Ibid., 3:150-151.

²Ellen G. White, “The Little Things—No. 1,” *Youth’s Instructor*, 14 April 1898, 284.

³White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 48-49.

⁴White, *Testimonies*, 3:131-132.

to attain this object, the physical, mental, moral, and religious education of children must have attention.”¹

There was never any question in Ellen White’s mind which was of greater importance, the intellectual or the moral/spiritual development. In order to be useful in the world, children must have what White called “proper education,” which put moral and spiritual education above intellectual training. “Any effort,” she stated, “that exalts intellectual culture above moral training is misdirected.”² True education values character above intellectual acquirements. “The world does not so much need men of great intellect as of noble character. It needs men in whom ability is controlled by steadfast principle.”³ In fact, a true moral character is so important that White declared character building to be “the most important work ever entrusted to human beings.”⁴ The following is what she chose as a description of a true and noble character: “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.”⁵

Such a character, White declared, “is the result of self-discipline,” which she

¹Ibid., 3:132.

²Ibid., 3:142.

³White, *Education*, 225.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., 57.

explained as “the subjection of the lower to the higher nature.” And this is a purposeful self-discipline that involves the entire being. It is “the surrender of self for the service of love to God and man.”¹ Later in the same book discussing education and character, White stated that “the true foundation and pattern for character building” has always and everywhere been the same, namely, “the divine law, ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart; . . . and thy neighbor as thyself’ (Luke 10:27), the great principle made manifest in the character and life of our Saviour.”²

The fundamental elements of a noble character are self-denial and self-sacrifice for the good of others and the glory of God.³ Describing the lives of Joseph and Daniel of the Old Testament, Ellen White mentioned several character traits: In his childhood and youth “Joseph had been taught the love and fear of God. . . . He had gained strength of mind and firmness of principle.” On the way to bondage in Egypt, he “thrilled with the resolve to prove himself true—ever to act as became a subject of the king of heaven.” He “was steadfast,” he had “learned the lesson of obedience to duty,” he showed “faithfulness in every station, from the most lowly to the most exalted.” “Loyalty to God, faith in the Unseen, was Joseph’s anchor. In this lay the hiding of his power. ‘The arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob.’”⁴

Regarding Daniel, White stated that he “had been faithfully instructed in the

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., 228-229.

³White, *Testimonies*, 3:145.

⁴White, *Education*, 52-54.

principles of the word of God,” and “had learned to sacrifice the earthly to the spiritual, to seek the highest good.” The result was “habits of temperance” and a “sense of responsibility” as a representative of God. These “called to noblest development the powers of body, mind, and soul.” Daniel was “unwavering in allegiance to God, unyielding in the mastery of himself,” tactful, courteous, possessing “genuine goodness of heart” and “fidelity to principle.”¹

Not only did White point out the faithfulness of Joseph and Daniel to God, she also called attention to their interest in the heathen people among whom they lived. They revealed their Christ-like character in “their devotion to the interests of the people” who were idolaters and as a result those heathen people saw in Joseph and Daniel “an illustration of the goodness and beneficence of God, an illustration of the love of Christ.”²

For White, a Christ-like character and salvation were closely linked. Discussing the eternal destiny of the youth, she stated that parents should make the salvation of their children their highest priority. She spoke of salvation in the context of the “inward adorning,” and “beautiful characters that God can approve.”³ Such a character is the result and evidence of salvation, the restoring of the image of God in the human being.⁴

More than anything else, according to White, the study of salvation and all it

¹Ibid., 55-56.

²Ibid., 57.

³White, *Testimonies*, 3:145-146.

⁴White, *Education*, 125: “The central theme of the Bible . . . is the redemption plan, the restoration in the human soul of the image of God.”

encompasses develops the spiritual powers. It is “the science of all sciences . . . the highest study in which it is possible for man to engage. As no other study can, it will quicken the mind and uplift the soul.”¹ This study inevitably leads to the word of God. And when the word is studied and accepted, it is a power that transforms and recreates. White expressed it concisely in the following statement. “The creative energy that called the worlds into existence is in the word of God. This word imparts power; it begets life. Every command is a promise; accepted by the will, received into the soul, it brings with it the life of the Infinite One. It transforms the nature and re-creates the soul in the image of God.”²

Thus, when individuals, realizing their need of salvation, study and feed upon the Word of God, they are, according to White, cooperating with the power of the Creator, the power of Christ. White suggested that in the struggle against the “bent to evil” in the human nature, this cooperation is the individual’s greatest need and, therefore, in all educational endeavors this cooperation should be “the highest aim.”³ This means that as far as the part played by the human being is concerned, the highest aim in that effort should be cooperation with the power of Christ. This aim, the cooperation, is a means for achieving the ultimate aim of the image of God being restored in the human being. The same applies to the human being’s greatest need, namely, the restoration of God’s image; in the struggle against the forces opposed to that restoration, the cooperation with the

¹Ibid., 126.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., 29.

power of Christ is the greatest need. Here, in the area of ends and means, White would agree with Dewey when he stated that “every means is a temporary end until we have attained it.”¹

Preparation for Joyful Service

So far the exploration of Ellen White’s writings has yielded insight into her basic epistemology and fundamental worldview, as well as her concepts of primary and ultimate aims of education and related ideas. In the first paragraph of her book *Education*, White called for a twofold aim in education: balanced development of all one’s capabilities, and preparation for service. A few pages later in the same chapter she returned to the concept of a harmonious development of all the individual’s capabilities, stating that it is the outcome of loving God with “the whole strength, and mind, and heart.”² This “highest development of every power” meant restoration of the image of God in the human being.³ Likewise, as White, explained in the next paragraph, “loving our neighbor as ourselves,” is the law of love calling “for the devotion of body, mind, and soul to the service of God and our fellow men.”⁴ In both aspects, love is seen in action. The love of God mobilizes the whole being—body, mind, and soul—to become like God and to express that likeness in unselfish service. These two aspects are inseparable; God-

¹Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 124.

²White, *Education*, 16.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

likeness is always expressed in unselfish service, and unselfish service is always the fruit of God-likeness. It is important to note that this unselfishness in service is part of the love that develops the capabilities of the individual. “Unselfishness,” White maintained, “underlies all true development. Through unselfish service we receive the highest culture of every faculty. More and more fully we become partakers of the divine nature.”¹ Therefore, White, later in her book *Education*, stated without hesitation that the true teacher desired his students “above all else, to learn life’s great lesson of unselfish service.”²

As the twin educational aims of (1) harmonious development of all one’s powers and (2) the preparation for service are explored further in the writings of Ellen White, it becomes clear how inseparably they are linked in her thought. When she stated that “we should cultivate every faculty to the highest degree of perfection,” the reason she gave was “that we may do the greatest amount of good of which we are capable.”³ In the context of this statement White gave the following definition of true education: “True education is the preparation of the physical, mental, and moral powers for the performance of every duty; it is the training of body, mind, and soul for divine service. This is the education that will endure unto eternal life.”⁴ The link is clear. Just as without works faith is dead, so without unselfish service there is no Christlike character;

¹Ibid.

²White, *Education*, 29-30.

³White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 330.

⁴Ibid.

that is to say, no love-generated development has taken place.

As for preparation for service in the life to come, White offered this statement: “The Lord . . . will bequeath the most in the future life to those who do the most faithful, willing service in the present life.”¹ Another interesting insight into the future life of service is White’s statement that the followers of Christ are, under His training, developing Christ-like character “to act an important part in the occupations and pleasures of heaven.”²

Types of Service

When speaking about “the service of God and our fellow men.”³ White had several things in mind. Uppermost were various branches of missionary work such as gospel ministry, evangelism, religious education, literature evangelism, and medical missionary work. This missionary work involved revealing God to the world “by a life of service,”⁴ indeed, giving the gospel “to the whole world.”⁵

White emphasized that this life of service, “a life of service to Christ,” involves connection with His church which is “organized for service.”⁶ The work of the followers

¹Ibid.

²Ellen G. White, *Christian Experiences and Teachings of Ellen G. White* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1940), 209.

³White, *Education*, 16.

⁴White, *Ministry of Healing*, 409.

⁵White, *Education*, 271.

⁶Ibid., 268.

of Christ is the same work Christ did when here on earth, “healing the sick, comforting the sorrowful, and preaching the gospel to the poor,”¹ but not forgetting individuals in high places, persons of intellect, influence, and wealth.² This work of Christ’s followers makes them co-workers with Christ and His angels. They are “God’s helping hand.”³

But White did not limit cooperating with Christ in His work for humanity to church work. In all walks of life, in every honorable occupation, the followers of Christ are called to Christian service. Some may, in the words of White, “go as teachers of the gospel to heathen lands,” but others “may spend their lives within the circle of the home,” and the majority may “engage in life’s common vocations . . . but all are alike called to be missionaries for God, ministers of mercy to the world.”⁴

Not everyone is to do the same type of service. White believed that people differ in talents and capabilities which determine “the specific place appointed us in life.” She is here referring to the choice of occupation. In this context she mentioned such occupations as farmer, artisan, nurse, minister, lawyer, and physician. Such occupations are a significant part of serving God and the world in which we live.⁵

The same applies in the work of the church where there also are different talents and capabilities. Referring to Eph 4:11-12 White stated that “all are not given the same

¹Ibid.

²White, *Testimonies*, 6:82-83.

³White, *Education*, 271.

⁴White, *Ministry of Healing*, 395.

⁵White, *Education*, 267.

work,”¹ and “God has appointed to every man his work, according to his ability.”²

Yet, there is a sense in which the same work is given to everybody. It is, White stated, “the heaven-appointed purpose of giving the gospel to the world. . . . It opens a field of effort to everyone whose heart Christ has touched.”³ Within this broad assignment, all will find something that calls for their talents and capabilities. White stated it in these words:

“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15), is Christ’s command to His followers. Not all are called to be ministers or missionaries in the ordinary sense of the term; but all may be workers with Him in giving the “glad tidings” to their fellow men. To all, great or small, learned or ignorant, old or young, the command is given.⁴

White pointed out that Christ in His work as a humble carpenter was just as faithfully fulfilling His mission as when He was healing the sick. “So,” she claimed, “in the humblest duties and lowliest positions of life, we may walk and work with Jesus.”⁵

Preparation for the service of God and fellow human beings involves the development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers and is thus an integral part of the restoration of the image of God in human beings whereby they reflect His character of love and ministry. This preparation is part of the ultimate aims of education.

¹White, *Medical Ministry*, 249; see also idem, *Testimonies*, 8:170-171.

²White, *Desire of Ages*, 361-362.

³White, *Education*, 262.

⁴Ibid., 264.

⁵White, *Steps to Christ*, 82.

Physical Preparation for Service

White recognized that “the nature of man is threefold . . . physical, intellectual, and moral.”¹ She also believed that the physical nature serves and supports the intellectual and the moral powers.² She advocated, therefore, that “the foundation of a strong constitution be laid in early life,”³ through education, discipline, and correct habits regarding the children’s physical health.⁴ White warned that if our bodies are impaired through unhealthful habits, it is “impossible to render to God perfect service.”⁵ Physical health and strength, therefore, are not only important for the improvement of life, they are foundational to all preparation for service.

White believed that a close sympathy existed between the physical and the moral nature; she stated that “wrong habits of eating and drinking lead to errors in thought and action. Indulgence of appetite strengthens the animal propensities, giving them the ascendancy over the mental and spiritual powers.”⁶ Speaking of unclean meats⁷ as unwholesome and injurious foods, White declared: “That which corrupts the body tends

¹White, “Thoughts on Education,” 17.

²White, *Testimonies*, 3:136, 140, 151.

³White, “Thoughts on Education,” 17-18.

⁴White, *Counsels on Diet*, 228.

⁵*Ibid.*, 56.

⁶Ellen G. White, “The Life of Daniel an Illustration of True Sanctification,” *Review and Herald*, 25 January 1881, 50.

⁷White is here referring to the biblical distinction between clean and unclean animals. See, e.g., Gen 7:2; Lev 11:47; and Acts 10:14.

to corrupt the soul. It unfits the user for communion with God, unfits him for high and holy service.”¹ The following statement suggests that White considered the health of the physical body crucial and decisive for all mental, intellectual, moral, and spiritual development and preparation for serving God: “The body is the only medium through which the mind and the soul are developed for the upbuilding of character.”² More specifically, White stated that “the brain nerves which communicate with the entire system are the only medium through which Heaven can communicate to man and affect his inmost life.”³

The preparation of the physical powers for true service in a manner acceptable to God, White believed, is not possible without divine help. The appetite and the passions must be kept under the control of “enlightened conscience”;⁴ they must be “controlled by the will, which is itself to be under the control of God,” and “the kingly power of reason, sanctified by divine grace.”⁵ The power of Christ is needed. White believed that human beings would never really be temperate “until the grace of Christ is an abiding principle in the heart.”⁶

¹White, *Ministry of Healing*, 280.

²Ibid., 130.

³White, *Testimonies*, 2:347.

⁴Ibid., 3:491.

⁵White, *Ministry of Healing*, 130.

⁶White, *Counsels on Diet*, 35. See also idem, *Special Testimonies*, series A, no. 9, 54.

Intellectual and Mental Preparation for Service

Ellen White saw the importance of beginning the mental training for service early in life by giving children “little duties” which would call for “thought, calculation, and a plan of action.”¹ These domestic duties would train them to think and tax their memories “to remember their appointed work.”²

Another important aspect of mental preparation for service is the training of the will. White maintained that any attempt or effort to “break the will” of a child would be “a terrible mistake.” The strength of the will would be needed in “the battle of life,” and therefore “the will should be guided and molded, but not ignored or crushed.”³ The will is to be “under the control of God,” and the reason “sanctified by divine grace.”⁴ This will give the child the self-discipline and the self-control needed for successfully serving the Lord by living a life of usefulness.⁵

White considered self-discipline of great importance. Minds disciplined by faithfulness to duty and principle instead of indulgence of pleasure and inclination “are not wavering between right and wrong. . . . They are loyal to duty because they have

¹White, *The Adventist Home*, 287.

²White, *Special Testimonies on Education*, 223.

³White, *Education*, 288-289.

⁴White, *Prophets and Kings*, 489.

⁵White, *Education*, 289.

trained themselves to habits of fidelity and truth.”¹ White considered this more important for the development of the mind than great talents without self-discipline. She stated that “an ordinary mind, well disciplined, will accomplish more and higher work than will the most highly educated mind and the greatest talents without self-control.”² White was not opposed to the “highly educated mind.” On the contrary, she held that it was right for the young people to aspire to “the highest development of their mental powers,” but it had to be in preparation for serving God.³

In addition to a well-disciplined mind and right motivation White added one more dimension—that of the Holy Spirit. The worker for God does not work independent of Him. The followers of Christ are instruments in the hands of His Spirit. Recognizing that and bringing to the work a highly educated and disciplined mind with a desire to be an honor to God and a blessing to humanity, the worker is prepared for an effective service. “If placed under the control of His Spirit,” White stated, “the more thoroughly the intellect is cultivated, the more effectively it can be used in the service of God.”⁴

Moral and Spiritual Preparation for Service

The great object of service for God is the salvation of souls, White claimed. It is

¹White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 223.

²White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 335.

³White, *Testimonies*, 8:311.

⁴White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 333.

the most important work anyone can engage in.¹ Moral and spiritual preparation, therefore, is essential.² Without the experience of the new birth the human being cannot serve God in a way approved by Him. “In order to serve Him aright,” White maintained, “we must be born of the divine Spirit.”³ She went on to explain how being born of the Spirit would ensure an acceptable service for God. It would give the individual a pure heart and a renewed mind, “a new capacity for knowing and loving God,” and a “willing obedience to all His requirements.”⁴

White emphasized the need to train the mind to have “noble, unselfish thoughts,” and “to love to contemplate heavenly things.”⁵ Obtaining spiritual knowledge was important. White referred to it as higher education and defined it as “an experimental knowledge of the plan of salvation.”⁶

White held that prayer also was important for moral and spiritual preparation for service. Not just family prayer or public prayer but especially secret prayer, the one “to

¹Ellen G. White, “To Every Man His Work,” *Review and Herald*, 15 June 1886, 369. See also idem, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 326-327, where White claims that “Christ’s followers have been redeemed for service,” which is “to work in co-operation with Christ for the salvation of souls.”

²Moral and spiritual preparation, however, is not the only preparation needed for spiritual work. White stated that “in order to lead souls to Jesus there must be a knowledge of the human nature and a study of the human mind.” White, *Testimonies*, 4:67.

³Ibid., 9:156.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., 2:187

⁶White, *Counsels to Parents*, 11.

be heard only by the prayer-hearing God.”¹ The soul cannot prosper without prayer. The nature of prayer, however, did matter. It had to be “a special exercise of the mind.”² It is worth noticing that both in obtaining spiritual knowledge and in fervent, private prayer, White spoke of exercising the mind. When doing so, she would remind all to be guided by the word of God, “that unerring guide,” and “the all-sufficient rule of faith and practice.” The followers of Christ were not to rely upon “their own feelings and impressions” or entertain “superstition or fanaticism.”³ Prayer is not to be an unintelligent act of ecstasy, but rather a rational exercise of the intellect guided by the Holy Spirit.⁴

In Ellen White’s thinking no dichotomy existed between the spiritual and the mental or the intellectual. She stated clearly that “if placed under the control of His Spirit, the more thoroughly the intellect is cultivated the more effectively it can be used in the service of God.”⁵ On the other hand, if the attention of the students is focused entirely on secular studies, and religion and Christian experience are neglected, “they are becoming disqualified for the work of God.”⁶ Therefore, using our minds in our spiritual development is essential and “when controlled by the love and fear of God, intellectual

¹White, *Testimonies*, 2:189.

²Ibid.

³White, *Great Controversy*, 186-188.

⁴White, *Education*, 47.

⁵White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 333.

⁶White, *Testimonies*, 4:113.

culture is a blessing; yet,” White continued, “this is not presented as the most important qualification for the service of God.” The most important qualification, White indicated, is to have “the attributes of the character of Christ.”¹ The important elements of a Christlike character are “the gifts and graces” enumerated in God’s word. These are given to those who can “sympathize with suffering humanity, . . . who appreciate that work as sacred,” and “will be unobstructed channels through which His [God’s] grace can flow.”²

When discussing the qualifications essential for the work of God, White asked two pointed questions: “Have the men who are handling sacred things a clear understanding, a right perception, of things of eternal interest? Will they consent to yield to the working of the Holy Spirit?”³ In harmony with these qualifications White maintained that obedience to God’s law means the “the health, the activity of every spiritual energy in the service of God.”⁴

In a special testimony to the Battle Creek Seventh-day Adventist Church (1898), Ellen White presented important attributes and qualifications for service based on her study of Pss 19:7 and 119:1-6. First, she specified a character formed by “upright principles and pure sentiments, cultivated and practiced,” second, “a conscience void of

¹White, *Testimonies to Ministers*, 259.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ellen G. White, “Hungering for Righteousness,” *Signs of the Times*, 5 September 1895, 4.

offense toward God and man,” and third, “a heart that feels the tenderest sympathy for human beings, especially that they may be won for Christ.” Filled with the Holy Spirit, they would then be prepared for service and have “a reservoir of persuasion and a storehouse of simple eloquence.”¹

White also saw trials and obstacles as part of the education that would yield spiritual preparation for service in God’s cause. Trials would reveal the workers’ “lack of wisdom and experience,” bring growth, help them know themselves better, and give them greater trust in God.² The trials would also be the means of discipline, of discovering defects in the character, of purifying “God’s children from the dross of earthliness,” so they can “fit themselves for service.”³

The Joy of Service

Discussing the life of Paul, White stated that “in service he found his joy,”⁴ but she went on to confirm the certainty of “a future joy to which Paul looked forward as the recompense of his labors—the same joy for the sake of which Christ endured the cross and despised the shame—the joy of seeing the fruition of his work.”⁵

The joy Ellen White spoke about in connection with service is a certain kind of

¹White, *Testimonies to Ministers*, 120.

²White, *Gospel Workers*, 142.

³White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 524.

⁴White, *Education*, 68.

⁵Ibid.

joy generated by a certain kind of service. The service is that of serving Christ.¹ It is an unselfish service,² and it is a service to God given “in spirit and in truth.”³ It is the joy experienced when individuals have become partakers of the divine nature “diffusing blessings to their fellow men.”⁴ This joy is the pure, heavenly joy of working for the salvation of others.⁵ “The purest joy,” White claimed, “is . . . found . . . where self-sacrificing love is the ruling principle.”⁶ The fact that God has given human beings a part to act in the plan of salvation, White considered “the highest honor, the greatest joy, that it is possible for God to bestow upon men.”⁷

Joy is not only a product of unselfish service, or the reward for such service. Joy can itself also be a form of service or ministry. “A sunny temper, reflecting light and cheerfulness, glorifies God, and benefits humanity,”⁸ White maintained. And speaking about the gift of the Holy Spirit, White makes special mention of the “joy in the Holy Spirit,” as being “health-giving, life-giving joy.”⁹ This and other gifts God bestows on

¹White, *Testimonies*, 7:244.

²White, *Ministry of Healing*, 362. “True joy can be found only in unselfish service,” White claimed.

³White, *Testimonies*, 8:247.

⁴White, *Steps to Christ*, 79.

⁵White, *Testimonies*, 9:59.

⁶*Ibid.*, 3:382.

⁷White, *Steps to Christ*, 79.

⁸Ellen G. White, “June Has Come,” *The Health Reformer*, 1 June 1871, 293.

⁹White, *Testimonies*, 7:273.

His people in order that they may return them to Him multiplied, having brought “into the lives of others light and joy and peace.”¹ Thus, joy itself becomes a ministry of joy.

Before examining the important connection between the knowledge of God, which White considered the knowledge of most worth, and the ultimate aims of education, a short sectional summary is helpful.

Summary

White believed that God created human beings in His own image. In their physical, mental, and spiritual nature they reflected a likeness to their Creator. It was the Creator’s purpose that human beings should, throughout eternity, reflect ever more fully this image, God’s glory, especially His character of love. But before they could enjoy all that God had prepared for them, before they could be eternally secure in their individuality and freedom of choice, their loyalty, obedience, faith, and love must be tested. The parents of the human race failed the test. They distrusted God, disbelieved Him, and rejected His authority. Their nature became corrupted and sinful.

God did not, White maintained, abandon His purpose in creating the human race. The plan of salvation was put into operation and the education of human beings was to go hand in hand with that plan. The aim of both enterprises was the same: to restore the image of God in the human soul; to restore the dignity, the individuality, the moral freedom, and the character of love in the human being.

This restoration of the image of God, in White’s view, required conversion as a

¹Ibid.

primary aim. Then, the ultimate aim of education in this life, the restoration of the image of God, was possible and it involved the development of all the powers of body, mind, and soul. Finally, the ultimate eternal aim of reflecting more and more fully the image of God throughout eternity could be realized.

In White's mind, attaining these aims is a dynamic, progressive process, calling for daily conversion, continual development of all the powers of the human being through the grace of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit. The essence of this process, this education, is the knowledge of God, and the primary source of that knowledge is the word of God given to mankind in the Scriptures, in nature, and in what White called "the book of experience in God's dealing with human life."¹ The energy and power in the word of God is the same mighty power that called the universe into existence. This power is the power of God, the power of Christ. In the effort of attaining the ultimate aims of education, cooperation with that power should be the highest aim.

White maintained that the moral image of God, His character of love, is expressed in His law. The law of God calls for loving God supremely and our fellow human beings as ourselves. This is love in action, love expressed in unselfish, joyful service to God and mankind. Just as true education is "the harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers,"² so, true education is also "the preparation of the physical, mental and moral powers for the performance of every duty; it is the training of

¹White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 125.

²White, *Education*, 13.

body, mind, and soul for divine service.”¹

White called for various types of service: missionary work, work for the sick and the poor, work in the home and in the community, as well as common occupations and professional practice. Not everyone is called to do the same kind of work, as talents and capabilities vary. Yet, in one sense the same work is given to everybody—the work of giving the good news of salvation to their fellow human beings.

Physical health, White held, is foundational to all preparation for service. Furthermore, the body is the only medium through which the mind and the soul are developed for character building, and through which heaven can communicate with the human being. Physical health, therefore, is also indispensable to the mental and spiritual preparation for service.

White encouraged early mental development for service through the performance of domestic duties. Children were to learn right habits and right ways of thinking, and to remember their assigned tasks. It was also important that the will of the child should not be broken, but rather guided and molded. The mind was to be disciplined by faithfulness to duty and principle. For mental development the study of the great themes of the Scriptures was more effective than the study of any other books. The more thoroughly the intellect was cultivated under the control of the Holy Spirit, the more effectively it could be used in the service of God.

Being born of the Holy Spirit was, in White’s view, fundamental for moral and spiritual preparation for service. The mind must constantly be exercised in obtaining

¹White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 330.

spiritual knowledge and understanding. White regarded knowledge of God, secured by earnest and diligent study of the Scriptures, of utmost importance for an acceptable service of God and fellow human beings. This study must be done prayerfully under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The Epistemological Connection: The Knowledge of God

Ellen White maintained that the restoration of the image of God in the human being could not take place without a knowledge of God. This knowledge must, however, go well beyond theoretical, intellectual knowledge of God. It must be an individual, personal, experiential knowledge of God, through Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, and the searching of the word of God. This experiential knowledge of God also calls for genuine faith and what White called “the divine principle of co-operation.”¹ The co-operation includes full surrender and obedience to God’s will, and this obedience, through the grace and power of Christ, is expressed in loving God supremely with all one’s heart, soul, strength, and mind, and one’s neighbor as oneself. Stated White: “The knowledge of God as revealed in Christ is the knowledge that all who are saved must have. It 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.”² This knowledge, therefore, clearly is indispensable to attaining the ultimate aims of education.

¹White, *Prophets and Kings*, 486-487.

²White, *Ministry of Healing*, 425.

When White spoke of knowing God or of the knowledge of God, she was almost always referring to experiential knowledge of God. In order to convey her concept of the knowledge of God, Ellen White would employ such terms as “a genuine, saving knowledge of God,” “communion with God,” “a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ,” “union with Christ,” and “experimental knowledge of God.” She would speak of knowing God experimentally, personally, individually. This deeper knowledge of God would always be in the context of the human being’s need of salvation, of restoring the image of God in the human soul. It would be synonymous with “a saving knowledge of the Scriptures,” and “a saving knowledge of the gospel”; it would be the same as receiving the word of God into the soul, and feeding upon His word.¹ The key here is the word “saving.” A knowledge of the Scriptures in and of itself and a knowledge of the gospel separate from an experiential knowledge of God would not be a saving knowledge.²

White linked this experiential knowledge with obedience and bearing fruit “in words and deeds,” that is, kindness, love, “unity, fellowship with one another and with Christ.”³ If the follower of Christ did not have such an experience in the knowledge of God, “perfected by fruitbearing,” then the knowledge of Christ he professes is “a falsehood, a deception.”⁴ For White, experiential knowledge, resulting in a dynamic,

¹See White, *Desire of Ages*, 391.

²White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 109-114.

³Ellen G. White, “Lessons from the First Epistle of John,” *Review and Herald*, 30 June 1910, 3.

⁴*Ibid.*

living, spiritual, “fruitbearing” experience, was the only meaningful knowledge of God.

In order to better understand White’s concept of experiential knowledge and what it entails, a closer look is needed. As a focal point, a significant, definitional statement made by her in 1910, at the age of eighty-two, may be helpful. The statement was made when Ellen White had most of her active life behind her, and it is rich in its epistemological implications: “To know God is, in the Scriptural sense of the term, to be one with Him in heart and mind, having an experimental knowledge of Him, holding reverential communion with Him as the Redeemer. Only through sincere obedience can this communion be obtained.”¹

This statement contains some key elements for consideration: The epistemology of the heart and of the mind; oneness with God; experimental rather than theoretical knowledge of Him; reverential, redemptive communion; and obedience. Each one of these elements is important for the knowledge of God. It is also of importance to notice that White was careful to place this knowledge of God within the authority of the Scripture. That does not mean that this knowledge is found only between the covers of the Bible, but that the knowledge of God, revealed in nature, in human relationships, and in the providence of God, will agree with the revelation of God in Scripture. White made it clear that “the Holy Scriptures are to be accepted as an authoritative, infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the revealer of doctrines, and the test of experience.”² They reveal the fundamental principles of Christian education.

¹Ibid.

²White, *Great Controversy*, vii.

The Epistemology of Heart and Mind

The knowledge of God, divinely revealed truth,¹ involves both the heart and the mind. White had a clear view of the epistemological role of the heart versus the mind. A good example of her position is found in her book *The Desire of Ages*, in the chapter “Among Snares.” Here she presented the mind as the seat of the reason and the heart as the seat of the will; and truth, the revelation of God, appeals to both the reason and the will.² It requires the involvement and the submission of both. However, simply a blind submission of the will without intelligent acknowledgment will not suffice. Likewise, revealed truth cannot be handed over to reason alone. There must be a wholehearted surrender of the will to the will of God along with intellectual efforts, which White here referred to as “man’s advantages for obtaining a knowledge of the truth.”³

Of the roles played by the heart and the mind, the role of the heart was the crucial one. Intellectual knowledge of the truth was “of no benefit . . . unless the heart is open to receive the truth.”⁴ White amplified this by the following reiterations: “Truth must be received into the soul; it claims the homage of the will”; “it [truth] is to be received through the work of grace in the heart; and its reception depends upon the renunciation of every sin that the Spirit of God reveals”; there must be “a conscientious surrender of

¹White, *Counsels on Health*, 371.

²White, *Desire of Ages*, 455.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., 455-456.

every habit and practice that is opposed to its [truth's] principles"; and there must be "an honest desire to know and to do His [God's] will."¹

Here, the reference has been to truth, not to the knowledge of God. The principles, however, hold true. Even though there is a useful and practical distinction between the knowledge of truth and the knowledge of God, White considered the two as fundamentally one and the same. Not only did she maintain that "to know the truth is to know God,"² but also that "the knowledge of God is the knowledge of all truth, and is the beginning of all understanding."³ When speaking here of "the truth" White is, as is generally the case throughout her writings, referring to the truth God has revealed in His word for the salvation of humanity. The identification of this truth, God's word, with God Himself is very strong. "The seeds of truth," is the same as "the seed of the gospel," which is the same as "the word of God." In God's word, "in every command and in every promise . . . is the power, the very life of God," and "he who by faith receives the word is receiving the very life and character of God."⁴

Although in knowing God the role of the heart is primary, the function of the mind is by no means inconsequential. The mind is to be applied seriously to the investigation of truth. White stated that God endowed human beings with "intellectual

¹Ibid, 509.

²Ellen G. White, "Selections from the Testimonies for Students and Workers of our Sanitariums," *Special Testimonies*, Series B, no. 16 (Loma Linda, CA: The College Press, 1911), 5.

³White, "The Knowledge of God," 9.

⁴White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 38.

powers . . . that men may have the ability to search into and understand rich depths of knowledge in the character, word, and works of God.”¹ White very much wanted “the noblest of our faculties, the reason,” to be “set to the task of knowing God.”² Even the surrender of the will, or obedience, White maintained, was to be not only wholehearted but also intelligent. God does not want “a blind submission,” or to exercise “an unreasoning control.”³ He desires an obedience or homage that is not only willingly but also intelligently given.⁴ Such obedience, which White also described as “the service and allegiance of love,”⁵ and “the fruit of faith,”⁶ is a condition of communion with God which again is the heart of experiential knowledge of God. Here, intellect and reason play a significant role. These are of no benefit, however, if the heart is not, first and foremost, open to receive the truth which is the knowledge of God.⁷

One with God in Heart and Mind

White used several terms to express the concept of being one with God, such as “harmony with God,” “oneness with God,” and “close relationship with God.” To be one

¹Ellen G. White, “Peril of Neglecting Salvation,” *Review and Herald*, 10 March 1891, 145.

²Ellen G. White, *The Voice in Speech and Song as Set Forth in the Writings of Ellen G. White* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1988), 24.

³White, *Steps to Christ*, 43.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., 60.

⁶Ibid., 61.

⁷White, *Desire of Ages*, 455-456.

with Christ, or in harmony with Christ, was the same as being one with God, in harmony with God. In fact, a person could be one with God only in or through Christ.¹ White defined being one with God as being “obedient to the divine will,”² and being in harmony with His law.³ This meant being in harmony with the character of God since “the character of God is expressed in His law.”⁴

This harmony with God, His law, His character, is not something superficial, outward, or legalistic. It is not just intellectual agreement. It goes to the core of the human being. It means “complete and entire consecration” to God.⁵

In an article, one of several on the subject, entitled “Union with Christ,”⁶ White anchored her theme in the illustration of the vine and the branches representing the union between Christ and His true disciples. At the outset she made a distinction between true disciples and those who claim to be disciples but do not have faith in Christ. The true believers are “fruit-bearing,” they will “bring forth the fruits of righteousness— fruit that

¹Ellen G. White, “Words to the Young,” *Youth’s Instructor*, 6 December 1894, 380; idem, “The Knowledge of God,” 473; idem, “The Word Made Flesh,” 9; idem, “That They All May Be One,” *Signs of the Times*, 19 December 1906, 6.

²Ellen G. White, “Universal Guilt During the Time of the End,” *Review and Herald*, 11 October 1906, 7.

³White, *Selected Messages*, 1:229.

⁴White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 391.

⁵White, *Testimonies*, 4:544.

⁶Ellen G. White, “Union with Christ,” *Review and Herald*, 13 December 1887, 769.

will honor and bless men, and glorify God.”¹ The others do not bear such fruit.

This spiritual relationship with Christ cannot be established, White held, except by “the exercise of personal faith.” This faith is manifested in the disciple by the expression of “supreme preference, perfect reliance, entire consecration.” Not only must the will be surrendered to the divine will, but this union with Christ also calls for the “feelings, desires, interests, and honor” to be devoted to the cause of Christ’s kingdom. Once this close connection and communion with Christ is formed, “his righteousness is imputed to” his followers. They “receive moral and spiritual power,” and it is through this union with Christ that they can be victorious Christians.²

However, White emphasized, it is not enough to simply establish this union with Christ. It must be preserved by “earnest prayer and untiring effort.” She explained the effort: “We must resist, we must deny, we must conquer self. Through the grace of Christ, by courage, by faith, by watchfulness, we may gain the victory.”³

By this White does not mean that human beings can save themselves by their own works. She was speaking about total surrender and wholehearted cooperation with divine power. The key elements presented in this article, referred to above, are genuine faith, total devotion and surrender, acceptance of Christ’s righteousness, earnest prayer, and cooperation with the grace of Christ. These elements constitute, form, and maintain the close union with Christ, the oneness represented by the vine and the branches. In a

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

message to young people, White stated the same concept: “It is . . . the work of the sinner . . . to accept Christ as his peace and righteousness. Thus man becomes one with Christ and one with God.”¹

When White explained what she called “the divine principle of co-operation,” she claimed that in matters of salvation, human effort could not accomplish anything without divine power. Likewise, without human effort, “divine effort is with many of no avail.”² This divine principle of cooperation White stated concisely in these words: “To make God’s grace our own, we must act our part. His grace is given to work in us to will and to do, but never as a substitute for our effort.”³

This union with Christ, making His disciples Christlike, enables them to know God. White made this clear in an article entitled “Knowing God.” She stated that if we desired to know God “we must be Christlike,” by which she meant “living a pure life through faith in Christ as a personal Saviour,” demonstrated by “love to God and love to man.”⁴ White saw this as a matter of daily exercise stating that “He who does not seek each day to be more Christlike can not know God.”⁵

It is evident from White’s writings that oneness with God is an indispensable

¹White, “Words to the Young,” 380.

²White, *Prophets and Kings*, 486-487.

³Ibid., 487.

⁴Ellen G. White, “Knowing God,” *Youth’s Instructor*, 22 March 1900, 90.

⁵Ibid.

element in knowing God.¹ This oneness must be through Christ, since “Christ is a perfect revelation of God,” and since “only by knowing Christ can we know God.”²

Experimental Knowledge of God

This deeper knowledge of God is gained by experiencing God in Christ as one’s personal Redeemer. God cannot be known spiritually by anyone displaying only an impersonal, worldly, humanistic or scientific attitude in the investigation of truth and knowledge. In 1895, White stated that “a knowledge of the attributes of the character of Christ Jesus cannot be obtained by means of the highest education in the most scientific schools.”³ A theory of the truth or a knowledge of God’s word is of “no avail” without the aid, enlightenment, and the ministry of the Holy Spirit.⁴ Yet, White readily acknowledged that “there is much wisdom with worldly men,” but, she continued, “they behold not the beauty and majesty, the justice and wisdom, the goodness and holiness, of the Creator of all worlds.”⁵ That is, however, exactly what humanity needs.

¹White, “Lessons,” 3.

²Ellen G. White, “Prepare to Meet Thy God,” *Review and Herald*, 3 February 1903, 8.

³White, *Fundamentals*, 343. Very likely White is here referring to worldly education. In *Christ’s Object Lessons*, she offered this: “All the culture and education which the world can give will fail of making a degraded child of sin a child of heaven” (96). She is possibly also referring to worldly education in *Steps to Christ*, where she stated: “Education, culture . . . have their sphere, but here [changing the heart] they are powerless” (18).

⁴White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 408-411.

⁵Ellen G. White, “Meetings at South Lancaster, Mass.,” 146.

White was convinced that it was of the utmost importance for human beings to have an experiential and individual knowledge of God,¹ and to know by experience that this “knowledge of God . . . is our righteousness, our sanctification, our redemption.”² The eternal destiny of human beings depended upon this saving, experiential, and individual knowledge of God.

Again, Ellen White differed radically from the self-sufficient spirit of her time, from the explicit faith in the scientific method. The knowledge of most worth, the knowledge of God and His purposes, could not be obtained by humanity’s own effort, on their own terms, and in their own wisdom. White indicated that history has already shown this. This became evident before Christ came to this world, “through successive ages of darkness, in the midnight of heathenism,” when God permitted people to try “finding out God by their own wisdom.” He allowed this precisely so “that men themselves might see that they could not obtain a knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ, save through the revelation of His word by the Holy Spirit.”³

This inability of human beings to know God in their own wisdom is by no means limited to worldly people, the heathen, or the unbelievers. Believers are no more able to obtain a knowledge of God and His truth in their own wisdom or by their own efforts than are unbelievers. When searching the Scriptures, they must come to God’s word acknowledging their limitations. “The boastful self-knowledge and self-sufficiency,”

¹White, *Fundamentals*, 404.

²Ellen G. White, “The Knowledge of God,” 473.

³Ellen G. White, “The World by Wisdom Knew Not God,” 769.

declared White, “must stand rebuked in the presence of the word of God.”¹ Those seeking to know God and to enter into communion with Him must come with “the most profound humility,”² and in “sincerity and reverence.”³

Humility, sincerity, and reverence leads to quietness in the soul. White saw that as essential for hearing the voice of God, and thus knowing Him and His will. There is a beautiful passage on this subject in her book on the life of Jesus, *The Desire of Ages*. The heart of that passage is almost melodic:

Everyone needs to have a personal experience in obtaining a knowledge of the will of God. We must individually hear Him speaking to the heart. When every other voice is hushed, and in quietness we wait before Him, the silence of the soul makes more distinct the voice of God. He bids us “Be still, and know that I am God.”⁴

And then, while the soul is silent, the knowledge given by God will be “brought home to the heart by the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit.”⁵ Again, it is worth noting that it is the heart that God speaks to, and it is the heart to which the Holy Spirit brings the knowledge of God.

This knowledge, individual, personal, and experiential, is all-important for humanity. The importance cannot be overstated as it is the beginning of, and the very essence of, eternal life itself. Quoting a biblical text, John 17:3, where it is declared that

¹Ellen G. White, “The Importance of Obedience,” *Review and Herald*, 15 December 1896, 790.

²White, *Testimonies*, 5:50.

³White, “The Importance of Obedience,” 790.

⁴White, *Desire of Ages*, 363.

⁵*Ibid.*, 605.

eternal life is to know God and Jesus Christ, White stated that “it means everything to us to have an experimental and individual knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ, ‘whom He hath sent.’”¹

The experiential knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ comprises not only God’s nature and character, His goodness and His love, but also His truth, His plans, purposes and actions, as well as His will and His laws. White spoke specifically of such aspects of experiential knowledge of God, as experiential knowledge of His will,² of His ways,³ of the plan of salvation,⁴ and of the power of grace.⁵

The very heart of this experiential knowledge is personal experience. In the words of White “experience is knowledge from experiment.”⁶ A few paragraphs later she spoke of tasting and learning by experience.⁷ In this context, White called for experimental religion, as opposed to “a theoretical knowledge of religious truth.”⁸ This meant having concrete, practical experience of the divine power of grace making a decided difference in the life. It meant listening to and obeying the instructions and

¹White, *Fundamentals*, 404.

²Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Parents*, 19.

³*Ibid.*, 45.

⁴White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 42.

⁵White, *Counsels to Parents*, 487.

⁶White, *Testimonies*, 5:221.

⁷*Ibid.*, 222.

⁸*Ibid.*, 221.

warnings given by the Holy Spirit. It was evidenced by earnest efforts and sacrifices on the road that leads to life. It meant not only knowing what was right, but delighting in it.¹ It was truly a living, practical, wholehearted, and intelligent experience resulting in experiential knowledge of God.

Communion with God

White regarded the communion with God as essential for knowing God.² The chief means of such a communion are personal prayer and prayerful study of God's word,³ meditating upon His word, and contemplating His character.⁴ Human beings can also have communion with God "through His created works."⁵

Time is an essential ingredient in communion with God, White held. She pointed to the example of Daniel and his three-times-a-day communion with God, and how sacred this time was to him. She stated that "he who realizes his dependence upon God will realize that without Christ he can do nothing, and will esteem the privilege of communion with God above everything else."⁶

¹Ibid.,

²White, "Lessons," 3.

³White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 362. See also idem, *Education*, 258; idem, *Testimonies*, 7:42; and idem, *Manuscript Releases*, 12:254.

⁴Ellen G. White, "Communion with Christ," *Sabbath School Worker*, 1 April 1895, 51.

⁵White, *The Adventist Home*, 132.

⁶Ellen G. White, "The Power of Prayer," *Bible Echo*, 1 March 1893, 66.

White emphasized that “only through sincere obedience can this communion be obtained.”¹ This obedience to God’s will was not only the condition of human beings’ communion with God, but also of their very existence and happiness.²

The obedience to God’s will and commandments is indispensable to oneness with God, to experiential knowledge of God, and to communion with God. Referring to the Ten Commandments, White stated that “obedience to these commandments is the only evidence man can give that he possesses a genuine, saving knowledge of God.”³

In summary, this deeper, more intimate, experiential knowledge of God is the epistemological connection to the ultimate aims of education, the restoration of the image of God in the human being. This knowledge based on oneness with God, close communion, and complete trust and faith in God is, indeed, the key to the knowledge of most worth.⁴ The supreme expression of this image is in loving God supremely with all one’s heart, soul, strength, and mind, and one’s neighbor as oneself. This love is expressed in action, in ministry and service to God and mankind. This ultimate aim is a complex, dynamic aim involving the whole being, all its powers, and the inmost motives, thoughts and desires. It calls for self-denial and self-sacrifice, it means development and growth, and it is crowned with happiness and joy. It means reflecting the image of God more and more fully throughout eternity. This ultimate aim of restoration can also be

¹White, “Lessons,” 3.

²White, *Patriarch and Prophets*, 48-49.

³White, “Knowing God,” 90.

⁴White, *Education*, 24.

looked at as a cluster of interacting aims including conversion, development of all the powers of the individual, and the preparation for a joyful service. These elements in their fullness, through the grace of Christ, restore the image of God in the human soul. The very center of this image is God's moral character of love. When human beings possess that love then "love for God is demonstrated by love for those whom Christ has died."¹ That truly is reflecting the glory of the image of God.

¹White, "Lessons," 3.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Purpose and Scope

The primary purpose of the present study was to identify, describe, analyze, and evaluate the aims of education in the writings of Ellen White, primarily the ultimate aims of education. The study identified what White considered were the sources of those aims. An important part of the study was to gain an understanding of White's basic philosophy, particularly the epistemological foundations of her ultimate educational aims.

In addition to the ultimate aims of education, intermediate and short-term aims have been touched upon such as skills, practical duties, and job training. Also, in the context of the ultimate aims, there are intermediate aims related to the development of the physical, mental, and spiritual powers. These intermediate and short-term aims were not discussed in any detail as such discussion would have extended beyond the space limitation of the present study. No attempt was made to create a detailed taxonomy of aims or objectives.

Historical Background and Contemporary Setting

Ellen White (1827-1915) lived during a period of great changes in the Western world, a time when liberal ideas were increasingly accepted in religion, philosophy, and

literature, and when secular ideas such as the evolutionary theory were gaining ground. In this environment Ellen White, brought up in a staunch Methodist home, accepted Christ as her personal Saviour, and devoted herself to a life-long service in the Seventh-day Adventist Church of which she was one of the founders. She wrote prolifically on many subjects, among them education, including aims of education, the topic of the present study.

Ellen White's ideas of education were formed during a time when influential thinkers such as Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) and John Dewey (1859-1952) were developing their theories, and the Manual Training and Vocational Education movements were gaining momentum. The ideas of Spencer, Dewey, and the proponents of the manual education movements were explored, against a short background sketch of the Greek and Hebrew roots of Western thought. The influence of the Renaissance and the Reformation periods on education was also briefly examined.

Greece emphasized physical fitness for military service as well as intellectual development through the study of ideas, logic, poetry, and art. Neither offered much training in technology or commerce, both of which were considered degrading and left to slaves. The Hebrews placed primary emphasis on instruction in the Torah—the law. The principles of love and justice were embodied in the Law—the law of God, and the will of God as revealed in the writings of the Old Testament, but practical, vocational preparation for life was also important. The Hebrews believed in the dignity of labor, its social values, as well as its beneficial influence upon intellectual pursuits.

With the Renaissance and the Reformation, the two strands of Greek and Hebrew

influence continued in the Western world. The Renaissance represented a renewed interest in the learning and literature of ancient Greece and Rome while the Reformation, on the other hand, brought about a return to the authority of the Scriptures with its moral and religious instruction and showed an interest in manual labor, including the learning of a trade.

Still, classical education persisted until challenged during the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries by educational thinkers. During the same period fundamental changes were taking place in Western Europe and North America, primarily as a result of the Industrial Revolution. A predominantly agricultural society was being transformed into an increasingly industrial, urban society with the factory system replacing a domestic industry. Democratic societies were dawning on the horizon by the nineteenth century, while new ideas in science and religion challenged the hegemony of classical education.

Science was also knocking at the door of manual and technical education. The Manual Training Movement of the second half of the nineteenth century and the Vocational Education Movement at the beginning of the twentieth century were influential in shaping the education of the time. Their roots lay in the Manual Labor Movement of the early nineteenth century. In addition to these movements, the ideas of two influential thinkers, contemporaries of Ellen White, provide a context to her educational ideas: Herbert Spencer and John Dewey. Both made a radical break with classical, educational philosophy and emphasized practical, naturalistic, and non-religious education. Both rejected Christianity and embraced the evolutionary theory.

White agreed with those of her time who saw little value in the classical studies. Although she recognized the need for some Greek and Latin scholars,¹ her priorities were the same as those of the Reformation—the centrality of the Scriptures. She also agreed with the Hebrews’ emphasis on manual labor and the desirability of learning a trade, which was reflected in the Manual Labor Movement as well as in the later movements of manual training and vocational education.

Ellen White did not oppose intellectual achievements; in fact, she encouraged them, but they had to be combined with spiritual power for worthy purposes. She also favored scientific knowledge, especially of the laws governing healthful living, but again, it had to contribute to the development of all the powers of the human being, and to the service of God and mankind. In her perspective, “true education does not ignore the value of scientific knowledge or literary acquirements; but above information it values power; above power, goodness; above intellectual acquirements, character. The world . . . need[s] men . . . of noble character . . . in whom ability is controlled by steadfast principle.”²

The Knowledge of Most Worth

The knowledge Ellen White considered to be the most important for mankind

¹See Ellen G. White, “The Bible in Our Schools,” *Review and Herald*, 17 August 1897, 513.

²White, *Education*, 225. Howard A. Ozmon and Samuel M. Craver express a similar sentiment regarding the idealists: “What they want in society is not just the literate, knowledgeable person but the *good* person.” *Philosophical Foundations of Education*, 6th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill, 1999), 28.

extended beyond scientific knowledge and technical skills to meet humanity's greatest need. Human beings needed most of all a regenerated heart, the image of God restored in the soul. For that to take place a correct knowledge of God was vital; it was the knowledge of most worth. White held that the predicament of the human family stemmed from the parents of the human race making a fatal choice in regard to knowledge: they chose the knowledge of evil instead of the knowledge of good. White interpreted the knowledge of evil as the knowledge of the character of Satan, which is an experiential, deadly knowledge of sin and all its consequences—hardship, heavy burdens, disappointments, bitterness, pain, sickness, sorrow, anguish, and death. The knowledge of good, on the other hand, she understood to be the knowledge of the character of God, a life-giving knowledge resulting in peace, righteousness, happiness, and joy throughout eternity.

White maintained that the key to the knowledge of God is faith. This key was cast away when, in the garden of Eden, Eve accepted the flattering falsehood of Satan: She distrusted God's goodness and wisdom, disbelieved His word, and rejected His authority. All of this, White believed, could be reversed through the divine plan of redemption of which true education is an integral part, and the foundation of which is a true knowledge of God. Ellen White referred to this redemption as the restoration of the image of God in the human soul. It was the great object of life, the ultimate aim of education.

In the beginning God created Adam, the father of the human race in His own physical, mental, and spiritual image. White equated the moral image of God with His moral character and referred to it also as God's glory which human beings were to reflect

more and more fully throughout eternity as they gained “new treasures of knowledge” and obtained “clearer and yet clearer conceptions of the wisdom, the power, and the love of God.”¹ However, through sin, this likeness to God in the human being was almost obliterated. Hence there is a need for restoring the image of God in the human being through faith and a correct knowledge of God.

Herbert Spencer and John Dewey also recognized humanity’s imperfections and needs. Unlike Ellen White, however, they rejected the biblical account of humanity’s origin, nor did they acknowledge the problem of degradation and sin, which they saw as mere lack of progress in the evolutionary scheme. Their solution to humanity’s needs was not redemption and restoration; it lay in science—scientific knowledge obtained through reason and the scientific method. For Spencer and Dewey the knowledge of most worth was science. All external, supernatural authority was rejected. The solution was the human being’s own naturalistic, scientific thinking employing the experimental methods of science in the aid of evolutionary progress.

Likewise, the manual labor movement had a narrow, although worthy, focus of manual skills and related moral values such as honesty, industriousness, thrift, and pride in workmanship. These ideals were eventually superseded by or to some degree incorporated in the vocational education movement, the exclusive focus of which was knowledge and skills preparing young people for jobs needed in the growing economy.

All these ideas fell short of White’s broad, deep, and far-reaching vision for the human race based on her Christian, biblical worldview in general and her epistemological

¹White, *Education*, 15.

concepts in particular. The human race came into being through design and purpose and its destiny reaches far beyond the grave. Beyond physical strength and intellectual achievements White saw spiritual aims to attain. In addition to knowledge of the physical, natural world, White recognized the realm of spiritual truth and knowledge. Instead of the finality of the earthly existence, White envisioned an eternity of advancing in knowledge of God and the wonders of His creation, an eternity of happiness and joy that comes from serving God. Thus, White's vision for humanity's progress and destiny, anchored in the character and eternal purposes of the Creator of the universe, differed radically from the vision of the liberal, secular, humanistic thinkers of her day. Rather than scientific knowledge, a correct knowledge of God was essential.

Aims

Many of Spencer's aims of education were in general agreement with White's educational ideas. Like White, Spencer emphasized understanding the causes of diseases as well as knowledge of the laws of physiology and health for individuals and for parenthood. He also underlined the need for moral and intellectual training of parents and children, as did White. But whereas Spencer focused on the present world, White consistently looked to the kingdom of God and the world to come. White was less interested in the social and political affairs of this world than in the work of God in the earth. That did not mean that White did not care for the well-being of society. She certainly did. Her ideas, however, were in harmony with her worldview and aims of education—individuals and families reflecting the image of God would be society's

greatest blessing. “The greatest want of the world,” White maintained, “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.”¹ White understood this to be a description of a noble character, a centerpiece of the image of God in the human being, a core value in the ultimate aims of education.

Dewey also had lofty ideas of the ultimate end and value in education: “The educational end and the ultimate test of the value of what is learned is its use and application in carrying on and improving the common life of all.”² Dewey believed in social progress and humanity’s own power to attain to the common good for all. White believed a noble character was “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.”³ Dewey had a humanistic point of reference, White a spiritual one. The irreconcilable difference between the two lay in the source of power to attain to the noble aspirations. Dewey believed in the power of humanism, naturalism, and the scientific method;⁴ White

¹White, *Education*, 57.

²John Dewey, “The Need of a Philosophy of Education,” in *John Dewey on Education: Selected Writings*, ed. R. D. Archambault (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 11.

³White, *Education*, 57.

⁴*John Dewey: The Early Works, vol. 4, 1882-1898*, ed. J. A. Boydston and F. Bowers, *Reconstruction* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1971), 102. See also Rockefeller, 216-217.

believed in the grace and the power of Christ.¹

White's views of the ultimate aims of education had their roots in her philosophical concepts. God is the ultimate reality, the Creator of all there is. He created human beings in His own image. When the parents of the human race failed the test of loyalty to God, their nature became sinful. They had chosen the knowledge of evil and rejected the knowledge of good. Through sin the image of God was almost obliterated. The life that is now granted the human race has one great aim: the restoration of the image of God in the human being. It is, therefore, also the ultimate aim of true education. In view of White's belief that God is the ultimate reality, the source of all truth and all true knowledge, it follows that He is also the source of all true education. Specifically, White stated that "*in a knowledge of God* all true knowledge and real development have their source."²

White maintained that before the restoration of God's image can begin, the individuals must recognize their sinfulness, see their need for redemption, and desire it. They must repent and accept Christ's forgiveness and salvation. In other words, conversion or a new birth is a condition for the restoration of the image of God in the human soul; thus it is a primary aim of education.

The image of God in the human being has several facets. In White's writings four significant aspects come to light. First, there is freedom of choice; the possibility of obeying or disobeying the Creator. This freedom of choice involves the capability of

¹See White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 254, and idem, *Education*, 29.

²White, *Education*, 14. Italics supplied.

appreciating the wisdom and goodness of God's character and the justice of His requirements. It is the basis for the development of character and the moral responsibility for one's actions. Without freedom of choice there would be no moral or spiritual image of God in the human being.

Second, there is dignity—dignity of origin as well as physical, mental, and moral dignity with which human beings were invested at creation. This dignity is manifested in physical strength, health, and beauty; in nobility of thoughts and purity of heart in harmony with the divine character of meekness, gentleness, and sympathy. A hallmark of this God-given dignity is self-control.

Third, there is individuality. White called it the “power to think and to do,”¹ involving the mind, the will, the judgment, and the conscience. It is intelligently and willingly, never blindly, subject to God and never under the control of another human being. The mind is free to be creative and original, yet this freedom is found in harmony with God, His character and will.² Individuality is expressed in creative and clear thinking, planning and acting, directing enterprises, accepting responsibilities, and demonstrating moral courage and leadership. For the preservation of God-given individuality the will must be trained to obey the dictates of a sanctified reason and a conscience enlightened by the Holy Spirit.

Fourth, there is the character of love, the fundamental element of God's nature,

¹White, *Education*, 17.

²The original deception was the suggestion that freedom could be found apart from God, the source of all good. In fact, estrangement from God leads directly to slavery to evil.

the essence of who God is. This character of love was revealed in Christ's tenderness, compassion, sympathy, and consideration of others. It was manifested in mercy and forgiveness but also in justice and righteousness. The principle of God's character is the principle of self-sacrificing love.

White believed that the restoration of God's image in the individual is a lifelong process synonymous with sanctification and requiring daily conversion and daily commitment to God. It involves the development of all one's powers, physical, mental, and spiritual, through the grace of Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit. It requires the cooperation of the human being, an important educational concept. Spencer and Dewey also had great faith in progress and development, and they also called for the cooperation of the individual in this process. Spencer spoke of the "highest life" and "the highest happiness" as "active altruism," requiring all to give mutual help in achieving set goals and avoiding evil.¹ Dewey's idea was social growth through full and free association and interaction of all the members of society. Thus mankind could accomplish its own salvation and bring about a just and good society by itself. "When science and art . . . join hands," Dewey stated, "the most commanding motive for human action will be reached, the most genuine springs of human conduct aroused, and the best service that human nature is capable of guaranteed."² The optimism of the progressive movement in reaching the goals of life and of education was indeed great. As Rockefeller observed,

¹See Duncan, 576.

²John Dewey, "My Pedagogic Creed," in *John Dewey on Education: Selected Writings*, ed. R. D. Archambault (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 437-439.

the human being's own power, reason, intelligence, scientific methodology, and technology may go a long way to achieve noble goals and alleviate wrongs, but the source of evil in human nature itself may make the realization impossible.¹ White had a very definite answer to mankind's predicament: "It is impossible," she claimed, "for us, of ourselves, to escape from the pit of sin in which we are sunken. Our hearts are evil, and we cannot change them. . . . Education, culture, the exercise of the will, human effort, all have their proper sphere, but here they are powerless. They may produce an outward correctness of behavior, but they cannot change the heart."²

Aims of education must be attainable or else they are only a wishful thinking, an unrealistic dream. White realized this when she wrote the chapter entitled "Source and Aim of True Education" in her book *Education*. In that chapter she stated that "in order to understand what is comprehended in the work of education, we need to consider both the nature of man and the purpose of God in creating him. We need to consider also the change in man's condition through the coming in of a knowledge of evil, and God's plan for still fulfilling His glorious purpose in the education of the human race."³ So, in White's view, the education of the human race is God's work. He has a plan, a purpose, and an aim in that education. It is a true religious education in which God invites human beings to cooperate with Him in the work of restoring His image in them. In all educational effort God invites human beings to cooperate with the power of Christ in

¹See Rockefeller, 221-222.

²White, *Steps to Christ*, 18.

³White, *Education*, 14-15.

order to attain the ultimate aim of education.

This cooperation involves the development of all one's powers in preparation for service. In the words of White "it means that in the whole being—the body, the mind, as well as the soul—the image of God is to be restored."¹ In a major chapter entitled "Proper Education,"² White first discussed mental development, stressing the importance of self-control, and of acting from reason and principle. She called the mind "the capital of the body," whose function was to rule the human being and, through an "intelligent will," to control all of its powers. White strongly advocated the highest cultivation of the mind and the highest intellectual achievements balanced by religious principles in the love and fear of God. The greatest means of mental development, White held, were communion with God through the study of His word.

Second, White considered the development of the physical powers of great importance as the body was the servant of the mind. A sound mind required a healthy body. White, therefore, advocated healthful diet and also physical exercise, preferably in the form of useful labor. Physical exercise would prevent the mind from being overworked, give vigor to mental activities, and promote purity of character. Useful labor would prevent the evils of idleness and also prepare the individual for the practical duties in life.

Finally, Ellen White considered the development of the moral and spiritual powers, that is, character building, "the most important work ever entrusted to human

¹Ibid., 16.

²White, *Testimonies*, 3:131-160.

beings.”¹ This moral and spiritual development was character building. A noble character of firm principles was the result of self-discipline, of subjecting the lower nature to the higher nature. White believed that the divine law of loving God supremely and one’s neighbor as oneself was the true foundation and guide for character development. She claimed that the fundamental elements of a noble character are self-denial and self-sacrifice for the glory of God and for the good of others. The greatest means of moral and spiritual development, White held, is the highest study in which anyone can engage—the study of redemption. She called it “science of all sciences.”²

Central to a noble character of love is unselfish ministry, the joy of giving. White claimed that it is the “law of life for the universe . . . representing the character of the great Giver,”³ and she called for the devotion of all the powers of the person to the service of God and our fellow human beings. The types of service ranged from evangelism and missionary work at home and abroad, to caring for the poor and the sick. Also included was service of mankind in the common occupations and professional practices. Physical health and strength were foundational to all preparation for service. The mind was to be disciplined by faithfulness to duty and principle. Above all, White regarded being born of the Holy Spirit and having an experiential knowledge of God as an indispensable preparation for serving God and mankind. The capstone of this unselfish service of God and mankind is joy. Like Christ Himself, His followers find their highest joy in service.

¹White, *Education*, 225.

²Ibid., 126.

³White, *Desire of Ages*, 21.

On a deeper level, a direct epistemological connection exists between the ultimate aims of education and the knowledge of most worth—the knowledge of God; between the restoration of God’s image in the human soul and an experiential knowledge of God. Without knowing God deeply, personally, and experientially, an individual will not have the image of God restored in his or her soul. The building blocks, from the foundation up, are the experiences of knowing God personally and intimately through oneness, through communion, and through voluntary, true, sincere, and heartfelt obedience to the will of God.

This experiential knowledge involves both the mind and the heart; both the reason and the will. God appeals to both and requires the surrender of both. God wants individuals to know Him, to accept Him, and experience Him intelligently and wholeheartedly. This experience is also to be an intimate oneness with God in Christ, a harmony with God and His will. It means a complete and entire consecration to God established and maintained by the exercise of personal faith. All of this is through the grace of Christ operating by the work of the Holy Spirit in the human heart. The work, or cooperation, of the sinner is to accept Christ as his or her peace and righteousness. This oneness with God must be through Christ since “only by knowing Christ can we know God.”¹

This experiential knowledge of God is comprehensive, including not only God’s character, His goodness and love, but also His truth, His plans, purposes, and actions, as well as His will and His laws. It includes a personal knowledge of His power to save.

¹White, “Prepare to Meet Thy God,” 8.

The means of this experiential knowledge of God is communion with Him, the most important elements of which are personal prayer and prayerful study of God's word. The knowledge of God in Christ is most clearly revealed in the Scriptures through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Such communion with God requires time. Here God has given mankind the sacred time, the sanctifying time, of the Sabbath. But every day is an appropriate time to cultivate communion with God, not only at regular devotional times, but even throughout a busy day when one may lift up the thoughts to God in silent prayer.

White argued that this communion with God is directly dependent upon conscious obedience to the will of God and His requirements. When Adam disobeyed God his direct communion with God was cut off. Sincere obedience from the heart is a condition of communion with God and it has a bearing on the eternal destiny of human beings. "The condition of eternal life is now," White stated, "just what it always has been—just what it was in Paradise before the fall of our first parents,—perfect obedience to the law of God, perfect righteousness."¹ This is not, however, attainable through unaided human effort. "Ropes of sand"² is the metaphor White used for human resolutions apart from the grace of Christ. Redemption is possible only through the grace and power of Christ. This is the restoration of the image of God in the human soul.

White held that the image of God is fundamentally the character of God, which is

¹White, *Steps to Christ*, 62.

²See, e.g., White, *Steps to Christ*, 47; idem, *Ministry of Healing*, 175; and idem, *Testimonies*, 5:513.

expressed in His law and government. It is His righteousness and holiness. It is love.¹ The restoration of this image in the human soul, the redemption of the human being, is victory, through knowledge of God, in the great controversy—a fundamental theme in White’s writings; the conflict between good and evil, between truth and error, between light and darkness. Restoring the image of God in the human soul is bringing human beings, through Christ, back from darkness, error, and evil, to light, truth, and love. It is bringing them back to divine dignity, individuality, true freedom, and unselfish love, unselfish service of God and fellow human beings. It is victory in the conflict of the ages. Again, human beings will bear the image of their Creator and through endless ages reflect that image more and more fully.

This was Ellen White’s fundamental philosophy of education. Her cluster of ultimate aims of education consisted of the knowledge of God, genuine conversion, restoration of the image of God in the human soul, and reflecting that image, the glory of God, more and more fully throughout eternity.

¹See White, *Mount of Blessing*, 18.

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