

**Outline for the review of:
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
History and Philosophy (Theorists)**

Rationale for significance:

In order to feel as if you comprehend a discipline or field of study, you must know where it came from, the other disciplines or influences from which it has sprung, on what philosophies it is grounded, and who has and continues to influence those philosophies.

Definitions:

There are many. I will include some specifically about religious education—which to many authors includes formal as well as informal education. Since we focus primarily on the church's education rather than the school's education, we often slither over into a field/discipline referred to in seminaries as discipleship, which emphasizes the spiritual formation aspect of religious education.

Craig Dykstra defines Christian education thus:

“Christian education is that particular work which the church does to teach the historical, communal, difficult, countercultural practices of the church so that the church may learn to participate in them ever more fully and deeply. It is the dialogical process of teaching and learning through which the church comes to see, grasp, and participate ever more deeply in the redemptive transformation of personal and social life that God is carrying out.” (“No Longer Strangers”)

Robert Pazmino (evangelical) has formulated a definition based on the work of his former professor at Columbia University, Lawrence Cremin's definition of education. Pazmino defines Christian education as the “deliberate, systematic, and sustained divine and human effort to share or appropriate the knowledge, values, attitudes, skills, sensitivities, and behaviors that comprise or are consistent with the Christian faith. It fosters the change, renewal, and reformation of persons, groups, and structures by the power of the Holy Spirit to conform to the revealed will of God as expressed in the Old and New Testaments and preeminently in the person of Jesus Christ, as well as any outcomes of that effort.” (Quoted in *Introducing Christian Education: Foundations for the 21st Century*)

Dallas Willard has a definition of Christian education which I am possibly paraphrasing because I heard it on a video and haven't found a print source yet.

“Christian education is helping the student to walk routinely and easily in the character and power of Jesus.”

Nevin Harner states it this way:

“Christian education is a reverent attempt to discover the divinely ordained process by which individuals grow in Christlikeness, and to work with that process.” (*The Educational Work of the Church*. New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1939, p. 20, quoted in *Introducing Christian Education: Foundations for the 21st Century*)

The History:

Historical Period	People / Institutions / Concepts
Jewish education before exile	Shema, Deut. 6:4-9 / family Moses, educator turned shepherd
Jewish education after exile	Torah
Christ	Wherever He went
Apostolic church (0-200)	House churches, synagogues (Gangel claims Greek influence was strong in N.T. Gentile education)
Early church (200-400)	Catechumenal schools Catechetical schools—Antioch / Chrysostom Alexandria / Origen, Athenasius Augustine
Middle Ages (400-1500)	Monasteries, Cathedral schools, Universities, Abelard, Aquinas
Renaissance (1300-1600) Reformation (1500-1600)	Luther, Calvin
Enlightenment Post & Counter Reformation (1600-1700)	Ignatius of Loyala Comenius Spener Puritans Harvard 1636
1700's	Francke, Zinzendorf, J. Edwards, J. Wesley, Pestalozzi, Sunday Schools
1800's	Herbart, Froebel, Bushnell, McGuffey
1900's	Catholic —Thomas Groome, Mary Boys, Gabriel Moran Mainline Protestant —George A. Coe, James Smart, D.C. Wyckoff, Lewis Sherrill, R.C. Miller, Sara Little, J. Westerhoff, James Loder, James Fowler, Craig Dykstra Evangelical —Frank Gaebelein, Lois LeBar, Howard Hendricks, Lawrence Richards SDA —E. G. White, George Knight, V. Bailey Gillespie

Classic Questions:

In the Adventist setting the question is, what to call “religious education.” In much of the literature it is referred to as Christian education, but to Adventists that means our formal parochial system. We seem to better understand the concept of discipleship, but not very deeply. And many do not understand how discipleship and education relate.

Another question is a curriculum question: what is to be taught, who decides what is to be taught, and where will it be taught?

Contemporary Issues:**For Adventists:**

Formal: Even though we make use of learning theories, all we do must be grounded in our theology. Unfortunately, our teacher training institutions do not always intentionally ground future teachers (formal) in theology and theistic philosophy.

Informal: How do we change the paradigm of “the ministry” to view their role as administrators or seminary deans of their local “church-schools” where each believer/disciple is becoming equipped for their own ministry as they and their minister grow together as disciples.

In General:**Prominent Theories**

Theories: Note the attached chart from Seymour and Miller’s *Contemporary Approaches to Christian Education* (1982) which names the following “approaches” and unpacks them slightly:

Approach	Written about by . . .	Associated names
Religious Instruction	Sara Little	James Michael Lee
Faith Community	Charles Foster	John Westerhoff
Spiritual Development	Donald Miller	James Fowler
Liberation	Allen Moore	Paulo Freire
Interpretation	Jack Seymour, Carol Wehrheim	Thomas Groome

Other approaches		
Participation In community	Susanne Johnson	“It is the task of Christian education and spiritual guidance to initiate believers, through the faith community, into the coming of God’s Realm and to help them understand and live their whole lives in light of that reality.”
Relationship and Holy Spirit	Roy Zuck	“Students learn best when teachers have established conditions favorable to the working of the Holy Spirit. As pupils recognize their needs, and submit to the

		teaching of the Holy Spirit in meeting those needs, learning takes place. The Holy Spirit is essential in learning God's truth, for individuals can learn nothing of spiritual significance unless they are God-taught. Pupils have not learned until the Holy Spirit has made the truths of God relevant to their life-needs." ("Principles of Learning and the Work of the Holy Spirit," <i>The Holy Spirit in Your Teaching</i> . 1984.
Redemption/Restoration (Family style small group)	Ellen White	"In the training of His disciples the Saviour followed the system of education established at the beginning. The Twelve first chosen, with a few others who through ministry to their needs were from time to time connected with them, formed the family of Jesus. They were with Him in the house, at the table, in the closet, in the field. They accompanied Him on His journeys, shared His trials and hardships, and, as much as in them was, entered into His work." (<i>Education</i> , p. 84)

Theological critique of the theories:

[More to come]

Seminal Books:

Bushnell, Horace. (1876). *Christian Nurture*. New York: Scribner, Armstrong, & co.

Fowler, James. *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian*.

Current Books:

Eldridge, Daryl. (1995). *The Teaching Ministry of the Church*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman.

Gangel, Kenneth O., and Benson, Warren S. (1983). *Christian Education: Its History and Philosophy*. Chicago: Moody.

Reed, James E., and Prevost, Ronnie. (1993). *History of Christian Education*. Nashville: Broadman and Holman.

Wilhoit, James and Dettoni, John. (1998). *Nurture That Is Christian*. Grand Rapids, MI: BridgePoint, an imprint of Baker Books.