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# **THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS: Changing the paradigm**

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## **The ecological crisis: changing the paradigm**

The severe ecological crisis in which we live has been identified as a crisis of the present society values. The aim of this essay is to discuss the historical roots of the modern ecological crisis and its consequences in terms of paradigms that base Environmental Education actions.

Educational processes have been attempting to recover the values clearly and precisely expressed by God during Creation, looking for new environmental ethics.

Adventist educational philosophy sees the recovery of these values as a product of the integration of faith and Learning in Environmental Education. That integration constitutes the only guarantee of consistent ethical changes, accompanied by coherent acts.

### **1. Environmental Crisis and Ethics**

The debate over the relationship between humanity and nature has occurred since a very early time<sup>1</sup>. Philosophers, scientists, artists and religious people have expressed their admiration for nature, as well as their concern about the human /nature balance. That concern originated from the break in an harmonious relationships between our first parents and God.

Adam and Eve were created by God with a deep responsibility concerning the harmonious balance among human beings, and between humans nature and God. Sin broke these delicate relationships. But, when Eve chose to eat the forbidden fruit, she was also choosing to trust Satan in opposition to God. At the same time she started to use nature based on an egocentric and rationalistic ethic. She wanted to eat the fruit more than she wanted to obey God. Her desire was put above God's prohibition (egotism). Her reasoning was placed above God's revealed will (rationalistic anthropocentrism). When Adam realized the decisive consequences of Eve's choice, he

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1 VERNIER, J. *O meio ambiente*. Campinas, SP : Papyrus, 1992, p. 7.

refused to trust that God would provide for his needs, and, loving her more than he loved God, he quickly ate the fruit.

Immediately after, Adam and Eve felt themselves ashamed in God's presence and started blaming one another and the serpent for their disobedience. The balance between Creator and His creatures was broken.

The first couple's behavior was to be reflected in all relationships among human beings, and between human beings and nature from then on. The consequences of those new set of egotistic and rationalistic values were terribly shown when Adam and Eve cried upon the dead body of their beloved son Abel.

Despite the fact that the emergence of this new ethic occurred simultaneously with that of sin in the Earth, the power of influence of anthropocentric ethics on the destinies of human civilization would gain great emphasis in humanism. The transition between the medieval and the modern world occurred with the entrance of a new order of ideas, in which the dominance of an anthropocentric worldview was shown with sophistication in Renaissance society. In opposition to the medieval theology, a new kind of human being would appear, whose logical structure placed him/her in the center of the universe. The development of science brought radical transformations to the Aristotelian idea of animated nature, which was colorful, full of sounds, smells and virtues. In the new mechanistic paradigm, nature began to be compared to a clock, which functions mechanically and can be mathematically described<sup>2</sup>.

Descartes (1596-1650) suggested reason as an ideal tool for establishing irrefutable truths. In possession of reason, humans can examine nature outside themselves. As a consequence, the dichotomy between humans and nature legitimizes the power of dominating, controlling and utilizing nature more than ever. It is in the basis of this dichotomy that we can find the philosophical

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2 GRÜN, M. *Ética e educação ambiental : a conexão necessária*. Campinas, SP : Papirus, 1996, pp. 27-28.

genesis of the modern ecological crisis. The difference between subject (human) and object (nature), was also legitimized by the methodological procedure of natural sciences causing the distance between subject and his object. Cartesianism combined with a misunderstood view of Christianity, was the basis of an ethic in which humans were the lords and exploiters of nature. All modern education was built upon that misguided ethic. The autonomy of reason, identified by individualism and rationalism, would be joined by pragmatism, based on utilitarian ethics, where nature is valued only for its use<sup>3</sup>.

The Industrial Revolution, which began in England in the eighteenth century, enabled the establishment of the capitalist system in the twentieth century, initiating the consumerism and intensifying humanity/nature separation. The motive underlying the quest for knowledge about the environment was based on the need for control and exploitation of natural resources. At the same time, scientists were describing and cataloging natural species, making nature appear simply innocuous, as if sitting for a photograph<sup>4</sup>.

In 1863, Thomas Huxley expressed his concern about the dichotomy between humans and nature writing about the interdependencies between humans and other living beings. The next year, George P. Marsh presented a detailed survey about the effect of human exploitation on natural resources, directing people's attention to ecological disasters as one of the causes of decay of ancient civilizations, warning modern societies about the same danger<sup>5</sup>.

Writing about the danger of the dichotomy human/nature worldview, White, as early as 1903, placed emphasis on the similarity between laws which rule nature, and those that rule human

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3 Ibid., pp. 26-32.

4 Ibid., pp. 29-30.

5 DIAS, G. F. *Educação ambiental : princípios e práticas*. 5. ed. São Paulo : Global, 1998.

beings<sup>6</sup>. In 1898 the same author warned that the disharmony between human society and nature was the cause of poverty and misery in the world<sup>7</sup>.

However, for a long time, there was the feeling that nature, with its marvelous purifying power, would be able to absorb and neutralize man's aggressions against it<sup>8</sup>. At the same time, we would expect from science a solution for the environmental problems that have been caused by progress. The incredible quantities of information collected by each scientific specialty, even when gathered together does not increase the awareness about the integrated operation of the planet. On the contrary, it is impossible to gather enough scientific information to understand the interactions of the planet with the economic and cultural systems of humanity<sup>9</sup>.

We have verified that the compilation of data almost never solves problems, because the speed of emergence of new problems is constantly greater than the speed of unraveling and solving the previous problems. The emergency of the environmental crisis is an explicit concern in Education, and it was preceded by a process of systematically submitting society to ecological issues<sup>10</sup>. Donald Worster identifies 1945 as the symbolic mark for the beginning of that process. The burst of Hiroshima and Nagasaki's atomic bombs brought consciousness of the actual possibility of complete destruction of the planet. The atomic bomb ironically planted the first seeds of the contemporaneous environmentalism.

Socioenvironmental problems emerged at the end of the sixties, which were severely menacing to the survival of life on the earth. Air and water pollution, and soil erosion, for instance,

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6 WHITE, E.G. *Education*. Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1953, p.103.

7 WHITE, E.G. *The Desire of Ages*. p. 346.

8 VERNIER, J. *O meio ambiente*. Campinas, SP : Papirus, 1994, p. 7.

9 SÃO PAULO( Estado). SECRETARIA DO MEIO AMBIENTE. *Conceitos para se fazer educação ambiental*. 2. ed. São Paulo : A Secretaria, 1997, p. 20.

began transcending national frontiers, generating regional or worldwide concerns. Those new problems did not seem liable to solution by isolated scientific or educational projects.

The questioning about different types of global development were systematized in 1968 by a report ordered by the “*Clube de Roma*” (Club of Rome). In 1972 the Club published the report *The Limits of Growth*, denouncing the idea that increasing worldwide consumption would conduct humanity to a limit and possible collapse. After some months, the UN Conference on Human Environment took place in Sweden, admitting the need of Environmental Education development as an important factor in the struggle against the environmental crisis in the world.

After more than a quarter of a century, we can say that the subjects related to the environment are part of public awareness<sup>12</sup>. We have already been conscious that natural resources are finite and insufficient to meet the unbearable demand of the human population. However, present societies have admitted indifferent behaviors, both consciously and unconsciously, resisting to change whatever is necessary, unless these changes guarantee immediate pleasure and power. Through this ethic, people just live and are responsible for their own lives. At the same time, a great majority merely does not realize what is going on, while suffering the consequences of that fierce model<sup>13</sup>. Evidently our civilization is unsustainable if our scale of values is held within the present patterns. Such diagnosis shows us that ecologically responsible deeds should be directly related to a change of values<sup>14</sup>. That change effectively comprises an educational problem of complex nature.

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10 GRÜN, M. *Ética e educação ambiental : a conexão necessária*. Campinas, SP : Papyrus, 1996, p. 16.

11 WORSTER, D. *Nature's economy : a history of ecological ideas*. New York : Cambridge, 1992.

12 LOCKTON, H. A. *Seeing green: adventist and the environment*. Christ in the classroom, Silver Spring, v.8.

13 VIEIRA, J.A. *Ética e meio ambiente*. In: Cadernos do III fórum de educação ambiental. GAIA, São Paulo, p. 27, 1995.

14 CADERNOS DO III FÓRUM DE EDUCAÇÃO AMBIENTAL. GAIA, São Paulo, p. 23.

Environmental Education appeared in that context as a new way of facing the human being's role in the world, a new proposal for the rational and discerning management of this interdependent binomial: economy/environment. However, the problem is not related to questioning whether Environmental Education is essential, but which kind of Environmental Education is important, in order to incite a change of values and behaviors.

GRÜN<sup>15</sup> determines that the main task of Environmental Education is to encourage the return of values that rule the acts of humanity harmoniously related to nature, which are suppressed by the predominant tradition of Cartesian rationalism.

The Letter of Belgrade, of 1975, states that the Environmental Education goal is to develop a citizen informed about the complete environment, concerned about the problems related to that environment, and having the knowledge, posture, stimuli, involvement and skills to work both individually and collectively in search of results, in order to solve the present and future problems<sup>16</sup>. Which country does not need a citizen like that? What kind of education would support this project?

## 2. Education, School and Environment

The relations among education, school and environment have historically reflected the relations of society and science to the global environment. Up through previous decades, the teaching of sciences was mainly based on an anthropocentric ethic, using and regarding the environment only as a source of natural resources available to human beings. Because of that, there are such expressions

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15 GRÜN, M. *Ética e educação ambiental* : a conexão necessária. Campinas, SP : Papirus, 1996, p. 22.

16 SÃO PAULO( Estado) . SECRETARIA DO MEIO AMBIENTE. *Conceitos para se fazer educação ambiental*. 2. ed. São Paulo : A Secretaria, 1997, p. 22.

17 SANSOLO, D.G., MAZOCHI, L.H. *Educação, escola e meio ambiente*. In: Cadernos do III fórum de educação ambiental, *GAIA*, São Paulo, p. 23, 1995.

as *harmful animals* or *useful plants*, *water necessary for population*, *importance of the soil to the man/woman*, and other anthropocentrisms . In Brazil the teacher would ask the pupils to know by heart the names of the rivers which flow into the Amazon river, emphasizing the importance of those that are sources of greater richness for people, due to the presence of ores, wood and other products from the region. On the other side of the same Cartesian rationalism, most natural sciences teachers insist on relating the concept of nature to the untouchable ecosystems, imposing a naturalistic aspect to the school curriculum. That consideration avoids the observance and analysis of the factors of alteration or degradation caused by progress. The field trips are directed to such environments as woods, jungles, and rocky coasts, while the environments in transformation are conspicuously ignored. When working with physical geography, for instance, the teacher would open up the relief, climate, vegetation and hydrography as segments of the natural world, managing to identify ecosystems or biomes since these ecosystems or biomes are completely disjoined from social relations. Modified ecosystems, like urban channels, parks and green regions of the city, polluted groundwater, open cast sewer from the slums, real estate speculation, and development of slums, would not even not be mentioned <sup>17</sup>. When visiting a barren land, an elementary school science teacher would focus on plants and animals from that region, perhaps managing the concept of the food chain, since the land remained completely distant from the rest of the environment of which it is part.

From the seventies the reformulation of the concept of environment, linked to the recent worldwide events about ecology, showed clearly the mutual relations between nature and society. It placed emphasis on the double integration of human beings with nature and society, showing how we affect and how the environment affects us. Such breakthroughs, along with the popularization of ecological subjects, have generated stress on the authors of schoolbooks. Words like *ecology* and *environment* started appearing more frequently in the textbooks, in spite of being explicitly or implicitly related to the cultural patterns, which work as supporters of anthropocentric ethics. The



very fragmentation of the teaching of sciences at the university level makes difficult the translation of the concepts of reciprocity Man-Nature to the schoolbooks and activities considered as activities related to Environmental Education.

Such difficulties, present at every level of education in the Brazilian schools in general, also appear in the Brazilian Adventist schools, and have interfered in the quality of the programs and activities of Environmental Education carried out by the schools, as well as in the efficacy of the obtained results. Therefore the actual necessity of checking our values, concepts and strategies when planning Environmental Education activities, is evident. However, it is important to mention that the demands and responses of Environmental Education performed by the schools are increasing.

The civil society concerns have been expressed through a strong consensus that something needs to be urgently done in order to interfere in the environmental demotion processes. (Environmental) Education would have to reply to that scenario of perplexity by educating the citizen to value environmental integrity. However, it seems that this response is not occurring, or at the very least it is not occurring in accordance with the need, in order to avoid other catastrophes.

### **3. Catastrophism and Holism**

Scientists and educators have utilized the ecological studies and their catastrophic projections as an incentive for the creation or improvement of the consciousness and of environmentally friendly behaviors. Analyzing the sociopolitical conjuncture of the environmentalist tendency, *Alphandéry et al.* states that fear is qualified as one of the most obvious expressions of ecology at the end of the second millennium<sup>18</sup>. Utilizing the sophisticated scientific equipment currently available, it is possible to describe a frightening scenario about the future possibilities of humanity on the earth.

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18 ALPHANDÉRY, P. [et al]. *O equívoco ecológico : riscos políticos da inconseqüência*. São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1992.

Environmental educators, like Orr<sup>19</sup> and Capra<sup>20</sup>, have argued that any change of students' attitudes in relation to the environment would be conditioned to the understanding of the actual situation of that environment. Paradoxically, that approach has led to a way of thinking about environmental problems which Lasch<sup>21</sup> named the "theory of survival" characterized by an emphasis on the matter of individual survival, and not human being or planet survival. The appeal to the catastrophe, clearly expressed through titles of books like *Earth at a crossroads*<sup>22</sup> or *Avant que la nature meure* (Before nature dies)<sup>23</sup>, ends up generating a cynical pessimism<sup>24</sup> which can be synthesized from the mode proposed by Grun<sup>25</sup> as follows: 1. Things are really bad. 2. Any political attitude, which I can take, seems irrelevant in view of the imminent catastrophe. 3. In this respect, the best thing is to do nothing and to dedicate myself to a celebration in *here and now*. That is an attitude easily identifiable in student groups from the big Brazilian cities, who live in much-degraded environments and are subject to the catastrophic clamor from the media.

On the other hand, the same fear generated by catastrophism has conducted many environmental educators to holism, which has been designated as a new paradigm for the Environmental Education. As the Cartesian model to interpret reality is *reductionist, fragmentary, with no life and mechanical*, the new rule is *complex, holistic, alive and organic*<sup>26</sup>. The birth of holism as a word of order,

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19 ORR, D. *Ecological literacy and the transition to a postmodern world*. Albany : State University of New York , 1992.

20 CAPRA, F. *What is ecological literacy? Guide to ecoliteracy*. Berkeley : The Elmwood Institute, 1993.

21 LASCH, C. *O mínimo eu : a sobrevivência psíquica em tempos difíceis*. São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1986.

22 HARTMUT, B. *Earth at a Crossroads*. [S.l.] : Cambridge University, 1998.

23 DORST, J. *Avant que nature meure : por une ecologie politique*. Neuchâtel, Swiss: Delachoux & Nestlé S.A., 1971.

24 GIDDENS, A. *As conseqüências da modernidade*. São Paulo : UNESP, 1992.

25 GRÜN, M. *Ética e educação ambiental : a conexão necessária*. Campinas, SP : Papirus, 1996, pp. 88.

26 *Ibid.*, pp. 63.

present in the greater part of speeches about Environmental Education, is intuitively used as an opposition to the Cartesian fragmentation system. That concept was historically recovered from the Greeks, for whom nature was aware of its role in guaranteeing the order and maintaining the regularity of the universe. Human beings felt interconnected to a cosmic order and intelligence. In that way, mysticism was inevitably incorporated into the holistic new ideas.

Supposing a divine nature, many Environmental Education programs are based on pantheistic concepts and mystic practices, in order to enable the individual to meet the divinity present in nature, and inside himself.

Brazilian government suggests that Environmental Education should address the student to think about the problems, which influence his life, community, country and planet<sup>27</sup>. That reflection must provide him with opportunities to examine again the values and change behaviors related to his local and global reality. Despite such instructions, the practices of Environmental Education, based on catastrophism or holism, have not turned out to be efficient in terms of change of attitude.

The problem is that an ethics change or even a change of attitudes, in which there is value not using or using less a determined resource, depends on an altruism that is not natural to the non-converted human being. Where is it possible to find ethics patterns in order to revitalize the relationship between humanity and its decadent environment?

#### **4. Bible and Environmental Education**

There should be a Christian awareness that is an environmentally friendly one. When the Bible says that no one lives or dies to himself (Rom. 14: 8), it is asserting an ecological statement that

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27 SÃO PAULO( Estado). SECRETARIA DA EDUCAÇÃO. *Parâmetros curriculares nacionais*. São Paulo: A Secretaria, 1997.

supposes an essential interdependence among all beings. The world is not complete in itself. We join and rely on each other, and we live at the expense of God<sup>28</sup>.

The Protestant ethics has been identified as one of the causes responsible for present practices of environmental exploitation. This identification was based on perceived divine order referring to the fact that humans could dominate and control the Earth (Gen. 1: 28)<sup>29</sup>. On the contrary, the intention of God was that humanity could reproduce, with living beings and their environment, the same relations of care and love determined by Him during Creation. Instructing Adam about the kind of work he would perform in Eden, God stated the first Environmental Protection Act (Gen. 2: 15)<sup>30</sup>, whose interpretation was completely corrupted after the break in friendly relationships between humans and their Creator.

The ecological appeal at the moment evokes the fact that life does not belong to a person, but to everyone. Any aggression to the environment cannot be unpunished because it attacks the common heritage of humanity and violates the golden rule about loving God and one another. The basic purpose of Environmental Education and Ecology (as science) is to bring back the original aspect of a perfect planet.

Doubtless the definitive response to the human ecological dilemma can only be found in the reviving message of the gospel<sup>31</sup>. Human beings are called to have God's image restored in all their relationships, including ecological ones. Therefore, every redeemed person should aim to be a good steward of the planet where we live<sup>32</sup>. The key to the delicate balance between our dependence on

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28 RAMOS, J.C. Evangelho , ecologia e vida. *REVISTA ADVENTISTA*, v. n<sup>o</sup> , Nov.,1993.

29 WHITE, L. The historical roots of our ecological crisis. *SCIENCE*. v. 155, n. 3.767, 1967.

30 BALDWIN, J.T. *Keepers of the garden : the Adventist and the environment*. [S.l.] : Theological Seminary, Andrews University. Jun., 1997.

31 RAMOS, J.C. Evangelho, ecologia e vida. *REVISTA ADVENTISTA*, v. n<sup>o</sup> , Nov., 1993.

32 LOCKTON, H. A. Seeing green : Adventist and the environment . *Christ in the classroom*, Silver Spring, v. 8 .

God and power upon the Earth is in restoration of the divine image of human beings<sup>33</sup>. Therefore, Ecology gets its deeper and transcendental meaning in the Gospel<sup>34</sup>. The reliable and effective stimuli, for the reconstruction of the values and attitudes referring to the relationships of humanity with environment, are in the Gospel and redemption.

However, that message is new, even for the majority of Adventist educators. Surprisingly (having in mind our biblical basis), Brazil's Adventist schools have not been well known as centers of excellence in Environmental Education, and their students have not been considered models of success in the subject. Why?

We can try to explain our results as structural consequences of a country in progress, amid an international scenario of economic instability and social difficulties. Therefore, perhaps the reason is related to the fact that we are still training educators and working with Environmental Education based on secular or even pagan paradigms. But we can also analyze Adventist community worldview concerning environment conservation and preservation. We usually think about ourselves as pilgrims waiting for our Savior to lead us out from this sinful world. As pilgrims maybe we are not interested at all about this planet environment problems, for this is not our definitive house.

Jesus' warning about this sort of worldview is revealed in the parable of the disloyal steward, in which his master expects him to take care of the master's house and his servants (Luke 12: 42-48). In a more decisive statement, Jesus advises us that there will come the time for Him to "destroy those who destroy the earth"( Rev.11:18).

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33 RAMOS, J.C. Evangelho, ecologia e vida. *REVISTA ADVENTISTA*, v. n<sup>o</sup> , Nov.,1993.

34 WHITE, E.G. *Education*. Boise, Idaho : Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1953 , p. 20.

## 5. Adventist Educational Philosophy and Environmental Education

From the Creation, God determined a special role for nature. He founded the first school in the Garden of Eden, where the book of nature spread live lessons before our first parents and was a source of unfailing delight and instruction<sup>34</sup>. The intention of God was that as the human family grew and became more numerous, it should establish other homes and schools similar to the first founded by Him<sup>35</sup>.

Nature continued to perform an important role in the redemptive plan of God, in spite of being tarnished. The most important lessons taught by Him to the children of Israel were transmitted next at Sinai - an environment not polluted by villages and cities which was suitable for the fulfillment of His purpose. The fundamental lesson was that reliable education does not consist of forcing instruction on an unprepared and resisting spirit, but in encouraging wakefulness of the mind and provoking individual interest in an appropriate environment<sup>36</sup>.

The lives of several biblical characters show the power and the influence of an education according to divine plan. Joseph's pure and simple life as a shepherd improved the development of both physical capacity and reasoning power. Joseph, with God, developed steady principles and mental vitality<sup>37</sup>.

That very lesson was learned by Moses. In the military academy of Egypt, Moses learned the law of survival. This apprenticeship so strongly clung to his character that forty years of quietude and communion with God and nature were necessary to enable him to perform his task<sup>38</sup>. The decisive completion of his preparation to become a grand leader only occurred when God sent him

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35 Ibid., p. 22.

36 Ibid., pp. 34-35.

37 Ibid., p. 52.

38 Ibid., p. 65.

to the rough simplicity of the desert. In that environment and in God's presence, Moses understood how weak, inefficient and narrow-minded man is. The results of the preparation offered by God were so spectacular that they still contribute to the progress of the world<sup>39</sup>.

In the same way, Elisha enjoyed an intense contact with nature. His first years were spent in the quietude of rural life, under God's teaching and nature, and in performing useful work<sup>40</sup>.

As did young Moses, Paul considered the law of survival his main persuasive tool, before meeting Christ. Looking for the loneliness of nature, Paul found a school in the Arabian's desert, where he could study the Holy Scripture, learn about them, and strip away the traditions and preconceptions which had blinded him<sup>41</sup>.

Jesus prepared the disciples, within nature, to support the heavy responsibilities, which should rest on them. Sometimes He taught them while they sat next to the mountains, or the sea, in a boat, and even while they walked<sup>42</sup>. Those were the classrooms and lessons God used to prepare powerful faithful men and women, and their history and influence changed the world.

Among the lessons that our children most need to learn, there is one that shows us that men and women will be able to understand real relationships with nature and his fellows, only when living in harmony with God. When man[woman] contravenes his physical, mental or moral law, he[she] is out of Universe's harmony<sup>43</sup>.

This is an extraordinary warning about the real approach of an effective Environmental Education: the integration of faith and learning. The real nature of the relationships between man/woman, his/her environment and his/her neighbors will be discovered and restored only when

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39 Ibid., p. 62-64.

40 Ibid., p. 58.

41 Ibid., p. 65.

42 Ibid., p. 85-86.

43 Ibid., p. 99.

the human character and nature are restored in the likeness of Christ, in accordance to what was planned by God in Eden.

Through the light from Calvary, the teaching of nature can be correctly learned<sup>44</sup>. When we look at our Environmental Education programs, will we find the reflections from that light?

The key for the new paradigm, which environmental educators clamor for, can be here. Utilizing secular or pagan paradigms, we will always be unable to enjoy the reliable source of transformation of values and attitudes: the Holy Spirit. When we handle Environmental Education isolated from the plan of salvation, we continue betting on reason as the source of hope for change and nature's salvation.

On the need of permanent contact with nature, White emphasizes that we should not simply talk to children about nature's things<sup>45</sup>, but provide them with opportunities for looking into lessons and truths. Contact with nature mitigates the heart and the mind becomes receptive<sup>46</sup>.

The best classroom for Environmental Education is near nature. No studied, argued or experienced subject, no modern or sophisticated method used within a classroom, will have the good and pure influence of the work performed in a natural environment.

Nature represents an infallible source of education and delight for children and older persons, who also need the silent memory of spiritual and eternal things<sup>47</sup>. In contact with nature, we are invited to state our anthropocentric, egocentric or idolatrous values and open the mind to eternal ones.

Which lessons will be at our disposal in that environment? Which subjects should we bring up when faith composes Environmental Education?

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44 Ibid., p. 101.

45 Ibid., p. 117.

46 Ibid., p. 102.

47 Ibid., p. 100.



As Eden's inhabitants learned from the pages of nature, as Moses discerned the lines of the God's writing in the plains and mountains from Arabia, and as the baby Jesus, in the Nazareth mountains, made use of those teachings, so children will be able to learn about God in nature<sup>48</sup>. The constant contact, the mystery of life and the beauty of nature revives the spirit and purifies and promotes character<sup>49</sup>.

Only the person who recognizes the work of the Father in nature, and who reads His writing in the richness and beauty of the earth, can learn the deepest lessons from nature's things and receive His most elevated aid. Only the person who looks at mountains and valleys, rivers and seas as the expression of God's thought, as a revelation of His character, will be able to evaluate widely the meaning of those beauties.

It is important that children learn to find in nature the expression of God's love and wisdom<sup>51</sup>. If children learn the lessons, which are in everything created and in all experiences of life, educators can show that the same laws, which rule nature's things, also rule the human beings. It is possible to observe that such laws were given for our own profit, and only in obeying them can we find real happiness<sup>52</sup>. Due to God's laws found in nature, the results follow the causes with inevitability confidence. There is not a mistake in nature: at the harvest the good and bad seed will be multiplied<sup>53</sup>.

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48 Ibid., p. 100.

49 Ibid., p. 112.

50 Ibid., p. 120.

51 Ibid., p. 102

52 Ibid., p. 103.

53 Ibid., pp. 108-109.

Everything, both in the earth and heaven, states that the grand fact of life is the work in favor of others<sup>54</sup>. *Give, and it will be given to you* (Lucas 6: 38) - is the lesson surely written both in nature and Holy Scripture<sup>55</sup>. The fact that the goods we handle are not ours can never be ignored<sup>56</sup>.

Gratitude for God's property is the basis for the real success of Environmental Education. The Creator is the original owner of everything. We are His stewards and God entrusted everything we have to us in order to be used according to His direction. That is a commitment that rests on every human being and influences every range of activities<sup>57</sup>. The power for controlling nature was given to us to a certain extent. As God evoked the beauty of the earth from chaos, we can also produce order and beauty from the mess<sup>58</sup>. By formulating a plan for crops, for instance, we can awaken the pupils' interest in beautifying the ground of the school and classroom. In that way, a perfect taste, a will for order, and good habits<sup>59</sup> will become important for the development of protective attitudes and environmental conservation, will be motivated.

In the relationship between the operation of the body and nature, we can find valuable lessons. Nature works harmoniously as the body depends on its parts. Considering the body as the *temple of the Holy Spirit*, carelessness will be reflected in the lack of concern of the individual in relation to the environment in which he/she lives. In that way, the fact of determining hygienic habits, self control, and simplicity of living is connected to the commitment of thinking<sup>60</sup>. Debility of the body and mind, intemperance, laziness, and aimless or bad company can predispose the child and the

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54 Ibid., p. 103.

55 Ibid., p. 103.

56 Ibid., p. 139.

57 Ibid., p. 137.

58 Ibid., p. 215.

59 Ibid., p. 212.

60 Ibid., p. 202-204.

young adult to ignore environmental issues. A life with wise and balanced decisions, even in reference to the environment, can result from obedience to the divine commandments, and the study and application of God's Word<sup>61</sup>.

About the contrast between God's desire and our life style, based on egocentric values, Ellen White wrote in 1898:

*If men[women] today were simple in their habits, living in harmony with nature's laws, as did Adam and Eve in the beginning, there would be an abundant supply for the needs of the human family. There would be fewer imaginary wants, and more opportunities to work in God's ways. But selfishness and the indulgence of unnatural taste have brought sin and misery into the world, from excess on the one hand, and from want on the other*<sup>62</sup>.

What a timely diagnosis!

Would not the role of Environmental Education, under the worldview of the Adventist educational philosophy, be to prepare our students for a life style in accordance with God's principles? Should we not conduct our students to Christ through contact with nature and, considering the transformation of the Holy Spirit, take restorative actions in relation to our environment and our neighbors?

There is an urgency for a revision of paradigms, as the basis of our work in Environmental Education. By doing so, integration between our faith and Environmental Education can be transformed into a powerful tool, for the improvement of human nature's recovery, in order to move toward the way God created it.

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61 Ibid., p. 202-204.

62 WHITE, E.G. *The Desire of Ages*. p. 346.