

**Institute for Christian Teaching**

**ELLEN G. WHITE ON THE ROLE SCRIPTURE IN  
ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE**

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# **Ellen G. White on the Role of Scripture in Academic Discipline**

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Ellen G. White's view of Scripture is foundational to her philosophy of education. In looking at her view of Scripture's role in academic discipline, it may be helpful first to get a broad overview of her concept of education, then examine the authority of Scripture in education, and finally move in for a closer look at Mrs. White's understanding of how Scripture relates to various fields of study. The book *Education* (1903) will provide a basis for our consideration; we will supplement it with materials drawn from throughout Mrs. White's writings.

## **I. Ellen G. White's Understanding of True Education**

### **A. The Goal of Education**

For Mrs. White, what was the aim, the goal, of education?

Our ideas of education take too narrow and too low a range. There is need of a broader scope, a higher aim. True education means more than the pursuit 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. (*Education*, p. 13)

For her, all education, then, had to include the long view, the eternal view. It must prepare the student for service here, but for wider, greater service in the world to come. In light of this goal, we are not surprised to find her clear assertion:

The Holy Scriptures are the perfect standard of truth, and as such should be given the highest place in education. To obtain an education worthy of the name, we must receive a knowledge of God, the Creator, and of Christ, the Redeemer, as they are revealed in the sacred word. (Ibid., p. 17)

As “the perfect standard of truth,” the Scriptures provide the foundation. No matter what the discipline one may study, according to Mrs. White, Scripture must have the highest place. In her view, all other study is secondary to this, because the goal of education is not simply the mastery of a body of knowledge or a mental discipline. Education without character is worse than wasted; it may be harmful, both now and for eternity. The education Mrs. White sought for people

strengthens the character, so that truth and uprightness are not sacrificed to selfish desire or worldly ambition. It fortifies the mind against evil. Instead of some master passion becoming a power to destroy, every motive and desire are brought into conformity to the great principles of right. As the perfection of His character is dwelt upon, the mind is renewed, and the soul is re-created in the image of God.

She went on to ask, “What education can be higher than this? What can equal it in value?” (ibid., p. 18).

Leaving no doubt about the nature of such an education, she wrote the famous words of the following first two sentences, but we must not miss her elaboration on them in the rest of the paragraph:

Higher than the highest human thought can reach is God’s ideal for His children. Godliness—godlikeness—is the goal to be reached. Before the student there is opened a path of continual progress. He has an object to achieve, a standard to attain, that includes everything good, and pure, and noble. He will advance as fast and as far as possible in every branch of true knowledge. But his efforts will be

directed to objects as much higher than mere selfish and temporal interests as the heavens are higher than the earth. (Ibid., pp. 18, 19)

For her, only Scripture could provide an awareness of what is higher than the selfish, more lasting than the temporal, more elevating than the earthly.

Conversely, falsehood, error, and all kinds of evil spring from a failure to believe and heed the word of God. The transgression of our first parents was in disbelieving, distrusting, God's word.

When Eve took and ate the fruit at the instigation of Satan,

there was nothing poisonous in the fruit itself, and the sin was not merely in yielding to appetite. It was distrust of God's goodness, disbelief of His word, and rejection of His authority, that made our first parents transgressors, and that brought into the world a knowledge of evil. It was this that opened the door to every species of falsehood and error. (Ibid., p. 25)

Mrs. White's position on the matter is unequivocal. From that basic choice to doubt God's goodness and disbelieve His word, rejecting His authority, "every species of falsehood and error" has sprung. By the choice to mingle evil with good, man's "mind had become confused, his mental and spiritual powers benumbed" (ibid.). This is the condition from which he needs divine restoration.

In Ellen G. White's view, then, education should settle for nothing less than this restoration. When education is measured by the divine standard, there is no room to be satisfied with half-hearted mastery of the material involved, but this is only part of the task. One must master not only the material but oneself, bringing corrupt humanity into fellowship with God which will lead to conformity to His will and design for the life. We see her concern in such statements as this one, which sets forth the teacher's work:

The true teacher is not satisfied with second-rate work. He is not satisfied with directing his students to a standard lower than the highest which it is possible for them to attain. He cannot be content with imparting to them only technical knowledge, with making them merely clever accountants, skillful artisans, successful

tradesmen. It is his ambition to inspire them with principles of truth, obedience, honor, integrity, and purity—principles that will make them a positive force for the stability and uplifting of society. He desires them, above all else, to learn life’s great lesson of unselfish service. (Ibid., pp. 29-30)

Such lofty concepts of education make it clear that Mrs. White was no anti-intellectual. She could not be content with the kind of spirituality which concludes that nothing else matters but a pious religious glow. She called for a thorough, disciplined approach to achieving the highest levels of intellectual development, always based upon the foundation of the Word of God:

If the youth will but learn of the heavenly Teacher, as Daniel did, they will know for themselves that the fear of the Lord is indeed the beginning of wisdom. Having thus laid a sure foundation, they may, like Daniel, turn every privilege and opportunity to the very best account, and may rise to any height in intellectual attainments. Consecrated to God, and having the protection of His grace and the quickening influence of His Holy Spirit, they will manifest deeper intellectual power than the mere worldling. (*Messages to Young People*, pp. 190, 191)

Let the youth be taught from childhood that there is no excellence without great labor. Aspirations for eminence will not avail. Young friends, the mountain-top cannot be reached by standing still, and wishing yourselves there. You can gain your object only by taking one step at a time, advancing slowly perhaps, but holding every step gained. It is the energetic, persevering worker that will scale the Alps. Every youth should make the most of his talents, improving to the utmost present opportunities. He who will do this, may reach almost any height in moral and intellectual attainments. But he must possess a brave and resolute spirit. He will need to close his ears to the voice of pleasure; he must often refuse the solicitations of young companions. He must stand on guard continually, lest he be diverted from his purpose. . . . (*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 333)

### **B. Bible Illustrations of True Education**

Mrs. White cited Bible examples of those who have exemplified heaven’s ideal of education.

Among these are Joseph, Daniel, Elisha, Moses, and Paul. We will look at several of them:

**Daniel.** Of Daniel and his companions Mrs. White wrote,

At the court of Babylon were gathered representatives from all lands, men of the choicest talents, men the most richly endowed with natural gifts, and possessed

of the highest culture this world could bestow; yet amidst them all, the Hebrew captives were without a peer. In physical strength and beauty, in mental vigor and literary attainment, they stood unrivaled. "In all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm." Daniel 1:20.

Unwavering in allegiance to God, unyielding in the mastery of himself, Daniel's noble dignity and courteous deference won for him in his youth the "favor and tender love" of the heathen officer in whose charge he was. The same characteristics marked his life. Speedily he rose to the position of prime minister of the kingdom. Throughout the reign of successive monarchs, the downfall of the nation, and the establishment of a rival kingdom, such were his wisdom and statesmanship, so perfect his tact, his courtesy, and his genuine goodness of heart, combined with fidelity to principle, that even his enemies were forced to the confession that "they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful." Daniel 6:4. (*Education*, pp. 55, 56)

**Moses.** Similarly, Moses rose to the heights of human knowledge and achievement in Egypt.

He, like Daniel, had received faithful early training at home, only to go on to be immersed in secular and pagan-religious training. He refused to yield his special religious orientation, despite the strongest pressures of the Egyptian training and culture around him.

In the schools of Egypt, Moses received the highest civil and military training. Of great personal attractions, noble in form and stature, of cultivated mind and princely bearing, and renowned as a military leader, he became the nation's pride. The king of Egypt was also a member of the priesthood; and Moses, though refusing to participate in the heathen worship, was initiated into all the mysteries of the Egyptian religion. Egypt at this time being still the most powerful and most highly civilized of nations, Moses, as its prospective sovereign, was heir to the highest honors this world could bestow. But his was a nobler choice. For the honor of God and the deliverance of His downtrodden people, Moses sacrificed the honors of Egypt. Then, in a special sense, God undertook his training. (*Ibid.*, p. 62)

This training consisted of learning to trust fully in God, becoming constantly aware of His personal presence.

In the course of his converse with God, he also came to know (more fully than before?) the truth about the origin of this world, which he skillfully set against the backdrop of the Egyptian and

Canaanite myths of the world's creation. Here, his mastery of the pagan materials and mindset, combined with his refusal to adopt them as his own, enabled him to write what we know today to be a powerful repudiation of the dominant cosmological views of his culture, while upholding in majestic simplicity the truth of God's creative and redemptive work. He provides an example to us of one who reached the highest attainments in education and, instead of being diverted into false paths, used his training to speak mightily to the people of his day (and all succeeding generations) of the nature and character of the God of heaven.

**Paul.** Ellen G. White's last example in *Education* of men who revealed the education God desires for His people is the Apostle Paul. His speeches in the book of Acts and the reasoning in his epistles reveal that he was well acquainted with the writers of the pagan culture around him as well as with the teachings of the Jewish rabbis. Indeed, he had studied under Gamaliel, one of the most prominent of the rabbis. But most of all he was immersed in the Scriptures. Mrs. White commented on his use of his broad education:

See Paul at Athens before the council of the Areopagus, as he meets science with science, logic with logic, and philosophy with philosophy. Mark how, with the tact born of divine love, he points to Jehovah as "the Unknown God," whom his hearers have ignorantly worshiped; and in words quoted from a poet of their own he pictures Him as a Father whose children they are. (Ibid., p. 67)

From the lives of these great men of old and in other ways, Mrs. White highlighted the importance of God-focused character and service to others—academics with eternity in view. Our interest in this study is more narrow—the role of Scripture in academic disciplines—so the material which follows will concentrate on this aspect. But by no means was this all Mrs. White was concerned about regarding education.

### C. Jesus the Example

In her *Education* chapter about Jesus, Mrs. White described the conditions into which He was sent, which were diametrically opposed to God's will for mankind. We will highlight key points:

God's greatest gift was bestowed to meet man's greatest need. The Light appeared when the world's darkness was deepest. Through **false teaching** the minds of men had long been turned away from God. In the prevailing systems of education, **human philosophy had taken the place of divine revelation**. Instead of the heaven-given standard of truth, men had accepted a **standard of their own devising**. From the Light of life they had turned aside to walk in the sparks of the fire which they had kindled.

Having separated from God, **their only dependence being the power of humanity**, their strength was but weakness. Even the standard set up by themselves **they were incapable of reaching**. The want of true excellence was supplied by appearance and profession. **Semblance took the place of reality**.

From time to time, teachers arose who pointed men to the Source of truth. Right principles were enunciated, and human lives witnessed to their power. But these efforts made no lasting impression. There was a **brief check in the current of evil**, but its **downward course was not stayed**. The reformers were as lights that shone in the darkness; but they could not dispel it. The world "loved darkness rather than light." John 3:19.

When Christ came to the earth, humanity seemed to be fast reaching its lowest point. The very foundations of society were undermined. Life had become false and artificial. The Jews, destitute of the power of God's word, gave to the world mind-benumbing, soul-deadening **traditions and speculations**. The worship of God "in Spirit and in truth" had been supplanted by the **glorification of men** in an endless round of **man-made ceremonies**. Throughout the world all systems of religion were losing their hold on mind and soul. Disgusted with **fable and falsehood**, seeking to drown thought, men turned to **infidelity and materialism**. Leaving eternity out of their reckoning, they **lived for the present**. (Ibid., pp. 74, 75)

How did Jesus relate to the standard education of His day, which had produced such results?

According to Mrs. White,

His life demonstrated the worthlessness of those things that men regarded as life's great essentials. Born amidst surroundings the rudest, sharing a peasant's home, a peasant's fare, a craftsman's occupation, living a life of obscurity, identifying Himself with the world's unknown toilers,—amidst these conditions and surroundings,—Jesus followed the divine plan of education. The schools of His time, with their magnifying of things small and their belittling of things great, He did not

seek. His education was gained directly from the Heaven-appointed sources; from **useful work, from the study of the Scriptures and of nature, and from the experiences of life**—God’s lesson books, full of instruction to all who bring to them the willing hand, the seeing eye, and the understanding heart. (Ibid., p. 77, emphasis mine)

In Mrs. White’s view,

In the Teacher sent from God, all true educational work finds its center. . . . In the presence of such a Teacher, of such opportunity for divine education, what worse than folly is it to seek an education apart from Him—to seek to be wise apart from Wisdom; to be true while rejecting Truth; to seek illumination apart from the Light, and existence without the Life; to turn from the Fountain of living waters, and hew out broken cisterns, that can hold no water. (Ibid., p. 83)

Thus we see the central issues in academics for Mrs. White. Study and learning are not proper ends in themselves but only means to serving a higher purpose: the development of one’s powers of mind and body to know God and to serve Him. Service to Him requires ministry to others. Such service is not for this world and this life only, but for eternity. The Scriptures provide the essential information from God about Himself and about our world. They contain His instructions for knowing Him and choosing the pathways which will honor Him and bless others.

We will turn our attention now to Ellen G. White’s understanding of the authority of Scripture for the Christian.

## II. The Authority of Scripture

Many today, both inside and outside of academics, would like to limit the authority of Scripture, usually to little more than matters of salvation. They tell us that the Bible is not a science textbook, not a history, not a work of geography, physiology, psychology, sexuality, etc. And of course in one sense this is true. The Bible was not written for those purposes as practitioners in these

various areas define them. But the Bible does speak on such matters, and where it does we do not find Mrs. White restricting its authority. Rather, she upheld the veracity, validity, and value of Scripture in areas such as these. Foundational, of course, is the Bible's primary emphasis, that which points us to God and determines our service to Him. But we will note how the Bible functions authoritatively in other areas as well.

#### **A. As a Basis for Faith**

One of Mrs. White's strongest statements upholding the authority of the Bible is this:

He [Christ] pointed to the Scriptures as of unquestionable authority, and we should do the same. The Bible is to be presented as the word of the infinite God, as the end of all controversy and the foundation of all faith. (*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 39, 40)

This was not an isolated, aberrant expression of Mrs. White's outlook on the question. In the midst of cautioning A. T. Jones on another matter, she wrote, "I am fully in harmony with you in your work when you present the Bible, and the Bible alone, as the foundation of our faith" (*Selected Messages*, 2:85).

The Bible is not only the foundation of all faith, it is the rule of faith, the criterion of teaching and deed. No other work is to occupy so high a position.

Leave the impression upon the mind that the Bible, and the Bible alone, is our rule of faith, and that the sayings and doings of men are not to be a criterion for our doctrines or actions. (*Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 84)

So high was Mrs. White's regard for the Bible's authority that she did not hesitate to use words most of us typically avoid, such as "creed" and even "infallible."

The Bible, and the Bible alone, is to be our creed, the sole bond of union; all who bow to this Holy Word will be in harmony. Our own views and ideas must not control our efforts. Man is fallible, but God's Word is infallible. (*Selected Messages*, 1:416)

Since the Bible is God's infallible Word, we are obliged to recognize and honor its authority.

It is not enough to learn what it teaches; we must believe it and obey what it calls upon us to do.

Only thus can it truly be the basis of our faith.

Parents need to reform; ministers need to reform; they need God in their households. If they would see a different state of things, they must bring His word into their families and must make it their counselor. They must teach their children that it is the voice of God addressed to them, and is to be implicitly obeyed. They should patiently instruct their children, kindly and untiringly teach them how to live in order to please God. The children of such a household are prepared to meet the sophistries of infidelity. They have accepted the Bible as the basis of their faith, and they have a foundation that cannot be swept away by the incoming tide of skepticism. (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 143)

Mrs. White cautioned against a counterfeit of faith, presumption, which embraces the promises of God without their provisions, their conditions. Scripture contains both, and genuine faith dare not separate them.

But faith is in no sense allied to presumption. Only he who has true faith is secure against presumption. For presumption is Satan's counterfeit of faith. Faith claims God's promises, and brings forth fruit in obedience. Presumption also claims the promises, but uses them as Satan did, to excuse transgression. Faith would have led our first parents to trust the love of God, and to obey His commands. Presumption led them to transgress His law, believing that His great love would save them from the consequence of their sin. It is not faith that claims the favor of Heaven without complying with the conditions on which mercy is to be granted. Genuine faith has its foundation in the promises and provisions of the Scriptures. (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 126)

As a guide to faith, the Bible must be the test of any other claim to inspiration. It is not enough for one to claim to have received instruction from God. How does it compare with the infallible guide? Mrs. White, who had experience with personal revelations herself and who encountered many other people who claimed to have had such experiences, wrote, "True Christianity receives the word of God as the great treasure house of inspired truth and the test of all inspiration"

(*The Great Controversy*, p. 193). Against the claim that the Holy Spirit had given new revelations whose guidance was to take precedence over the Bible, Mrs. White declared, “The Spirit was not given—nor can it ever be bestowed—to supersede the Bible; for the Scriptures explicitly state that the word of God is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested” (*ibid.*, p. vii). Again, “Even the work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart is to be tested by the Word of God. The Spirit which inspired the Scriptures, always leads to the Scriptures” (*Selected Messages*, 1:43).

For Mrs. White, true faith is found in a relationship with God. It does not consist merely of intellectual belief, nor can it ever be dry, grudging obedience. Of the Bible and its role in matters of faith, she wrote,

This book is the voice of God speaking to us. The Bible opens to us the words of life; for it makes us acquainted with Christ who is our life. In order to have true, abiding faith in Christ, we must know Him as He is represented in the word. (*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 433)

### **B. As a Guide to Salvation**

Here we find Scripture’s primary purpose—to show the human family the way of salvation. Mrs. White’s most famous statement on the purpose of Scripture is found in her introduction to *The Great Controversy*:

In His word, God has committed to men the knowledge necessary for salvation. 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. (*The Great Controversy*, p. vii)

For Mrs. White, then, the Bible reveals the will of God authoritatively, even infallibly, providing the standard by which we may test character, doctrine, and even experience. These things are her brief elaboration on “the knowledge necessary for salvation.” They are all, she said, contained in Scripture.

Mrs. White insisted on the Bible's authority as a guide to salvation. On such matters, Scripture is to be the final arbiter. "Let the Bible decide every question that is essential to man's salvation" (*Medical Ministry*, p. 97).

### C. As a Guide to Life

Mrs. White exalted the authority of the Bible in more than the areas of salvation and faith. Not limiting its application to these areas alone, she understood that "the Bible is an unerring guide" (*Testimonies for the Church*, 4:312). It serves the practical needs of the Christian, right down to the close of life. She wrote, "The Bible presents a perfect standard of character. This sacred book, inspired by God, and written by holy men, is a perfect guide under all circumstances of life" (*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 100).

The Christian evidence that we need, is found not in the experience of men, but in our Bibles. The Word of God is the man of our counsel; for it brings us down from age to age, bearing its testimony to the unchangeableness of the truth. . . .

Give the Word its honored position as a guide in the home. Let it be regarded as the Counsellor in *every* difficulty, the standard of *every* practice. . . .

. . . We have a Guidebook, the Word of God, and we are inexcusable if we miss the way to heaven, for plain directions have been given us. (*My Life Today*, p. 25, emphasis mine)

In the following statement we see the universality of Scripture as a guidebook for living:

All who do not earnestly search the Scriptures and submit every desire and purpose of life to that unerring test, all who do not seek God in prayer for a knowledge of His will, will surely wander from the right path and fall under the deception of Satan. (*Testimonies for the Church*, 5:192)

**1. Basis of Morality.** Scripture, not convenience or personal advantage, provides the basis for determining what is right and wrong. As Mrs. White wrote, "The Bible should be read every day. It is the correct standard of right and wrong and of moral principle" (*Signs of the Times*, March 20, 1884).

The morality it presents is not merely “quite good” or worthy of our consideration for adopting portions of it while rejecting others. Mrs. White represented it as the pinnacle of purity and nobility. “It [the Bible] is, in all its precepts and requirements, as pure as the character of God and as elevated as His throne” (*Testimonies for the Church*, 3:375).

As the basis of morality, the principles of Scripture are to guide the conscience. Mrs. White quoted approvingly a statement by Wylie referring to John Huss:

This led him to adopt for his own guidance, and to preach to others for theirs, the maxim that the precepts of Scripture, conveyed through the understanding, are to rule the conscience; in other words, that God speaking in the Bible, and not the church speaking through the priesthood, is the one infallible guide. (*The Great Controversy*, p. 102)

**2. Standard of Character.** The Bible is the measure of character, the standard by which we may test the direction of our lives in every circumstance. As Mrs. White put it, “The Bible is God’s will expressed to man. It is the only perfect standard of character, and marks out the duty of man in every circumstance of life” (*Testimonies for the Church*, 4:312).

**3. Basis of Happiness.** The way of life which the Bible presents enables rather than restricts one’s joy and fulfillment. It does more than prevent the unwanted toll on body and spirit that sin brings. It also contributes a positive influence for happiness and satisfaction, which the recipient will increase by extending it to others. Mrs. White observed,

He who is following the divine guidance has found the only true source of saving grace and real happiness, and has gained the power of imparting happiness to all around him. No man can really enjoy life without religion. (*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 53)

Through the study of the Scriptures we obtain a correct knowledge of how to live so as to enjoy the greatest amount of unalloyed happiness. (*Testimonies for the Church*, 3:374)

### D. As the Basis of Knowledge and Truth

In the book *Education*, in writing of the time of Christ's first advent, Mrs. White contrasted the authority of Scripture—"divine revelation"—with human systems:

In the prevailing systems of education, human philosophy had taken the place of divine revelation. Instead of the heaven-given standard of truth, men had accepted a standard of their own devising. (*Education*, p. 74)

Though her primary concern was that people come to know God through His word and experience His salvation, it is clear that Mrs. White saw in Scripture primary material for study in many other disciplines. Further, she held that a study of the Word would strengthen the intellect, sharpening the powers of the mind for any worthy endeavor. She wrote,

"Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth." The word of God should be made the great educating power. How shall students know the truth, except by a close, earnest, persevering study of the word? Here is the grand stimulus, the hidden force which quickens the mental and physical powers, and directs the life into right channels. Here in the word is wisdom, poetry, history, biography, and the most profound philosophy. Here is a study that quickens the mind into a vigorous and healthy life, and awakens it to the highest exercise. It is impossible to study the Bible with a humble, teachable spirit, without developing and strengthening the intellect. Those who become best acquainted with the wisdom and purpose of God as revealed in His word, become men and women of mental strength; and they may become efficient workers with the great Educator, Jesus Christ. . . .

. . . Christ has given His people the words of truth, and all are called to act a part in making them known to the world.

. . . There is no sanctification aside from the truth,—the word. Then how essential that it should be understood by every one! (*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 432)

Scripture's authority as the basis for knowledge and truth is asserted in statements such as these:

We have a Bible full of the most precious truth. It contains the alpha and the omega of knowledge. (*Gospel Workers*, p. 309)

Men of the greatest intellects, if not guided by the word of God in their research,

become bewildered; they cannot comprehend the Creator or His works. But set the mind to grasp and measure eternal truth, summon it to effort by delving for the jewels of truth in the rich mine of the word of God, and it will never become dwarfed and enfeebled, as when left to dwell upon commonplace subjects. (*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 84)

The Bible must be made the foundation for all study. (*Ibid.*, p. 451).

Without the Bible we should have been left to conjectures and fables in regard to the occurrences of past ages. Of all the books that have flooded the world, be they ever so valuable, the Bible is the Book of books, and is most deserving of the closest study and attention. It gives not only the history of the creation of this world, but a description of the world to come. It contains instruction concerning the wonders of the universe, and it reveals to our understanding the Author of the heavens and the earth. It unfolds a simple and complete system of theology and philosophy. (*Ibid.*, p. 129)

#### **E. As the Basis of All Education in Our Schools**

Because she held the authority of Scripture so high, not just in matters of salvation but as the basis for all knowledge, it is not surprising that Mrs. White called for the Bible to be the foundation of all the education we offered in our schools.

In our training-schools the Bible is to be made the basis of all education. (*Ibid.*, p. 490)

The Bible should not be brought into our schools to be sandwiched in between infidelity. The Bible must be made the groundwork and subject matter of education. . . . It should be used as the word of the living God, and esteemed as first, and last, and best in everything. Then will be seen true spiritual growth. (*Ibid.*, p. 474)

Bible study is especially needed in the schools. Students should be rooted and grounded in divine truth. Their attention should be called, not to the assertions of men, but to the word of God. Above all other books, the word of God must be our study, the great textbook, the basis of all education; and our children are to be educated in the truths found therein, irrespective of previous habits and customs. (*Testimonies for the Church*, 6:131, 132)

Mrs. White understood the Bible to speak compellingly to varied interests and disciplines:

In its wide range of style and subjects the Bible has something to interest every mind and appeal to every heart. In its pages are found **history** the most ancient; **biography** the truest to life; **principles of government** for the control of the state, for the regulation of the household—principles that human wisdom has never equaled. It contains **philosophy** the most profound, **poetry** the sweetest and the most sublime, the most impassioned and the most pathetic. Immeasurably superior in value to the productions of any human author are the Bible writings, even when thus considered; but of infinitely wider scope, of infinitely greater value, are they when viewed in their relation to the grand central thought. Viewed in the light of this thought, every topic has a new significance. In the most simply stated truths are involved principles that are as high as heaven and that compass eternity. (*Education*, p. 125, emphasis mine)

### III. Specific Areas of Application

What did Ellen G. White understand the role of Scripture to be in the various disciplines of academic study? We will note a number of areas of study and cite representative comments of hers about each.

#### A. True Religion and Knowledge of God

It will come as no surprise that Ellen G. White believed that the Bible was the source of knowledge regarding God, His salvation, and His will for mankind. Not in the study of philosophy, anthropology, comparative religions, or any other source will one find a true knowledge of God except in the Scriptures.

Searching the Scriptures alone will bring the knowledge of the true God and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent. (*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 415)

Human talent and human conjecture have tried by searching to find out God. But guesswork has proved itself to be guesswork. Man cannot by searching find out God. This problem has not been given to human beings. All that man needs to know and can know of God has been revealed in His Word and in the life of His Son, the great Teacher. . . .

God cannot be understood by men. His ways and works are past finding out. In regard to the revelations that He has made of Himself in His Word, we may talk,

but other than this, let us say of Him, Thou art God, and Thy ways are past finding out. (Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, 6:1079)

Neither by searching the recesses of the earth nor in vain endeavors to penetrate the mysteries of God's being is wisdom found. It is found, rather, in humbly receiving the revelation that He has been pleased to give, and in conforming the life to His will. (*Testimonies for the Church*, 8:280)

**Higher Criticism.** Today, however, often the question is, "What methods shall we use in studying Scripture?" The dominant methods in Christianity today are variations of historical criticism, also known as "higher criticism." As Adventist scholars have attended non-Adventist universities (and I number myself among them), many have returned schooled in these methods, utilizing and defending them in their studies.

Ellen G. White knew of higher criticism and made a number of direct references to it. She saw both its character and its dangers, and she did not fail to warn against it. In the following statement, as set forth first in *Education* and enlarged upon in *The Acts of the Apostles*, she took specific note of its methods and their results:

Even Bible study, as too often conducted in the schools, is robbing the world of the priceless treasure of the word of God. The work of "higher criticism," in dissecting, conjecturing, reconstructing, is destroying faith in the Bible as a divine revelation; it is robbing God's word of power to control, uplift, and inspire human lives. (*Education*, p. 227)

The warnings of the word of God regarding the perils surrounding the Christian church belong to us today. As in the days of the apostles men tried by tradition and philosophy to destroy faith in the Scriptures, so today, by the pleasing sentiments of higher criticism, evolution, spiritualism, theosophy, and pantheism, the enemy of righteousness is seeking to lead souls into forbidden paths. To many the Bible is as a lamp without oil, because they have turned their minds into channels of speculative belief that bring misunderstanding and confusion. The work of higher criticism, in dissecting, conjecturing, reconstructing, is destroying faith in the Bible as a divine revelation. It is robbing God's word of power to control, uplift, and inspire human lives. By spiritualism, multitudes are taught to believe that desire is the highest law, that license is liberty, and that man is accountable only to himself. (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 474)

Here Mrs. White correctly characterized the methods of higher criticism as “dissecting, conjecturing, reconstructing,” and she noted the result as “destroying faith in the Bible as a divine revelation.” The result follows from the method itself, which in its classical expression explicitly rules out divine intervention in human affairs (the principle of correlation). Though some of its newer expressions are less candid about this aspect, the same results follow. Mrs. White’s opposition to it may be measured by the company in which she placed it—among evolution, spiritualism, theosophy, and pantheism.

She noted, too, that by such means as these “the enemy of righteousness is seeking to lead souls into forbidden paths.” In another statement she elaborated on the enemy’s involvement with higher criticism:

Man can be exalted only by laying hold of the merits of a crucified and risen Saviour. The finest intellect, the most exalted position, will not secure heaven. Satan had the highest education that could be obtained. This education he received under the greatest of all teachers. When men talk of higher criticism, when they pass their judgment upon the word of God, call their attention to the fact that they have forgotten who was the first and wisest critic. He has had thousands of years of practical experience. He it is who teaches the so-called higher critics of the world today. God will punish all those who, as higher critics, exalt themselves, and criticize God’s holy word. (*Review and Herald*, March 16, 1897)

Mrs. White warned of the critic *par excellence* and where his labors lead:

Satan is the sharpest critic that the world has ever known, and he works to hinder and pervert truth. He has induced men to strive to change the Sabbath of the fourth commandment. Under his dictation the first day of the week has been adopted by the Christian world as the Sabbath. He has used his masterly mind to influence other men to adopt the same views that he himself entertains. But if we turn aside from the fourth commandment, so positively given by God, to adopt the inventions of Satan, voiced and acted by men under his control, we cannot be saved. We cannot with safety receive his traditions and subtleties as truth. (*Review and Herald*, July 6, 1897)

Mrs. White contrasted the higher critics with One higher than they:

But just as soon as some enter college and get a little bit of knowledge they think they know more than God. And you hear of the higher critics. Who is the Higher Critic? It is the Lord God of the universe, who has spread the canopy of the heavens above us, and has made the stars and called them forth in their order; that has created the lesser light, the glory of the moon, to come in its order and to shine in our world. And the higher critics come in. Who are they? Poor, finite man on probation to see if he will be loyal and true to God that he can stand under the blood-stained banner of Prince Emmanuel, and that he can become a child of God and an Heir of heaven. Talk of the critics, the higher critics. We have God; we have his Word in its simplicity. (*Sermons and Talks*, 1:255)

For Mrs. White, every assertion in scriptural and spiritual matters must be tested by the Word of God. Scholars and ministers may set forth grand, appealing ideas—beautiful fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil—which only serve to bewilder and ensnare:

What is the condition in the world today? Is not faith in the Bible as effectually destroyed by the higher criticism and speculation of today as it was by tradition and rabbinism in the days of Christ? Have not greed and ambition and love of pleasure as strong a hold on men's hearts now as they had then? In the professedly Christian world, even in the professed churches of Christ, how few are governed by Christian principles. In business, social, domestic, even religious circles, how few make the teachings of Christ the rule of daily living. Is it not true that "justice standeth afar off: . . . equity cannot enter. . . . And he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey"? Isaiah 59:14, 15. (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 142)

It becomes every one blessed with reasoning power to beware from what source he receives light and knowledge. We should not be dazzled by men who boast of their education and talent, but who use their power to bewilder souls. Thoughts flash from their minds which charm, but are soon forgotten. When these supposed grand thoughts, which perplex and mystify while they please, are presented, let those who have souls to save or to lose, inquire, Is there Scripture to prove the truth of these utterances?

Where eternal interests are involved, it becomes every soul to require ministers of the gospel to give Scriptural evidence for everything they say. The traditions of the Fathers, the customs and sayings of professedly good men, the opinions of the most learned divines or of the highest critics,—all are worthless unless they harmonize with the word of God. We must go back from the so called "Fathers" to the great Heavenly Father, the Creator of the universe. The Sabbath of

the Lord must rest on its own basis—the word of the living God. (*Review and Herald*, July 6, 1897)

Mrs. White set forth the underlying arrogance of higher criticism:

Men act as though they had been given special liberty to cancel the decisions of God. The higher critics put themselves in the place of God, and review the Word of God, revising or endorsing it. In this way, all nations are induced to drink the wine of the fornication of Babylon. These higher critics have fixed things to suit the popular heresies of these last days. If they cannot subvert and misapply the Word of God, if they cannot bend it to human practices, they break it. . . . (*The Upward Look*, p. 35)

For Mrs. White, then, Scripture must be the principal study in religion, and one must study it reverently, as God's revelation. Difficult passages of Scripture may be understood in the light of clearer ones as one compares Scripture with Scripture, seeking the harmony. These famous paragraphs from the introduction to *The Great Controversy* present the essence of her position:

Written in different ages, by men who differed widely in rank and occupation, and in mental and spiritual endowments, the books of the Bible present a wide contrast in style, as well as a diversity in the nature of the subjects unfolded. Different forms of expression are employed by different writers; often the same truth is more strikingly presented by one than by another. And as several writers present a subject under varied aspects and relations, there may appear, to the superficial, careless, or prejudiced reader, to be discrepancy or contradiction, where the thoughtful, reverent student, with clearer insight, discerns the underlying harmony.

As presented through different individuals, the truth is brought out in its varied aspects. One writer is more strongly impressed with one phase of the subject; he grasps those points that harmonize with his experience or with his power of perception and appreciation; another seizes upon a different phase; and each, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, presents what is most forcibly impressed upon his own mind—a different aspect of the truth in each, but a perfect harmony through all. And the truths thus revealed unite to form a perfect whole, adapted to meet the wants of men in all the circumstances and experiences of life. (*The Great Controversy*, p. vi)

## B. Science

Though the secular scientific method, *per se*, excludes consideration of God, requiring the assumption that everything may be explained by the natural means of cause and effect, Mrs. White held that “Apart from Christ, science is misleading” (*Medical Ministry*, p. 97). She urged that science be studied in the light of the Bible:

The foundation of all true science is contained in the Bible. Every branch of knowledge may be found by searching the word of God. And above all else it contains the science of all sciences, the science of salvation. (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 107)

In its human wisdom the world cannot know God. Its wise men gather an imperfect knowledge of God from His created works, and then in their foolishness they exalt nature and the laws of nature above nature's God. Those who have not a knowledge of God through an acceptance of the revelation He has made of Himself in Christ, will obtain only an imperfect knowledge of Him in nature; and this knowledge, so far from giving elevated conceptions of God, and bringing the whole being into conformity to His will, will make men idolaters. Professing themselves to be wise, they will become fools. (*Selected Messages*, 1:295)

Scripture, then, is essential not only for knowing God but for understanding nature.

The problem, generally, is not in that part of science which deals with what is testable and repeatable today, but with questions regarding the origins of this world, its contents, and the universe it inhabits. Other areas of contention relate to events of long ago, such as the formation of the geologic column, of coal and oil fields, and of the land masses as we know them. These are not issues subject to conclusive scientific testing; they rely on theories and assumptions which are essentially unprovable. It is in such areas, which were emerging strongly into the public consciousness during Mrs. White's time, that we find her taking issue with science.

Space will not allow a full cataloging of Mrs. White's statements regarding science, but we will note some representative ones in which she highlights the role of Scripture in such study.

It is the entrance of God's word that 'giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.' Psalm 119:130. His word is given for our instruction; there is nothing in it that is defective or misleading. The Bible is not to be tested by men's ideas of science, but science is to be brought to the test of the unerring standard.

Yet the study of the sciences is not to be neglected. Books must be used for this purpose; but they should be in harmony with the Bible, for that is the standard. (*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, pp. 425, 426)

An entire chapter of *Education* is given to the topic "Science and the Bible." It is well worth reading completely, for it sets forth plainly Mrs. White's concept of the relationship between science and Scripture.

Though I no longer remember the source, I recall seeing something in print which quoted from this chapter in *Education* to say that we should allow the findings of science to influence our understanding of Scripture in these disputed areas. The quoted portion probably looked something like this:

Since the book of nature and the book of revelation bear the impress of the same master mind, they cannot but speak in harmony. By different methods, and in different languages, they witness to the same great truths. . . . The book of nature and the written word shed light upon each other. (*Education*, p. 128)

The author went on to suggest that perhaps our understanding of what the Bible taught about origins and the flood needed to be reinterpreted in the light of science, since Mrs. White claims that they are in harmony and "shed light upon each other."

A fair reading of the chapter from which these quotations come, however, shows that Mrs. White intended no such construction for her words. The chapter begins this way:

Since the book of nature and the book of revelation bear the impress of the same master mind, they cannot but speak in harmony. By different methods, and in different languages, they witness to the same great truths. Science is ever discovering new wonders; but she brings from her research nothing that, rightly understood, conflicts with divine revelation. The book of nature and the written word shed light

upon each other. They make us acquainted with God by teaching us something of the laws through which He works.

Inferences erroneously drawn from facts observed in nature have, however, led to supposed conflict between science and revelation; and in the effort to restore harmony, interpretations of Scripture have been adopted that undermine and destroy the force of the word of God. Geology has been thought to contradict the literal interpretation of the Mosaic record of the creation. Millions of years, it is claimed, were required for the evolution of the earth from chaos; and in order to accommodate the Bible to this supposed revelation of science, the days of creation are assumed to have been vast, indefinite periods, covering thousands or even millions of years.

Such a conclusion is wholly uncalled for. The Bible record is in harmony with itself and with the teaching of nature. (Ibid., pp. 128, 129)

Clearly, Mrs. White objected to the effort to make the interpretation of the Bible record accommodate the supposed findings of science in these areas. For her, Scripture must take priority; science, rightly understood, will accord with it.

At the end of the chapter, these paragraphs summarize her view:

The deepest students of science are constrained to recognize in nature the working of infinite power. But to man's unaided reason, nature's teaching cannot but be contradictory and disappointing. Only in the light of revelation can it be read aright. "Through faith we understand." Hebrews 11:3. . . .

"When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth." John 16:13. Only by the aid of that Spirit who in the beginning "was brooding upon the face of the waters;" of that Word by whom "all things were made;" of that "true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world," can the testimony of science be rightly interpreted. Only by their guidance can its deepest truths be discerned.

Only under the direction of the Omniscient One shall we, in the study of His works, be enabled to think His thoughts after Him. (Ibid., p. 134)

Another significant statement on the relation of science and the Bible comes from *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 8:

God has permitted a flood of light to be poured upon the world in the discoveries of science and art; but when professedly scientific men reason upon these subjects from a merely human point of view, they are sure to err. The greatest minds, if not guided by the word of God, become bewildered in their attempts to investigate the relations of science and revelation. The Creator and His works are beyond their

comprehension; and because these cannot be explained by natural laws, Bible history is pronounced unreliable.

Those who question the reliability of the Scripture records have let go their anchor and are left to beat about upon the rocks of infidelity. When they find themselves incapable of measuring the Creator and His works by their own imperfect knowledge of science, they question the existence of God and attribute infinite power to nature.

In true science there can be nothing contrary to the teaching of the word of God, for both have the same Author. A correct understanding of both will always prove them to be in harmony. Truth, whether in nature or in revelation, is harmonious with itself in all its manifestations. But the mind not enlightened by God's Spirit will ever be in darkness in regard to His power. This is why human ideas in regard to science so often contradict the teaching of God's word. (*Testimonies for the Church*, 8:257, 258; see also a similar statement in *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 461, 462.)

A little farther on in the same volume, this statement appears:

He who has a knowledge of God and His word has a settled faith in the divinity of the Holy Scriptures. He does not test the Bible by man's ideas of science. He brings these ideas to the test of the unerring standard. He knows that God's word is truth, and truth can never contradict itself; whatever in the teaching of so-called science contradicts the truth of God's revelation is mere human guesswork. (*Ibid.*, p. 325)

Regarding one branch of science which often figures into the clash of science and Scripture, Mrs. White wrote, "But apart from Bible history, geology can prove nothing" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 112).

Interestingly, the scientist is not the only one who faces perplexing questions by observing nature. According to Mrs. White, even children do. While she encouraged even the preschool children to immerse themselves in the grand lesson-book of nature, she acknowledged that doing so would bring one face to face with more than the loving visage of the Creator. Especially at such times, one needs more than observation to arrive at correct conclusions:

Yet even the child, as he comes in contact with nature, will see cause for perplexity. He cannot but recognize the working of antagonistic forces. *It is here that nature needs an interpreter.* Looking upon the evil manifest even in the natural world, all

have the same sorrowful lesson to learn—"An enemy hath done this." Matthew 13:28. Only in the light that shines from Calvary can nature's teaching be read aright. (*Education*, p. 101, emphasis mine)

Ellen G. White outlined the course by which practitioners of science may be on the firmest footing, avoiding pitfalls which will assuredly bring them to wrong conclusions:

God has permitted a flood of light to be poured upon the world in both science and art; but when professedly scientific men treat upon these subjects from a merely human point of view, they will assuredly come to wrong conclusions. It may be innocent to speculate beyond what God's word has revealed, if our theories do not contradict facts found in the Scriptures; but those who leave the word of God, and seek to account for His created works upon scientific principles, are drifting without chart or compass upon an unknown ocean. The greatest minds, if not guided by the word of God in their research, become bewildered in their attempts to trace the relations of science and revelation. Because the Creator and His works are so far beyond their comprehension that they are unable to explain them by natural laws, they regard Bible history as unreliable. Those who doubt the reliability of the records of the Old and New Testaments, will be led to go a step further, and doubt the existence of God; and then, having lost their anchor, they are left to beat about upon the rocks of infidelity. (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 113)

### C. History

Ellen G. White set forth at least two essential points regarding the relationship between the Bible and the study of history. The first is that Bible history is reliable, reporting accurately what really happened. The second is that the Bible presents the true philosophy of history. Both assertions occur on the same page of *Education*:

The Bible is the most ancient and the most comprehensive history that men possess. It came fresh from the fountain of eternal truth, and throughout the ages a divine hand has preserved its purity. It lights up the far-distant past, where human research in vain seeks to penetrate. In God's word only do we behold the power that laid the foundations of the earth and that stretched out the heavens. Here only do we find an *authentic account* of the origin of nations. Here only is given a history of our race *unsullied by human pride or prejudice*.

In the annals of human history the growth of nations, the rise and fall of empires, appear as dependent on the will and prowess of man. The shaping of events seems, to a great degree, to be determined by his power, ambition, or caprice. But in

the word of God the curtain is drawn aside, and we behold, behind, above, and through all the play and counterplay of human interests and power and passions, the agencies of the all-merciful One, silently, patiently working out the counsels of His own will.

The Bible reveals the *true philosophy* of history. (*Education*, p. 173, emphasis mine)

**Accuracy.** The following passage elaborates on Mrs. White's view of the accuracy of

Scripture's history:

The lives recorded in the Bible are authentic histories of actual individuals. From Adam down through successive generations to the times of the apostles we have a plain, unvarnished account of what actually occurred and the genuine experience of real characters. It is a subject of wonder to many that inspired history should narrate in the lives of good men facts that tarnish their moral characters. Infidels seize upon these sins with great satisfaction and hold their perpetrators up to ridicule. The inspired writers did not testify to falsehoods to prevent the pages of sacred history being clouded by the record of human frailties and faults. The scribes of God wrote as they were dictated by the Holy Spirit, having no control of the work themselves. They penned the literal truth, and stern, forbidding facts are revealed for reasons that our finite minds cannot fully comprehend.

It is one of the best evidences of the authenticity of the Scriptures that the truth is not glossed over nor the sins of its chief characters suppressed. Many will urge that it is an easy matter to relate what has occurred in an ordinary life. But it is a proved fact that it is a human impossibility to give an impartial history of a contemporary; and it is almost as difficult to narrate, without deviating from the exact truth, the story of any person or people with whose career we have become acquainted. The human mind is so subject to prejudice that it is almost impossible for it to treat the subject impartially. Either the faults of the person under review stand out in glaring relief, or his virtues shine with undimmed luster, just as the writer is prejudiced for or against him. However impartial the historian may design to be, all critics will agree that it is a very difficult matter to be truly so.

But divine unction, lifted above the weaknesses of humanity, tells the simple, naked truth. (*Testimonies for the Church*, 4:9, 10)

**Philosophy of History.** Mrs. White's view of the philosophy of history is that God is in control of the events of nations, that each may have opportunity to reveal whether it will live according to His benevolent laws or will exemplify the character of the original rebel. She set forth her view in *Education*:

God declares that whosoever will may come “into the bond of the covenant.” Ezekiel 20:37. In the creation it was His purpose that the earth be inhabited by beings whose existence should be a blessing to themselves and to one another, and an honor to their Creator. All who will may identify themselves with this purpose. Of them it is spoken, “This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise.” Isaiah 43:21.

God has revealed in His law the principles that underlie all true prosperity both of nations and of individuals. “This is your wisdom and your understanding,” Moses declared to the Israelites of the law of God. “It is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life.” Deuteronomy 4:6; 32:47. The blessings thus assured to Israel are, on the same conditions and in the same degree, assured to every nation and every individual under the broad heavens.

The power exercised by every ruler on the earth is Heaven-imparted; and upon his use of the power thus bestowed, his success depends. To each the word of the divine Watcher is, “I girded thee, though thou hast not known Me.” Isaiah 45:5. And to each the words spoken to Nebuchadnezzar of old are the lesson of life: “Break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquility.” Daniel 4:27.

To understand these things,—to understand that “righteousness exalteth a nation;” that “the throne is established by righteousness” and “upholden by mercy” (Proverbs 14:34; 16:12; 20:28); to recognize the outworking of these principles in the manifestation of His power who “removeth kings, and setteth up kings” (Daniel 2: 21),—this is to understand the philosophy of history.

In the word of God only is this clearly set forth. Here it is shown that the strength of nations, as of individuals, is not found in the opportunities or facilities that appear to make them invincible; it is not found in their boasted greatness. It is measured by the fidelity with which they fulfill God’s purpose. (*Education*, pp. 174, 175)

#### **D. Philosophy**

Mrs. White did not give as extensive coverage to philosophy as she did to the areas we have already explored, but a multitude of scattered references reveal that, as in the other cases, she held that the Bible must be the standard of all true education. A few statements will serve to illustrate:

Satan and his hosts set themselves to overthrow the work of God. To fainting, unbelieving souls it may seem that the powers of darkness are about to prevail. Philosophy sets up reason as an antagonist of revelation. Science, falsely so called, directs the minds of men to the book of nature as a contradiction of the word of God. Critics search the Scriptures to find some pretext for treating with contempt the words of Holy Writ. The base spirit of worldliness leads men to seek to throw off the

claims of their Maker. And many who profess to reverence God's word make war upon all who proclaim its plain and cutting truths. (*Review and Herald*, August 28, 1883)

Apart from Christ, science is misleading and philosophy is foolishness. (*Medical Ministry*, p. 97)

All the philosophies of human nature have led to confusion and shame when God has not been recognized as all in all. (*Testimonies for the Church*, 8:322)

Christian knowledge bears its own stamp of unmeasured superiority in all that concerns the preparation for the future, immortal life. It distinguishes the Bible reader and believer, who has been receiving the precious treasures of truth, from the skeptic and the believer in pagan philosophy. (*Medical Ministry*, p. 89)

Mrs. White understood the Bible to present not only a complete theology, but a complete philosophy as well. By this she certainly did not mean that the Bible explores every philosophical nuance that the curiosity of mankind might wish to explore, for she described the Bible's system of philosophy not only as complete, but also as simple. In her view, the Bible presents the foundation truths which answer the major questions of life. In a relationship with the God portrayed in Scripture, we may find meaning in life, comfort in sorrow, purpose for existence, and a goal toward which we may strive. What is more, studying and following Scripture will strengthen the mind. She wrote,

The Bible contains a simple and complete system of theology and philosophy. It is the book that makes us wise unto salvation. It tells us of the love of God as shown in the plan of redemption, imparting the knowledge essential for all students—the knowledge of Christ. . . . (*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 422)

The study of the Bible will give strength to the intellect. Says the Psalmist, "The entrance of Thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple." The question has often been asked me, "Should the Bible become the important book in our schools?" It is a precious book, a wonderful book. It is a treasury containing jewels of precious value. It is a history that opens to us the past centuries. Without the Bible we should have been left to conjectures and fables in regard to the

occurrences of past ages. Of all the books that have flooded the world, be they ever so valuable, the Bible is the Book of books, and is most deserving of the closest study and attention. It gives not only the history of the creation of this world, but a description of the world to come. It contains instruction concerning the wonders of the universe, and it reveals to our understanding the Author of the heavens and the earth. It unfolds a simple and complete system of theology and philosophy. Those who are close students of the word of God, and who obey its instructions, and love its plain truths, will improve in mind and manners. It is an endowment of God that should awaken in every heart the most sincere gratitude; for it is the revelation of God to man. (*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 129)

Ellen White's counsel, in brief:

Cleave to the word, "It is written." Cast out of the mind the dangerous, obtrusive theories which, if entertained, will hold the mind in bondage so that the man shall not become a new creature in Christ. (Ibid.)

### **E. Other Disciplines**

In the book *Education*, Mrs. White dealt with a number of other disciplines which may form a part of true education. In general, she held that Scripture provided a firm foundation for these studies, such as business (in which the Bible's ethics would prove instructive and help ensure God's blessing—see pp. 135-145), physiology and hygiene (one should work in harmony with the laws enshrined in our creation—pp. 195-201), dietetics (the Bible outlines the diet God devised for us—pp. 202-206), and even poetry, song, and literature (the Bible provides classic examples—pp. 146-168). In all of these, the union of Scripture with the academic discipline, with Scripture providing the controlling principles, yields the strongest and most effective approach to the field of study.

Mrs. White, of course, did not limit the Bible's role to academic disciplines. In one of her most far-reaching statements, she presented the Bible as foundational to all human relationships here on this earth—the family, society, and even the nation. She wrote,

The teaching of the Bible has a vital bearing upon man's prosperity in all the relations of this life. It unfolds the principles that are the cornerstone of a nation's prosperity—principles with which is bound up the well-being of society, and which are the safeguard of the family—principles without which no man can attain usefulness, happiness, and honor in this life, or can hope to secure the future, immortal life. There is no position in life, no phase of human experience, for which the teaching of the Bible is not an essential preparation. (*Child Guidance*, pp. 507, 508)

#### IV. Conclusion

For Ellen G. White, the Bible was the revealed Word of God, expressing accurately the mind of God and His will for man, the history and nature of this world, and the way of salvation. Because, in her view, the purpose of education was not merely to gain a livelihood or to try to “make a name” for oneself, but to be able to serve others well in this life and to make full preparation for eternal life to come, the Bible must be central and foundational to any academic endeavor. She wrote,

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 does not so much need men of great intellect as of noble character. It needs men in whom ability is controlled by steadfast principle.

“Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom.” “The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright.” Proverbs 4:7; 15:2. True education imparts this wisdom. It teaches the best use not only of one but of all our powers and acquirements. Thus it covers the whole circle of obligation—to ourselves, to the world, and to God. (*Education*, p. 225)

Coming humbly to the Word puts one in touch with the mind of God and prevents unwarranted departures into error, which often lead to a shipwreck of faith. In religion, science, history, and other disciplines, being firmly anchored in the Word of God will direct one's study into fruitful lines.

The first great lesson in all education is to know and understand the will of God. Take the knowledge of God with you through every day of life. Let it absorb the mind and the whole being. God gave Solomon wisdom, but this God-given wisdom was perverted when he turned from God to obtain wisdom from other sources. We need the wisdom of Solomon after we have learned the wisdom of One greater than Solomon. We are not to go through human wisdom, which is termed foolishness, to seek true wisdom. For men to learn science through man's interpretation, is to obtain a false education, but to learn of God and Jesus Christ is to learn the science of the Bible. (*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pp. 414, 415)

We note again how Mrs. White herself summed up the attraction of the Bible for those interested in various disciplines:

In its wide range of style and subjects the Bible has something to interest every mind and appeal to every heart. In its pages are found history the most ancient; biography the truest to life; principles of government for the control of the state, for the regulation of the household— principles that human wisdom has never equaled. It contains philosophy the most profound, poetry the sweetest and the most sublime, the most impassioned and the most pathetic. Immeasurably superior in value to the productions of any human author are the Bible writings, even when thus considered; but of infinitely wider scope, of infinitely greater value, are they when viewed in their relation to the grand central thought. Viewed in the light of this thought, every topic has a new significance. In the most simply stated truths are involved principles that are as high as heaven and that compass eternity. (*Education*, p. 125)