

Institute for Christian Teaching
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**INSTILLING CHRISTIAN VALUES INTO THE EXTRA-CURRICULAR
ACTIVITIES OF AN ADVENTIST EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION**

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Introduction

When I entered the 9th grade at a Seventh-day Adventist academy I seriously applied myself to my studies. As a result, at the end of the first term, I ended up with straight A's, and at the top of my class. But, when I compared my grades with those of my fellow classmates, I discovered that the next highest grade point average was a "C." Since I was merely interested in being "number one" in class, I decided that I really did not have to study *that* faithfully. Consequently, there was a steady and marked decline in my grades, even though I still managed to retain first place. Unfortunately, in the competitive environment of that Adventist school, I ended up "proud of my mediocrity"!¹

How could this have occurred in a school that was set up to teach the virtues and values of Christian character? Yes, I had faithfully gone to Bible classes, where we studied about the *sacrificial* life of Jesus Christ; how He had consistently lived to uplift others and not Himself. And yes, I had even attended chapels and worships, where further instruction was given on being a *humble* Christian. Why had I then become so *self-concerned*? What had therefore "gone wrong" in my educational experience?²

Before proceeding further, it must be noted that this essay is to a large extent a continuation and extension of another one titled "Integrating Faith in the Pre- Post- & Co-Curricular Practices of an Adventist Campus." Thus, since most of the introductory materials, and all of the "Theo-Philosophical Basis" for integrating faith into the per-curricular practices of Adventist schools has been presented there, it will not be repeated

¹When I say, "proud of my mediocrity," I am not suggesting that a "C" grade is evidence of a mediocre performance. Rather, I am merely pointing out that I was capable of doing "A" grade work; but since I was simply desiring to be in *first* place, I was doing a mediocre job compared with what I know I was then able to do.

²Now before I make a critique of that situation, let me share a few general personal observations. As I reflect on the decades spent in Adventist educational institutions, from elementary through graduate studies, both as student and as teacher, I can honestly praise God for the innumerable blessings, and incalculable character-building opportunities afforded at these "schools of the prophets." In fact, had I not (as a student) been blessed with committed, caring, Christ-centered teachers and administrators, and later (as a lecturer) with dedicated and supportive colleagues, I honestly do not believe that I would be *where* I am now (i.e., sharing the Gospel as a redemptive educator), or more importantly *who* I am today (i.e., a born-again believer in a personal relationship with my Savior, Jesus Christ).

here. Instead, this essay will proceed, keeping in mind the background as provided in the other paper.

By way of reminder, it should be noted that the term *extra-curricular*, as used in these essays, refers to the host of non-classroom practices and policies of an educational institution that, though unintended, do convey specific values to its students. This concept includes all officially permitted activities participated in by students, either on or off campus, which are not part of the institution's planned non-classroom curriculum; this includes things such as videos and television programs viewed, student club events, recreational activities, entertainment practices, etc. This essay will go into depth on a selection of these issues, as they relate to faith integration.

Quantitative Reports

Even a cursory reading of the Bible indicates that on various occasions records were taken of the growth and development of God's people.³ Unquestioningly, record-keeping is useful and frequently necessary in order to assess improvement and progress. This is clearly visible from figures such as the 3000 baptized after the preaching of Peter on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:40). Furthermore, there is nothing inherently evil in setting targets or goals. However, there is all too frequently a dangerous downside to this elevation of success—pride in personal achievement.⁴ This abominably arrogant attitude is quintessentially epitomized in Nebuchadnezzar's braggadocio: ““Is not this great Babylon that *I* have built for a royal dwelling by *my* mighty power and for the honor of *my* majesty?”” (Dan 4:30, emphasis added).⁵ The result? With the swiftness of an eagle he was reduced from a boast to a beast!

One of the more subtle dangers in this focus on figures is faced by those who are involved in full time “work for the Lord.” It seems so easy to take credit to ourselves for

³See, for example, the emphasis in the book of Numbers, especially chapters 1 and 2, the numbers of the exiles returning from Babylon (Ezra 2), and the thousands converted in the early church (Acts 2:40-47).

⁴See, for example, David's numbering of Israel (1 Chron 21).

⁵Unless otherwise stated, all quotations are from the New King James Version (NKJV).

providential blessings and divinely-bestowed successes. I will probably never forget the “global evangelist” I met at an international airport one day. After our brief chat, we exchanged business cards. Other than personal data, which I have omitted or changed to conceal his identity, his card reads as follows:

John Smith, an apostle to the nations, has preached in more than *55 nations*, to *tens of thousands* of people around the world, he often preaches at the *largest churches* in nations.

He spends *7 hours a day* with God...

4 hours a day in prayer and *3 hours* a day in the Word of God.

In 1999 he preached in *40 nations*, all in *one year*, and might be the *first man* in the history of Christianity to preach in *40 nations* in *one year*.

In 1999 he preached in *every nation* in Central and South America, all in *one year*, and might be the *first man* in our time to have done that. (Emphasis added).

All that, and more personal data, on his regular-size small-print business card.

Admittedly, this is an extreme example, but the danger must be recognized for what it really is—the danger of *pride in personal performance*, the risk of self-glorification!

Thus, while we must acknowledge that there is a place for financial figures, quantitative analyses, and numerical records, is it really necessary to elevate statistical reports to the “number one” position, as so often done? The *number* of new students enrolled; the *number* of courses being offered; the *number* of books in the library; the *number* of faculty with doctorates; the *number* of computers in the lab; the *number* of graduates; even the *number* of baptisms! This fixation on figures conveys the impression that quantity is of considerable consequence. Yet, when overemphasized in this way, it may reflect a secular value system that ignores qualitative development. It might be instructive to note here that only eight persons were saved in the ark (1 Pet 3:20; cf. Gen 7:13), and that Jesus Himself warned: “Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are *many* who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are *few* who find it” (Matt 7:13b, 14, emphasis added). Notice, that it is only the *few* who find salvation!

In view of the fact that a holistic education seeks to promote Christian values such as unalloyed quality, unswerving commitment, a striving for mastery and excellence in all things, altruistic self-sacrificial service, and a Christ-centered humility, would it not be more congruent with this theologically-sound objective to reassess the entire concept of

“success,” and then report things in such a way as to enhance a faith-based perspective? For example, in an apparent attempt to focus more on quality than quantity, at least one Adventist congregation has stopped announcing the number of baptisms. Instead, they do report how many Bible studies are being conducted, the natural result of which is baptisms. They seem to be thus more focused on the process and quality of spiritual growth rather than merely on numbers.

Instead of a Dean’s List (which emphasizes essentially academic achievement), why not establish a “President’s List,” which seeks to recognize *all* students who model a consistent and harmonious development of all the basic values and objectives of the institution? Quality growth can also be assessed by means of pre- and post-tests, improved community relations, the overall tone and general content of student publications, the growth and success of the work program, improved methods and results in student retention, the vibrancy and spontaneity of voluntary spiritual activities initiated and conducted by students,⁶ the growth of spiritual mentoring programs, the improved health awareness and wellness practices of students and employees, student and employee involvement in optional community and church-related activities, the quality and relevance of scholarly faculty publications, the state of the institutional loyalty of administrators, faculty, staff, students, and even alumni, the exit reflections of students, as to the perceived quality and value of their educational experience, especially extra-curricular practices, and the selection of “Alumni of the Year,”⁷ who live exemplary lives that are “Bible-based, Christ-centered, service-oriented, and kingdom-directed.”⁸

⁶At one institution students initiated and conducted voluntary (i.e., not for “worship credit”) 6am prayer groups, a Friday evening personal testimony service (prior to vespers), and a Wednesday evening outdoor Bible study session.

⁷A study of Jesus’ parable of the talents (Matt 25:14-30) shows that it is right to appropriately recognize those who have diligently utilized their God-given gifts. As seen in the next section on “Lifestyle Consistency” proper modeling is vital in the Christian life as well.

⁸Humberto M. Rasi, “Worldviews, Contemporary Culture, and Adventist Education,” Paper presented at the 27th International Faith and Learning Seminar, Mission College, Muak Lek, Thailand, 3-15 December 2000, 12.

In brief, the focus should not be facts and figures, but rather an integrated and comprehensive perspective of the development of dedicated students who seek to be faithful to the Lord, as they serve the church, the community, and the world as a whole.

Lifestyle Consistency

While others have dealt with this issue of modeling more in depth,⁹ the purpose of this section is rather to reemphasize lifestyle, from the perspective of consistency and integrity, together with a couple of relevant examples.

Living as a committed Christian, the apostle Paul could say: “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ” (1 Cor 11:1). Indeed, as Ellen White indicated, “one example is worth more than many precepts,”¹⁰ and it “will preach louder than words.”¹¹ Recent research has now confirmed this very point, indicating that positive faculty role modeling contributes to “long-term commitment to Christian beliefs and behaviors by graduates of Christian colleges and universities.”¹² If this is so, then administrators, faculty, and staff must seek to practice what they preach, becoming exemplary role models “of the Christian graces and professional competencies.”¹³

Consider, for example, the case of an SDA educational institution that, while permitting only a vegetarian diet in the cafeteria, raises beef cattle as one of its main

⁹See, for example, Alexandru Breja, “Teaching Through Example: A Biblical Perspective,” *Christ in the Classroom: Adventist Approaches to the Integration of Faith and Learning*, vol. 21 (Silver Spring, MD: Institute for Christian Teaching, Education Department, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1998).

¹⁰Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1942), 149.

¹¹Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Stewardship* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1940), 41.

¹²Jane Thayer, Christine D. Bothne, and Robert D. Bates, “Christian College Students’ Perceptions of Faculty Spirituality,” *Journal of Research on Christian Education* 9:2 (Fall 2000): 206.

¹³“A Statement of Seventh-day Adventist Educational Philosophy,” 26 March 2001, a Document handed out at the 1st International Conference on the Seventh-day Adventist Philosophy of Education, 7-9 April 2001, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, USA, 3. Though this statement is referring specifically to “The Teacher,” in the context of modeling it can clearly apply to all employees.

sources of income from its farm. When students realized this, they quickly charged the institution with being hypocritical. Paul Brantley aptly remarks: “Students readily detect faith that is phony and discontinuous rather than integrated. They know when our deeds fail to match our creeds.”¹⁴ Thus, while the “Total Commitment Document” calls “the faculty and staff to a consistency of life-style,”¹⁵ unfortunately, there is sometimes a “tension between creeds and deeds, between believing and living.”¹⁶

A similar health-related anomaly becomes apparent when there is a public promotion of a vegetarian diet as being the best, and yet the practice is one of providing meat at official faculty/staff socials, both on and off campus. For example, after his request was denied to hold a flesh-serving fund-raising function on campus, the departmental chair of an educational institution wrote a letter of appeal to an administrator, citing some examples of non-vegetarian on-campus activities as precedent-setting events.¹⁷ Recognizing that, “faculty modeling is a primary force in motivating students to adopt new behaviors and a key factor in implementing programs promoting wholeness,”¹⁸ and aware that “students tend to fashion their lives more according to what

¹⁴Paul S. Brantley, “From Athens to Jerusalem and Points Beyond: The Continuing Search for an Integrated Faith,” *Journal of Research on Christian Education* 3:1 (Spring 1994): 10.

¹⁵Appendix A – “Total Commitment Document,” *Christ in the Classroom: Adventist Approaches to the Integration of Faith and Learning*, vol. 23 (Silver Spring, MD: Institute for Christian Teaching, Education Department, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1999), 383.

¹⁶Oliver K. S. Koh, “Worship and School Life,” *Christ in the Classroom: Adventist Approaches to the Integration of Faith and Learning*, vol. 21 (Silver Spring, MD: Institute for Christian Teaching, Education Department, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1999), 168.

¹⁷Somehow, this mid-level administrator completely missed the health-related concern in this issue. Interestingly, the upper-level administrator who turned down the request was also apparently unaware of the institution’s “no-meat-at-official-functions” policy on this matter, for he contradicted it by suggesting that the department conduct this non-vegetarian function off-campus.

¹⁸Beverly J. Buckles, “Promoting Wholeness Programs in Health-Related Graduate Education,” *Christ in the Classroom: Adventist Approaches to the Integration of Faith and Learning*, vol. 19 (Silver Spring, MD: Institute for Christian Teaching, Education Department, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1997), 25.

the teacher does, than by what is said,”¹⁹ it would be prudent for institutions to foster a more consistent pattern relating to dietary practices, as well as all other areas. This would include things such as the music that employees play and listen to, the TV and video programs they watch, their personal appearance related to dress and adornment, the diet they practice both at home and away, the manner in which they observe the seventh-day Sabbath, the way they relate to fellow employees as well as students, and the manner in which they redemptively discipline students. For, as John Wesley Taylor aptly remarks: “If we want our students to become authentic Christians, then we as educators must set the pace, thinking and living Christianly.”²⁰ Put simply: “Spirituality is more easily caught than taught.”²¹

How is this to be accomplished? Veteran Adventist educator, George Akers, states: “Teachers who are immersed in Scripture and who enjoy a deep spiritual experience with Christ can communicate to their students a nonverbal message that comfortably harmonizes reason and revelation, scholarship and religion.”²² Obviously, this does not mean that the Bible must be used in every class, but it does mean that “its principles saturate every class, because they saturate every teacher.”²³ Or, as Edward Norton put it in his doctoral dissertation: “The principles of Christian education can *only* be made alive through a teacher who has an experiential relation with God and who is living a life of selfless service to others.”²⁴

¹⁹John Wesley Taylor V, “Instructional Strategies for the Integration of Faith and Learning,” Unpublished paper presented at the 27th International Faith and Learning Seminar, Mission College, Muak Lek, Thailand, 3-15 December 2000.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Koh, 179.

²²George H. Akers, “The Measure of a School,” *Adventist Education* 40:2 (December 1977-January 1978): 9.

²³Ibid., 45.

²⁴Edward M. Norton, “The Philosophy of Christian Service and Its Practice in the Seventh-day Adventist Senior Academies of the United States During the 1979-1980 School Year” (Ed.D. Dissertation, Andrews University, 1985), 242 (emphasis added).

Entertainment Practices

Mass media is an overwhelmingly powerful social institution. In fact, as Delyse Steyn notes: “Television is the most dominant medium and its marriage with rock ‘n roll in the music video are significant forces that both in style and content, reflect the spirit of the age, which therefore need to be understood in terms of influence on thinking and feeling.”²⁵ Others, such as Australian graphics designer Daniel Sheehy, have been more direct, pointing out specific problems. Sheehy “stated that film techniques distort reality, overload the nervous system, and force subliminal acceptance of actors’ values (51 percent of whom condoned adultery, 80 percent favored homosexuality, and 97 percent were pro-abortion, one study showed).”²⁶ In a similar vein, lamenting the wave of decadence portrayed on television, James Sire identifies the moral views of the modern media: “Happiness is associated with money, sex and power.... Fathers are weak and bumbling.... People are depicted in morally compromised situations as if they were the norm.”²⁷ Then he warns: “When decadent morality is portrayed as normal, this morality seeps into the consciousness of viewers,”²⁸ and their moral powers are “unwittingly eroded.”²⁹ More recent research has confirmed the above concerns, indicating that “the media in all forms have become a primary influence on the moral development of youth in our society;” thus, it plays a major role, that “is often destructive.”³⁰

²⁵Delyse Steyn, “Thinking Christianly in a Media-Dominated Society,” *Christ in the Classroom: Adventist Approaches to the Integration of Faith and Learning*, vol. 7 (Silver Spring, MD: Institute for Christian Teaching, Education Department, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1993), 275.

²⁶Brian E. Strayer, “Adventists & Movies: A Century of Change,” *Dialogue* 5:1 (1993): 14.

²⁷James W. Sire, *Discipleship of the Mind: Learning to Love God in the Ways We Think* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 175-176. While Sire is here speaking specifically about sitcoms, these moral problems can be seen in most other entertainment-oriented programs as well.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 176.

²⁹*Ibid.*

³⁰Gary L. Hopkins, Talin Babikian, Duane McBride, and Anita Oliver, “Media Messages: How Do They Affect Our Youth?” *Journal of Adventist Education* (February/March 2001): 14.

A study of Scripture shows that there are certain basic principles regarding what believers should permit into their minds. The classic passage is found in Philippians 4:8: “Whatever things are true,... noble,... just,... pure,... lovely,... of good report,... praiseworthy – meditate on these things.” The same sentiment is reiterated in Colossians 3:2 (KJV): “Set your affections on things above.” Or, as the Psalmist prays: “Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things, and revive me in Your way” (Ps 119:37). For, “I will set nothing wicked before my eyes” (Ps 101:3).

With so much evidence demonstrating the serious negative effects of much of the average television programming, the Christian campus will need to be especially vigilant as it attempts to educate its students concerning this all-pervasive medium. The challenge is “to teach our young people how to examine and understand the effects of media.”³¹ Hopefully, courses such as Film Evaluation, and Christian Ethics will provide basic biblical principles and criteria for students to “develop critical viewing skills”³² that they can use in determining which videos or TV programs to watch. Steyn appropriately notes:

If education is to be redemptive, and its focus is on the restoration of the image of God in man, then a study of the mass media must be given a place in the curriculum... [since] it has assumed the role of the priesthood in the secular society and must therefore be counterbalanced with a Christian perspective on reality and truth. Its portrayal of salvation is not redemptive but rather it is essentially damning in terms of its functional and pragmatic utilitarianism and relativism.³³

Thus, in addition to specific classroom instruction, the leadership of the institution itself needs to establish clear, practical, morally-sound guidelines for the selection of TV programs, videos, etc., that are to be shown on campus. Also, all educators must guard against the lure of a mere “lip service,” such as offering a prayer before the showing of a morally questionable video. For example, I remember once going to a Saturday night movie shown at an Adventist university. Before the screening of what turned out to be a

³¹Ibid., 15.

³²Ibid.

³³Steyn, 287.

violence-filled, obscene-language, sexually-explicit video, the coordinator had a public prayer for the Lord's blessing!

While it is scripturally correct for an institution to determine that only that which is morally uplifting and congruent with its mission will be permitted to be shown on campus, it must move beyond merely bemoaning the moral evils of the modern media. Adventist behavioral scientists maintain that "keeping youth otherwise occupied during the periods when they would be likely to engage in media activities is a useful strategy."³⁴ Ellen White goes beyond this, indicating that whenever something bad is removed, *something better* must be substituted: "'Something better' is the watchword of education, the law of all true living. Whatever Christ asks us to renounce, He offers in its stead something better."³⁵ Thus, it would be prudent to follow the lead of the various Christian thinkers who recommend that activities such as the following be utilized as positive alternatives to the time spent watching TV: Reading character-building books, exercising, doing good deeds, informal discussions and debates, listening to uplifting music, learning to play a musical instrument, writing letters, participating in a work program, getting involved in community service, joining a singing group, etc.³⁶

While the focus of the above discussion has been mainly on the dangers of the misuse of TV and videos, the same concerns and cautions could be noted about other types of entertainment frequently permitted on Adventist campuses, certain elements of which could easily erode essential scriptural ethics. This includes issues such as the types of entertainment that students are "permitted" to indulge in, the questionable fund-raising activities at times allowed ("all in the name of a 'good cause'"), the uncritical use of the

³⁴Hopkins, et al, 14.

³⁵Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1903), 296.

³⁶See Strayer, (p. 14), who refers to books by Lonnie Melashenko and Tim Crosby, and Joe Wheeler, where they suggest some of the ideas mentioned above, as well as things such as playing games, painting, baking bread, working on a hobby, family dinner discussions, raising pets, and having family worship.

internet, the permissive attitude towards music, especially MTV,³⁷ and the apparently indiscriminating selection and production of certain dramatic presentations.³⁸

Educators ought to encourage committed Adventist musicians to compose, direct and perform music that is socially and spiritually uplifting; also they must challenge dedicated playwrights to write and produce character-enhancing plays, so that students will learn how to think Christianly even in this extra-curricular area of entertainment. As Arthur Holmes put it: “We need an integrated spirituality.”³⁹ Thus, instead of unconsciously conforming to current cultural practices, educational institutions must make a concerted effort to be catalysts in the transformation of society.

Recreational Activities

Without a doubt, the issue of sports and games⁴⁰ has been one of the most contentious in Adventist educational circles. This has primarily been due to concerns over

³⁷Music television (MTV), as well as rock music in general, is becoming universally accepted; yet, most of it promotes anti-biblical values. Concerning the power of music, Morris Taylor notes: “It can be demonstrated that music may enter a person’s brain quite directly without necessarily going through the cerebrum. Since music may be perceived through the subliminal portion of the brain, it does influence and condition behavior whether we are consciously aware of the music or not;” Morris L Taylor, “Choosing Music in a Christian College,” *Christ in the Classroom: Adventist Approaches to the Integration of Faith and Learning*, vol. 1 (Silver Spring, MD: Institute for Christian Teaching, Education Department, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1991), 289-290. Among his many suggestions, Morris Taylor (pp. 297-303) states that good music must include: technical excellence, cultural expression, an appropriate wedding of text and music, the portrayal of moral good as attractive, emotional expression balanced by intellectual control, positive associational factors, serious intent, a balance of repertoire, a world view that positively confirms Christian values, and be consonant with the institution’s objectives.

³⁸Besides the obvious concerns about pride and self-glorification (which are temptations in many activities and areas of life), some of the other dangers of the uncritical use of drama include, portraying the drinking of alcoholic beverages as an acceptable way to drown out sorrow or to forget problems, sexually compromising actions and suggestive statements, the promotion of ethically dubious actions, such as using deception in difficult situations in such a way as to imply that it is perfectly justifiable and morally right to lie at times. For more on this, see Ron du Preez, “A Holocaust of Deception: Lying to Save Life and Biblical Morality,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 9 (1998), 187-220.

³⁹Arthur F. Holmes, “What About Student Integration?” *Journal of Research on Christian Education* 3:1 (Spring 1994): 4.

⁴⁰The terms “sports and games” are being used here to refer to activities such as soccer, basketball, tennis, or even table/board games such as monopoly, chess, etc. In this essay, sports and games are being distinguished from “solo exercise” activities, which includes things such as swimming, jogging, gardening, strolling, or jigsaw puzzles.

the matter of rivalry and competition.⁴¹ Before proceeding any further, however, two vital points of clarification need to be made: First, in the discussion of competitive activities, some have attempted to differentiate between “rivalry” and “competition,” seeing the former as problematic but the latter as acceptable. However, since various reputable English dictionaries indicate that these terms are synonymous, they will be used interchangeably in this essay.⁴² Second, not everything in life is competitive. There are such things as innately competitive activities—sports such as tennis, baseball, or soccer, in which the only way that one can win is if the other loses! Then, there are also aspects of life, such as work, hobbies, or nature activities, which are not inherently rivalrous, but only become such if the people involved make them competitive.⁴³

Thus, while it is rightly recognized that a spirit of rivalry can arise in many situations, including physical education classes, as well as all other classes, concern regarding extra-curricular sports will be addressed in this paper, because these competitive activities are virtually always conducted without any real consideration of the

⁴¹See, for example, Walter S. Hamerslough, “Physical Education and Sport from a Christian Perspective,” *Christ in the Classroom: Adventist Approaches to the Integration of Faith and Learning*, vol. 10 (Silver Spring, MD: Institute for Christian Teaching, Education Department, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1994), 205-219; P. Wayne Miller, “Team Sports in Adventist Education: Another Look,” *Christ in the Classroom: Adventist Approaches to the Integration of Faith and Learning*, vol. 19 (Silver Spring, MD: Institute for Christian Teaching, Education Department, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1997), 189-203; Bruce G. Peifer, “Seventh-day Adventist Intercollegiate Competition: A North American Perspective,” *Christ in the Classroom: Adventist Approaches to the Integration of Faith and Learning*, vol. 19 (Silver Spring, MD: Institute for Christian Teaching, Education Department, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1997), 245-264; Thomas A. Davis, “Incident on a Sunday Afternoon,” *Adventist Review*, 26 November 1981, 8, 9; David C. Nieman, “Do Sports Belong in SDA Schools?” *Ministry*, August 1988, 4-9.

⁴²See, for example, the *Random House Dictionary*, the *New Webster's Dictionary*, and the *American Heritage Dictionary*.

⁴³An interesting article on competition in the classroom is the one by Roger L. Dudley, “Competition and Cooperation in the Classroom: Which Goal Structure Is More Effective?” *Journal of Adventist Education* 44:2 (December 1981/January 1982): 34, 35, 37, 38. While Dudley’s article provides a useful summary of the work of other researchers, it employs confusing and even contradictory examples to illustrate its points. For example, a baseball team is used to demonstrate what it means to be “cooperative.” Yet, the article shows that this approach is still ultimately rivalrous and selfish, for all work together so that *they* can beat others and thus win. Similarly, to illustrate a “competitive” event, a running race is used. But, in running, one must simply strive to do one’s best (without “attacking” anyone else) in the event; and more than one runner can be in first place, as happens in a tie! This example would fit better under Dudley’s category of “individualistic” goal structures.

values being transmitted to the students, values that “can be damaging to the spiritual growth of the youth of the church.”⁴⁴ Moreover, as recently noted at an Adventist university, though their inter-varsity flag football games and soccer matches were actually contrary to the officially established guidelines, it was felt that their interscholastic competition had “the moral support” of the school’s Physical Education department.⁴⁵

This mixed message concerning competition is clearly a problem that we need to face head-on. Back in 1980, Reuben Hilde, commented on this “double standard,” by using the metaphor of the SDA Church marching around a modern Jericho, an enemy to be conquered before entering the promised land:

We’ve tramped with uneven cadence; we’ve blown our trumpets—but with different sounds and different pitches; we’ve marched to the beat of a variety of different drummers; and we’ve stubbed our toes on the rock pile of competitive grades.... We’ve given prizes to our temperance winners, but we’ve cried aloud and spared not (and we’ve given it that certain ring) when our kids have become too enthusiastic over a basketball game.... [And] we’ve used red books [of Ellen G. White] to spank the child afflicted with the inordinate craze for competition....

In plain English, we have been inconsistent.⁴⁶

Addressing the issue of rivalry, Paul says that those who engage in “measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise” (2 Cor 10:12). Furthermore, the Christian is challenged to “Carry each other’s burdens,...

⁴⁴Reuben Hilde, *Showdown: Can SDA Education Pass the Test?* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1980), 159. There are some who believe they find biblical support for competitive activities, as for instance in the story of the talents; see for example, Marvin Moore, *How to Handle Competition* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1978), 18-19. However, this parable talks about all individuals simply using their talents to the best of their ability for *God’s glory*, without beating anyone in order to do so. Others quote 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, where Paul uses the metaphors of running and boxing. However, as Hilde (p. 162) notes, more careful study shows a “principle contrary” to competition—“Simply stated, it is that God does not provide a plan of salvation based upon competition or rivalry.... In reality, just the opposite is true. Whereas, in a race (in the games of the world), only one can win, the race for the crown of life may be won by all.” (In support of this, Hilde quotes Luke 2:10, 11; 1 Tim 2:4; John 3:16; and Rev 22:17). Still others, believe that some competitive sports are an acceptable evangelistic method. Akers, challenging this, says: “It is highly debatable whether or not this mock warfare arena, with its self-glorification, rivalry, and killer instinct requirement (taking advantage of your brother’s mistakes and missteps) is within the spirit of the gospel;” George H. Akers, “Adventist Varsity Sports?” *Adventists Affirm* (Spring 1990): 56.

⁴⁵See *The Student Movement*, 15 November 2000, 6; and 2 May 2001, 6.

⁴⁶Hilde, 150-151.

without comparing himself to somebody else” (Gal 6:2-4 NIV); and, to “do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves” (Phil 2:3 NIV). Put plainly, “Competition is *selfish*.... It tends to breed suspicion, alienation, and exploitation.”⁴⁷ Or, as George Knight indicates: “At its base, competition rests on strife for supremacy—to be the *first*, the best, the most, and so on. Here, we should note, is the very disease that stands at the *heart of sin*.”⁴⁸

Ellen White specifically noted that “a spirit of competition ... is all wrong and displeasing to God,”⁴⁹ and that rivalry “is an offence to God.”⁵⁰ In her classic on the principles of true education, she spoke pointedly about competitive sports:

Some of the most popular amusements, such as [American]⁵¹ football and boxing, have become schools of brutality. They are developing the same characteristics as did the games of Rome. The love of *dominion*, the *pride* in mere *brute force*, the *reckless disregard of life*, are exerting upon the youth a power to *demoralize* that is appalling. Other athletic games, though not so brutalizing, are scarcely less objectionable, because of the *love of pleasure* and excitement, thus fostering a *distaste for useful labor*, a disposition to shun practical duties and responsibilities and its tranquil enjoyments. *Thus the door is opened to dissipation and lawlessness, with their terrible results.*⁵²

Basic Problems. Essentially, competitive sports “is a gladiatorial model, inherently *antibiblical* and *anti-Christian*, for it idealizes an adversarial view of, and

⁴⁷Moore, 15 (emphasis added).

⁴⁸George R. Knight, *Myths in Adventism: An Interpretive Study of Ellen White, Education, and Related Issues* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1985), 226 (emphasis added). As Akers reminds us: “The whole miserable sin chapter began by the question, ‘Who is the greatest?’” Akers, “Adventist Varsity Sports?” 55.

⁴⁹Ellen G. White, Letter B-3-1881.

⁵⁰Ellen G. White, “Christ Man’s Example,” *Review and Herald*, 4 September 1900, 215.

⁵¹The word “American” was intentionally added, since this was the type of “football” Ellen White was referring to. This does not mean that soccer (known as “football” in many parts of the world), does not come under this condemnation, as can be seen in the fourth sentence of this quotation.

⁵²White, *Education*, 210 (emphasis added).

relationship to, human beings—God’s children.”⁵³ Indeed, “*Self-promotion is the lifeblood of competitive games.*”⁵⁴ While other modern writers have likewise noted negative aspects of competitive sports,⁵⁵ it appears as though there are seven basic problems with these activities:

- (a) *Vengeance Promotion*: a basically selfish, “pay-back” attitude is fostered;
- (b) *Violence Glorification*: a violent, aggressive spirit is encouraged;⁵⁶
- (c) *Viscera Magnification*: uncontrolled reactions are portrayed as normal;
- (d) *Vacuum Usurpation*: an empty soul finds a pseudo-fulfillment in sports;⁵⁷
- (e) *Victor Adoration*: sports stars hold a godlike status, hero-worship abounds;
- (f) *Vanity Formation*: the “successful,” easily become self-centered and proud;
- (g) *Value Transmutation*: biblical norms, such as love and truthfulness, are ignored, while “hatred” (of the opponent) and “deception” (of the rival), are promoted as actions that are positive and “good” virtues.⁵⁸

Biblical Values. If Christian education is to facilitate and foster the proper development of biblical values in every aspect of campus life, especially in sports and games, then all of these activities must be conducted in such a manner as to exemplify the following aspects:

⁵³George H. Akers, “An Appeal to the Health and PE Teachers of the North American Church School System,” *Ministry*, August 1988, 7. Though Akers was dealing specifically with interschool league sports, the concept he outlines clearly applies to all competitive sports, indeed all competitive activities.

⁵⁴Shirl J. Hoffman, “The Sanctification of Sport: Can the Mind of Christ Coexist with the Killer Instinct?” *Christianity Today*, 4 April 1986, 18.

⁵⁵See, for example, even such pro-competition writers as, Hamerslough, 214; and Peifer, 251.

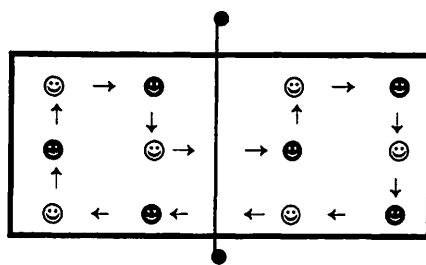
⁵⁶See, for example, Hilde, 160. Hoffman (p. 18) says: “Sports psychologist Bruce Ogilvie reported: ‘Almost every true great athlete we have interviewed during the last four years ... has consistently emphasized that in order to be a winner you must retain the killer instinct.’” Hoffman (ibid.) also notes Jimmy Connors’ attitude: “‘I don’t go out there to love my enemy, I go out there to squash him.’”

⁵⁷This factor seems to be corroborated by the large numbers of people crowding sports stadiums, while many churches have few attending them; some writers also see sports as “religion;” see for example Hoffman, 20-21.

⁵⁸As Hoffman notes, “the spiritual graces of compassion and sensitivity can place second to” winning; 18.

- (a) *Christ-centered*: the self-sacrificial, humble spirit of Jesus is to be imitated;
- (b) *Character-building*: virtues, like kindness and honesty need to be fostered;
- (c) *Cooperative*: a community-orientation can be promoted through teamwork;
- (d) *Compassionate*: concepts of love and mercy must be held up for emulation;
- (e) *Controlled*: emotional control and self-discipline should be encouraged;
- (f) *Complementary*: recreation is shown as only one part of a balanced lifestyle;
- (g) *Confessional*: every sport or game must provide opportunities for participants (and even spectators) to genuinely focus on God and His goodness.

In order to implement these essential principles, it will be necessary to creatively alter one or more of the basic rules of every sports activity. For example, the competitive aspect of basketball can be effectively neutralized by simply swopping one or two different players from one team to the other at the end of each of the first three quarters; in this way everyone will get to play on both “sides” throughout the game, yet they will actually constitute one “team.” In volleyball, after winning a volley served by their rivals, team members normally rotate on their side of the court prior to one of their players serving the ball. But, in order to remove the basic competitive element of the game, teams should “mix” their players before they start the game (as shown below), and then they need to “inter-rotate,” only when the server is changed on one side of the court, as indicated in the following diagram:



Major Factors. Similar changes can be made to the rules of many, if not most, other games. In brief, the major factors to consider when rules are being modified, are as follows:

- (a) *Time*: set reasonable time limits for the completion of the game;⁵⁹
- (b) *Target*: have a goal for players to reach, such as 15 points in volleyball;
- (c) *Technique*: teach players to play by the basic rules of the modified game;
- (d) *Tactics*: encourage participants to master the skills needed for the game;
- (e) *Talent*: promote the development of individual talents;
- (f) *Teamwork*: all players in the game form one team, against inanimate targets;
- (g) *Testimony*: find creative, innovative ways of getting students to regularly share the positive lessons learned as a result of playing the game.

This manner of approaching sports will assist students in putting into practice the specific biblical injunctions that call for a self-sacrificial, cooperative attitude on the part of the Christian: “Honor one another above yourselves.... Live in harmony with one another” (Rom 12:10, 16 NIV); “Through love serve one another” (Gal 5:13); thus, “bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal 6:2). As White noted: “In *true education* the selfish ambition, the greed for power, the disregard for the rights and needs of humanity, that are the curse of our world, find a counterinfluence.”⁶⁰ Indeed, “the evidence clearly shows that cooperation is superior to competition in producing desirable affective learning and in helping students develop skills in dealing with other people.”⁶¹ Since, “God’s ideal is cooperation,”⁶² all educators are thus challenged to provide this kind of “true education” for every student.⁶³

⁵⁹This is especially so for table/board games, such as the modified game of monopoly, called “Co-opoly. While the major aim in monopoly is to accumulate as much wealth as possible, even bankrupting other players in the process, the rules of Co-opoly seek to promote and inculcate the Christian values of compassion, community concern, self-sacrificial service, other-centeredness, a Christ-centered striving for excellence, etc.

⁶⁰Ellen G. White, *Child Guidance* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1954), 293 (emphasis added).

⁶¹Dudley, 38.

⁶²Knight, 226. Secular research is now showing that unselfishness and cooperation are more effective than competition, in the classroom and on the job; Jim Roy, “No,” *Adventist Review*, 13 October 1988, 13-14.

⁶³For an example of scores of cooperative games, see Susan Butler, *Non-Competitive Games for People of All Ages* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1986).

To promote cooperation however, does not mean to deemphasize quality. On the contrary, the Christian is challenged to “do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor 10:31), and to “do it with your might” (Eccl 9:10). Furthermore, to condemn competitive sports, does not mean to negate the need for physical exercise, as can be seen from the suggestions above on how to “transform” competitive games into cooperative ones.

In the absence of sufficient manual labor opportunities, Adventist sports and health researcher, David Nieman, notes that aerobic exercises such as jogging, brisk walking, swimming, and cycling, with activities such as flexibility exercises and weight lifting all improve body fitness.⁶⁴ In addition, “Outdoor recreational activities such as sailing, canoeing, wilderness survival, camping, and backpacking might be given more room in our student programs.”⁶⁵ But, there is “a more excellent way:”

Practical Training

Admittedly, there are some Adventist educators who apparently sincerely believe, as one put it, that the “current environment [of our educational institutions] does not support the notion of useful labor and practical duties as an alternative for physical development.”⁶⁶ Thus, “the colleges and universities are replacing these physical labor activities with competitive athletics.”⁶⁷ The opposite danger is to take out of context Ellen White’s statements on physical labor, such as the one that teachers *must* spend “several hours” daily “working with the students in some line of manual labor.”⁶⁸ More careful study of her works shows that she promoted a remarkable balance between cognitive knowledge, practical skills, and spiritual development in her writings on true education.⁶⁹

⁶⁴Nieman, 8.

⁶⁵Ibid., 9.

⁶⁶Peifer, 13.

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸White, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, 211.

⁶⁹See, for example, White, *Education*, 13-19; cf. Knight, 235-250.

She was nevertheless concerned with the danger of a misplaced emphasis on mental education to the virtual exclusion of practical duties: “A man may have a brilliant mind; he may be quick to catch ideas;... yet he may still be far from possessing a fitness for his duties.”⁷⁰ Thus, she admonished that, “every youth, on leaving school, should have acquired a knowledge of some trade or occupation.”⁷¹ Not only will this be useful in the emergencies of life, but it will also promote the development of mind and character.⁷²

Decades ago research was done on an SDA campus to find out the benefits of a balanced educational program. It was discovered that, “students who engage in manual labor to a reasonable extent (from 10-14 hours per week in this study) do the best school work.”⁷³

An example of this emphasis on balance, is a large Adventist university that has an integrative curriculum, which seeks to promote learning by means of four components: (a) a relationship with God and revelation; (b) professional training; (c) preparation for life; and (d) cultural heritage.⁷⁴

In order to fulfill the first component, students are required to take a 3-credit Bible class every semester, throughout the entire course of study; and to do at least 30 hours of outreach service per semester throughout the entire degree program. This includes witnessing, literature evangelism, and special ministry projects.

While the second component deals with the usual academic degree aspects, the third component includes the knowledge and practical application of healthful living, and

⁷⁰White, *Education*, 220.

⁷¹Ibid., 218.

⁷²See, *ibid.*, 214-222.

⁷³H. E. Edwards, “A Study of the Relation of Manual Labor Performance to Scholastic Achievement in College,” Unpublished paper available from the Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, USA.

⁷⁴See “Adventist Philosophy Applied to Campus Life,” Unpublished paper presented at the 1st International Conference on the Seventh-day Adventist Philosophy of Education, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, USA, 7-9 April 2001.

“manual labor” training done over four years, as follows: Year one—work with the soil (on the farm or in the gardens); year two: for women—sewing and cooking, and for men—home maintenance (including electricity, plumbing, painting, refrigeration, construction, and auto mechanics); years three and four: residency in a trade of the student’s choice. In addition to attendance at cultural events, the fourth component requires students to attend at least 80% of the weekly general assemblies.

Relating to the principle of component number two above, Knight says: “Training to meet today’s practical demands should find a place in Adventist curricula.”⁷⁵ For the student, the benefits of an effective work or practical training program are many, including: Learning to appreciate the dignity of work and the joy of accomplishment; providing insights into the character of God, and developing a sense of responsibility and dependability; developing a proper sense of the value of things such as money, health, and time; and preparation for the joy of wider service.⁷⁶

While it is vitally important to include some form of practical training into a well-balanced curriculum, there is at least one additional indispensable element of Christian education that can be overlooked only at great peril! And that is:

Humanitarian Service

For, even if students learn to be diligent and dependable workers, and develop practical skills for everyday living, these abilities could easily be used in a selfish manner, for personal survival, without regard to the needs of others. For, “to gain an education for self-service and self-glorification is the antithesis of Christianity.”⁷⁷

⁷⁵Knight, 240. Similarly, Raymond Moore, notes: “Aside from simple, cooperative play, God’s plan for our limited probationary time is work—manual labor and work for souls, a duo which goes perfectly together,” Raymond S. Moore, *Adventist Education at the Crossroads* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1976), 32.

⁷⁶Hilde, 149. See also, White, for example, *Education*, 214-222.

⁷⁷Knight, 56.

Speaking of Himself, Jesus, our supreme example, says that He “did not come to be served, but *to serve*” (Mark 10:45, emphasis added). Discussing true education, Ellen White maintains that “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.”⁷⁸ She goes further by stating that, “The *true object* of education is to fit men and women for *service* by developing and bringing into active exercise all their faculties.”⁷⁹ Since, “the great law of life is a law of service,”⁸⁰ “if service is not a vital part of the curriculum, it is not a life-giving curriculum.”⁸¹

As mentioned in the previous lecture, a growing “blind spot” in SDA education is the area of social concern, of self-sacrificial service for humanity. However, a call to communal consciousness must not become merely a means of making or maintaining a good image for the institution, or of simply helping humanity to live more prosperously on planet earth; ultimately it *must* point to Jesus Christ. As the above integrated university curriculum shows, their program requires all students to be involved in at least 30 hours of outreach service per semester throughout their entire degree program, including personal witnessing, literature evangelism, and special ministry projects.

With a bit of imagination, creativity, and simple observation of the actual needs of people, students and staff can discover much-needed, valuable and appreciated community projects. This could include things such as environmental clean-ups, soup kitchens for the destitute, providing emergency transportation for the needy, free baby-sitting, “adopting a grand-parent,” doing yard-work for the elderly, visiting orphans, participating in AIDS prevention by actively promoting abstinence, engaging in youth-to-youth anti-drug campaigns, going on short-term church-building projects (such as with Maranatha Volunteers International), doing longer term volunteering (such as student

⁷⁸White, *Education*, 13 (emphasis added).

⁷⁹White, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, 493 (emphasis added).

⁸⁰White, *Education*, 103.

⁸¹Hilde, 174.

missionary service, task force work, global mission pioneers, or Adventist Frontier Missions outreach), being a volunteer fire-fighter, visiting hospitals, prisons, etc.

Edward Norton's research work on the philosophy and practice of Christian service, from which the following lengthy comes, provides us with some salient points on this vital aspect of Adventist education:

[The curriculum committee must create] a learning environment in which *cooperation* and *service* to each other replaces the spirit of competition and a 'me first' social psychology.... For too long the grading and honors system has been based on self-glorification and conquest of others, an alien philosophy to that of the Christian principle of *selfless service* to and affirmation of others. How much better would it be if teachers would encourage students to assist each other to reach the highest level of achievement possible, not to best someone else, but to develop skills and attitudes which glorify God and benefit others! In this manner the classroom becomes a laboratory for the Body of Christ—a mini-Christian community: *Supportive, caring* and *servicing* each other. The teacher presides over this laboratory modeling the compassionate lifestyle of Christ and assisting the students to imitate Him also.⁸²

This perspective fully concurs with number seven of the "Core Concepts of Adventist Educational Philosophy," which states that, in Adventist education, "*Service* to fellow human beings, motivated by God's love, is the ideal purpose of life.... School programs [should] foster activities that alleviate human needs."⁸³

Whether it be student clubs, student officer elections,⁸⁴ international food fairs, heritage days (to celebrate cultural diversity), "fashion" shows, or any other sanctioned extra-curricular activity, institutional leaders need to seriously heed the following divine warning: "See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world

⁸²Norton, 249-250 (emphasis added).

⁸³Humberto M. Rasi, "Core Concepts of Adventist Educational Philosophy," Unpublished document received at the 27th International Faith and Learning Seminar, Mission College, Muak Lek, Thailand, 3-15 December 2000 (emphasis added).

⁸⁴Norton (p. 252) makes a strong appeal for carefully selected student leaders, since they do have a profound effect on the spiritual tone of the entire institution.

rather than on Christ” (Col 2:8 NIV).⁸⁵ Students must be challenged and encouraged to think Christianly, even in the activities not planned or directly run by the institution.

Commencement Challenges

The “final” message to a graduating class is called a “commencement address,” since they will soon be commencing a major new part of their lives. Similarly, this last section is labeled “Commencement Challenges,” rather than “Conclusion,” since it is hoped that the ideas presented here in this essay will become a solemn summons to “commence” a more holistic integration of faith into all the procedures, programs, plans, and practices of every Adventist educational institution.

Taylor states: “In order to *effectively* integrate faith and learning, Christian educators must bring the hidden curriculum to the surface.”⁸⁶ To the degree that this has been accomplished here, and to the extent that this paper has challenged all educators, especially institutional leaders, to continue to conscientiously engage in this exercise, this essay will have been successful.

From the lifestyle we live through the entertainment we engage in, from the music we promote to the movies we permit, we ought to forsake all futile efforts to simply sanitize the secular; instead we need to redirect all resources to the holistic integration of faith in all extra-curricular exercises (as well as in the classroom), for the sake of the eternal destiny of our students—for “this is the object of education, the great object of life.”⁸⁷ This is the challenge that we, as redemptive educators, must successfully meet, by the grace of God!

⁸⁵Is not the following a case of “worldly philosophy”? “[Anonymous SDA college] gives students a higher level of personal responsibility and freedom than do most North American [Adventist] colleges. Regular visitation hours allow students to visit the dorm rooms of the opposite sex;” Ted Swinyar, “An American at [Anonymous SDA college]: One Student’s Adventist Adventure,” *Adventist Today* (January-February 2001): 15.

⁸⁶John Wesley Taylor, “Instructional Strategies for the Integration of Faith and Learning, 4 (emphasis added).

⁸⁷White, *Education*, 16.