

# Two Books on Adventist Education

Reviews by George R. Knight

## Educational Philosophy

Raymond S. Moore, *Adventist Education at the Crossroads* (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1976), 200 pp., Index.

Raymond Moore is a man with a message, and that message is evident throughout his book. In essence, Moore is issuing a thrusting call to the Adventist Church to follow the educational plans of God as revealed through Ellen G. White.

The main theme of *Adventist Education at the Crossroads* deals with the necessity of a balanced work-study program in every Adventist school. Moore frequently quotes from *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, page 211, which states that "our teachers should not think that their work ends with giving instruction from books. Several hours each day should be devoted to working with the students in some line of manual training. In no case should this be neglected." His emphasis often falls on the last sentence, and he has defined "several hours" as three or four. In his interpretation, it is therefore a divine imperative for every teacher in every school to work three or four hours a day with students in some form of manual labor. To be faithful in this, as well as in other aspects of God's plan, is to qualify

for the blessings of Deuteronomy 28. On the other hand, if one neglects any part of the program, he is likely to suffer the curses of that same chapter. Adventist education, Moore implies, is at a crucial crossroad. Its choice of direction will determine whether it reaps blessings or curses.

*Crossroads* postulates that the teacher-student balanced work-study program is "the perfect answer for the community of Christ" (p. 63). The program is set forth as a divine panacea that, when properly applied, solves a wide range of administrative, teaching, student and financial problems. It is an integral part of "God's plan of education for this time" (pp. 52-54).

In the introduction, Moore lists three purposes for writing the book. First, he wants to identify certain dilemmas in Adventist education; second, he desires to link these problems to the solutions of the Scriptures and the writings of Ellen G. White; and third, he wishes to offer support for these counsels in terms of actual experiences and experiments that will act as stimuli for further implementation (p. 11). Moore is not interested in a merely theoretical discussion of the issues involved. His book is primarily aimed at those who are determined to follow God's principles at all costs and are asking, "How can these ideals be applied in actual school situations?" On the other hand, he is certainly not against proselyting readers to his point of view.

Many themes besides the omnipresent work-study with all teachers and students

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involved are also highlighted and often treated in a helpful manner. Some of these oft-repeated minor theses include his emphasis of the nongraded classroom, creative homework rather than dull routine, teaching students how to think rather than emphasizing rote, the desirable age for entering school, students teaching students in monitorial fashion, the importance of the home as an educational agency, and possible avenues of cooperation between home and school. These minor themes are generally integrated into some phase of his major theme.

**A** definite problem in *Crossroads* is its organization. Early in the book, the reader is confronted with a defensive stance regarding

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“God’s program of education,” the rewards of the plan, and how to initiate it in actual practice. Nowhere, however, are the components of “the plan” outlined in a manner that leaves the reader without doubt regarding the identity and interrelationships of its major constituents. The reader wanders through the book and picks up the elements of the “ideal program” in isolated snatches rather than as a cohesive whole. The desired emphasis is made through redundancy of ideas and references rather than through an organizational plan leading from a statement of position to the application of the leading principles. As a result, the finished product resembles more an assemblage of prohibitions and imperatives than it does a closely reasoned and carefully written document.

The reading of the volume for its unique contribution is also made more difficult by

long excursions into general educational lore dealing with such issues as homework, administrative principles and teaching methods. These subjects are good, true and helpful in themselves, but are loosely related to Moore’s fundamental argument. It seems that much of this material could have been shortened or deleted. For example, nearly one whole chapter is quoted from a National Education Association study on homework, an interesting article, but hardly distinctive to God’s plan for Adventist education. If the manuscript could have been both shortened and clarified through a tighter organizational pattern, its major thesis would have been more forcefully argued.

The most serious difficulty in *Crossroads* lies in the slim documentation of the major thesis. There is no doubt that it is a rewarding experience for teachers and students to work together. Ellen White makes this clear in several places.<sup>1</sup> In only one reference, however, has the reviewer found the qualification that this should never be neglected and that it should be for several hours each day. Yet, it is upon this isolated case that Moore has based his argument. He refers to this passage at least one dozen times and leaves the reader with the false impression that Ellen White repeatedly emphasized the point under consideration.

The passage in *Counsels to Teachers* was written to a particular school with a definite, but not unique, set of circumstances. Fernando School in California had been boasting of its curriculum, emphasizing many languages, its “college” status, and its intellectual program, while neglecting the reason for its existence — the sending of practical missionaries right into the field prior to a collegiate education. A study of the manuscripts concerning the problem of the Fernando School makes it explicit that Ellen White had been earnestly speaking with both the teachers and the administration concerning their educational role. She specifically noted that Fernando was not a college, that colleges had a different function than intermediate schools, that Fernando was to delete “flowery notices” of what it intended to do from its bulletin, and that it was to uplift labor and basic educational skills rather than advanced

studies.<sup>2</sup> It is in this concrete context that Ellen White made her strong statement in *Counsels to Teachers*. To develop this statement into a universal mandate and a divine command for every teacher in all schools is to go beyond the documentation, to obscure the moderation of other statements,<sup>3</sup> and to divorce the writings of Ellen White from the historical context that gives them meaning. It is a theological safeguard that a doctrine is not based on an isolated text. Likewise, an educational theory cannot be developed out of a single reference.

In his introduction, Moore claims that his book is his interpretation of God's counsel rather than a "fiat from Mount Sinai" (p. 12). After reading the manuscript, however, one is tempted to feel that one must either agree with the author or carry the heavy burden of being wrong—with all the eternal penalties entailed therein. Despite this implication, the reader may choose to disagree with the rigidity of Moore's conclusions but still benefit from reading his book. Moore has emphasized aspects of Christian educational theory that are generally neglected in practice. Although at times he has not maintained perfect balance, many of his suggestions are provocative and will be a stimulus to experimentation and diversification in Adventist education at all levels.

The title of Moore's book is indicative of an ongoing problem and challenge confronting Adventist education. Adventist education has for the past 100 years stood at the crossroads of secular and sacred educational philosophy and practice and has all too often opted for the secular. *Adventist Education at the Crossroads* is one sincere attempt to direct Adventist education to a fulfillment of its special mission.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 325; *Counsels to Teachers*, pp. 203, 208; *Testimonies for the Church*, VI, 179; *Education*, pp. 212, 219.

2. E. G. White to the Teachers of the Fernando School, May 17, 1903, Letter 89, 1903; E. G. White to Those in Charge of the Fernando School, May 17, 1903, Letter 88, 1903; Remarks by E. G. White at the Los Angeles Camp Meeting on Sept. 17, 1902, MS 54, 1903; Portion of an Address Given at the Opening of

the Fernando, Calif., School on Oct. 1, 1903, MS 47, 1903. See also MS 125, 1902 and *Counsels to Teachers*, pp. 202-213.

3. For example, "And, so far as possible, facilities for manual training should be connected with every school. To a great degree such training would supply the place of the gymnasium, with the additional benefit of affording valuable discipline." *Education*, p. 217.

#### Educational History

Maurice Hodgen, ed., *School Bells & Gospel Trumpets: A Documentary History of Seventh-day Adventist Education in North America* (Loma Linda: Adventist Heritage Publications, 1978), 308 pages.

**S**chool Bells & Gospel Trumpets is a pioneering venture in the history of Seventh-day Adventist education, an almost untouched territory. That Adventists have generally neglected the history of their educational activities is remarkable considering the emphasis Adventists place on education. Until recently, works in Adventist educational history have focused on institutions. Foremost among these histories have been Emmett K. Vande Vere's *The Wisdom Seekers* (1972), about Andrews University, and Everett Dick's *Union: College of the Golden Cords* (1967). Beyond these histories of specific institutions, there is E. M. Cadwallader's *A History of Seventh-day Adventist Education* (4th ed., 1975), a mimeographed volume circulated by Leaves-of-Autumn Books. Cadwallader's work is in essence a collection of institutional histories. It is incomplete and does not attempt to synthesize the development of the various institutions, to cover the evolution of educational theory among Adventists, or to provide insight into the dynamic interaction that takes place within a burgeoning educational system. In addition to institutional histories, Adventists have produced some biographies of educators. Illustrative of this approach have been Merlin Neff's *For God & C.M.E.: A Biography of Percy T. Magan* (1964) and Richard Schwarz's *John Harvey Kellogg, M.D.* (1970).

Given this rather sparse offering of institutional histories and biographies, Maurice

Hodgen's comprehensive documentary history is a welcome new development. There are only two other major collections of Adventist educational documents. The first is *Early Educational Materials*, which appeared in 1936 under the sponsorship of the General Conference Department of Education. The second, *Reprints on Christian Education by Church Leaders*, came out of James M. Lee's efforts in the early 1970s. A chronologically arranged collection of journal articles published between 1862 and 1971, it provides no commentary or classification. Hodgen has accurately noted that *Reprints* is "bulky, expensive and in short supply." The 1936 collection has long been out of print as well as out of date and the Lee production is not generally available. *School Bells* is the first compilation to go beyond the stage of being a mere collection and is, therefore, the first

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truly documentary history. It has an interpretive framework that gives genuine insight into denominational educational development.

Hodgen has, rather surprisingly, elected a topical rather than a chronological arrangement for his readings. *School Bells* is divided into eight nearly equal parts: the beginnings of Adventist education, the widening of educational concern, the training of teachers, Adventist educational theory, the curriculum, school administration and the relation of Adventist education to the larger social order. Each section has between 11 and 19 chronologically arranged readings. An introduction to each part provides context and

perspective for the various articles that follow. In addition to these introductions, each selection is prefaced with helpful information concerning the author and other pertinent data. The readings have nearly all been taken from public sources such as reports of important educational conventions, the journals of the church and school bulletins.

This documentary history indicates, on the part of the editor, a knowledgeable background of Adventist educational history and extensive reading in the source materials. Hodgen has resisted the temptation to focus on the development of higher education, and his collection shows balance between higher education and the elementary and secondary branches. Furthermore, his treatment of higher education unfolds for readers the evolution of both professional and liberal arts education within the church. Those interested in the continuing conflict in educational philosophy in Adventist circles will especially benefit from Part IV, which largely avoids selective bias in providing a wide spectrum of educational viewpoints. This section, along with its introductory comments, also highlights the dearth of serious thinking concerning educational philosophy among Seventh-day Adventists.

*School Bells* shares both the strengths and weaknesses of other documentary histories. It is strong in that it puts the reader into direct contact with historical documents. This helps him become involved in the pulse of the times, imbibe the power of the original arguments, and participate in differences of opinion through the eyes of historical figures who were at the center of action. On the other hand, documentary histories offer a scattering of viewpoints and gaps in time to readers who may need synthesis and interpretation before they are able to fully benefit from the original documents. Of course, the function of the introductory essays in documentary histories is to moderate this difficulty. In Hodgen's collection, however, the difficulty of gaining a chronological overview is compounded by the topical arrangement. The topical structure demands that the reader already have a good grasp of

the field, which is difficult when there is no published history of Adventist education by which a reader may get his bearings.

The problem of selection for the editor of a documentary history proves to be a major task as he sifts through a seemingly endless number of meaningful documents. Hodgen made a basic decision by not including readings from Ellen White because her most significant documents were already widely distributed among Adventists (114). This was undoubtedly a wise decision, but the usefulness of his book would have been broadened if he had cross-referenced his selections to Ellen White statements. Along this same line, it would have been helpful if additional suggested readings from other sources were listed at the end of each section. Another important selection decision was made when the editor ruled out the major writings of Edward Sutherland and the statements of educational philosophy by F. E. J. Harder on the ground that these were of easy access (114-15). However, these documents are not readily available to readers located outside

Adventist educational centers. Beyond this, a reader might desire to see more selections from personal documents such as letters or entries from the diaries of leading educators. Other topics that might have been included are documents concerning self-supporting educational work and excerpts from early Adventist textbooks. In addition, an index of authors would be helpful.

Of course, one must appreciate the limitations of space forced upon Hodgen by the hard facts of publishing costs. And despite all the previous suggestions, this reviewer wishes to express appreciation to Hodgen for his pioneering endeavor and to Adventist Heritage Publications for making this material available to the public. This may not be a book that the average reader will devour from cover to cover, but it is a significant source collection in a convenient form. It will serve a useful function as both a general source book on Adventist educational history and a reader on special topics. As such, it is a valuable addition to the historical literature of the Adventist Church.