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Editorial

Managing for Eternity

The accelerated pace at which modern living unfolds and goods and services are introduced makes it imperative that we consider both the product we are selling and the target population to be reached. Recent data compiled by researchers for the church indicate that our constituency desires a superior product, which results from quality services (teaching) in a supportive spiritual environment.

To be effective in our delivery of the valued and valuable services we render as educators, we must have clearer conceptions of what it is we are selling and how best to appeal to students and parents.

Our modern secularized nations have become accustomed to a plurality of wares from which to choose, according to personal preference. More and more, in education, our society is also presented with a smorgasbord of educational opportunities, many of which compete effectively with the programs of our schools.

Closer scrutiny of our campuses might reveal that what some imagine to be true is not so; in fact, our education is of better quality than has been alleged. But because of the hectic pace of life, superficial perceptions too often become the reality for would-be buyers.

In this year of the Seventh-day Adventist teacher we may wish to highlight those characteristics that have been regarded as the distinguishing marks of true Christian education. While the church is reviewing its doctrines we may also wish to highlight our distinctiveness.

Regarding the function of doctrines in a church, Ninian Smart in his work *Worldviews: Cross-Cultural Explorations of Human Beliefs*, notes that doctrines function in at least five ways to affirm the believer:

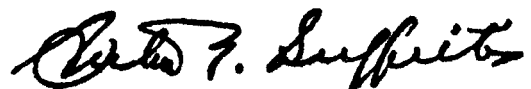
1. To bring order into the material presented by tradition in the form of myth and religious experience;
2. To make clear the way in which religious symbols refer beyond themselves to what is ultimate and universal;
3. To relate tradition to changes in knowledge;
4. To define the community; and
5. To stimulate a vision of the world.

It seems to me that these objectives of a church's doctrines could easily be made a distinctive part of the global purpose of the Christian educator.

To fail to do so may make us susceptible to the forces of secularization, whose impact has already caused some religious institutions to drift from the distinctives that gave them legitimacy and power in their early days. As Professor Smart has so succinctly described it:

From one angle secularization means a drift from traditional customs and ideas: instead of feast days, football games; instead of pilgrimages, tourism; instead of cathedrals, movie theaters; instead of penances, diets; instead of hymns, the Beatles; instead of God, love; instead of crusades, war; instead of Christendom, the nation; instead of the Bible, the newspaper; instead of prayer, television; instead of salvation, happiness; instead of peace of mind, fun; instead of confession, psychoanalysis; instead of sin, problems; instead of the Second Coming, progress.*

The attraction of our schools must go beyond their progressive ideas and approaches; their marketing strategies must appeal not only to the demands of society here, but also to the society of the hereafter. □



*Ninian Smart, *Worldviews: Cross-Cultural Explorations of Human Beliefs* (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1983), pp. 152, 153.