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THE EDUCATIONAL IDEAS OF E. G. WHITE

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PART I

Statement of the research problem and outline of American
and European educational theory and practice 1827 to 1900.

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

The educational programme of the Seventh-day Adventist Church has attracted interest for three main reasons:

- (a) its Christian philosophy of education,
- (b) its recent origin,
- (c) its extent.

Throughout most countries of the world the schools of the denomination are found. These range from primary schools to colleges of university level. In Australia, for example, the Avondale College, Cooranbong, N.S.W., prepares students for the University of London B.Sc and for the "Common First Year" Science Course of the University of N.S.W. It also is affiliated with Pacific Union College, California, U.S.A., an officially accredited institution of higher learning, through which it offers Bachelor of Arts degrees in Secondary Education, and Theology.

In the United States of America the denomination operates two universities: Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, and Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California. The latter is an American Medical Association - approved medical centre. It has major schools (Dentistry, Medicine, Nursing) and six related professional schools (Nutrition and Dietetics, Medical Technology, Physical Therapy, Radiologic Technology, Public Health and Tropical

Medicine, and Graduate Studies).

"The Adventists to-day operate the second largest Protestant parochial-school system in the United States and the largest Protestant church-school program outside of North America" (Delafield, 1963, p. 19). All told, the denomination, at the end of 1966, operated 4,723 elementary schools throughout the world, and 416 secondary schools and colleges. 296,204 students were enrolled in the elementary schools and 84,244 in the secondary schools and colleges, while 18,922 teachers were employed (Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1968, p. 18). Mitchell (1958, pp. 106, 107) states, "The Adventists are a highly literate people. Compared proportionately with the general American public, three times as many American Adventists are college graduates and one and a half times as many have completed the high-school grades. Twice as many of the general population, proportionately stop their education at or below the eighth grade".

That E. G. White was largely responsible for the guidance and development of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's educational programme is generally recognized both within the church and outside it. On her death, an editorial in "The Independent" stated, "Their work began in 1853 in Battle Creek, and it has grown until now they have thirty-seven publishing houses throughout the world, with literature in eighty different languages. . . . They have now seventy colleges and academies, and about forty sanitariums; and in all this Ellen G. White has been the inspiration and guide"

(Aug. 23, 1915, p. 250). In Seventh-day Adventist literature, such words as the following frequently occur: "These three volumes [writings of E. G. White] prove to be of great service to parents in their homes, to teachers in the schools, and to the administrators of educational work. They constitute a sort of blue print or pattern for that work" (General Conference Department of Education, 1949, p. 5), and, "But as our institutions entered upon their work many lessons were learned from experience and invaluable counsel was gained from the revelations which were given to Ellen White nurturing, guiding, and guarding this important line of work" (General Conference Department of Education, 1949, p. 4).

W. A. Spicer, an ex-President of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, its governing body, wrote:

Any survey of the whole system - from church schools to academies and junior and senior colleges, with one medical college beyond the senior college circle - reveals the Spirit of prophecy [the messages delivered by White, believed by the Adventist Church to have been communicated to her by God] as a major influence in its development. The educational leaders who have wrought out the system through the years are the first to testify to their indebtedness to that gift" (Spicer, 1937, p. 78).

In view of the extent of the Seventh-day Adventist educational system, and its philosophy, the assertions that White was the major influence in its development, and that her writings still are the "blue print or pattern for that work", make her writings significant. While some studies of her ideas have been made, none, to the knowledge of the writer, has attempted to compare them with those

current in her day in order to ascertain her contribution to education. This gap the present study endeavours to fill.

The research problem was fourfold:

(1) To study White's life history in order to appreciate her work generally, and to gauge her influence on the Adventist educational system of her day.

(2) To investigate the writings of White in order to ascertain her educational ideas.

(3) To study nineteenth century educational thought and practice, mainly in the United States.

(4) By examining White's educational ideas in the context of the educational thought and practice of the nineteenth century, to evaluate her contribution to education.

SOURCES OF DATA

The material written on educational theory and practice in the U.S.A. and Europe was gathered from histories of education, works of educators, and readings in educational history. The educational ideas of White were gathered from her own writings. Books, pamphlets, and periodicals published by the Seventh-day Adventist denomination, correspondence with the Board of Trustees of the Ellen G. White Publications, and with Dr. Raymond Moore, an Adventist educator, together with manuscripts supplied by them, were also used.

METHOD OF PROCEDURE

White's educational ideas were noted from a study of her writings and form the basis of Parts II and III of this research. The characteristics of American and European educational theory and practice 1827 to 1900 outlined in Part I, were arrived at from a study of the sources mentioned, particular attention having been given to the topics connected with White's ideas. White's ideas were considered in the context of those of the nineteenth century in Part III.

White's life story was summarised from her own writings and other historical records in order to understand her background and her contribution to the Seventh-day Adventist Educational System of her day.

Throughout, the investigator endeavoured to maintain the scientific attitude. Accordingly, judgments were based on the evidence available, and not on preconceived notions. No attempt was made to examine the genuineness of White's claim to have received her ideas on education by revelation from God.

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Education. This term is used in two ways. When referring to White's educational ideas it means "the aggregate of all the processes by means of which a person develops abilities, attitudes, and other forms of behaviour of positive value in the society in

which he lives" (Good, 1959, p. 191). When referring to schooling, it has a more limited meaning: "the social process by which people are subjected to the influence of a selected and controlled environment . . . so that they may attain social competence and optimum individual development" (Good, 1959, p. 191).

Christian Education. "Training in appreciation and practice of principles enunciated by Jesus" (Good, 1959, p. 92), and often used by White to include the normal subjects of the curriculum such as history, nature study and arithmetic.

Philosophy. "An integrated personal view that serves to guide the individual's conduct and thinking" (Good, 1959, p. 395).

Philosophy of Education. "Any philosophy dealing with or applied to the process of public or private education and used as a basis for the general determination, interpretation, and evaluation of educational problems having to do with objectives, practices, outcomes, child and social needs, materials of study, and all other aspects of the field" (Good, 1959, p. 395).

Elementary Education. "The period of formal education beginning in childhood, usually at the age of 5 to 7 years, and ending approximately with adolescence; defined as including grades 1 to 8, and sometimes nursery school and kindergarten, or as ending with grade 6" (Good, 1959, p. 197). In the early nineteenth century these age limits did not always apply, and older young people were found in elementary schools learning reading, writing and

arithmetic.

Nursery Education. "Provision for the physical, motor, health, nutritional, intellectual, aesthetic, emotional, and social development of the preschool child" (Good, 1959, p. 370).

Kindergarten. "An educational set up or section of a school system, devoted to the education of small children, usually from four to six years of age" (Good, 1959, p. 307).

Secondary Education. "A period of education planned especially for young people of ages approximately twelve to seventeen" (Good, 1959, p. 491).

College. May be "an institution of higher education, usually offering only a curriculum in the liberal arts and sciences, and empowered to confer degrees" or "a major division of a university (usually the division of arts and sciences), especially one that requires for admission no study beyond the completion of secondary education" (Good, 1959, p. 108).

Character Education. "Education designed to develop characters that conform to some system of morality" (Good, 1959, p. 85).

Character. "Structural or enduring elements or characteristics which give continuity to personality over time" and "often viewed in relation to some system of morality or criterion of value" (Good, 1959, p. 84).