

## 9. The Church and Education (4Q 2020—Education)

**Biblical Material:** Luke 10:30–37, Matt. 5:14–16, Luke 4:18–23, Jer. 29:13, Matt. 7:7, 1 Thess. 2:6–8.

### Quotes

- Much of the philosophy of religious education has been based upon a false premise, and perhaps many have missed the essence of Christian experience, having had religious training take its place. *Billy Graham*
- I think there is a great deal to be said for religious education in the sense of teaching about religion and biblical literacy. Both those things, by the way, I suspect will prepare a child to give up religion. If you are taught comparative religion, you are more likely to realise that there are other religions than the one you have been brought up in. And if you are if you are taught to read the bible, I can think of almost nothing more calculated to turn you off religion. *Richard Dawkins*
- The Biblical educator must not only have a Christian understanding of the material, he must have a Biblical understanding of the student. If he does not, then the result will be a hybrid Christian methodology employed to achieve a humanistic goal. *Douglas Wilson*
- The Church is not a gallery for the better exhibition of eminent Christians, but a school for the education of imperfect ones. *Henry Ward Beecher*
- It is so important that our churches, our Christian schools and we, as individuals, do not allow non-Christian influences to influence our beliefs. *Jonathan Falwell*
- No man who worships education has got the best out of education. Without a gentle contempt for education no man's education is complete. *G.K. Chesterton*

### Questions

Why is the church, especially our church, so interested in education? How are the gospel and education related to one another? What would happen if we were anti-education? Have we invested too much in our educational program to the detriment of other activities? How would you best describe what we are trying to achieve when it comes to spiritual education?

### Bible summary

Luke 10:30–37 provides Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan. "You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill can't be hidden. No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a bucket. No, it's placed on a lamp-stand and it provides light to everyone in the house. In the same way you should let your light shine before everyone so they can see the good things you do and praise your heavenly Father." Matt. 5:14-16 FBV. Jesus announces the manifesto for his mission and ministry in Luke 4:18–23. "You will look for me and you will find me when you're completely committed to looking for me." Jer. 29:13 FBV. "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you." Matt. 7:7 FBV. Paul makes it clear to the Thessalonians that when he shared the gospel it was not for any personal benefit—in fact it cost him a great deal to come and share the good news and educate them. (1 Thess. 2:6–8).

### Comment

The church has always played a role in education. In fact the spreading of the gospel requires the transmission of information and experience, which is a process of education.

For a faith community that has made the second advent its trademark it comes as a surprise for some that we invest so heavily in education. After all, if the coming of the Lord is near, what value is there in making such a massive commitment to an educational system?

Yet we do—to the tune of multiple millions of dollars, with over a million students in schools from kindergarten to universities. An educational program that is billed as the largest Protestant school system in the world, for which we can praise God.

But the question returns—why? Why do we as Adventists make so much of education—more than any other comparable religious organization? What is our reason?

Part of the answer is in our history. It was recognized early on that the church needed to establish schools to educate its children; to provide an environment that would be conducive to learning along Adventist principles, and which would avoid the problems of public schooling on the Sabbath. Our early church leaders saw the importance of education not only to the members, but also to the church itself.

This perspective has paid rich dividends. Adventist education has safeguarded many, and has provided a reasoned faith to last a lifetime. Through education we have established a faith that makes sense, that provides answers to life's questions of meaning and purpose, that gives hope and assurance now and in the future.

But that's not the whole story. Our commitment to education is more to do with the way we understand the nature of humanity. Recognizing the spiritual, mental and physical components that make up who we are, we cannot simply focus on the spiritual alone to the neglect of the other aspects. The quality of life that is so important to us as Adventists demands that we take seriously such needs of education in the mental and physical areas also. We believe in the totality of each human being.

The root meaning of education is to “lead out”—to aid the student in leading out their true potential. That's our call. Not to take an individual and bend them to our will and purpose, but to help them develop the gifts and talents God has placed there. Even to show them new ones that Spirit can bring. Albert Einstein said that “It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge.”

Ours is the commitment to excellence. We are not satisfied with second best. In whatever field of study we seek to be the best we can be, not from a sense of glory or pride, but to demonstrate our dedication to the Author of All Truth. Ours is not an obscurantist gospel, but the gospel of openness and fairness and truth and right. Our beliefs need no apology: we stand firm on the promises of God who invites us to come and reason together.

### **Ellen White comments**

The subject of education is one that should interest every Seventh-day Adventist. The Lord says to us, Seventh-day Adventists are not to place themselves under the counsel and instruction of teachers who know not the truth for this time. The molding and fashioning of minds should not be left to men who have not comprehend the importance of a preparation for that life which measures with the life of God. {RH, March 12, 1908 par. 1 }

The education and training of the youth is an important and solemn work. The great object to be secured should be the proper development of character, that the individual may be fitted to rightly discharge the duties of the present life, and to enter at last upon the future, immortal life. Eternity will reveal the manner in which the work has been performed. {CE 24.1 }