

Ellen White and the Situation of Seventh-day Adventist Schools in Urban Settings

Mission to the Cities

As a people we need to hasten the work in the cities, which has been hindered for lack of workers and means and a spirit of consecration. At this time, the people of God need to turn their hearts fully to Him; for the end of all things is at hand. They need to humble their minds, and to be attentive to the will of the Lord, working with earnest desire to do that which God has shown must be done to warn the cities of their impending doom. (*The Review and Herald*, January 25, 1912)

Again and again I am instructed to present to our churches the work that should be done in our large cities. There is a great work to be done, not only where we have churches already established, but also in places where the truth has never been fully presented.... Often we have been told that our cities are to hear the message, but how slow we are to heed the instruction. I saw One standing on a high platform with arms extended. He turned and pointed in every direction, saying, "A world perishing in ignorance of God's holy law, and Seventh-day Adventists are asleep." (Manuscript 7, 1908; also *Evangelism*, p. 33)

The burden of the needs of our cities has rested so heavily upon me that it has sometimes seemed that I should die. May the Lord give wisdom to our brethren, that they may know how to carry forward the work in harmony with the will of the Lord. (Manuscript 13, 1910.)

The cities must be worked. The millions living in these congested centers are to hear the third angel's message. This work should have been developed rapidly during the past few years. A beginning has been made, for which we praise God. Outpost centers are being established, from whence, like Enoch of old, our workers can visit the cities and do faithful service.... I referred to the great work that must be done in the cities of our land, and of our inability to do this work by establishing institutions in the heart of these cities. (*The Review and Herald*, July 5, 1906, p. 7)

There is no change in the messages that God has sent in the past. The work in the cities is the essential work for this time. When the cities are worked as God would have them, the result will be the setting in operation of a mighty movement such as we have not yet witnessed. (*Medical Ministry*, p. 304)

Oh, that we might see the needs of these cities as God sees them! (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 101)

Young People are to Be Involved in Reaching the Cities

There is no class of persons capable of accomplishing more in the warfare against intemperance than are God-fearing youth. In this age the young men in our cities should unite as an army, firmly and decidedly to set themselves against every form of selfish, health-destroying indulgence. What a power they might be for good! How many they might save from becoming demoralized in the halls and gardens fitted up with music and other attractions to allure the youth! (*Youth's Instructor*, July 16, 1903).

Guidance for Institutions

As in the days of Noah and of Moses God arranged every detail of the ark and of the tabernacle, so in the building of His institutions today He Himself is watching the work done. Let them remember that the great Master Builder, by His word, by His Spirit, and by His providence, designs to direct His work. They should take time to ask counsel of Him.... All should remember that they are erecting an institution in which is to be carried forward a work of eternal consequence, and that, in doing this work, they are to be laborers together with God. "Looking unto Jesus" is ever to be our motto. And the assurance is, "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with Mine eye." Psalm 32:8. (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 94)

An Ideal for All Schools

The school should not be in or near a city, where its extravagance, its wicked customs and practices, will require constant work to counteract the prevailing iniquity, that it may not poison the very atmosphere which the students breathe. All schools should be located, as far as possible, where the eye will rest upon the things of nature instead of clusters of houses. (*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 322)

No pains should be spared to select places for our schools where the moral atmosphere will be as healthful as possible; for the influences that prevail will leave a deep impress on young and forming characters. For this reason a retired locality is best. The great cities, the centers of business and learning, may seem to present some advantages; but these advantages are outweighed by other considerations.... The youth educated in large cities are surrounded by influences similar to those that prevailed before the flood. The same principles of disregard for God and His law; the same love of pleasure, of selfish gratification, and of pride and vanity are at work at the present time.... In choosing retired localities for our schools, we do not for a moment suppose that we are placing the youth beyond the reach of temptation. Satan is a very diligent worker, and is untiring in devising ways to corrupt every mind that is open to his suggestions. He meets families and individuals on their own ground, adapting his temptations to their inclinations and weaknesses. But in the large cities his power over minds is greater, and his nets for the entanglement of unwary feet are more numerous. In connection with our schools, ample grounds should be provided. There should be work for all students, whether they are able to pay their way or not; the physical and mental powers should receive proportionate attention. Students should learn to cultivate the land; for this will bring them into close contact with nature. There is a refining, subduing influence in nature that should be taken into account in selecting the locality for a school. (*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pp. 421-423)

Let parents understand that the training of their children is an important work in the saving of souls. In country places abundant, useful exercise will be found in doing those things that need to be done, and which will give physical health by developing nerve and muscle. "Out of the cities" is my message for the education of our children. (Manuscript 85, 1908)

I am urging our people to establish our schools away from the congested cities and to place in these schools faithful, consecrated teachers, who will make the Word of God the beginning and end of all the education given. (Letter 143, 1902 to Marry Foss)

The instruction is still being given, Move out of the cities. Establish your sanitariums, your schools, and your offices away from the centers of populations. (Letter 26, 1907 to W. D. Salisbury, leader in Australia.)

Elementary Schools in the Cities

In every city where the truth is proclaimed, churches are to be raised up. In some large cities there must be churches in various parts of the city. (Letter 168, 1909; see also *Medical Ministry*, p. 309).

In localities where there is a church, a school should be established if there are no more than six children to attend. A teacher should be employed who will educate the children in the truths of the Word of God. (*Review and Herald*, July 2, 1908; see also *Child Guidance*, p. 308, and *Australian Union Conference Record*, July 26, 1899)

So far as possible these schools [to educate the children of African-Americans] should be established outside the cities. But in the cities there are many children who could not attend schools away from the cities; and for the benefit of these, schools should be opened in the cities as well as in the country. (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 201)

Secondary Schools in the Cities

I wish to state especially that very much more can be done to save and educate the children of those who at present cannot get away from the cities. Church schools are to be established in these cities, and in connection with these schools provision is to be made for the teaching of higher studies, where these are called for. These

schools can be managed in such a way, part joining to part, that they will be a complete whole. The Lord has His methods and His plans. His wisdom is far-reaching. (Letter 189, 1903 to Frederick Griggs, serving as General Conference education director. Note: The term “higher studies” refers to post-elementary education, but does not include tertiary education, whose students Ellen White refers to as youth. Earlier in this letter Ellen White had written, “It is not God’s design that our youth should be called to Battle Creek. Calling them to this place, and associating them with worldly people of all grades, high and low, is like Lot’s taking his family into Sodom. The Lord said, It is for the interest of our youth to be educated in some place other than Battle Creek. He declared it to be His will for the Battle Creek College to be removed to some place in the country.”)

The Location of Educational Centers for Youth

The Lord calls upon our young people to enter our schools and quickly fit themselves for service. In various places outside of cities, schools are to be established where our youth can receive an education that will prepare them to go forth to do evangelical work and medical missionary work. (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 170)

Never can the proper education be given to the youth in this country [Australia], or any other country, unless they are separated a wide distance from the cities. The customs and practices in the cities unfit the minds of the youth for the entrance of truth. The liquor-drinking, the smoking and gambling, the theatre-going, the horse racing, the great importance placed upon holidays,—are all a species of idolatry, a sacrifice upon idol alters.... Should schools be located in the cities or within a few miles from them, it would be most difficult to counteract the influence of the former education which students have received.... All this is a false education. We shall find it necessary to establish our schools out of, and away from, the cities, and yet not so far away that they cannot be in touch with them, to do them good, to let light shine amid the moral darkness.... We should choose a location for our school apart from the cities, where the eye will not rest continually upon the dwellings of men, but upon the works of God; where there shall be places of interest for them to visit, other than what the city affords. Let our students be placed where nature can speak to the senses, and in her voice they may hear the voice of God. (*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pp. 312-313, 320)

It may be urged by some that our school must be in the city in order to give influence to our work, and that if it is in the country, the influence is lost to the cities; but this is not necessarily the case. The youth who attend our school for the first time, are not prepared to exert a correct influence in any city as lights shining amid the darkness. They will not be prepared to reflect light until the darkness of their own erroneous education is dispelled. In the future our school will not be the same as it has been in the past. Among the students there have been reliable, experienced men who have taken advantage of the opportunity to gain more knowledge in order to do intelligent work in the cause of God. These have been a help in the school, for they have been as a balance wheel; but in the future the school will consist mostly of those who need to be transformed in character, and who will need to have much patient labor bestowed upon them; they have to unlearn, and learn again. It will take time to develop the true missionary spirit, and the farther they are removed from the cities and the temptations that are flooding them, the more favorable will it be for them to obtain the true knowledge and develop well-balanced characters. (*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 324).

God has sent warning after warning that our schools and publishing houses and sanitariums are to be established out of the city, in places where the youth may be taught most effectively what is truth. Let no one attempt to use the Testimonies to vindicate the establishment of large business interests in the cities. Do not make of no effect the light that has been given upon this subject. (Manuscript 76, 1905)

Educational Institutions for Preparing Gospel Workers

Repeatedly the Lord has instructed us that we are to work the cities from outpost centers. In these cities we are to have houses of worship, as memorials for God; but institutions for the publication of our literature, for the healing of the sick, and for the training of workers are to be established outside the cities. Especially is it important that our youth be shielded from the temptations of city life. (*Special Testimonies, Series B*, pp. 7-8, 1907.)

As we draw near to the close of time the cities will become more and more corrupt, and more and more objectionable as places for establishing centers of our work. The dangers of travel will increase; confusion and drunkenness will abound. If there can be found places in retired mountain regions where it would be difficult for the evils of the cities to enter, let our people secure such places for our sanitariums and advanced schools. (Manuscript 85, 1908)

City Evangelism Training Schools

More attention should be given to training and educating missionaries with special reference to work in cities. (*General Conference Daily Bulletin*, January 30, 1893, p. 37)

In every city there should be a city mission that would be a training school for workers. (Letter 56, 1910)

After a time, as the work advances, schools will be established in many cities, where workers can be quickly educated and trained for service. The students and their teachers can go out with our publications and spread the truth by means of the printed page. Desirable places can be secured for meetings to be held, and here the people can be invited to gather. Let those who are fitted for the work, the young and middle-aged, act a disinterested, unselfish part in laboring for the fields white for the harvest that are yet unworked. (Manuscript 11, 1908. The nature of these schools is described in the following paragraph: "In following up the interest after a camp-meeting, helpers are needed in various lines, and these occasions should be as a training school for workers. Let young men work in connection with experienced laborers who will pray with them and patiently instruct them. Consecrated women should engage in Bible work from house to house. Some of the workers should act as colporteurs, selling our literature, and giving judiciously to those who cannot buy.")

A well-balanced work can be carried on best in the cities when a Bible school for the training of workers is in progress while public meetings are being held. Connected with this training school or city mission should be experienced laborers of deep spiritual understanding, who can give the Bible workers daily instruction, and who can also unite wholeheartedly in the general public effort. (*Gospel Workers*, p. 364)

Brother and Sister Haskell have rented a house in one of the best parts of the city [Nashville], and have gathered round them a family of helpers, who day by day go out giving Bible readings, selling our papers, and doing medical missionary work. During the hour of worship, the workers relate their experiences. Bible studies are regularly conducted in the home, and the young men and young women connected with the mission receive a practical, thorough training in holding Bible readings and in selling our publications. The Lord has blessed their labors, a number have embraced the truth, and many others are deeply interested. It was in this way that the fishermen who left their nets at the call of Christ were trained. A similar work should be done in many cities. The young people who go out to labor in these cities should be under the direction of experienced, consecrated leaders. Let the workers be provided with a good home, in which they may receive thorough training. (*The Review and Herald*, September 7, 1905.)

Establishing Educational Institutions

Schools and sanitariums are to be established in places where there is now nothing to represent the truth. These interests are not to be established for the purpose of making money, but for the purpose of spreading the truth. Land should be secured at a distance from the cities, where schools can be built up in which the youth can be given an education in agricultural and mechanical lines. (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 215)

The popular sentiment is that cities should be chosen as locations for our schools. But God desires us to leave the sin-polluted atmosphere of the cities. It is His design that our schools shall be established where the atmosphere is purer. (*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 6, p. 408)

In their efforts to economize, our brethren should be careful lest they restrict the investment of means where wise investment is needed. In establishing schools and sanitariums, enough land should be purchased to provide for the carrying out of the plans that the Lord has outlined for these institutions. Provision should be

made for the raising of fruit and vegetables, and, wherever possible, sufficient land should be secured so that others may not erect, near the institution, buildings of an objectionable character. (*Gospel Workers*, p. 457)

Our manner of working must be after God's order. The work that is done for God in our large cities must not be according to man's devising.... Your work in New York has been started in right lines. You are to make in New York a center for missionary effort, from which work can be carried forward successfully. The Lord desires this center to be a training school for workers, and nothing is to be allowed to interrupt the work. After the people have embraced the truth and taken their stand, then the Lord will prepare them to be educated for the full reception of Bible truth.... We need a sanitarium and a school in the vicinity of New York City, and the longer the delay in the securing of these, the more difficult it will become. It would be well to secure a place as a home for our mission workers outside the city.... Think you that if I had said that New York would be destroyed by a tidal wave, I should have urged the purchase of property only sixty miles away from this city, as a sanitarium site, and a place from which New York could be worked? (*Evangelism*, p. 385-388)

In connection with the work in Nashville, I wish to speak of the school work that Brethren Sutherland and Magan are planning to do. I was surprised when, in speaking of the work they wished to do in the South, they spoke of establishing a school in some place a long way from Nashville. From the light given me, I knew that this would not be the right thing to do, and I told them so. The work that these brethren can do, because of the experience gained at Berrien Springs, is to be carried on within easy access of Nashville; for Nashville has not yet been worked as it should be. And it will be a great blessing to the workers in the school to be near enough to Nashville to be able to counsel with the workers there. In searching for a place for the school, the brethren found a farm of four hundred acres for sale, about nine miles from Nashville. The size of the farm, its situation, the distance that it is from Nashville, and the moderate sum for which it could be purchased seemed to point it out as the very place for the school work. We advised that this place be purchased. (*Review and Herald*, August 18, 1904. Note: The land was purchased and Madison College established in that location.)

Relocating Educational Institutions

Special light has been given me in regard to moving our publishing houses and sanitariums and schools out of the cities into places more favorable for their work, where those connected with them will not be exposed to all the temptations of city life. Especially should our schools be away from the cities. It is not for the spiritual good of the workers in our institutions for them to be located in the cities, where the temptations of the enemy abound on every hand. (*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 492)

God wants the school [Battle Creek College] to be taken out of Battle Creek. Some may be stirred about the transfer of the school from Battle Creek, but they need not be. This move is in accord with God's design for the school before the institution was established, but man could not see how this could be done. There were so many who said that the school must be in Battle Creek. Now we say that it must be somewhere else. The best thing that can be done is to dispose of the school's buildings here as soon as possible. Begin at once to look for a place where the school can be conducted on right lines.... Those now in charge of the school work here have their hearts blended in unity of purpose, to accomplish the thing which God has designated as the right thing to do. They have undertaken this work irrespective of the opposition that has come up, and the strife of tongues. These men have a grip on the work. They have been learning, and have planned to establish industrial schools out of the city, where a large space of ground can be secured. They mean to be heroic reformers, to adopt solid, intellectual methods. Their thoughts and plans have been maturing, and now they are prepared for decided action. (Pamphlet 158 "Testimonies Relating to Emmanuel Missionary College and Its Work", p. 2)

The light that has been given me is that Battle Creek has not the best influence over the students in our school. There is altogether too congested a state of things. The school, although it will mean a fewer number of students, should be moved out of Battle Creek. Get an extensive tract of land, and there begin the work which I entreated should be commenced before our school was established here,—to get out of the cities, to a place where the students would not see things to remark upon and criticize, where they would not see the wayward course of this one and that one, but would settle down to diligent study. (*General Conference Bulletin*, April 14, 1901)

I rejoiced when I heard that the Battle Creek school was to be established in a farming district. I know that there will be less temptation there for the students than there would be in the cities that are fast becoming as Sodom and Gomorrah, preparing for destruction by fire. The popular sentiment is that cities should be chosen as locations for our schools. But God desires us to leave the sin-polluted atmosphere of the cities. It is His design that our schools shall be established where the atmosphere is purer. (Manuscript 67, July 29, 1901)

Denominational Schools in the Closing Years of the Work

God has revealed to me that we are in positive danger of bringing into our educational work the customs and fashions that prevail in the schools of the world. If teachers are not guarded in their work, they will place on the necks of their students worldly yokes instead of the yoke of Christ. The plan of the schools we shall establish in these closing years of the work is to be of an entirely different order from those we have instituted in the past. For this reason, God bids us establish schools away from the cities, where, without let or hindrance, we can carry on the work of education upon plans that are in harmony with the solemn message that is committed to us for the world. Such an education as this can best be worked out where there is land to cultivate, and where the physical exercise taken by the students can be of such a nature as to act a valuable part in their character- building, and to fit them for usefulness in the fields to which they shall go. (*Special Testimonies, Series B*, p. 28)

Conditions of Success

As our work has extended and institutions have multiplied, God's purpose in their establishment remains the same. The conditions of prosperity are unchanged. (*Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 6, p. 224)

With us, as with Israel of old, success in education depends on fidelity in carrying out the Creator's plan. Adherence to the principles of God's work will bring as great blessings to us as it would have brought the Hebrew people. (*Education*, p. 50)

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