

Institute for Christian Teaching  
Education Department of Seventh-day Adventists

**A PROPOSAL FOR ADVENTIST CHRISTIAN EDUCATION:  
FROM RHETORIC TO REALITY**

by  
**Ralph M. Coupland**  
Walla Walla College  
College Place, Washington

**368-99 Institute for Christian Teaching  
12501 Old Columbia Pike  
Silver Spring, MD 20904 USA**

Prepared for the  
24<sup>th</sup> International Faith and Learning Seminar  
held at  
Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, U.S.A.  
June 20 - July 2, 1999

## **A Proposal for Adventist Christian Education: From Rhetoric to Reality**

Ralph M. Coupland

### **Introduction**

*“True education is the harmonious development of the physical, mental and spiritual powers.”*<sup>1</sup> This “statement” articulates an inspired vision for education and it provides a foundation for a philosophy of Adventist Christian education. Adventist educators have attempted to fulfill the essence of this vision by promoting concepts of holism, balance and integration. Holism has often been interpreted to mean that education should address all three dimensions of body, mind and soul. Balance has often been interpreted to mean that education should strive to address all three dimensions in an equal manner. And integration has often been interpreted to mean that the curriculum should include physical, mental and spiritual content.

How successful have Adventist educators been in achieving this vision? Is there evidence that Adventist educators have been able to plumb the depths of its meaning and significance? Is there evidence that Adventist educators have been able to translate and apply this vision to the purposes, theory and practice of Christian education? Or is there evidence that suggests that Adventist educators are often strong on the rhetoric of the vision but come up short on the reality of its application and practice? Can Adventist Christian educators find in this vision the philosophical foundation and conceptual framework that will enable them to go beyond rhetoric to reality?

The history of education suggests that educators have been engaged in a continuous search to find meaningful purposes, theories and practices for education. And current educators continue this tradition by searching for answers to the challenges they face in today’s schools. These challenges center around issues concerning curriculum choices and standards, teachers and teaching methods, students and student learning, the assessment of student learning, and the complex contexts in which education occurs.

There has been a flurry of activity on multiple fronts directed toward meeting these challenges. The result is a plethora of educational ideas and practices that are being promoted to help meet these educational challenges. Some current examples of these ideas and practices in the K-12 systems include cooperative learning, multiple intelligences, learning styles, the 4MAT system, tribes, integrated curriculum, dimensions of learning, authentic assessment, performance

assessment, standards based curriculum, character and values education, brain compatible teaching and learning, inclusive education, block scheduling, technology, multi-age and multi-grade, constructivism, brain-based education, critical thinking strategies, service learning, whole language, and phonics. The list is growing and being added to daily.

Many Adventist educators are also caught up in this search for answers to the challenges of education in today's Christian schools. Fresh ideas, practices and new approaches are sought, identified, tried, embraced, and promoted. Often attempts are made to legitimize a particular idea, practice or approach by showing how it "fits" into the "philosophy" of Adventist education.

### **Purpose**

My primary purpose in this essay will be to unpack the fundamental ideas behind this "statement." I will attempt to show that, although many of the educational initiatives that consume many Adventist educators today may have merit and may appear to "fit" into an Adventist "philosophy," they may not address the primary and foundational ideas inherent in this inspired "statement." I will attempt to show that it will be necessary and essential to have a clearer understanding of the foundational principles and mandates inherent in this vision if Adventist education is to achieve its mission. And I will attempt to show that Adventist education's performance has often demonstrated an insufficient understanding of this "statement." I will also suggest that even the concept of "integrating faith and learning" may indicate a limited grasp of the depth of this inspired vision for Christian education.

### **A Philosophical Perspective**

To appreciate the depth of this inspired "statement" and unpack its potential as a powerful vision for Christian education, it may be useful to view it through a philosophical "lense." This philosophical perspective has the ability to support and enhance its holistic and comprehensive nature and enrich its theoretical and practical power and worth. For some, the notion of thinking about anything in philosophic terms may be either intimidating or viewed as having limited value. For these, it should be noted that a philosophical perspective is not so complicated and esoteric as to be of little use. Rather, a philosophical perspective is comparatively simple, makes good sense, is relatively uncomplicated and has the potential for significant practical application.

Philosophy is a term used to describe a very important human activity that has a long

history. Philosophy was born when human beings started to ask important questions. And it has developed into a structured and systematic way or method of looking at anything and everything. It provides a “lense” through which anything and everything may be viewed. There is virtually nothing that cannot be perceived through this lense. This includes all of created reality, plus the abstract, concrete, and normative and aesthetic cultural artifacts that human beings have created. Because of this, philosophy can serve a very important function in our quest to understand the nature and purpose of Christian education.

Philosophy is born out of our questions. How many questions are there? It may first appear that there are probably an infinite number of questions that could be ask. In one sense, this is probably true. However, upon reflection, we realize that there are only seven basic question that can be asked about anything. These seven questions are embedded in our language and they contain the seeds for the philosophical “lense” through which we can view anything and everything. These questions are *whence* (origin), *whither* (destiny), *where* (space), *when* (time), *what* or *who* (concrete reality or product), *how* (abstract truth or pattern), and *why* (worthy value or purpose). Each question addresses a dimension of reality. If any dimension is removed, then the reality does not exist. Answers to all of these questions will reveal all there is to know about any specific reality. Thus, every entity of reality has an *origin* (*whence*) and will have a future *destiny* (*whither*). It will also exists in *time* (*when*) and *space* (*where*). The three remaining dimensions of concrete *reality* or product (*what* or *who*), abstract *truth* or pattern (*how*) and worthy *value* or purpose (*why*) identify the three primary dimensions of any specific entity of reality. They correspond to the philosophical content categories of *metaphysics* (what is *real*), *epistemology* (what is *true*) and *axiology* (what is of *value*). This three part view, therefore, provides the key dimensions of the philosophical “lense” through which one can view anything and everything. Figure 1. presents the seven questions and their corresponding dimensions of reality. Figure 2. presents the three primary dimensions of the philosophical “lense.”

The following example illustrates how this philosophical “lense” may be applied. A #2 wooden pencil is a well know object and when viewed through this “lense,” one is provided with a holistic understanding of the pencil and its basic dimensions. This lense helps us to recognize that a #2 pencil has an *origin* (*whence*), a *destiny* (*whither*), and exists in *time* (*when*) and *space* (*where*). In addition, we realize that the pencil’s essential essence depends upon three fundamental primary dimensions. These include a concrete *product* dimension (*what is real*), an

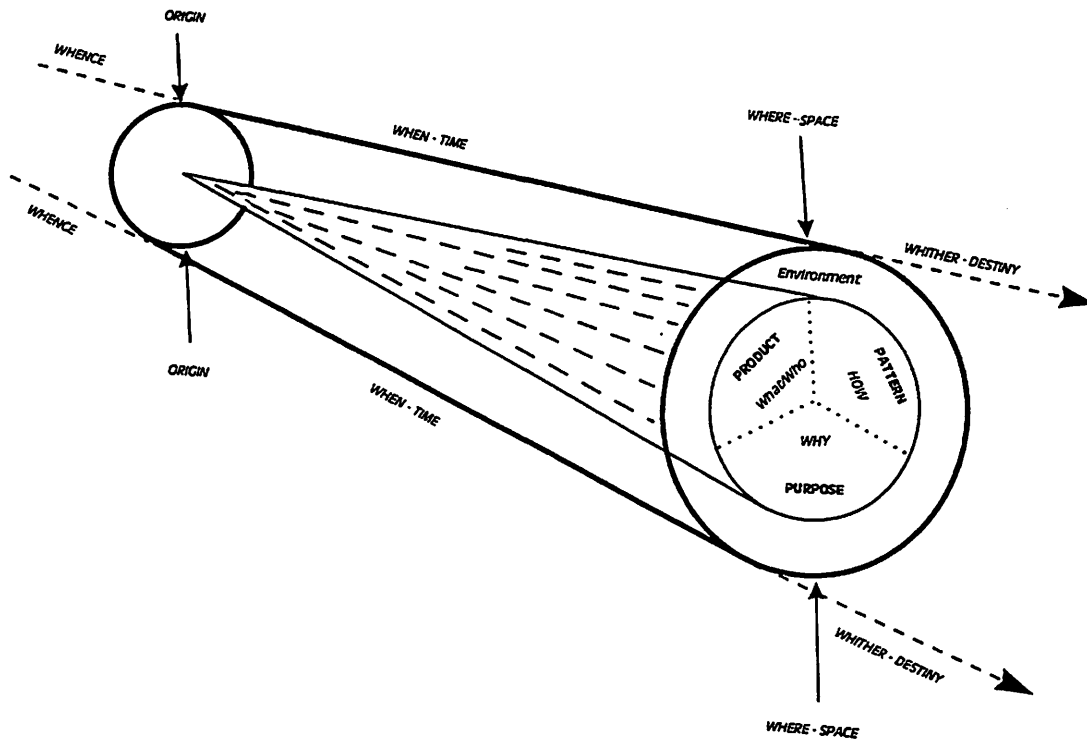


Figure 1. Seven Questions and Dimensions of Reality

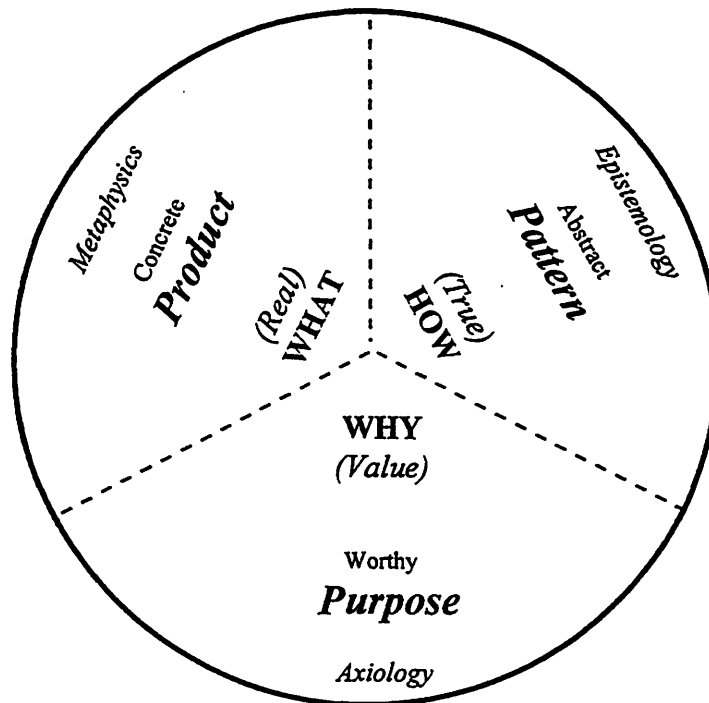


Figure 2. Three Primary Dimensions of the Philosophical "Lense"

abstract *pattern* dimension (*how* is it *true*), and a worthy *purpose* dimension (*why* is it of *value*). Thus this pencil exists as a #2 pencil precisely because it has a concrete *product* (real) dimension that identifies *what* the pencil is made of (e.g. wood, lead, metal, rubber, and paint), an abstract *pattern* (true) dimension that identifies the idea or plan that defines *how* the concrete physical material is shaped and assembled into a functional pencil, and a worthy *purpose* (value) dimension that identifies *why* the pencil exists and the nature of its purpose. The #2 pencil cannot and does not exist apart from these seven dimensions. And every entity of reality can be viewed through this philosophical “lense” in this way. Figure 2. presents the three primary dimensions.

### Model of Education

By focusing and applying this “lense” to the educational process, a model of education emerges that is compatible with the vision of the “statement.” This model provides a more comprehensive view of each component of the educational process and the linkages between the components.

The educational process is acknowledged to be very complex and dynamic. Any attempt to isolate all of the variables is probably impossible. This model of education, however, identifies six primary *components* of education in schools and views these components within the perspective of three primary *dimensions*, as defined by the philosophical “lense.” It is the purpose of this model, therefore, to present a more holistic and complete understanding of authentic educational processes. Figure 3. presents the Model of Education.

Holistic and authentic educational processes within this model of education is characterized by three integrated *dimensions*. These primary dimensions are *purpose*, *product* and *pattern*. They encompass the primary aspects of the educational learning and developmental experience. Every educational experience will be more holistic, authentic and represent integrity in education when viewed, planned, integrated and implemented within the perspective of each of these dimensions.

1. ***Purpose*** addresses the axiological question of *why* and indicates a worthy dimension of *value*. Every educational experience will be motivated and directed by a meaningful and worthy *purpose*. This purpose will have intrinsic meaning, worth and value beyond success or grades in school. The purpose will link and make meaningful connections to and between every component of the educational experience, to life, and other disciplines that are important and of worth and value

to the student(s) and teacher(s). The purpose will provide links to the spiritual and moral dimension and the values inherent in the Judeo-Christian Biblical narrative. The *purpose* answers the questions about *why* this educational process and experience is important and of worth.

2. ***Product*** addresses the metaphysical question of *what* or *who* and indicates a concrete dimension of what is *real*. Every educational experience will be motivated and directed to achieve, construct or develop a concrete *product*. This product may include aspects of *declarative knowledge* (abstract information, ideas, facts, forms or patterns of knowing and understanding), *procedural knowledge* (concrete performances, procedures, processes, products or skills), and *valuative knowledge* (worthy spiritual, moral, ethical and aesthetic values, desires, attitudes, commitments or purposes). The *product* answers the questions about *what* this educational process should achieve.
3. ***Pattern*** addresses the epistemological question of *how* and indicates an abstract dimension of what is *true*. Every educational experience will engage the student (often in cooperation with other students and the teachers) in a significant disciplined *pattern* of inquiry. The student(s) and teacher(s) will use this disciplined *pattern* of inquiry to achieve, construct or develop a *product* that will satisfy a meaningful and worthy *purpose*. The *pattern* answers the questions about *how* the educational process may be achieved.

Therefore, the educational experience will engage the student(s) and the teacher(s) in a significant and effective disciplined *pattern* (*how*) of inquiry designed to achieve a *product* (*what*) that fulfills a meaningful and worthy *purpose* (*why*).

The dotted lines in the model (see figure 3) suggest that these three dimensions are ways of looking at a complex whole. Within this view, there is a very synergistic interaction between the dimensions. Therefore, the whole is more than the sum of the three dimensions or parts.

The six primary ***components*** identified in this model include *Curriculum Standards*, the *Teacher and Teaching*, the *Student and Student Learning*, *Performance Assessment*, an *Evaluation* function for each component, and finally, the complex *Context* within which the education in schools occurs.

1. ***Curriculum Standards*** identify the *declarative knowledge* (*patterns*), *procedural knowledge* (*products*) and *valuative knowledge* (*purposes*) important for each discipline. These curriculum standards are the teaching and learning goals and expectations for the educational process.

***Declarative knowledge*** (Abstract *patterns* such as facts, information, ideas, concepts, principles, generalizations, forms)

***Procedural knowledge*** (Concrete *products* such as skills, performances, processes, procedures, products)

***Valuative knowledge*** (Worthy *purposes* such spiritual, moral, ethical and aesthetic values, character traits, virtues, desires, attitudes, commitments)

2. ***Teacher Teaching*** employs various selected methods of teaching to promote student learning of the curriculum standards. The focus of these methods will be to engage teachers and students in significant and disciplined *patterns* of inquire designed to achieve *products* that fulfill meaningful and worthy *purposes*.
3. ***Student Learning*** is the primary objective of the educational process. Students will learn discipline specific *declarative knowledge*, *procedural knowledge* and *valuative knowledge*. In addition, students will learn how to make meaningful connections between disciplines.
4. ***Performance Assessment*** will attempt to assess, using a variety of methods, the quality and level of student learning of the curriculum standards. These assessment processes will evaluate *declarative knowledge* learned, *procedural knowledge* demonstrated and *valuative knowledge* desired and considered worthy within each discipline. The level of meaningful connections between disciplines will also be assessed.
5. ***Evaluation*** of each educational component of the model and the dynamic interaction among and between these components will be a continuous and reflective process. The purpose of this evaluation will be to assess the effectiveness of each on the quality of student learning and development.
6. ***Context*** includes all environmental elements that may have an impact on the educational process. Each element will be considered within its three-part dimensional perspective. Some of these contextual elements may include the social, economic, domestic, linguistic, ethnic, administrative, physical, spiritual and cultural aspects of the environment.

The complex educational process, therefore, including student learning (declarative, procedural, valuative) and the harmonious development of the physical, mental and spiritual powers will be facilitated by appropriate choices and conditions. These include the identity and integrity of selected curriculum standards, the identity and integrity of the teacher and teaching methods used, the identity and integrity of the student, the identity and integrity of the assessment



practices employed, plus a reflective evaluation of the total process within the complex aspects of its various contexts.

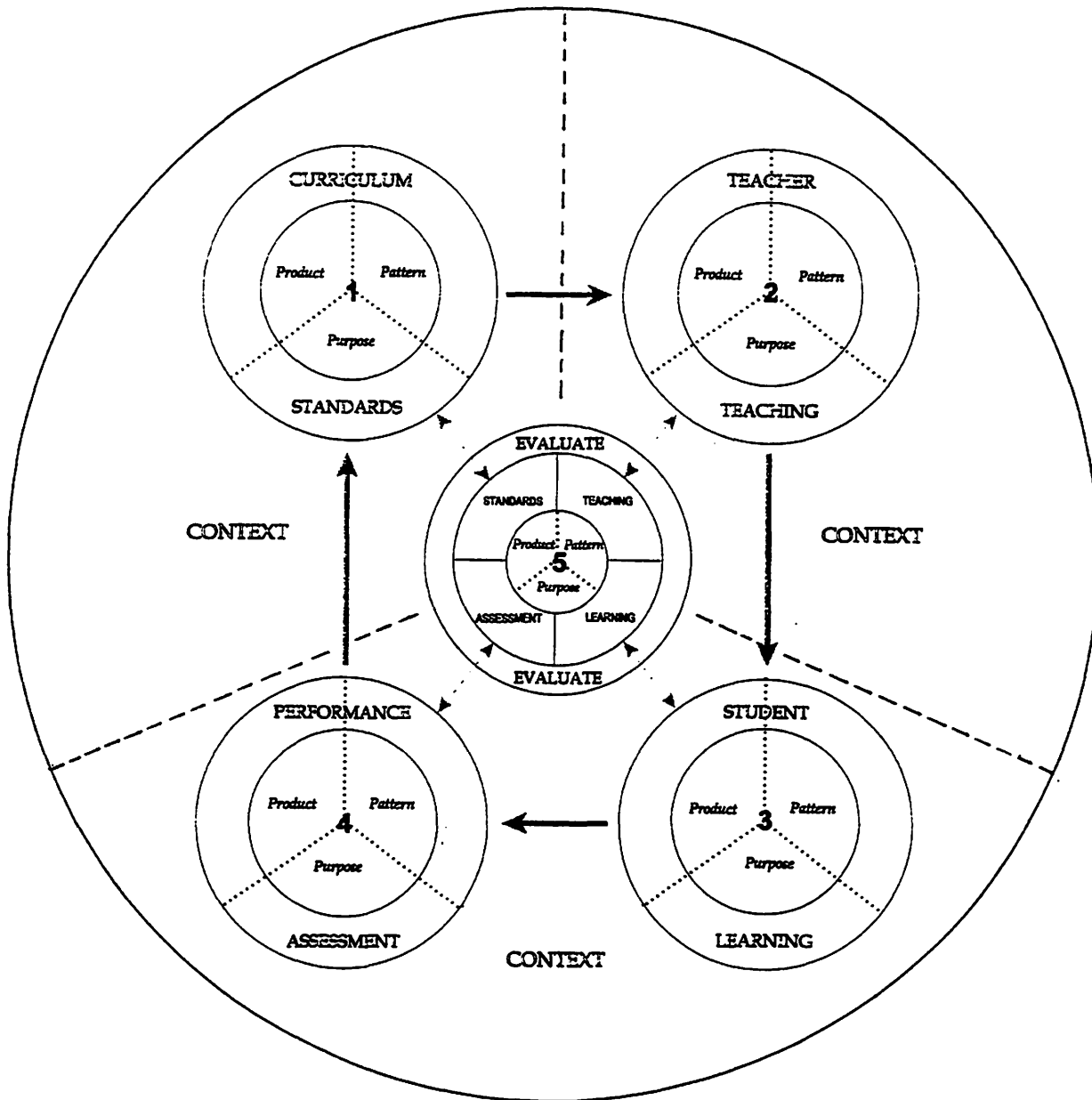


Figure 3. Model of Education

### **A Biblical Perspective Enhances the Role of Education**

The “statement” links education with the harmonious development of the physical, mental and spiritual powers. The perspective of the philosophic “lense” clarifies and enhances the three-part nature of all reality, including human beings. And the “model of education” builds upon and reflects this ternary view of human nature and every aspect of the educational process. A biblical perspective expands, supports and reinforces this view of human nature and the role of education in human development and restoration.

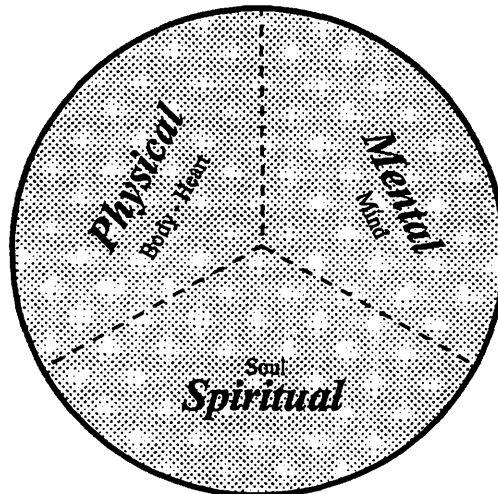
First, a biblical perspective clarifies the holistic and three dimensional nature of human beings, identifies mankind’s current lost condition, provides a plan of redemption, and anticipates the possibility and promise of a full restoration to wholeness. Ellen White links this plan of redemption and restoration to education. “To restore in man the image of his Maker, to bring him back to the perfection in which he was created, to promote the development of *body*, *mind*, and *soul*, that the divine purpose in his creation might be realized--this was to be the work of redemption. This is the object of education, the great object of life. Love, the basis of creation and of redemption, is the basis of true education.”<sup>2</sup>

Second, the biblical perspective identifies love as the basis of creation, redemption and education. This supreme Christian ethic of love is also holistic and has three dimensions. Jesus articulated it this way. “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your *heart*, with all your *soul*, and with all your *mind*.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”<sup>3</sup>

As indicated in the “statement” cited at the beginning of this essay, Ellen White describes true education as the harmonious development of the *physical*, *mental* and *spiritual* powers. And as noted above, love, the supreme Christian ethic, is the basis of both redemption and education. Therefore, the purpose of Christian education is the harmonious development of the three dimensions of human nature, the three corresponding powers, and the three aspects of the Christian ethic of love. These processes include the development of (1) *physical* strength and skill to demonstrate in concrete ways [to do the good] a love for God and humanity with all of one’s *heart*; (2) *mental* acuity and understanding that comprehends in more abstract ways [to know the good] a love for God and humanity with all of one’s *mind*; and (3) a *spiritual* and *moral/aesthetic* commitment [to desire the good and beautiful] and love for God and humanity

with all of one's *soul*. Therefore, this holistic and biblical approach to education focuses upon this life with an eternal perspective where Christian education, character education and redemption are one. And it is the biblical Judeo-Christian narrative that provides the context and gives power, meaning and purpose to this process.

This is education with integrity. It requires unimpaired and uncompromising adherence to quality, undivided wholeness and completeness. It connects theory, practice and worth. It links knowing, doing and desiring. Every educational element and process such as curriculum standards, teachers and teaching methods, students and student learning, assessment of learning and a meaningful and purposeful context are integrated into a significant whole. Integrity in education challenges educators to integrate so that linkages and connections are realized. Integrity in education within the context of the transcendent biblical narrative understands Christian education, character education and redemption as one. Students will develop in a harmonious manner the physical, mental and spiritual powers. Students will know abstract (mental) things, be able to do concrete (physical) things, and will have developed a faith commitment to worthy (spiritual) values. This type of education leads to a love and worship of God with all of one's heart, soul and mind, and to love one's neighbor as oneself. Figure 4 presents a graphic model of these dimensions and powers.



**Figure 4. A Model of the Dimensions and Powers**

### **Toward Achieving the Vision: Some Selected Options**

The ability to move from rhetoric to reality represents a significant challenge. The ability to fulfill a noble vision by linking theory and practice to the purpose inherent in the inspired “statement” will represent a substantial accomplishment. The application of the philosophic “lense” to the educational process will contribute to this process. The “model of education” will serve as a useful conceptual framework. And the biblical perspective grounded in the Judeo-Christian biblical narrative gives it ultimate meaning. Christian education with integrity will require attention to all of these aspects if this vision of the “statement is to be realized.

To assist in moving toward achieving the vision for Adventist Christian education, we are suggesting four areas that may help to bring about worthy purposes, theoretical insights and practical applications. These areas appear to articulate in significant ways with the inspired “statement,” the philosophical “lense,” the “model of education” and the transcendent Judeo-Christian biblical narrative. By attending to these four selected options, perhaps some progress could be achieved toward realizing the vision for Adventist Christian education.

The first option considers the notion of the harmonious development of physical, mental and spiritual powers. The second option considers more specifically the development of a diversity of powers. The third option considers the fundamental nature of academic content or curriculum standards. And the fourth option considers how the concept of the integration of faith and learning relates to the intrinsic qualities of academic content.

### **The Harmonious Development of the Physical, Mental and Spiritual Powers**

*True education is the harmonious development of the physical, mental and spiritual powers.* This “statement” is not new to Adventist Christian educators. It is frequently cited as providing the primary philosophical foundation for Adventist education. Historically, Adventist schools have attempted to fulfill its mandate by endeavoring to provide an education that emphasizes the physical, mental and spiritual dimensions.

To address the development of the *physical* dimension, schools have purposefully included curriculum that incorporates an emphasis on physical health. The history of Adventist education is replete with examples of programs that promoted physical health. The primary emphases of these programs focused on espousing a balanced life style. The elements of fresh air, water, sunshine, adequate rest, exercise, a nutritious vegetarian diet, and trust in divine power

were seen as key essentials. Additional areas of emphasis included physical education classes and practical work-study programs that often incorporated manual labor.

To address the development of the *mental* dimension, schools purposefully included curriculum that required challenging mental skills and acuity. The goal was to develop students to become thinkers rather than mere reflectors of other men's thoughts.<sup>4</sup> Subjects like science, mathematics, history, bible, languages, literature, etc., were considered curriculum areas that promoted rigorous mental discipline and development. Therefore, a challenging curriculum would be vital in contributing to the student's mental development.

To address the development of the *spiritual* dimension, Adventist schools purposefully included the addition of bible and religion classes to the curriculum. In addition, extra curricular activities were designed to assist in spiritual development. Some of these elements included devotionals during class times, special worships, chapels, weeks of prayer and Christian service activities. Some teachers and schools attempted to integrate biblical and spiritual elements into every subject and every class. The goal was to develop a Christian "culture" on the campus and within every classroom. To achieve this, all teachers, staff members and administrators would be expected to model by precept and example the life of a born again Christian. In this model, redemption, character development and education were seen as indistinguishable.

This interpretation of the "statement" and its application to Adventist Christian education has significant merit. Steadfast vigilance to the vision that inspired this theory and practice will continue to provide positive results. However, if the various components of the educational process, as outlined in the "model of education," (curriculum standards, teachers and teaching, students and learning, assessment of learning, evaluation, and context) are viewed through an expanded view of the "statement" and the philosophical "lense," then a more holistic and harmonious perspective will emerge. Within this perspective, each component of the educational process will be viewed as having three integrated dimensions. By attending to each of these three dimensions, the educational process becomes more holistic, realistic and authentic. This will make Christian education with integrity possible.

One of the important components of the educational process is curriculum standards. Viewing this component through the philosophical "lense" provides a useful example of its power and utility. In approaching most subject areas of the curriculum, educators often place a heavy emphasis on "learning" the *abstract declarative knowledge* (information, facts, ideas,

forms, patterns) associated with that particular subject. When viewed through the philosophical “lense,” it is revealed that this approach can result in very serious costs because limited attention has been paid to “learning” the *concrete procedural knowledge* and the *worthy valuative knowledge* inherent to that particular curriculum subject area. The philosophical “lense” should remind educators that every subject contains inherent and intrinsic *physical, mental* and *spiritual* dimensions and that every subject includes a *product, pattern* and *purpose*. Therefore, every subject requires that a student should learn to *know, do* and *desire* if this learning is to reflect not only the inherent three dimensional nature of man, but also the inherent three dimensional nature of the subject under study. If the educational process, therefore, is to fulfill the vision of Christian education as suggested by the “statement,” then it must give serious reflection on how these three dimensional aspects may be applied. This will require significant research, study and application. The scope of this project is well beyond the limits of this essay. What we are doing here is to begin the process by suggesting a conceptual framework that will give direction to this endeavor.

### **The Development of a Diversity of Powers**

We are suggesting that if Adventist Christian education is to move toward achieving its vision as advanced in the “statement,” then it should consider refocusing in a substantive way. In addition to focusing on the three dimensions as outlined above, it should give attention to the development of a *diversity of powers*. While there is a wide spectrum of powers, they can be categorized under the three headings of *physical, mental* and *spiritual* powers.

What does it mean to develop the *physical, mental* and *spiritual powers*? Are students developing these powers when they study and learn the traditional curriculum content? Or is the development of a physical, mental or spiritual power something fundamentally different? And if this is the case, then is it possible that there should be a significant shift in the role of the educational process?

Historically, education in schools has often been compromised because of competing visions for the role and purpose of education. There are only three traditional roles for education in schools. One is *socialization*. The objective of socialization is to prepare and shape students to fill productive roles in society and to preserve a culture’s norms and values. This process tends toward the homogenization of its members. A second role for education is to pass on to the

young the accumulation of a culture's particular *forms of knowledge* and wisdom. The goal is to teach students the particular forms of knowledge that will ensure their realistic and rational view of the world's reality, truth and value. This process tends toward specialization and a divergence of its members. A third role for education is to help each individual student realize their *unique human potential*. Here, the objective is to assist students develop to the maximum every student's unique and intrinsic ability and human potential. This process tends toward emphasizing individual differences and thus a divergence of its members.

These competing visions for education have resulted in a compromised curriculum in the history of American education.<sup>5</sup> And these trends also appear to have influenced the theory and practice of Adventist education. Some educators, however, are suggesting a need for radical changes. They believe that because of the conflicting nature of these three traditional purposes for education, perhaps the real role and purpose for education will be found elsewhere.

Kieran Egan proposes that the role of education needs to shift from its traditional roles to that of developing "tools for understanding." The focus of his work is on the development of language as a vital "tool for understanding" the world.<sup>6</sup> Summit School, a private school in Illinois, has demonstrated in its practices the importance and long-term value of focusing on developing a wide variety of learning tools.<sup>7</sup> These include a diversity of tools in the cognitive (mental) psychomotor (physical) and affective (spiritual) domains. A very interesting observation concerning the students who go through the Summit School experience is that they seldom require Special Education services. This is in contrast to the considerable evidence that this is not the case among the students attending the public and private schools in America. A growing demand for the services of Special Education teachers in both public and private schools, including Adventist Christian schools, is widely acknowledged.

The purpose of a "tool for understanding" is to provide a window on the world. Different tools provide differing views of the world. An expanded repertoire of *tools* or *powers* that include the physical, mental and spiritual domains increases the diversity of these powers. This will have the potential of enriching in multiple ways the powers for understanding the world.

### **The Nature of Curriculum Content**

What is the fundamental nature of curriculum content that students are asked to learn? Is there anything about the intrinsic nature of curriculum content that is important to consider? In

response to these questions, the philosophic “lense” provides an important perspective. It helps to clarify the holistic nature of curriculum. It is this perspective that links curriculum content to the vision articulated in the “statement.”

Every curriculum content area provides a window on the created world. An holistic view of curriculum leads to an holistic view of the world. Within this view, it is possible to perceive the *reality*, understand the *truth* and accept and internalize the *values* inherent in every entity of created reality. If the reality about curriculum content is reduced to abstract symbols, we lose. If the truth about curriculum content is limited to abstract symbols, we lose. And if the values about curriculum content is presented only in abstract lifeless and abstract symbolic forms, we lose. To avoid these losses, educators need to return to the pre-institutional, pre-symbolic, and pre-abstraction times to discover the depth of meaning and existence inherent in the realities, truths and values intrinsic to every subject area of the curriculum.

How can this be achieved when the utilization of abstractions has been institutionalized and is so pervasive and powerful in today’s world? This represents a significant challenge, because, as Glen Greenwalt has so perceptively pointed out, modern humans have aggressively mapped the created world and universe with our systems of abstract symbols.<sup>8</sup> The results of this “modern” approach is a two edged sword. While one side may give us a sense of understanding of the world and how it works, yet the other side is deadly. The abstractions that have been institutionalized have robbed us of a clear perception of *reality*, they have given us a false sense of security about our knowledge of *truth*, they have emaciated the power and potential of our moral, aesthetic and spiritual *values*, and they have undermined our ability to make meaningful and living connections between them so as to create a coherent whole.

How might this challenge be overcome? First, these abstractions need to be recognized for what they are. They are only abstract symbols that have become institutionalized and that they only *represent* something that is real. And second, the real concrete reality, abstract truth and worthy values that they actually do represent, need to be rediscovered. One way to do this is to let the mystery of the stars “sing” again. Modern science has attempted to demystify their meaning. And modern culture has developed the belief that the meaning of the stars and the rest of created nature is achieved by abstract symbolic descriptions. This implies that this is all there is to know. However, songs can reveal more than any symbol, word or concept. The power of song can provide multiple levels of meaning. We need to rediscover the meaning and mystery of



created nature. We need to listen again to nature's songs.

Another important way to overcome the dominance of abstract symbolization of reality is to recognize that we live our lives within the context of a powerful biblical transcendent narrative. This narrative provides meaning for the past, present and future. The power of this narrative goes beyond abstract words, concepts or symbols. The power of this story gives meaning and purpose to all reality, truth and value. It places everything in the context of meaning.

If educators would listen again to nature's songs and live their lives within the context of the biblical transcendent narrative, then teachers and students would be able to properly connect *abstract truths* of knowing and believing, *concrete reality* and acts of doing and being, and *worthy values* and purposes that provide meaningful insight and experience. This process acknowledges that insight comes before words and communication, that uniqueness is evident before universality and generalization, that an experience is evoked before a declaration is made, and that permanent facts are replaced by moments of insight and experience. Abstract doctrines, theories and ideologies tend to divide while concrete events, insights and moments of experience in time tend to unite. Therefore, if description overrides an indication, if an explanation supersedes the inexplicable, if common sense misses the uncommon, and if dogma ignores the mystery, then abstract symbols, words, names and concepts are inadequate for approaching God's created world and the curriculum that represents it. The words of scripture help to capture and enlarge this vision.

By the word of the Lord, were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. . . Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. For he spake, and it was done; commanded, and it stood fast.<sup>9</sup>

Abraham Heschel expands on this view and challenges us as we consider the Creator and His Creation.

We can never sneer at the stars, mock the dawn or scoff at the totality of being. Sublime grandeur evokes unhesitating, unflinching awe. Away from the immense cloistered in our own concepts, we may scorn and revile everything. But standing between earth and sky, we are silenced by the sight.<sup>10</sup>

This view suggests that every subject area of curriculum content is related to God's created universe and has an inherent spiritual dimension. Parker Palmer refers to the "great things," as the subjects that call teachers and students to know, teach and learn.<sup>11</sup> Therefore,

every subject can be viewed as a great subject and can be viewed with awe, wonder and reverence. The poet Robert Frost understood this truth. In a powerful metaphor, he describes these relationships. “We dance around in a ring and suppose, But the Secret sits in the middle and know.”<sup>12</sup> Teachers and students dance around each subject in awe of its mystery, wonder and greatness. They probe and study, knowing however, that they will never be able to completely reveal all of its secrets and essence. This activity reflects a balance between mystery and meaning, stillness and utterance, reverence and action. This mystery refers not only to the things about the world not yet known. It also refers to something that will never be known. This mystery includes, yet goes beyond, all properties that can be measured, catalogued and articulated. This mystery can never be known, it can only be approached in wonder, awe, reverence and respect. Its song can tell us much more than any abstract symbolic representation.

There is a profound sense of mystery and wonder inherent in every great subject. This gives grandeur to the mind, fertility and worth to the soul, and an essence of dignity to life and living. The ineffable mystery of the design and very existence of the created universe proclaims in silent thunder a moral and spiritual imperative; “What is required of me?”

Because of this, we are compelled to sing a song which we cannot utter, say a word we do not know how to spell or pronounce, and see the world we do not know how to name. It is then that we discover a Psalm, a song that we can sing, a word that we can spell and pronounce, and a world that we can name. A Song! A Psalm!

Praise the LORD from the heavens; Praise Him in the heights! Praise Him, all his angels; Praise Him, all His hosts! Praise Him, sun and moon; Praise Him, all you stars of light! Let them praise the name of the LORD, For He commanded and they were created. He has also established them forever and ever; He has made a decree which shall not pass away.<sup>13</sup>

By acknowledging and recognizing that a knowledge of God provides the foundation and source for all true knowledge and development,<sup>14</sup> the Adventist Christian educator acknowledges the true foundation for every aspect of the educational process. This perspective places the spiritual dimension of all reality at the heart of every great subject, every effective method and every learning experience.

### **The Integration of Faith and Learning**

This fourth option addresses the concept of integrating faith and learning. Integration implies bringing together one or more separate or discrete elements. When integrating faith and learning, faith is brought to learning and learning is brought to faith. The final product is dependent upon each element coming successfully to the other. In this way, faith enhances learning and learning enhances faith.

If, however, the educational process is viewed from the perspective of the “model of education,” the philosophical “lense,” and the inspired “statement” as presented above, then this integration model may be incomplete and insufficient. A more holistic understanding of the relationships between faith and learning would need to account for the intrinsic and internal spiritual qualities inherent in every subject area of curriculum content and every aspect of the educational process. This acknowledges the mystery and wonder of God’s creation, the complexity of the teaching and learning activities, and the holistic nature of the teachers and students who are involved in this complex education process. Inherent in each of these areas are intrinsic primary dimensions of product, pattern and purpose. They provide the foundational elements for a holistic development of a diversity of physical, mental and spiritual powers.

This model would not deny the influences of external revelatory gifts from God on faith development and learning. The power and influence God’s revelation as found in the Bible and nature plus the role of the Holy Spirit are recognized. However, this model proposes that educators should look to the inherent qualities of subject, method, process and person to find intrinsic dimensions that enhance development. This model, therefore, acknowledges the presents of God’s revelation and the spiritual dimension inherent within His created world. It also acknowledges the essential external influences of God’s revelation through the ministry of the Trinity.

### **Conclusion**

The harmonious development of the physical, mental and spiritual powers *is* education with integrity. As this is realized, students will know abstract mental things, be able to do concrete physical things, and will have developed a faith commitment to worthy spiritual values. They will be able to achieve this holistic development of the physical, mental and spiritual powers through a diversity of tools for understanding the world and God’s creation. Adventist

Christian education with integrity will link character development with redemption and restoration. This gives meaning and purpose to Christian education and endows it with power. In this way, Adventist Christian education may be enabled to move from rhetoric toward the reality of its inspired mission.

### References

1. Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1903), p.13. Italics supplied.
2. Ibid., pp. 15, 16. Italics supplied.
3. Matthew 22:37- 40. NKJV. Italics supplied.
4. Ellen G. White, *Education*, p.17.
5. David F. LaBaree, "Politics, Markets, and the Compromised Curriculum," *Harvard Educational Review*. Volume 57, Number 4, November 1987, pp. 483-493.
6. Kieran Egan, *The Educated Mind: How Cognitive Tools Shape Our Understanding* (Chicago 60637, The University of Chicago Press, 1997).
7. M. Ruth F, Tofanelli, *The Summit School Story* (Modern Learning Press, Inc., 1998).
8. Glen Greenwalt, "Stars, Texts and Emerging Shapes of Biblical Renewal," *Spectrum*. Volume 27, Issue 1, Winter, 1999, pp. 9-16.
9. Psalm 33: 6, 8, 9. NKJV.
10. Abraham Heschel, *Man is Not Alone* (New York, Harper & Row, Publishers, Incorporated, 1966), p. 25.
11. Parker J. Palmer, *The Courage to Teach* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc., Publishers, 1998).
12. Robert Frost, "The Secret Sits" from *The Poetry of Robert Frost*, Edward Conney Lathem (ed.) (New York: Henry Holt, 1979), p. 362.
13. Psalm 148: 1-6. NKJV.
14. Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 14.

Note: The ideas about the questions, dimensions, the philosophic "lense" and the graphic models that illustrate these ideas come from: Ralph M. Coupland, *The Nature of Man and Educational Administration: A Ternary Function* (Doctoral Dissertation, Andrews University, 1981)