

Institute for Christian Teaching
Education Department of Seventh-day Adventists

**THE TRANSMISSION OF CHRISTIAN VALUES
THROUGH SPORTS IN THE CURRICULUM OF
PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN HIGH SCHOOL**

By

Davide Sciarabba

Campus Adventiste du Salève
Collonges sous Salève, France

546-03 Institute for Christian Teaching
12501 Old Columbia Pike
Silver Spring, MD 20904 USA

Prepared for the
31st International Seminar on the Integration of Faith and Learning
Friedensau Adventist University
July 2003

There are many ways of teaching Physical Education. It all depends on what one wants to achieve and on the philosophy of life that one has and/or wants to transmit.

This paper intends to demonstrate that P. E. is an effective means for the transmission of Christian values to high school students, and that the Christian way of teaching P. E. needs a philosophical and theological foundation rooted in the Bible.

Before going any further, we want to delimit our paper in order to avoid any misunderstanding about the role of P.E. In our opinion, in a holistic view, the curriculum of P.E. should comprehend different physical activities that we could classify as sports, outdoor activities, manual labour and physical exercise. In our paper we want to concentrate on sport for three reasons:

1. In many countries, such as France, the curriculum of P.E. is called Sports and Physical Education. The official French state program requires that students be trained in competitive sports. Students even have a state exam at the end of high school where they have to compete in two sports of their choice.
2. We know that our students are influenced by, and very attentive to, the issue of sports because they are continually influenced by society, through the media and T.V. sports programs. Given that we want to transmit values through P.E., we have chosen this area of sports in order to reach students where they are with their comprehension about sports and help them find a balanced way to do sports. One way in which we can transmit our faith, as Paul did to the Corinthians, Philippians and Timothy, is by using sports metaphors.
3. Although it might be useful to write in an exhaustive manner about all the physical activities P.E. embraces, a much longer treatment would be necessary than the one allowed by the limits of this paper.

So in our paper, we would like to show first, that the basis of a good comprehension of P.E. is a holistic vision of life. The understanding that all dimensions in a man's life have the same importance is not evident in a secularised western culture that is essentially based on materialism and/or anthropological dualism. By showing the holistic vision of biblical anthropology we underline the value of the person as a physical, spiritual and intellectual being. Therefore, a balanced vision of the physical dimension, that is neither underestimated (body = matter) nor too exalted (body worship), is important. Once we are conscious of this aspect, it is evident that the education of the physical is important not only because it helps us to develop the other dimensions in a balanced way, but because it aims for the restoration of God's image in us.¹ If our goal as Christians is to develop our personality, intellect, spirit and body in order to reflect the image of God in all our being, it is evident that P. E. plays a very important role.

Secondly, we would like to show that we can draw values from the Bible that can be transmitted through P. E. and sports. Some examples will be given from sports metaphors Paul used in his letters in order to transmit his faith.

Thirdly, we would like to apply these values in the teaching of P. E. and sports in the context of high school life in contemporary European society.

We would like to conclude by formulating a philosophy of sports within P.E. from a Christian perspective.

1. A holistic vision as background for physical education.

We would like to present here some theological data on the holistic vision of man in order to give a biblical basis to physical education and sports. We think it is important to situate physical education in an anthropological biblical background on which the way of understanding and teaching P. E. will depend. It is in this context that it will also be useful to analyze Paul's New Testament metaphors.

¹ Ellen White, *Education*, Mountain View: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1952. p. 15-30.

This background seems important because, throughout history, the different anthropological conceptions have conveyed various beliefs and ideals that have exalted or repressed certain physical activities of human beings.

Most western societies have been influenced by anthropological dualism, often credited to Plato, not because he was its originator but because of his influence. “Nobody has indeed contributed in such a lasting way to the triumph of anthropological dualism than Plato. He is the one who sowed in philosophy the idea of the personal immortality of the soul.”² His metaphysical ideas on the immortality of the soul have not only influenced all philosophical thinking after him but also theological and religious thinking.³

Some have supposed that Plato may have influenced Paul in his anthropology. But an attentive study of Paul’s thinking shows that the background of his thinking does not come from the anthropological dualism of Greek philosophy, but from the anthropological monism of biblical Semitic thinking.⁴

The first Greek philosophers looked for the essence common to all beings (philosophical monism). The Bible, on the other hand, does not look for an essence, but affirms from the beginning the unity that is at the basis of all that exists (biblical monism): one God who is unique and manifests himself in trinitarian ways, and one humankind that is unique with multiple manifestations; physical, mental and spiritual.

“In its simplest and purest form, the biblical concept of man cannot be conceived other than « in the image of God », as a being of perfect unity (...) Therefore, unlike all the other anthropological dualisms, ancient and new, biblical psychology is monist, that is to say, that man forms a perfect and indivisible being: body, soul and spirit.”⁵

The basic text on which biblical anthropology is built is the one that describes man’s creation and that expresses clearly how man is viewed. “The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man become a living being”. (Genesis 2:7)⁶. Despite the text’s figurative language and didactic character, it is possible to distinguish the fundamental elements that compose man: soil, which constitutes man’s body, and the life-giving breath, that constitutes the spirit. The text does not distinguish the elements but takes into account their diversity in function of unity and totality. Their fusion gives life to a living entity: the human being.⁷

That means that the soul, in its most common sense, is not seen here as an ontological reality: the living soul exists only as a result of the life-giving breath (spirit) on the soil matter (body). The body in itself, deprived of its content-the life-giving breath-is nothing but soil, or matter, and the spirit, without the body, has no existence in human reality.⁸ This text excludes the hypothesis of considering man as a reality composed by two separated parts: a material body, perishable, and a pre-existing soul, immortal. Man is formed by matter and it is the divine breath

² J. Zurcher, *L’homme sa nature et sa destinée*, Neuchâtel : Delachaux et Niestlé, 1953. p.34.

³ For a further study of this topic, see J. Zurcher, *Idem*. pp.19-30. [...] « Le dualisme philosophique plonge ses racines dans le dualisme religieux. Ils ont ensemble un même fond d’idées, et un même mouvement de pensée. (L’un et l’autre sont à la recherche du salut, même le dualisme philosophique, et l’un et l’autre, sont à la recherche du salut de l’âme, même le dualisme religieux.) D’ailleurs le dualisme philosophique garde généralement un caractère religieux, et le dualisme religieux a presque toujours un caractère philosophique. » [...]

⁴ For a further study of this topic, see J. Zurcher, *Idem*.

⁵ J. Zurcher, *Essai d’anthropologie biblique*. pp. 2-3. Unpublished document distributed by professor Zurcher, academic year 1995-96.

⁶ *New International Version (NIV)*, London: International Bible Society, 1996.

⁷ Other versions translate « living soul », (ex. *La Nuova Riveduta*, Roma: Società Biblica Britannica & Forestiera, 2000), or “living creature”, (*Traduzione Interconfessionale in Lingua corrente*, Torino: Elle Di Ci Leumann – United Bible Societies, 1985). I will use the terms “living soul” and “living creature”.

⁸ Psalms 104:29,30; 146:4; Ezekiel 37:6-10; Jacques 2:26.

that gives life to man. The divine action is the source of life for the human being. There is no pre-existing autonomous soul that comes from God and that is somehow warrantor of the relation with God. It is up to men, in their entirety, to enter into contact with God. Therefore, at the moment of death, man decomposes and returns to the soil. "Our bodies will return to the dust of the earth, and the breath of life will go back to God, who gave it to us". (Ecclesiastes 12:7)⁹. It is written that "the spirit goes back to God", not that the soul returns to God. God gives life and takes it back. Man has nothing immortal that characterizes him¹⁰ or belongs to him.

Paul, by taking up the same Old Testament concept, confirms this vision of man in his writings. Indeed, when speaking about the manifestations of our being and of the ability to receive the blessings of a Christian life, he says: "May the God who gives us peace make you holy in every way and keep your whole being –spirit, soul, and body- free from every fault at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ!" (I Thessalonians 5:23).¹¹ This text does not imply a tripartite conception of the human being, just as the text of Genesis 2:7 does not imply a dualist vision.

"We think that Paul is not speaking about the metaphysical structure of men, (as the text of Genesis does), but rather of the three orders of manifestations of the being « as a whole ». The repetition of the conjunction in the Greek text between each one of the terms (the spirit, the soul and the body), highlights even more this fact. Even if the manifestations of the being are multiple and very different depending if they are done by the body, the soul or the spirit, they suppose each time man as a unity in a certain expression of himself."¹²

They are not three isolated entities of the human being but three objective manifestations of man. In the Bible, these manifestations always point to the totality of the human being.¹³

So, the Bible sees the human being as an integral unity, holistic and with various ways of expressing its reality. That is why all its manifestations are equally important. The physical, the spiritual and the intellectual must be considered and developed in harmony. But the problem arises in everyday life. Our society, with its dualistic heritage, either underestimates the physical, in respect to the spiritual and intellectual, or, on the other hand, by reaction exalts it in a worship of the body. Unfortunately, these visions have entered our church and our schools.

In European Adventist circles there is a form of pietism much closer to anthropological dualism than to biblical wholism. Some questions should be raised on this subject: how much time is employed in our schools, as obligatory courses, to practice music, painting, physical education, and all the other arts in comparison with intellectual and spiritual activities? Why doesn't the curriculum of theology and foreign languages have some courses in physical education? Why can only young children have physical activities, while adults have to stay in the church for their activities on Sabbath? It is important to give a biblical and theological/philosophical basis to our religious positions.

Considering all we have said thus far, we realize the important role P.E. plays in a holistic vision of a balanced development of a person. As Zurcher said¹⁴, from a biblical and practical point of view, man has been conceived in the image of God in his perfect unity; body, soul and spirit. This unity implies that the physical life is part of the spiritual and intellectual ones as much as the spiritual life is part of the physical and intellectual ones. Even if in our condition of sin spiritual life

⁹ *Good News Bible* (today's English Version), Glasgow: Collins, 1984.

¹⁰ Ecclésiaste 3:18-21. In fact, there is no difference between the human breath of life and that of animals.

¹¹ Maybe the *Nuova Riveduta*, and the *Traduzione Interconfessionale in Lingua Corrente*, respect better the concept because they respectively say: "(...) and your whole being, spirit, soul and body, (...); and "(...) all your person, spirit, soul and body (...).

¹² J. Zurcher, *Essai d'anthropologie biblique*. p. 4.

¹³ Deutéronome 6:5; Matthieu 22:37; Marc 12: 30; Luc 10:27.

¹⁴ See page 4.

has a clear priority in respect to intellectual and physical life, in God's ideal, in Eden for instance, there is no evident hierarchy of values in the manifestations of human life. All are important.

2. Sports metaphors transmitting Biblical values.

After having stated that P.E. needs biblical foundations in order to be properly understood, we are now turning to the study of some of the most explicit sports metaphors we find in Paul's writings in order to identify the values they try to transmit.

First of all, we must say that there are plenty of sports metaphors in Paul's epistles,¹⁵ and that we must not be surprised to find them. We have asked ourselves two questions in relation to them: « Why does Paul use sports metaphors addressing the first Christians? What message does he want to convey by using them? Are there any essential values still useful for us today? And if this is so, which are these values? » We call values the ethical principles that are considered the most important and that serve as standards of behaviour.

The historical and cultural context of the New Testament helps us answer the first question. Corinth, along with other ancient Greek cities, had an important sports tradition. Every two years, the Isthmic games and the Nemees feasts took place, in this city.¹⁶ During the year 51 AC., Corinth welcomed two important sporting events: the Isthmus games and the Imperial games.¹⁷ Chronologically, it is possible for Paul to have witnessed the animation of these games that shattered the city and called upon the Corinthian's attention.

On the other hand, since the apostle studied and was raised in the Hellenistic world, it would have been impossible for him not to notice the numerous sports images used by the Greek and Jewish philosophers to the teaching of ethics. Some of these images had become classic, teaching that life is a fight, that the world is a stadium where men are called to exercise their virtues when facing the obstacles of existence. For some philosophers,¹⁸ the Olympic Games were mirrors of every man's life. Before Paul, the Jewish moralists who lived in the Hellenistic world had already used these sports metaphors in order to illustrate their speeches on life as a training exercise subject to the demands of the law. A good example is Philo of Alexandria who defined life as an agonistic competition.¹⁹ Even in the deuterocanonical, apocryphal and intertestamental books,²⁰ life is compared to a fight, to a competition, to a constant struggle in which man is engaged: if he is defeated he will suffer unnecessarily, but if he wins he will receive significant rewards.

That is why we can suppose that the world of sports was doubly familiar to the ears of Paul of Tarsus: as curious observer of his fellow citizens, the stoics, and as pupil of the rabbis, in the synagogue, first at Tarsus, and then in Jerusalem next. Our study has permitted us to observe that « Paul has often surprised the exegetes by his knowledge of sport, its vocabulary and its practice. Some have even imagined that the apostle would attend to the games ... in order to announce the gospel! Personally I like to imagine that Paul sometimes went to the stadium between two evangelistic campaigns. »²¹

Anyway, Paul's language proves clearly that he was knowledgeable and that the world of sports was familiar to him. He has not found any better image for the Christian life than the long distance race, maybe the marathon.

¹⁵ Victor C. Pfitzner, *Paul and the Agon Motif*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1967. pp. 76-81.

¹⁶ M. Diana, *Appunti di Storia dell'Educazione Fisica*, course notes for a History of physical education class, academic year: 1992-1993 at I.S.E.F., Florence. pp. 18-20.

¹⁷ Santiago Fernández Ardanaz, *Las Olimpiadas y el espíritu deportivo de la vida en la Biblia y en el cristianismo primitivo*, *Reseña Bíblica*, Otoño, 1994, n° 3. p. 46. Cf. Gordon D. Fee *The first epistle to the Corinthians* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989. p. 433; Leon Morris, *La prima epistola di Paolo ai Corinzi*, Roma: G.B.U., 1974, p. 163.

¹⁸ See for instance Crisipe, Zénon, Aristocreonte, Philocrates, Arquedeme et Antipatre, Antenodores etc.. Cf. Heinz-Dietrich Wendland, *Le lettere ai Corinti*, Brescia: Paideia, 1976. pp.146-147.

¹⁹ *Som II*, 145.

²⁰ Sagesse 4 :2; 4 Esdras 7:127; 3 Maccabées 4:11; 4 Maccabées 6:10; 11:20; 16:16; 17:10; 18:23; Testamentum Jobi 4.

²¹ See A. Maillot, *Aux Philippiens d'aujourd'hui*, Genève : Labor et Fides, 1974 p. 112-113.

Paul, accordingly, draws from his cultural heritage a sports language that was very familiar to his audience. « Each citizen of the Greek world knew many sports well, for the practice of sports was widespread and characterized a culture that tended to worship the body. »²² It is consequently very normal for the apostle to use sports metaphors in order to transmit behavioural values and his faith in the Almighty. In the same way, as much as for the apostle, P.E. and sports may give me the opportunity to transmit my faith and my values.

Among the different metaphors used by Paul we have chosen those contained in four paradigmatic passages: I Corinthians 9:24-27; Philippians 3:12-16; II Timothy 2:4-6 and II Timothy 4:6-8. The reason is very simple: these are the most explicit passages on athletics and their sports vocabulary is unquestionable. Moreover, these four passages expose the principal values that, in Paul's thinking, contribute to the success of man in the different domains of his life, even in the realm of faith.

We shall now list the values that emerge from the sports images mentioned by Paul following the canonical order in which they appear.

A) I Corinthians 9:24-27.

“Do you know that in a race all the runners compete, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Well, I do not run aimlessly, I do not box as one beating the air; but I pummel my body and subdue it lest after preaching to the others I myself should be disqualified.”

This passage contains the most elaborate evocation of athletic images in Paul's epistles.²³ The way of referring to athletics shows Paul was aware of the games that were practiced in Corinth.²⁴ Through these images he appeals to the daily experience and direct knowledge of sports of his readers.

We have picked up in this passage two groups of basic values which are the centre of the metaphor²⁵: on one hand commitment and discipline, and on the other concentration and targeted effort.

a. Commitment and discipline.

In a sports competition, particularly in a high level one, it is normal to meet disciplined athletes that are completely focussed on obtaining their goal. The metaphor chosen by Paul, even if it does not use the word commitment, underlines in various ways the necessity of commitment in order to obtain the prize. This is most clear in verse 24: « Run, then, in such a way as to win the prize. » This sentence introduces the theme of discipline, but in our opinion, it also underlines the importance of commitment. It is not only a question of taking part with discipline but also with a certain technique, and with the totality of one's faculties. In order to obtain the prize, it is necessary to devote oneself fully.

The concept of self-control in the N. T. is neither a means nor an end in itself in order to obtain salvation, but it is always linked to God the Almighty Creator, who blesses man for his respect of the laws given at creation. Indeed, the man that controls himself as God asks him to, for his own well-being, for that of his neighbour and for the gospel, will receive the blessings that God will give him as a prize at the end of life's race.

²² G. Barbaglio, *Lettere di Paolo vol. I*, Roma: Borla, 1980. p. 410.

²³ *Idem.* p. 76, 81.

²⁴ S.D.A.B.C., Washington D.C.: Review and Herald, vol. 6, 1957. p. 735; A. Robertson et A. Plummer, *The First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, (ICC) Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1978. pp. 193-194. F. W. Grosheide, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians (The New International Commentary on the N.T.)*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983. pp. 214-215; G. D. Fee, *Op. cit.* p. 433. G. Barbaglio, *Op. cit.* p. 410. Leon Morris, *Op. cit.* p. 163.

²⁵ See Pfitzner, *Op. cit.* p. 89; and Fee, *Op. cit.* pp. 435-436.

Paul presents commitment and self-control as values that make it possible for everyone to receive the promised reward. Those who want to receive this transcendental prize must exercise self-control and submit to God's will, such as has been revealed for our own well-being and for that of humanity.

b. Concentration, targeted effort

Concentration is an essential value for athletic competitions. Competitors, both before the games and during the trials, must stay concentrated in order to succeed. Concentration is fundamental in order to know constantly where we are, where we want to go, who are the opponents, what their strengths and weaknesses are, and how victory can be achieved. It is important for the athlete to be on the alert during the whole competition. The fight can be lost if the athlete is not concentrated on each detail of the competition in which he participates. The least distraction may be fatal.

Concentration enables man, in his everyday life, to stay clear-headed and alert before the challenge, to face his enemies, not to under-estimate others, nor to overestimate himself. In this passage, the apostle vigorously encourages the Corinthians not to lose sight of the goal, the incorruptible prize, while keeping concentrated on the race, in spite of the fact that weak human beings are always tempted to be distracted.

We have said the principal theme of this metaphor is self-control, although we must not confuse it with the ascetic effort to obtain salvation, as was the case for some contemporaries of Paul. This does not mean Paul underestimates the importance of personal effort. He shows in this passage that he knows what his final goal is and that he is ready to give up everything to obtain it. Paul does not beat the air but addresses his adversary's weak points in order to win. He recommends the Corinthians to follow his example.

« Many Christians know that there is need to gain the victory over the desires and appetites that are in opposition to the will of God, but they are half-hearted in their efforts to subdue the self. They make a pretence of fighting, but they do not really wish their blows to punish that which is part of themselves, because they fear the pain of such well-directed blows. They love their sinful nature too much to hurt it, and lack the strength of will to ignore the pleas of the flesh for mercy. »²⁶

It is therefore important to focus all our efforts in order to leave the enemy no chance to disperse energies that could be useful for fighting the adversary and for reaching our final goals.

B) Philippians 3 :12-14

“Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect; but I press on to make it my own, because Jesus Christ has made me his own. Brethren, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Jesus Christ.”

Through this metaphor Paul highlights many values which, added to the ones we have already seen, are essential in order to construct a biblical philosophy of sport.

Here again Paul underlines two groups of main values²⁷: first, persistence and perseverance, and secondly, determination to reach the goal.

²⁶ S.D.A.B.C., *Op. cit*, vol. 6. p. 737

²⁷ See A. Maillot, *Op. cit*. p. 113-114; and Karl Barth, *Commentaire de l'épître aux Philippiens*, Genève : Labor et Fides, 1927. p.104-109.

a. Persistence, perseverance.

The first of the two major values from this second group of Paul's sports metaphors is persistence. The apostle's persistence in obtaining his goal is like the athlete's will for winning a race.

It is necessary for a runner to run with perseverance, without letting up, in order to succeed. For Paul letting up, even in the face of difficulties is out of the question. He insists in verse 12, « ... I keep striving... » in order to underline that he does not want to stop for three reasons: a) he is not content with himself and the road he has travelled; b) he has not yet arrived at the destination ; c) he has already been taken on by Jesus Christ.

Indeed Paul, in this metaphor, gives us three main reasons to face the race of life with persistence.

First of all, it would be imprudent to be content with the distance covered till now, because of the fatigue, discouragement and problems, without attaining the goal. Because even if we have a better score than others, even if we are first, we cannot stop or we will lose. The fact of still being in the race makes us persevere.

Secondly, as long as we have not yet won, as long as the finish line is still in front of us, it would be a pity to lose it all. The aim urges us to go on. The prize certainly stimulates us to continue. The prize is surely the strongest motivation that makes us never give up.

Thirdly, Paul does not want to deceive the one who has taken him on, the one who has done everything and has given everything, even his life, for him: Jesus Christ. He has called the apostle and has engaged him in this race, in this mission. He has bought him to run in his team. In sporting language, Christ is the manager/trainer who has bought a very expensive player to play on his team. And Paul (which means « small ») has become a « big » athlete thanks to Jesus Christ. Our motivation can only be strong, when called by Christ our trainer.

b. Determination in striving towards the goal

The second major value in this metaphor is the immediate consequence of the application of persistence, which is determination in striving towards the goal. Persistence meets determination.

Through his beautiful image of the athlete running straight towards the goal, Paul underlines the determination he has in reaching the goal. He describes it as forgetting (« ... to forget what is behind me »), like a striving (« I do my best to reach what is ahead ») and as a wonderful effort (« So I run straight towards the goal in order to win the prize, which is God's call through Christ Jesus to the life above ... ») « Paul does not enumerate the things he has in mind, but they are implied in his reasoning, and are covered by v. 14. To the runner in a race the only object worthy of attention is the finishing line, and so it was with Paul in his spiritual course. He fixes his eyes on the goal of eternal life and the inheritance in the world beyond. A clear vision of this goal will stimulate the Christian to faithfully and cheerfully run the race that is set before him. »²⁸

With this image Paul transmits a good formula for keeping our determination in the Christian race: a) do not think about the past; b) reach what is ahead; c) fix your eyes on the finishing line.

The marathon runner knows he must forget the road behind him in order to concentrate on the one ahead of him. He knows too that he will get better results if his body and spirit are both concentrated on what is ahead. From a technical point of view of the race, we can choose the way of running we want. But it is only if all the muscles, limbs and personal energies are oriented towards the goal and used in the best economy of movement that we can hope to finish the race.

An athlete knows that difficulties may come at any moment. The only way to succeed is to be determined in striving towards the goal, because if he is not, he can be distracted and discouraged and forced to stop. It is difficult to be at the top of our physical capacities in each competition; that is why it is important to keep our eyes on the finishing line.

²⁸ S.D.A.B.C., *Op. cit.*, vol. 7. p. 170.

C) II Timothy 2:4-6 and II Timothy 4:6-8

“No soldier on service gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to satisfy the one who enlisted him. An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. It is the hard working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops”. “For I am already on the point of being sacrificed; the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.”

Paul was at the end of his life when he wrote this letter to Timothy. This letter is considered his spiritual testament. So, with these metaphors he wants to transmit the higher values to help Timothy in his work.

The sports values highlighted in these two last texts²⁹ are respect for the rules and the satisfaction of the accomplished duty.

a. Respect the rules, loyalty and « fair-play »

One of the most important conditions in sports competitions is respect for the rules of the game. Of course, if one tries to play soccer with his hands he will be put out because he does not comply with the rules of soccer but of a game like rugby.

It is then clear that each discipline has its own precise rules. It is established to be played in the limits imposed by the rules and, within them the players may develop their own creativity, personality and originality.

In this metaphor, Paul underlines the importance of respecting the rules of the game. The rules are there in order to enable all athletes to play under the same conditions and to exploit their skills in all the possible situations the game offers in order to achieve victory.

The rules give the conditions and limits of the game in which the players may express their creativity. They mark out the trajectory between the start and the arrival of our race. Indeed, the respect of the rules becomes an essential framework for the participants in the game, if they want to obtain the prize.

In our society, there are more and more people, young and old, who reject or doubt that respect of the rules has essential value in life. They think that to be free is to live without rules. For the sportsperson, on the contrary, to play in freedom means to learn how to live within the rules that guide the game.

We think this sports metaphor applies perfectly to all aspects of everyday life because it is evident that young people who learn to play respecting the rules of the game in sports normally have a greater sense of responsibility in all dimensions of their adult life: family, work, social, religious.

Paul the rabbi, Pharisee of Gamaliel's school, when writing this metaphor is certainly conscious of what he meant: he referred to obedience to the Divine rules. He knows that a person's set of beliefs is constructed on universal principles which God has transmitted to men. The law, like the rules, does not just limit, but protects so that we can interact safely.³⁰

For the apostle, it is not only essential to have rules and to respect them but also to be loyal and act with « fair-play ». To practice loyalty is not simply to respect the rules; it means respect, protection and freedom for oneself and for the others.

²⁹ See Howard Marshall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999. p. 729; and Enrico Bosio, *Le Epistole Pastorali di San Paolo a Timoteo ed a Tito*, Torino: Claudiana, 1909. p. 113,132; Ralph Earle, *Word Meanings in the New Testament*, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989. p. 403,404.

³⁰ For a further study of this topic see R. Badenas, *Mas alla de la Ley*, Madrid: Safeliz, 1998.

This metaphor teaches us that it is only with an attitude of loyalty and « fair-play » that we can receive the prize one day. That is to say, it is only with this attitude, both theoretical and practical, respecting rules, oneself, others and God, that we will be winners in life.

b. Evaluation and assessment of the accomplished task; certainty in the hope of receiving the prize : receiving the prize with joy.

An important aspect of the life of an athlete (as much as in the life of a student, a researcher, a manager) is the evaluation of the accomplished task. This enables the athlete to evaluate his strengths and weaknesses and to acknowledge where he stands in respect to his preparation and his commitment, in order to get ready for the next competition, and do better.

Paul is at the end of his life. He reveals his own evaluation in verse 7 of II Tim. 4. He observes that he has worked in the right way. His energies, his commitment have not been used in vain but were well adapted to the goal. He has run the full distance. He has not been distracted. He has fought the good fight, he has seized the essential in life, that which really counts.

The evaluation Paul makes of his life, like that of athletes after a competition, is surely an example to follow if we want to avoid failure. When we postpone the evaluation to tomorrow, we risk arriving at the end of our lives only to find that we have lived in vain, for we have not reached the goal we wanted, since we had no precise goal in mind. Instead, regular self evaluation allows us to realize which fight we are committed to and how effectively we are confronting it.

Paul affirms that he has reached the goal. He has not stopped on his way. He has reached the end of his life having accomplished his task in the best possible way: keeping his faith. He has reached for the essential: Jesus Christ.

It is indispensable for an athlete to evaluate at each crossroad whether he is effectively running towards the goal; otherwise the competition may be a failure.

This same metaphor shows how important it is to relish the winner's prize. Indeed, Paul's life long faith in Jesus Christ has enabled him to believe and hope to receive the best award: eternal life. In other words, it is essential for the athlete to believe in his goal from the start and to have certainty of being able to win the prize.

Those who do not want to achieve victories, who do not dream of accepting the challenge, who do not believe in the possibility of winning, do not dare to participate. It is a single minded focus on the goal that enables the athlete to be on the winner's podium the day of the final reward.

As we have seen, Paul highlights through these metaphors values that can help us construct a biblical philosophy of sports.

3. Values in the teaching of P. E. and sports.

In order to transmit values to the students through sports the pupils need to understand the real aim of sports and P.E. in theory and practice. Our social context makes us think about P.E and sports in terms of competition, as we see them on T.V., whether we like sports or not. Often I have heard my students ask me "When will we do real sports?" alluding to a match they may have seen on T.V. the day before. It is up to us as P.E teachers to seize the opportunity in order to transform the clichés the students have in mind into reflected and motivated ideas. Like Paul, using the Olympic Games, we must prepare them to receive Christ's teachings.

The clichés that most people have in mind associate sport and P.E. with players that have become myths, celebrities that have a lot of success and money. Therefore, people try to identify with these stars, but not only in the positive aspects but mostly in the negative ones like doping, excessive effort, disrespect of rules and the desire of eliminating the competitors. They are looking for their own glory.

We are aware that in teaching sports in the curriculum of P.E. we will encounter problems related to the way in which sports are practiced today. Sports, after becoming a matter of show business, have endured a process of globalisation, which is dehumanising for the human being if

they are practiced mainly for money.³¹ The influence of money has helped in this transformation, contributing at the same time, to the loss of their original goals, which included also the transmission of values.³² The level of competition that we see on T.V. is a distortion, far removed from positive competition. The agonistic dimension has become mainly antagonistic.

The Greeks usually used two words to speak about competition³³, one with a positive meaning, which is also used by Paul in his metaphors, and the other with a negative meaning. The first one is *agonizo* (to compete with, to strive with), and the second one is *polemizo* (to compete against, to strive against). *Agonizo* is seen as a good strife in which the athlete strives together with others. As Hamerslough says: "It is a cooperative venture. Each offers himself to the other as a testing ground. One still still plays to win as you cannot provide a good test unless you do what the game is set up to do. You strive for the mutual development of both parties."³⁴ *Polemizo* describes bad strife in which the athlete fights or makes war against others. "A person strives to exalt him/herself by trying to get others to submit to his/her will. One tries to belittle, to destroy if you please, to BEAT them until they recognize their own weakness and the other's superiority."³⁵ This is the manner in which sports are practiced today.

Sports are part of western culture and many school systems require the teacher to teach sports in the P.E. curriculum. Not all sports have only positives values³⁶; so it is up to the teacher to evaluate which values are developed by each different sport³⁷. Christian P.E. teachers must try to teach sports in order to transmit values and to avoid problems usually associated with competition by favouring a positive competition. "The issue in sport education is not too much or too little competition, but appropriate competition. There is much to be learned from appropriate competition, both individually and as a member of a competitive group..."³⁸ Miller gives a few suggestions:³⁹

- Ensure that specific behaviours related to fair play are made clear to students.
- Use an accountability that promotes and rewards fair play.
- Encourage positive, supportive spectator behaviour.
- Use a well defined team selection system with equal competition as a primary objective.
- Appoint an elected sports council which decides on issues related to competition and fair play.
- Make fair play awards as important as awards for winning competitions.
- Teach and reward ritualistic ways of showing that fair play is valued in sport and that opponents are honoured for their efforts.

So, I think that we can find a manner to change this distorted vision of sport. In order to do it:

³¹ See Davide Sciarabba, *Attualità pedagogica nel Nuovo Testamento. Riflessioni critiche nel gioco e nello sport*, Firenze: Tesi ISEF, Academic year 1999-2000. p. 63-174.

³² *Ibidem*.

³³ For a further reflection about competition in sports, see Peifer Bruce G., "Seventh-day Adventist intercollegiate competition: a North American perspective", in *19 Christ in the Classroom*, No. 300-97, Silver Spring: Institute for Christian Teaching. p. 245-263.

³⁴ Walter S. Hamerslough, "Physical Education and Sport from Christian Perspective", in *10 Christ in the Classroom*, No. 128-93, Silver Spring: Institute for Christian Teaching. p. 212.

³⁵ *Ibidem*.

³⁶ See Appendix 1. This is the sports list of the State exam at the end of high school. Students can choose between these possibilities. The teacher can't teach all these sports, so that he must choose which sports to teach. See also Appendix 3 done by Samperio-Lehmann, Chiosis ton sport!, *Forum*, 2-3ème trimestre 1992. p. 10-11.

³⁷ See Appendix 2.

³⁸ D. Siedentop, *Sport education: Quality PE through positive sport experiences*, Champaign, IL. Human Kienetics, 1994. in P. Wayne Miller, "Team sports in Adventist education: another look", in *19 Christ in the Classroom*, No. 297-97, Silver Spring: Institute for Christian Teaching. p. 196.

³⁹ P. Wayne Miller, "Team sports in Adventist ducation: another look", in *19 Christ in the Classroom*, No. 297-97, Silver Spring: Institute for Christian Teaching. p. 197.

“It is necessary to avoid reducing the practice of sports to simply learning a technique. We need to make the effort of teaching a certain number of values that sport conveyed in the beginning. We have forgotten them! We need to reintroduce a humanistic dimension to the practice of sport. The same principle applies to competition. Why does it have to lead to violence? Because it generates real tension! Therefore we need to diminish this tension instead of exciting it as it is done today. In my opinion (...) the sports educators on the field hold the key. They play a decisive role.”⁴⁰

Now, we would like to give an example of theoretical and practical classes for students between 16 and 18. In the theoretical classes we present three points.

1. Awareness that sports and P.E. help to maintain good health.⁴¹
2. Discover the spirit of the first sports events: *Altius, fortius, citius*; that is higher, stronger, and faster, that is, to go beyond our limits in a positive sense.
3. Understand that sport and P.E. are a good means to convey values important for our whole life.

These three principles may help the students to restore the image of God in their beings. Afterwards, the practical classes will rest on this data. Let us take the example of the race whose values we have seen before by studying Paul. First of all we will explain the physical, technical and tactical aspects of running, asking the students to apply them in their training, and to keep in mind the three theoretical data as a goal. After a few sessions, when the students master the techniques, it would be interesting to do a workshop dividing the students into groups and asking them what other values may be cultivated by running (30 minutes). The teacher’s role is that of giving some issues for reflection and facilitating discussion through small questions, for instance: “What is it that makes you ready for the race? When you are tired or when you want to stop running what helps you finish the race? After a race, what is it that makes you better for the next time?”

The teacher’s aim is to transmit the following values:

- Perseverance;
- Determination in striving towards the goal;
- Concentration;
- Commitment and discipline;
- Evaluation of the accomplished performance;
- Certainty in the hope of receiving the reward;

After that, we may listen to the student reports and the teacher can summarize the lesson of the situation (30 minutes) and in every lesson that follows he or she will explain different values relating to running and life.

The teacher will then ask the students to apply the different values they have found in their everyday life as much as in the race.

This example is applicable to other sports and to the teaching other values.

Conclusion

To conclude this paper we would like to underline the importance of basing the teaching of physical education and sports on biblical philosophy. If we want a balanced idea about the role of physical education and sports we have to consider the holistic vision of man in the Bible. Man is a unity and physical education contributes to educating this unity, not just a part of it. Only in this way it is possible to say that physical education works in restoring the image of God in us.

From the Bible we can also draw values that can guide the teaching of physical education and sports in order to favour integration, solidarity, motivation in life, etc. and to avoid problems of

⁴⁰ Fabrice Moth, Politiquement incorrect, *Sport et Vie*, Mars-Avril 2003. p. 45.

⁴¹ South Pacific Division Education Department, *Education Physique*, Silver Spring, MD: Institute for Christian Teaching, 1990. p. 6.

negative competition, excess, and abuse. The Pauline metaphors on sports that we have seen are useful examples of values that contribute to success in our lives. Commitment, discipline, and concentration help us to handle our projects; perseverance, targeted effort, determination in striving towards the goal, respect of values, and loyalty help us never to give up our projects, in the hope of receiving the prize. Receiving the prize with joy gives us a reward for our efforts. Evaluation and assessment of the accomplished task prepare us for new challenges. In this way physical education and sports may become good means of transmitting values when both theory and practice are biblically-based.

Bibliography

- Badenas Roberto, *Mas alla de la Ley*, Madrid: Safeliz, 1998.
- Barbaglio Giuseppe, *Le lettere di Paolo*, vol II, Roma: Borla, 1980
- Barth Karl, *Commentaire de l'épître aux Philippiens*, Genève : Labor et Fides, 1927.
- Benoit P. and Bickel J., *Religion et sport : essai historique et philosophique*, St. Maurice : Ed. de l'œuvre de St. Augustin, 1994.
- Bosio Enrico, *Le Epistole Pastorali di San Paolo a Timoteo ed a Tito*, Torino: Claudiana, 1909.
- Busso Eduardo, "La educación física como agente educativo en la adquisición de hábitos de salud: una experiencia práctica" in *19 Christ in the Classroom*, No. 288-97, Silver Spring: Institute for Christian Teaching. p. 33-51.
- Cadwallader E.M., *Principles of Education in Writings of Ellen G. White*, Leaves of Autumn Books, Payson, Arizona, 1988.
- Diana M., *Appunti di Storia dell'Educazione Fisica*, Course notes for a History of Physical Education class, academic year: 1992-1993 at I.S.E.F., Florence.
- Ralph Earle, *Word Meanings in the New Testament*, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989.
- Gianfranceschi Fausto, *Il senso del corpo: segni, linguaggio, simboli*, Rusconi, Milano, 1986.
- Gori Mario, *I contenuti dell'educazione fisica*, Società Stampa Sportiva, Roma.
- Gori Mario, *Pedagogia della corporeità nella Antropologia cristiana*, Pezzini Ed., Viareggio, 1993.
- Grosheide F. W., *The first Epistle to the Corinthians (The New International Commentary on the N.T.)*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983.
- Fee Gordon D., *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989.
- Ferrero de Esparcia Cristina, "La educación física: una perspectiva adventista", in *13 Christ in the Classroom*, No. 177-94, Silver Spring: Institute for Christian Teaching. p. 93-119.
- Hammerslough Walter S., "Physical Education and Sport from a Christian perspective", in *10 Christ in the Classroom*, No. 128-93, Silver Spring: Institute for Christian Teaching. p. 205-219.
- Higgs Robert J., *God in the Stadium: Sports and Religion*, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1995.
- Hildmann Kathy and John, *Devotions from the World of Sports*, Colorado Springs: Chariot Victor Publishing, 1998.
- Hoffman Shirl J., *Sport and Religion*, Champaign ill: Human Kinetics Books, 1992.
- Jantzen René, *Sport et sacré*, Bordeaux: Presses Universitaires de Bordeaux, 1992.
- Ladd Tony. and Mathiesen James. A., *Muscular Christianity: Evangelical Protestants and the Development of American Sport*, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999.
- Maillot Alphonse, *Aux Philippiens d'aujourd'hui*, Genève : Labor et Fides, 1974.
- Marshall Howard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999.
- Mehhl-Koenlein Hrrade, *L'Homme selon l'apôtre Paul*, Delachaux et Niestlé, Neuchâtel-Paris, 1951.
- Miller P. Wayne, "Team Sports in Adventist Education: Another Look", in *19 Christ in the Classroom*, No. 297-97, Silver Spring: Institute for Christian Teaching. p. 189-203.
- Moth Fabrice, Politiquement incorrect, *Sport et Vie*, Mars-Avril 2003.
- Overman Steven, *The Influence of the Protestant Ethic on Sport and Recreation*, Aldershot: Avebury, 1997.
- Peifer Bruce G., "Seventh-day Adventist Intercollegiate Competition: a North American Perspective", in *19 Christ in the Classroom*, No. 300-97, Silver Spring: Institute for Christian Teaching. p. 245-263.
- Pfifzner Victor C., *Paul and the Agon Motif*, Leiden Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1967.
- Pikaza Xavier, *Antropologia biblica*, Salamanca: Ed. Sigueme, 1993.

- Prebish Charles S., *Religion and Sport: the Meeting of Sacred and Profane*, Westport Conn: Greenwood Press, 1993.
- Santiago Fernández Ardanaz, Las Olimpiadas y el espíritu deportivo de la vida en la Biblia y en el cristianismo primitivo, in *Reseña Bíblica*, Otoño, 1994, n°3.
- Robertson A. and Plummer A., *The First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, (ICC) Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1978.
- Robinson John A.T., *Le Corps, étude sur la théologie de St. Paul*, Ed. Du Chalet, Lyon, 1966.
- Rougemont Jean, *Vie du corps et vie de l'ame*, P. Derain, Lyon, 1945.
- Salas Antonio, *A imagen de Dios*, Ed. Grafinat, Madrid, 1990.
- Samperio-Lehmann, Choisis ton sport!, *Forum*, 2-3ème trimestre 1992.
- Sciarabba Davide, *Attualità pedagogica nel Nuovo Testamento. Riflessioni critiche nel gioco e nello sport*, Firenze: Tesi ISEF, Academic year 1999-2000.
- S.D.A.B.C., Washington D.C.: Review and Herald, 1957.
- South Pacific Division Education Department, *Education physique: SDA Secondary Curriculum*, Silver Spring, MD: Institute for Christian Teaching, 1990.
- Tresmontant Claude, *Etude de métaphysique biblique*, Paris, 1955.
- Wendland Heinz-Dietrich, *Le lettere ai Corinti*, Brescia: Paideia, 1976.
- White Ellen G., *Education*, Mountain View: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1952.
- Zanon Roberto, *Gioco, sport, educazione*, Società Stampa Sportiva, Roma, 1981.
- Zurcher Jean, *La perfection chrétienne*, Dammarie les Lys : ed. Vie et Santé, 1997.
- Zurcher Jean, *L'Homme sa nature et sa destinée*, Delachaux et Niestlé, Neuchâtel, 1953.
- Zurcher Jean, *Essai d'anthropologie biblique*. pp. 2-3. Unpublished document distributed by professor Zurcher, academic year 1995-96.

APPENDIX 1

ADAPTED LIST OF THE SPORTS INCLUDED IN THE BACCALAUREAT EXAM

Sports activities	Sports list	Characteristics	Values	Warnings
Athletic activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long distance race and middle distance race • Speed, hurdle race • Throwing the discus, hammer, javelin • Jumping 	Individual sports aimed at the surpassing oneself. These activities develop the body harmoniously.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perseverance • Striving towards the aim • Concentration • Commitment and discipline 	
Water sports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swimming 	As written above	As written above	
Out-door activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orienteering race • Free climbing 	Adapts one's movements to a variety of environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appreciating God's creation • Accepting the value of challenge • Exploring one's own limits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putting life at risk as for free climbing
Gymnastic and artistic activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apparatus • Horse jumping • Choreography 	Individual sports whose actions have an artistic and aesthetic purpose. Full body development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creativity • Rhythm • Consciousness of space, body orientation • Self-control 	
Teams Sport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basket-ball • Handball • Football • Rugby • Volley-ball 	Collective sports developing cooperation and opposition. Almost all are contact games	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect for others performance • Cooperation • Fair play • Honesty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk of hurting others physical and moral integrity
Combative sports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Judo • Wrestling • Boxing 	Individual sports with violent contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self defence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hurts the physical and moral integrity of the other • Danger of death
Racket sports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tennis • Ping-pong • Badminton 	Individual or double sports. Dual opposition activities. Development of body-ball-racket coordination.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perseverance • Concentration • Commitment and discipline 	

APPENDIX 2
VALUES DEVELOPPED BY DIFFERENTS SPORTS

VALUES	SPORTS
Harmonious body development	Water sports, gymnastics, judo, basketball, free climbing
Respect of the opponent and of his physical integrity	Athletics, water, outdoor, gymnastics, artistic, racquet activities, volleyball
Collaboration and trust in the other	Sports games
Development of will, decision, and perseverance	Generally all sports but especially athletics and water activities
Management of problems of confrontation	Team sport and combative sports
Endurance, discipline, fair-play, respect of rules	All sports
Appreciation of God's creation	Out-door activities

APPENDIX 3

List of sports problems by Samperio-Lehmann

Sport		Violence	Cheating	Intemperance	Pride	Money	Danger
Aerial	Paragliding	0	+	+	+	0	+++
Athletics	Races	+	++++	+++	++	+++	+
	Throwing	0	++++	++	+	+	0
	Jumping	0	++	++	+	++	0
Cycling	Bike	+	+++	+++	+++++	+++	+
Small Balls	Golf	0	0	0	++	+++	0
	Tennis	+	++	+++	++	+++	0
	Ping-pong	0	++	+	+	0	0
Balls	Basket	+++	+++	++	++	++	++
	Soccer	+++	+++	++	++++	++++	+++
	Handball	++	++	+	+	+	+
	Rugby	++++	+++	++	++	++	+++
	Volley	0	+	+	+	+	0
Combat	Boxing	Beyond	++++	+++	++++	++++	Beyond
	Fencing	++	+++	+	++	+	+
	Judo	++	+	++	+	+	+
	Karate	+++	++	++	+	+	++
Ice	Hockey	++++	+++	++	++	++	+++
	Figure skating	0	+	++	++	++	0
Snow	Downhill skiing	0	+	++	++	++	0
	Cross-country skiing	0	++	+++	+	+	0
Equestrian activities	Horse riding	0	0	+	+	0	0
Mechanized	Car	++	+++	+	++++	+++	+++
	Motorbike	++	++	++	++	++	+++
Water	Swimming	0	+	++	+	+	0
	Water Polo	+	+	+	+	0	0
	Roving	0	0	+	+	+	0
	Canoeing	0	0	+	+	0	0
	Surfing	0	0	+	++	+	+
	Yachting	0	+	+	++	++	++
Various	Mountaineering	0	+	++	++	++	++
	Badminton	0	+	+	+	0	0
	Body-building	+	+++++	++++	+++++	+++	+++
	Jogging	0	0	+	+	0	+