

ARTIGOS

FREDERICK GRIGGS: HIS LIFE, WORK AND INFLUENCE AS A SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST EDUCATIONAL LEADER

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ABSTRACT: Formal educational system was the last major segment to be established within the Seventh-Day Adventist Church (SDA) institutional development process. Several different reasons combined to cause that delay in this religious denomination. In its developmental process, some characters played a key role, such as Frederick Griggs, who was one of the most prominent leaders, and he is best known in SDA educational history as a moderate educator.

KEYWORDS: Frederick Griggs, SDA education, history, educational leader.

Frederick Griggs: sua vida, obra e influência como líder da educação adventista do sétimo dia

RESUMO: O sistema de educação formal foi o último grande segmento a ser estabelecido dentro do processo de desenvolvimento institucional da Igreja Adventista do Sétimo Dia (IASD). A combinação de diversos fatores causou esta tardança dentro da denominação religiosa. Em seu processo de desenvolvimento, alguns personagens exerceram um papel preponderante, tal como Frederick Griggs, que foi um dos mais proeminentes líderes, e se tornou conhecido no campo da história da educação adventista como um educador moderado.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Frederick Griggs, educação adventista, história, líder educacional.

1. THE EARLY YEARS

It seems that Christian education always exercised an important role in the development of our church, but this kind of reasoning is far from truth. "Formal education, in fact, was the last major institutional development within the denomination".¹ When we start talking about Seventh-Day Adventist (SDA) educational development we have always to consider that, there were several individuals who played a very crucial role in the process of establishing a formal denominational system of education within the Church. Without any hesitation we could affirm that Frederick Griggs was one of the most prominent of all.

This research paper purports to analyze two major facets of Griggs' career. Firstly, to identify his major contribution as an educational administrator, and secondly, it intends to analyze its impact upon the SDA education from its formative period till nowadays.

Historians claim that the past is always present. Assuming this premise, we could say that, if we want to understand Frederick Griggs and the qualities he brought as an educator and administrator, we must look into his ancestral background in order to identify the formative influences that he developed from his environment and training.

Frederick Griggs was born on March 23, 1867, at St. Charles, Michigan. The Adventist message came to his family through Reuben Griggs, his grandfather, who had attended meetings conducted by Ellen and James White at Tyrone, Michigan, in 1853. "Reuben later accepted the Sabbath under the ministry of M. E. Cornell, thereby becoming one of the earliest converts to Seventh-day Adventism in Michigan".² His father Ezra Griggs, served as a self supporting minister in eastern Michigan. He was a convicted believer in the gift of prophecy as revealed through Ellen White, and the same conviction expressed by his father made a lasting impression on the outlook of his son.

Talking about his father's influence, he stated: "My father purchased, read, and studied in our home, each publication of the Testimonies as it came from the press. He sought to obey



their counsel. It was then but natural that his children should believe that God was thus speaking to us".³ Since his early childhood, Griggs displayed both, an attitude of loyalty to the Seventh-day Adventist Church and to the Spirit of Prophecy. These two characteristics were perceptible during his entire life.

His father Ezra, "who was convicted that every person should have an opportunity to improve his abilities, took the lead in getting a public school established in his district".⁴ Opened in 1875 that school provided Frederick with his basic education through the eighth grade. After the end of his elementary school, Griggs enrolled at St. Charles High School. During the years of the secondary school, Griggs decided that after his graduation he would enter into a farming partnership with his father, but after a last minute decision, he came to conclude that he should do an examination for a teacher's certificate. The positive results of that examination convinced him to become a teacher.

Near the end of his second year as a teacher at Swan Creek, Frederick decided to visit his sister at Battle Creek College. During his visit, two important incidents exercised a crucial impact upon his future life: "first, he caught sight of a very beautiful and dainty young lady named Blanche Eggleston, and second, he was invited by W. W. Prescott, president of the college, to take the principalship of the college's preparatory department. Griggs accepted the later and pursued the former".⁵

Frederick Griggs passed through different stages in his life. "Griggs was in part the product of each and every phase through which his life passed. Not the least in importance were the years from childhood through youth spent in St. Charles, Michigan".⁶ Basically, we can affirm that Frederick was brought up in a pioneering type of environment with its emphasis on industry, self-reliance, and optimism.

2. GRIGGS BECOMES A STUDENT AT BUFFALO UNIVERSITY: SCHOOL OF PEDAGOGY

In 1896, Prescott, while on a trip east from Battle Creek, visited the Franklin model school which was affiliated with the newly established University of Buffalo School of Pedagogy. There he met its director, Frank M. McMurray. During the course of their conversation, "Prescott discovered an affinity between his thinking and the principles and methods of education expressed by McMurray".⁷ According to Osborne, "McMurray was in turn impressed with Prescott and offered three scholarships at the School of Pedagogy for selected preparatory-department teachers".⁸ Recognizing that he and his preparatory-department faculty at Battle Creek College were ill-prepared, Griggs proposed to the college board that he and several of his staff be granted leave to undertake further study.

In its three years of operation from 1895 through 1898, the University of Buffalo School of Pedagogy provided a quality professional training. The school's philosophy was basically committed to Herbartian psychology and Pestalozzian methodology. "McMurray, the director and key figure in the school, had obtained his Ph. D. in Germany and had been exposed firsthand to the influences of Herbart and Pestalozzi".⁹ During his year at Buffalo, Griggs completed twelve courses equivalent to five and three-fifths full credits, but he did not, therefore, complete the requirements for the diploma, but he gained exposure to fields of study hitherto denied him".¹⁰

At this point we could ask: To what extent was Griggs influenced by the scholars of Buffalo University? Was it a positive influence? In his dissertation, Dr. Reye presents four pieces of evidence that may be cited: "First, when Griggs wrote several articles for the *Review and Herald*, he based his series on child study on materials first presented by O'Shea, who was his teacher. Second, in a paper on "The Training of Teachers" presented to the Battle Creek College faculty early in 1897, Griggs expressed a number of concepts consistent with Herbartian psychology and Pestalozzian pedagogy. Third, when Griggs structured the teachers' courses he appeared to have followed the School of Pedagogy model. Fourth, Griggs borrowed the idea of model school that required teacher trainees to spend time in a practicum situation under the guidance of experienced and successful teachers".¹¹

2.1. THE FIRST CONTRIBUTIONS OF GRIGGS: A THEORY OF EDUCATION

After concluding his studies at Buffalo University, Griggs began to share his ideas on educational matters. During 1897 and 1898, he wrote thirty-five articles published in the *Review and Herald* and *The Christian Educator*. In these articles, Griggs gave a demonstration of what he understood of educational theory. The articles are concerned with eight major educational



points: "The aim of education, the nature of the child, moral training, discipline, a theory of learning, methodology, child study, and the curriculum".¹²

In search of describing Griggs' theory of education, let us present some of his ideas: (a) Character development was perceived by Griggs as being one of the greatest aims of education. His thought was a logical extension of his belief that education must concern itself with two worlds: the here and now and the world to come. (b) The nature of the child was clear and unequivocal to Griggs. Every child is born with the fallen nature of man. To this issue he stated: "The home, the church, and the school were commissioned to facilitate the exposure of the child to spiritual influences".¹³ (c) Griggs perceived the Bible as the strongest agent in moral education. About the Bible he said: "Through its stories the child could identify right and wrong and make appropriate value judgements, thereby learning skills applicable to meeting the choices faced in life".¹⁴ (d) Discipline was always to be positive in direction; it was to strengthen the good. "Sound discipline was an important function of the school, but the home had the first and principal role in developing the disciplined and self-respecting child".¹⁴ (e) On teaching methods and learning theory he urged that, "learning by discovery-learning only those things which were relevant to life at each stage of development, making the known the starting point for venturing into the unknown, and developing skills only insofar as they facilitated communication and computation".¹⁵ (f) About curriculum Griggs did not directly address himself, except as curriculum issues became a part of his discussion on aims, methods, and the needs of the child. However, he stated some very interesting points about this topic:

1. Language study should be an important element of curriculum.
2. Natural science should be included in the curriculum.
3. Religious instruction is essential as the medium through which God's love as the unifying principle of the universe can be presented to students.
4. Teachers should plan their curricula around participation and activity by the students.
5. The curriculum should be constructed around the interests of each age-group.

In spite of not making any attempt to present an ideal curriculum, Griggs demonstrated that his view on this particular issue was well-balanced and coherent. Griggs' basic educational theory originated from a number of sources: Adventist, American Herbartian, and Francis Parker. "This theory of education provided cohesion and consistency to his efforts in such areas as goal specification, curriculum development, and teaching-learning strategies".¹⁶ His theory of education was not a fixed one, during subsequent years he made some changes, modifications and additions to his educational schema. Finally, it would be worth mentioning that, it was in the 1890s that Griggs emerged with a conceptual base that would drive the whole course of his career as a teacher, educator and educational administrator.

3. THE RISE OF A NEW EDUCATIONAL LEADER

Without having a formal training in leadership or any experience in administrating a grade school, Griggs assumed the principalship of the Preparatory Department at Battle Creek School in 1890. During the nine years that he worked in that position he accomplished several goals in a very successful way. "The successes he achieved over the nine years he was at Battle Creek were the product of his personal qualities, his insight, and his capacity to learn from the role models provided by Prescott, Caviness, Sutherland, Kellogg, and Jones".¹⁸

In spite of limited documents for this early period of Griggs' life, the general record of his performance at Battle Creek College gives some idea about his behaviour as a fledgling administrator. First of all, it is important to mention that Griggs was a builder. "He possessed the foresight, ambition, and drive to want to improve what had been placed in his charge".¹⁹ In addition to that, he revealed another crucial component in the qualification of a leader, 'flexibility of mind'. This was perceived firstly when he decided to break away from the classical tradition and subsequently when he attempted to adapt the curriculum to the emerging Adventist philosophy of education.

Another important point that we ought to know is that, in his career as an administrator, Griggs was willing to learn something from the progressive theorists of his time. Absorbing their valuable ideas Griggs applied them within SDA education. This fact can be observed during his principalship at Battle Creek preparatory school where he established some personal and organizational goals. (a) He searched for improved organizational structures; (b) He made some



efforts in order to revise the curriculum; (c) He implemented some compatible innovations; (d) He established a normal department; (e) He demonstrated his willingness for self-improvement through study, and encouraged his staff to improve their professional capacities. "He strongly advocated the establishment of a teacher-training school, with the result that he became the first head of such a school connected with SDA colleges".²⁰

In the process of establishing organizational goals, Griggs proved to be a very effective leader in the task of persuading others to work with him and to accomplish his plans. Without losing sight from the organizational goals, Griggs demonstrated a special care for the individual's needs. "In his efforts to build and strengthen the preparatory department he moved out into the church community and visited the homes of Battle Creek. Participation in the life of his church, for example, gave opportunity for parents and students to see him as an active and involved member of the church community".²¹

Griggs was perceived by others to be a leader. Prescott had noticed definite evidences of leadership qualities in the young man. In 1894, a local publication entitled *Educators of Michigan*, made a comment about Griggs: "Although young in the profession, he exhibits all the characteristics which constitute the progressive and painstaking teacher".²²

In one of his morning talks that was addressed to the students of South Lancaster Academy, Massachusetts, Griggs stated his view on 'Leadership'. "A true leader is one who believes in his work with every atom of his being, and who puts every ounce of his strength into it. He knows that his cause will win because it is just. He is a leader because of his purity of heart and life. A leader is one who has learned how to obey. The acme of leadership is found in sympathetic ministry for others".²³

At that moment, there was emerging a new educational leader who was willing to serve God's cause with all his strength and determination. "Griggs found that educational administration could, on the one hand, be exhilarating and rewarding, and on the other hand, frustrating and professionally threatening. If he was to become a successful administrator, Griggs would have to learn to cope with both rewards and frustrations".²⁴

4. THE REMARKABLE ACHIEVEMENTS OF GRIGGS AS GENERAL CONFERENCE EDUCATIONAL SECRETARY

Griggs made his greatest contribution to Adventist education during his first term as General Conference Educational Secretary (1903-1910). As educational secretary, he was a key element in the successful functioning of the developing Adventist educational system. His contribution through that seven year period was twofold: "first, he was instrumental in guiding the development of Adventist education into a unified international system; and second, through his desire for both quality education and spiritual commitment, he facilitated a move away from the extreme reforms that had characterized Adventist education at the turn of the century".²⁵

Some criticism emerged at the 1903 General Conference session concerning the department's lack of effectiveness. Sutherland, the previous secretary, made an attempt to explain that problem. Writing to Daniells he stated: "there is no policy outlined by this department". And three months later he confessed to Griggs that, "I was in only one year, and I was put in merely to fill the place nominally. They did not expect me to do very much".²⁶ Griggs was chosen by the General Conference leaders as the right person to change this situation. It was voted in that session that the new secretary of the education department would exercise his function on a full-time basis, but a lack of qualified educational leaders made Griggs to retain his post as principal of South Lancaster Academy until 1907.

A tremendous challenge was ahead of Griggs. Apart from establishing the functions of the educational committee of the Department of Education, he had also to define the basic roles of the secretary. In order to accomplish this, Griggs would have to face some opposition, considering that the majority of the educational leaders had long been accustomed to the idea of working and making decisions independently. At that point, Griggs began to show his qualities as an effective administrator. "He realized that the best way to make progress was to involve his fellow educators in a collaborative effort to establish a system of education".²⁷ In 1907, he wrote a letter to Daniells saying: "In my work as chairman of the Department, I must get everybody doing something".²⁸ It is clear that 'cooperative spirit' was a key note in his leadership style, and it worked very well.

Basically, there were five major functions and responsibilities that Griggs had to face as the General Conference Education's Secretary: "(1) communicating the purposes, activities, and



achievements of the system to his fellow educators; (2) Clarifying the goals of the system and thereby providing direction to the efforts of educator and administrators; (3) promoting excellence and quality within the system through a supervisory role which encompassed the assessment of school plant, instructional programs, and the competence of personnel; (4) promoting plans and strategies for identifying and meeting the needs of the system; (5) extending his usefulness to the church by acting as a problem solver and counsellor in a variety of non-educational settings".²⁹

Another meaningful contribution that was given by Griggs as secretary of the department of education was to implement the educational convention. The main purpose for that was to foster group discussion and to activate the process of decision making. "Furthermore, they provided a forum for collegial discussion of issues of central concern to educational leaders as they wrestled with the need to clarify goals, establish structure, and bring cohesion to the growing system".³⁰ These meetings brought together a large number of Adventist educators, teachers, and church administrators. In 1904, Griggs wrote to Daniells: "The only way to get our work organized is to hold such gatherings until we get our plans into better working order".³¹ Three major educational conventions were promoted by Griggs, they were held in 1903, 1906, and 1910.

The outcomes of these educational conventions were crucial to the denomination's educational development. "One important outgrowth of the 1903 meetings was a series of teachers' manuals set forth the curriculum in the light of the church's educational philosophy, gave practical suggestions on how to implement the recommended curriculum, and standardized the curriculum by grade level up through grade ten".³² As a result of the 1903 convention, it was established a standing committee under the leadership of C. C. Lewis to develop denominational textbooks. "These efforts resulted in a large number of new textbooks especially geared to the needs of Adventist schools".³³ A second outgrowth of the 1903 and 1906 conventions was the establishment of a unified system of education with a well-defined administrative structure.

Frederick Griggs played a key role towards another central issue, the financing Christian education. "He realized that the development of a sound plan of financial support was foundational to the establishment of a system of Seventh-Day Adventist education".³⁴ Under Sutherland's leadership, it was decided to adopt a universal system of education that would be supported from a second tithe. Since there were no educational fees, this project would allow every Adventist child to study in a church school. By 1909 Griggs also formulated a plan in which academies and colleges would receive regular financial support from their conferences and union conferences.

In partnership with E. R. Palmer, secretary of the publishing department, Griggs developed a scholarship plan that would help the students and would promote enrolment. "Under this plan a student who sold denominational literature during the summer vacation not only received the 50 percent commission on sales, but also a 15 percent discount on school fees".³⁵ This scholarship plan has been applied today to the benefit of students who spend their holidays selling denominational literature.

Another major contribution that Griggs made during his secretaryship was to edit a forty-eight-page journal that specialized in education. The first issues of the *Christian Education* came off the press in September 1909. The journal has been published since that time, and today it is known as *Journal of Adventist Education*.

We could summarize Griggs' secretaryship affirming that, "beyond the general development of a structure for Adventist education, a unified curriculum with supporting textbooks, and a sound financial plan, he became a communicator, general supervisor of Adventist education, planner, goal clarifier, and personnel developer".³⁶

5. CONCLUSION

Frederick Griggs dedicated fifty-nine years of his entire life to serve the Lord in the Adventist Church. During these years Griggs worked in several different places around the world and his contributions were offered while he exercised the various duties and responsibilities as an educational administrator. To this we must add that, Frederick Griggs played a fundamental role towards the development of Seventh-day Adventist education.

At the beginning of this century prior to Griggs' time, there was no formal education within the SDA Church. "Adventist education consisted of scattered and unrelated schools".³⁷



The process of establishing an educational system began right after his first day of work as General Conference education secretary. In the whole course of his career none of the years were more crucial to the development of Adventist education as were those from 1903 to 1910. As secretary, "Griggs was unique in the sense that he guided the department of Education in its most formative years".³⁸ During those seven years that he worked in the General Conference, Griggs achieved some remarkable results to the establishment of a solid education. The major contributions that he offered have in a sense stood the test of time. "The shape and the structure of Adventist education, the components of the system, the role of the Department of Education committee, and the functions of the educational secretary were largely forged under the direction and leadership of Griggs".³⁹ Since that time there has been little significant changes in these areas.

In order to conclude this research paper I should say that, Frederick Griggs was a pivotal figure in the establishment of an administrative configuration for the system of Seventh-Day Adventist schools that proved its effectiveness and solidity for more than eighty years.

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