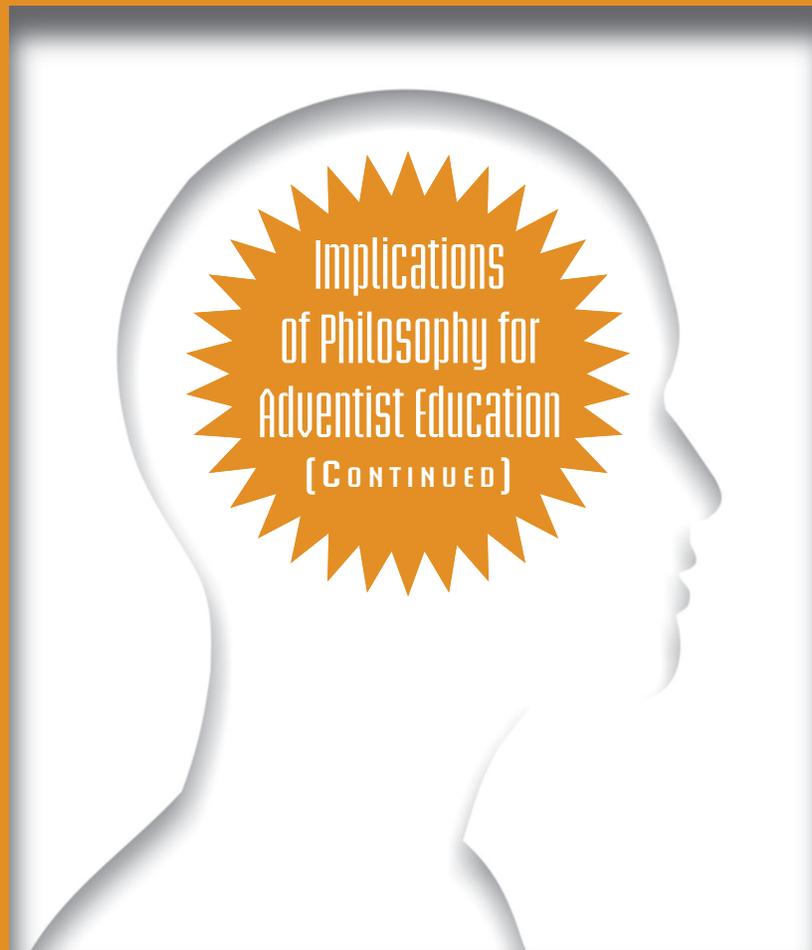


R E D E M P T I V E

E D U C A T I O N

P A R T I I I



Implications
of Philosophy for
Adventist Education
(CONTINUED)

B Y G E O R G E R . K N I G H T

A P P R O V E D F O R 0.5 C O N T I N U I N G E D U C A T I O N U N I T S *

Part I in this sequence discussed the major philosophic categories related to reality, truth, and value and examined each of those areas from an Adventist perspective. Building upon that philosophic foundation, Part II began to explore its implications for educational practice, particularly in terms of the nature of the student, the aims of Adventist education, and the ministerial role of the teacher. Part III discusses a Christian approach to curriculum, moves on to the implications of a Christian philosophy for teaching methodology and the social function of Adventist education, and closes with a perspective on the importance of Adventist educators being faithful to the philosophy that undergirds their schools.

A fuller discussion of many of the topics covered in this article may be found in the author's *Philosophy and Education: An Introduction in Christian Perspective*, 4th ed. (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 2006) and *Myths in Adventism: An Interpretive Study of Ellen White, Education, and Related Issues* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Publ. Assn., 1985, 2010).

The term *curriculum* comes from the Latin word *currere*, which means to run a race.” In a general sense it represents “all the courses and experiences at an institution.”¹ One author defines it as “a road map in broad strokes that points individuals in the direction of Christian maturing.”²

But, we need to ask, what should be included in the map? And on what basis should decisions be made? Those questions bring us to the issue of what knowledge is of most worth.

What Knowledge Is of Most Worth?

One of the most enlightening and coherent essays ever published on the relationship of philosophic beliefs to the content of the curriculum was developed by Herbert Spencer (a leading social Darwinist) in 1854. “What Knowledge Is of Most Worth?” was both the title and the central question of the essay. To Spencer, this was the “question of questions” in the realm of education. “Before there can be a rational *curriculum*,” he argued, “we must settle which things it most concerns us to know; . . . we must determine the relative value of knowledges.”³

Spencer, in seeking to answer his question,

classified human activity in a hierarchical order based on importance. He chose the following stratification, in terms of descending consequence: (1) those activities relating directly to self-preservation, (2) those activities that indirectly minister to self-preservation, (3) those activities having to do with the rearing of offspring, (4) those activities pertaining to political and social relations, (5) those activities that relate to the leisure part of life and are devoted to the tastes and appetites.⁴

His essay then proceeded to analyze human affairs from a naturalistic-evolutionary perspective, and eventually provided an unequivocal reply to his leading question: “What knowledge is of most worth?—the uniform reply is—Science. This is the verdict on all the counts.” Spencer’s explanation of his answer related Science (broadly conceived to include the social and practical sciences, as well as the physical and life sciences) to his five-point hierarchy of life’s most important activities. His answer was built upon the principle that whichever activities occupy the peripheral aspects of life should also occupy marginal places in the curriculum, while those activities that are most important in life

HOW IT WORKS :

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*Approved by the North American Division Office of Education. The tests for Parts I, II, and III must be successfully completed to meet alternative teaching certification requirements as outlined in Section 5.1 of the K-12 Educators Certification Manual.

should be given the most important place in the course of studies.⁵

Christians will of necessity reject Spencer's conclusions, which are built upon a naturalistic metaphysics and epistemology, but they must not miss the larger issue underlying his argument. It is crucial that Adventists understand the rationale for the curriculum in their institutions of learning. Mark Van Doren noted that "the college is meaningless without a curriculum, but it is more so when it has one that is meaningless."⁶

The Adventist educator must, with Spencer, settle the issue of "which things it most concerns us to know." The answer to that question, as Spencer noted, leads directly to an understanding of the relative values of various kinds of knowledge in the curriculum. Adventist educators can study Spencer's essay and the methodology included therein and gain substantial insights into the important task of curriculum development in the context of their distinctive worldview.

Authentic and viable curricula must be developed out of, and must be consistent with, a school's metaphysical, epistemological, and axiological bases. It is therefore a foundational truth that different philosophic approaches will emphasize different curricula. One implication of that fact is that the curriculum of Adventist schools will not be a readjustment or an adaptation of the secular curriculum of the larger society. Biblical Christianity is unique. Therefore, the curricular stance of Adventist education will be unique.

Another major issue in curriculum development is to discover the pattern that holds the curriculum together. Alfred North Whitehead claimed that curricular programs generally suffer from the lack of an integrating principle. "Instead of this single unity, we offer children—Algebra, from which nothing follows; Geometry, from which nothing follows; Science, from which nothing follows; History, from which nothing follows; a Couple of Languages, never mastered; and lastly, most dreary of all, Literature, represented by plays of Shakespeare, with philological notes and short analyses of plot and character to be in substance committed to memory. Can such a list be said to represent Life, as it is known in the midst of the living of it? The best that can be said of it is that it is a rapid table of contents which a deity might run over in his mind while he was thinking of creating a world, and has not yet determined how to put it together."⁷

However, the crux of the problem has not been ignorance of the need for some overall pattern in which to fit together the various sub-

jects of the curriculum in such a way that they make sense, but to discover such a pattern. We live in a world that has so fragmented knowledge that it is difficult to see how our various realms of expertise relate to the whole. It is in this context that C. P. Snow's "Two Cultures"—with its discussion of the great gulf between the humanities and the sciences—takes on particular significance and meaning.⁸

Our world is one in which subject-area scholars have too often lost the ability to communicate with one another because they fail to see the significance of their subject matter in relation to the "big picture." To complicate matters, we find existentialists and postmodernists denying external meaning, and analytic philosophers suggesting that since we can't discover meaning, we should focus on defining our words and refining our syntax.

The search for meaning in the total educational experience has been a major quest for more than a century. Some have defined the integrating center as the unity of the classics, while others have viewed it in terms of the needs of society, vocationalism, or science. None of those approaches, however, has been broad enough, and their claims have usually been divisive rather than unifying. We seem to live in a schizophrenic world in which many claim that there is no external meaning, while others base their scientific research on postulates that point to an overall meaning. Modern secular people have thrown out Christianity as a unifying force and have tended to concentrate on the details of their knowledge rather than on the whole. As a result, intellectual fragmentation continues to be a large problem as human beings seek to determine what knowledge is of most worth.

For Adventist educators, the problem is quite different. They know what knowledge is of most worth, because they understand humanity's greatest needs. They know that the Bible is a cosmic revelation that transcends the limited realm of humanity, and that it not only reveals the human condition but also the remedy for that condition. They further realize that all subject matter becomes meaningful when seen in the light of the Bible and its Great Controversy struggle between good and evil. The problem for Adventist educators has not been to *find* the pattern of knowledge in relation to its center, but rather to *apply* what they know.

All too often the curriculum of Christian schools, including Adventist institutions, has been "a patchwork of naturalistic ideas mixed with Biblical truth." That has led, Frank Gaebelein claims, to a form of "scholastic schizophrenia in which a highly orthodox theology

Modern secular people have thrown out Christianity as a unifying force and have tended to concentrate on the details of their knowledge rather than on the whole.

coexists uneasily with a teaching of non-religious subjects that differs little from that in secular institutions.”⁹ The challenge confronting the curriculum developer in an Adventist school is to move beyond a curricular view focused on the bits and pieces, and to find a way to clearly and purposefully integrate the details of knowledge into the biblical framework. That task brings us to the unity of truth.

The Unity of Truth

A basic postulate underlying the Christian curriculum is that “all truth is God’s truth.”¹⁰ From the biblical viewpoint, God is the Creator of everything. Therefore, truth in all fields stems from Him. Failing to see this point clearly has led many to construct a false dichotomy between the secular and the religious. That dichotomy implies that the religious has to do with God, while the secular is divorced from Him. From that point of view, the study of science, history, and mathematics is seen as basically secular, while the study of religion, church history, and ethics is viewed as religious.

That is not the biblical perspective. In the Scriptures, God is seen as the Creator of the objects and patterns of science and math, as well as the Director of historical events. In essence, there are no “secular” aspects of the curriculum. John Henry Newman pointed to that truth when he wrote that “it is easy enough” on the level of thought “to divide Knowledge into human and divine, secular and religious, and to lay down that we will address ourselves to the one without interfering with the other; but it is impossible in fact.”¹¹

All truth in the Christian curriculum, whether it deals with nature, humanity, society, or the arts, must be seen in proper relationship to Jesus Christ as Creator and Redeemer. It is true that some forms of truth are not addressed in the Scriptures. For example, nuclear physics is not explained in the Bible. That, however, does not mean that nuclear physics is not connected with God’s natural laws or that it does not have moral and ethical implications as its applications affect the lives of people. Christ was the Creator of all things—not just those things people have chosen to call religious (John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:16).

All truth, if it be truth indeed, is God’s truth, no matter where it is found. As a result, the curriculum of the Christian school must be seen as a unified whole, rather than as a fragmented and rather loosely connected assortment of topics. Once that viewpoint is recognized, education will have taken a major step forward in creating an atmosphere in which the “Christian mind”

can develop—an educational context in which young people can be taught to think “Christianly” about every aspect of reality.¹²

The Strategic Role of the Bible in the Curriculum

A second postulate follows that of the unity of all truth: The Bible is the foundational and contextual document for all curricular items in the Christian school. This postulate is a natural outcome of a bibliocentric, revelational epistemology. Just as special revelation forms the basis of epistemological authority, so also it must be the foundation of the curriculum. Our discussion of epistemology noted that the Bible is not an exhaustive source of truth. Much truth exists outside of the Bible, but it is important to note that no truth exists outside the metaphysical framework of the Bible. “The teaching authority of Scripture,” Arthur Holmes asserts, “commits the believer at certain focal points and so provides an *interpretive framework*, an overall glimpse of how everything relates to God.”¹³

The concept of an interpretive framework needs constant emphasis in Adventist education. The Bible is not the whole of knowledge, but it does provide a frame of reference within which to study and interpret all topics. Whether that framework is the view of evolutionary naturalism, the Greek and Roman classics, the biblical worldview, or some other perspective makes a great deal of difference. An Adventist school is Christian only when it teaches all subjects from the perspective of God’s Word.

Elton Trueblood noted that “the important question is not, Do you offer a course in religion? Such a course might be offered by any institution. The relevant question is, Does your religious profession make a difference? . . . A mere department of religion may be relatively insignificant. The teaching of the Bible is good, but it is only a beginning. What is far more important is the penetration of the central Christian convictions into the teaching” of every subject.¹⁴

Frank Gaebelin was making the same point when he wrote that there exists “a vast difference between education in which devotional exercises and the study of Scripture have a place, and education in which the Christianity of the Bible is the matrix of the whole program or, to change the figure, the bed in which the river of teaching and learning flows.”¹⁵

An educational system that maintains a split between the areas it defines as secular or religious can justify tacking on religious elements to a basically secular curriculum. It may even go so far as to treat the Bible as the “first among equals” in terms of importance. But the

UNITY OF TRUTH

school whose constituency and teachers embrace the idea that “all truth is God’s truth” will find itself bound by that belief to develop a curricular model in which the biblical worldview permeates every aspect of the curriculum.

According to Ellen White, “the science of redemption is the science of all sciences,” and the Bible is “the Book of books.”¹⁶ Only an understanding of that “science” and that “Book” makes everything else meaningful in the fullest sense. Viewed in the light of “the grand central thought” of the Bible, Ellen White points out, “every topic has a new significance.”¹⁷ Every student, she noted in another connection, should gain a knowledge of the Bible’s “grand central theme, of God’s original purpose for the world, of the rise of the great controversy, and of the work of redemption. He should understand the nature of the two principles that are contending for supremacy, and should learn to trace their working through the records of history and prophecy, to the great consummation. He should see how this controversy enters into every phase of human experience; how in every act of life he himself reveals the one or the other of the two antagonistic motives; and how, whether he will or not, he is even now deciding upon which side of the controversy he will be found.”¹⁸

The conflict between good and evil has left no area of existence untouched. On the negative side, we see the controversy in the deterioration of the world of nature, in war and suffering in the realm of history and the social sciences, and in humanity’s concern with loss in the humanities. On the positive side, we discover the wonder of a natural order that seems to be purposefully organized, in humanity’s ability to relate to and care for its fellows in social life, and in its deep visions and desires for wholeness and meaningfulness. “Why,” every individual is forced to ask, “is there evil in a world that seems so good? Why is there death and sorrow in an existence that is so delicately engineered for life?”

The questions go on and on, but without supernatural help, earthbound humans are helpless as they seek to discover ultimate answers. They can discover bits and pieces of “truth” and build theories concerning their meaning, but only in God’s cosmic breakthrough to humanity in its smallness and loss is that ultimate meaning provided.

God’s special revelation contains the answers to humankind’s “big questions.” It is that revelation, therefore, that must provide both the foundation and the context for every human study. Each topic within the curriculum, and

even human life itself, takes on new meaning in the light of God’s Word. It is imperative, therefore, that Adventist schools teach every subject from the biblical perspective.

Gaebelein, in his classic treatment of the issue, has suggested that what we need is the “integration” of every aspect of the school program with the biblical worldview. Integration “means ‘the bringing together of parts into the whole.’”¹⁹ “The call, then,” he writes, “is for a wholly Christian worldview on the part of our education. We must recognize, for example, that we need teachers who see their subjects, whether scientific, historical, mathematical, literary, or artistic, as included within the pattern of God’s truth.”²⁰ This is the rightful place of religion in education, claimed Henry P. Van Dusen in his Rockwell Lectures, not because the churches say so or because it is dictated by tradition, but “because of the nature of Reality.”²¹ After all, God is the being whose existence brings unity and meaning to the universe, and it is His revelation that provides unity and meaning to the curriculum.

Unfortunately, in the most common curriculum design, Bible or religion is just one topic among many, as illustrated in Figure 1²² on page 43. In that model, every topic is studied in the context of its own logic, and each is regarded as basically independent of the others. History or literature teachers are not concerned with religion, and religion teachers do not involve themselves with history or literature, since all teach their own specialty. Each subject has its own well-defined territory and traditional approach. This model rarely delves into the relationship between fields of study, let alone their “ultimate meaning.”

In an attempt to correct the above problem, some enthusiastic reformers have gone to the other extreme and developed a model that is illustrated in Figure 2.²³ This model seeks to make the Bible and religion into the whole curriculum, and, as a result, also misses the mark, since the Bible never claims to be an exhaustive source of truth. It sets the framework for the study of history and science and touches upon those topics, but it is not a “textbook” for all areas that students need to understand. On the other hand, it is a “textbook” in the science of salvation and a source of inspired information concerning both the orderliness and the abnormality of our present world, even though it never claims to be a sufficient authority in all areas of possible truth.

A third organizational scheme could be labeled the foundational and contextual model

(see Figure 3²⁴ below). It implies that the Bible (and its worldview) provides a foundation and a context for all human knowledge, and that its overall meaning infuses every area of the curriculum and adds significance to each topic. This corresponds with what Richard Edlin helpfully refers to as the “*permeative* function of the Bible.” “The Bible,” he notes, “is not frosting on an otherwise unaltered humanist cake. It needs to be the leaven in the educational loaf, shaping the entire curriculum from its base up as it permeates through the whole school program.”²⁵ Figure 3 sets forth an integration model, indicating that educators in Adventist

schools must approach each subject in the light of the biblical perspective in order to understand its fullest meaning.

The broken lines in Figure 3 signify the lack of rigid divisions between the various subjects, and the absence of any false dichotomy between the sacred and the secular. The two-headed arrows indicate not only that the Bible helps us understand every topic in the curriculum, but also that the study of history, science, and so on also sheds light on the meaning of Scripture. God has revealed Himself through the Bible in a special revelation, and through His created world in a general revelation. We can grasp the significance of the latter only in the light of the former, but both shed light on each other since all truth has its origin in God. Every topic in the curriculum has an impact upon every other, and all achieve maximum meaning when integrated within the biblical context.

Christianity and the Radical Reorientation of the Curriculum

One of the challenges that educators must face in developing a biblically oriented curriculum in the 21st century is the diverse worldviews that permeate contemporary society, including that of postmodernism, which claims that there is no such thing as a genuine worldview anchored in reality—that all worldviews or grand narratives are human constructions. But that claim is itself a worldview with definite metaphysical and epistemological presuppositions.²⁶

That thought raises the issue of the general lack of self-consciousness evidenced by most people. Harry Lee Poe reflects upon that topic when he writes that “every discipline of the academy makes enormous assumptions and goes about its business with untested and unchallenged presuppositions. We are used to this. Assumptions and presuppositions have become so much a part of the fabric of life that we do not notice the threads. These threads make up the worldview of the culture in which we live. They are the things ‘everybody knows’ and that, therefore, go untested. They are so deeply ingrained in us that we are rarely even aware of them.”²⁷ In short, worldviews for many people are subliminal—a part of the larger culture that is accepted without challenge.

On the other hand, Poe notes that “in the marketplace of ideas, the fundamental assumptions . . . to which people cling are the very things that Christ challenges.”²⁸ Clearly, the biblical worldview and the predominant men-



Figure 1. Curriculum Model: Self-Contained Subject Matter Areas

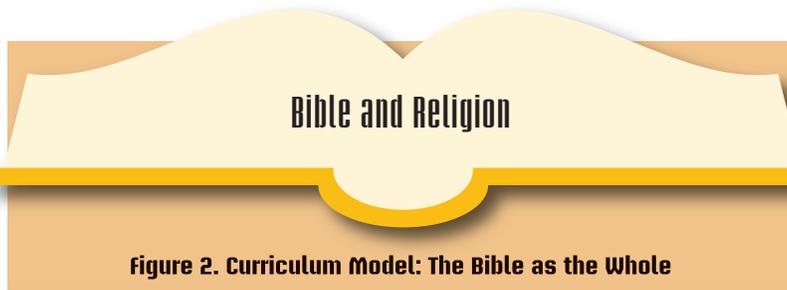


Figure 2. Curriculum Model: The Bible as the Whole

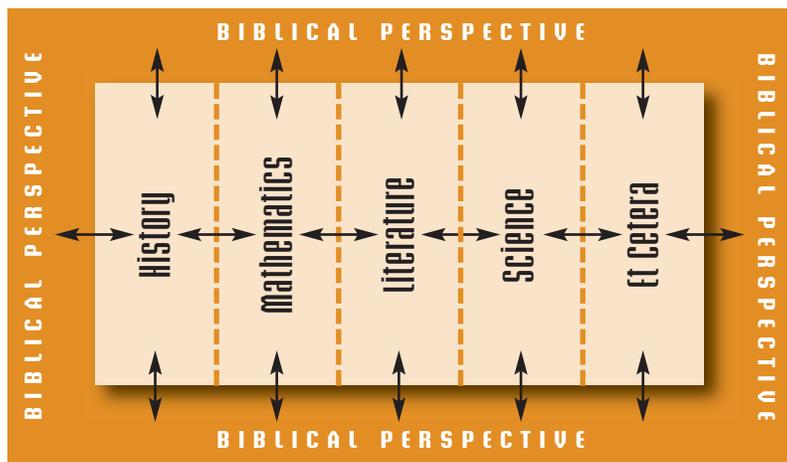


Figure 3. Curriculum Model: The Bible as Foundational and Contextual

tality of the larger culture are often at odds, and there are different religious and even different Christian worldviews. Making people aware of the contrasts results in what sociologist Peter Berger refers to as “collisions of consciousness”²⁹ and what philosopher David Naugle labels “worldview warfare.”³⁰

From that perspective, by its very nature, the biblically based curriculum challenges other methods of curricula organization and suggests a radical reorientation of the subject matter in Adventist schools. The essential point that the Adventist educator must grasp is that *the teaching of any topic in an Adventist school must not be a modification of the approach used in non-Christian schools. It is rather a radical reorientation of that topic within the philosophical framework of Christianity.*

A good place to begin examining the radical reorientation of the curriculum is the field of literary study.³¹ The study of literature holds a crucial position in all school systems because literature addresses and seeks to answer people’s most important questions; reveals humanity’s basic desires, wishes, and frustrations; and develops insight into human experience. Beyond raising aesthetic sensitivity, the study of literature leads to inductive insights in such areas as psychology, philosophy, religion, history, and sociology; and it provides information about such topics as human nature, sin, and the meaning and purpose of human existence.

The impact of literary study is all the more powerful because it is delivered in a package with which humans emotionally identify. That is, it reaches people at the affective and cognitive levels simultaneously. In the fullest sense of the words, literary content is philosophical and religious because it deals with philosophical and religious issues, problems, and answers. Literary study, therefore, holds a central position in curricular structures and provides one of the most powerful educational tools for the teaching of religious values.

Secularist John Steinbeck caught the significance of the central core of great literature in his classic *East of Eden* when he wrote that “I believe that there is one story in the world, and only one. . . . Humans are caught—in their lives, in their thoughts, in their hungers and ambitions, in their avarice and cruelty, and in their kindness and generosity too—in a net of good and evil. . . . There is no other story.”³²

While there may be no other story, there are certainly multiple interpretations of the implications of that story. For Steinbeck, from his earthbound perspective, there is no hope. The end is always disastrous despite hopeful signs

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along the way. By way of contrast, the Bible features hope in spite of serious problems. It also explores the “only story,” but with revelatory insight into the meaning of a world that forms the battleground for a cosmic clash between the forces of good and evil.

The responsibility of the literature teacher in the Adventist school is to help students learn to read critically so that they can grasp the meaning of their assignments in terms of the great controversy between good and evil.³³ Literary study is not merely a relaxing excursion into the realm of art. T. S. Eliot observed that what we read affects “the whole of what we are. . . . Though we may read literature merely for pleasure, of ‘entertainment’ or of ‘aesthetic enjoyment,’ this reading never affects simply a sort of special sense: it affects our moral and religious existence.”³⁴ There is no such thing as artistic neutrality. The function of literary study in an Adventist school is not just to help students become “learned” in the great writers of the past and present; it must also help them to view the issues at stake in the controversy between good and evil with more clarity and sensitivity.

The Bible in this context provides an interpretive framework that transcends human insights. “Every topic,” including literature, “has a new significance,” Ellen White suggests, when viewed in the light of the “grand central theme” of the Scriptures.³⁵ The Bible is quite a realistic book. Those literary extremes that ignore evil at one end of the spectrum or glorify it at the other are neither true nor honest and certainly allow no room for a viable concept of justice. The challenge for Christians is to approach literary study in such a way that it leads readers to see the reality of humanity and its world as it actually is—filled with sin and suffering, but not beyond hope and the redeeming grace of a caring God.

The interpretive function of literary instruction has generally been approached in two different ways (see Drawings A and B in Figure 4³⁶ on page 45). Drawing A represents a classroom approach that emphasizes the literary qualities of the material and uses the Bible or ideas from the Bible from time to time as asides. The only difference between this approach and the way literature is taught in non-Christian institutions, is that biblical insights are added.

Drawing B depicts the study of literature in the context of the biblical perspective and its implications for humanity’s universal and personal dilemmas. It interprets literature from the distinctive vantage point of Christianity, recognizing the abnormality of the present world and

God’s activity in that world. Using that approach, the study of literature in a Christian institution can be richer than in a secular school, since non-Christians are handicapped by their lack of the all-important (in terms of insight and interpretation) biblical view of sin and salvation. That does not mean that literary elements such as plot and style are unimportant, but rather that they are not, within the context of Christianity, the most important aspects of literary study.

Note also that in Drawing B the arrows indicate a two-way transaction between the biblical perspective and literary study. Not only does the biblical worldview help us interpret literature, but literary insights also help us to better understand religious experience within the context of religious truth.

Adventist teachers must help students move beyond the story to the meaning of its insights for daily life. The function of literary study in a Christian institution, Virginia Grabill writes, is to help students learn how to “think” about the issues of life—their personal identity and purpose, the presence of good and evil, justice and forgiveness, the beautiful and the ugly, sexuality and spirituality, ambition and humility, joy and suffering, purity and guilt, and so on.³⁷

C. S. Lewis made a similar point when he wrote that “one of the minor rewards of conversion is to be able at last to see the real point of all the literature we were brought up to read with the point left out.”³⁸ The goal of literary study in a Christian school is not to transmit a body of knowledge, but to develop a skill—the ability to think critically and to interpret literary insights from the perspective of the biblical worldview.

We have spent a great deal of time examining literary study in the reoriented Christian curriculum. Similar observations could be made about history and social studies. History in the Christian curriculum is viewed in the light of the biblical message as God seeks to work out His purpose in human affairs. The Bible is seen as providing the interpretive framework for events between the fall of Adam and the second coming of Jesus. The Bible is not treated as a comprehensive history textbook, but as an account that focuses on the history of salvation. There are, of course, points of intersection between general history and the Bible in terms of events, prophecy, and archaeology. But the Christian teacher of history realizes that the specific points of intersection are in the minority, and that the major function of the Bible in his or her discipline is to provide a perspective for understanding.

The same might be said of the life, physical, and social sciences, or physical education, or agriculture in the curriculum of an Adventist school. The Bible provides the framework for understanding a troubled world, while the disciplines bring forth the bits and pieces. The Bible provides the pattern that gives interpretive meaning to the otherwise meaningless details uncovered by the scholar. The Bible thus becomes the focal point of integration for all of human knowledge.

That fact is especially important in the sciences, an area in which the past century has witnessed one of the most significant “cultural wars” of all time. Unfortunately, unproven hypotheses related to macroevolution³⁹ have too often been granted the status of “fact” and then been used to provide the interpretive framework for science in most schools.

The basic problem: The cosmologies of macroevolution and biblical creationism are incompatible. The latter begins with a perfect creation, continues on with humanity’s fall into sin, and then transitions to God’s solution for removing the effects of the Fall. But the macroevolution scenario is diametrically opposed to the biblical model. From the perspective of macroevolution, all creatures originated as less-complex organisms and have been improving through the processes of natural selection. In that model there is no need for redemption and restoration.

The biblical framework for interpreting natural history is constructed from the Genesis account, which states that God created the earth in six days, and that He created human beings in His own image. The basic facts of the Genesis creation story do not allow for either macroevolution (in which God has no involvement) or theistic evolution (which limits God to the role of mere initiator of the evolutionary process). Adventist schools must be unapologetically creationist. The biblical metaphysic

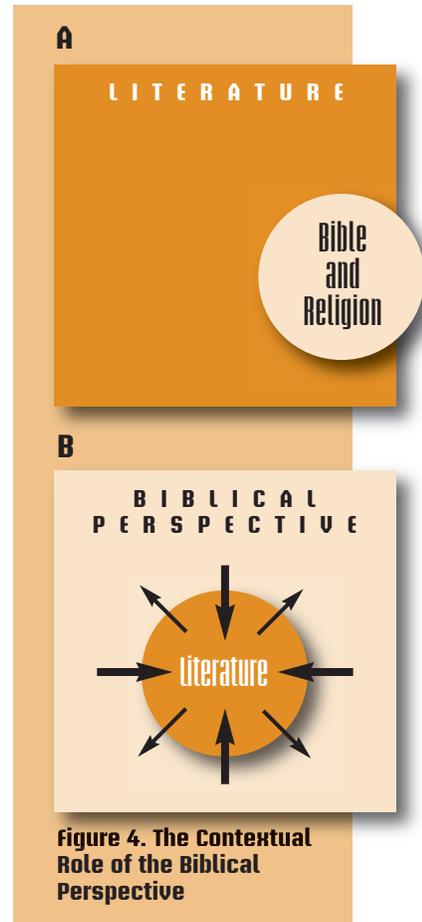


Figure 4. The Contextual Role of the Biblical Perspective

BALANCE

stands at the very foundation of why the Seventh-day Adventist Church chose to establish Adventism's educational alternative.

The integration of human knowledge into the biblical framework is important, but it must be done with care and wisdom. Frank Gaebelein, in discussing how to develop correlations between Christian concepts and the subject matter of the various fields of study, points out some necessary cautions. A major pitfall, as he sees it, is the danger "of a false integration through forced correlations that are not truly indigenous to the subject in question. Such lugging in of stilted correlations, even though motivated by Christian zeal, is liable to do more harm than good through giving the impression that integration of specific subjects with God's truth is a put-up job.

"What may be needed is a more relaxed attack upon the problem and a clearer realization of the limits under which we are working. Here a suggestion by Emil Brunner is useful. Speaking of the distortion brought into our thinking through sin, he sees it at its greatest in such areas as theology, philosophy, and literature, because these are nearest man's relation to God and have thus been most radically altered through the fall. They therefore stand most in need of correction, and in them correlation with Christianity is at its highest. But as we move from the humanities to the sciences and mathematics, the disturbance through sin diminishes almost to the vanishing point. Thus the Christian teacher of the more objective subjects, mathematics in particular, ought not to seek for the detailed and systematic correlations that his colleagues in psychology, literature, or history might validly make."⁴⁰

Gaebelein does not mean that there are no points of contact between Christianity and topics such as mathematics, but rather that they are fewer and less obvious.⁴¹ Christian teachers will utilize those points while not seeking to force integration in an unnatural manner.

However, the integration of mathematics and the physical sciences with Christian belief may be even more important than the integration of literature and the social sciences with Christianity because many students have imbibed the idea that they are "objective," neutral, and functional and have no philosophical presuppositions, biases about reality, or cosmological implications. On the contrary, the study of mathematics and the "hard" sciences is totally embedded in bias and assumption.

Mathematics, for example, like Christianity, is built upon unprovable postulates. Beyond that, assumptions such as the orderliness of the

universe and the validity of empirical observation are metaphysical and epistemological presuppositions that undergird science but are rejected by many modern and postmodern people in both Western and Eastern cultures. It is essential to make these assumptions evident in class presentations because they are often taken as facts and are "invisible" to the average student who has been raised in an age that has placed its uncritical faith in science and mathematics rather than in the Creator of scientific and mathematical reality. This integration is most natural at the elementary, secondary, and introductory college levels, since courses at these levels provide the intellectual context for such sophisticated courses as theoretical mechanics and advanced calculus.

Christian math and science teachers will also creatively utilize the natural points of integration between their subject matter and religion. Mathematics, for example, certainly has contact points with the Christian faith when it deals with such areas as infinity and the existence of numbers in other parts of daily life, from music to crystallography and astronomy. The world of mathematical precision is God's world; thus, mathematics is not outside the pattern of God's truth.⁴²

Before moving away from the radical reorientation of the curriculum, we need to emphasize that it is of the utmost importance for Adventist educators and their constituents to realize that *the biblical worldview must dominate the curriculum of our schools to ensure that they are Adventist in actuality rather than merely in name.* Adventist educators must ask themselves this probing question: If I, as a teacher in an Adventist school, am teaching the same material in the same way that it is presented in a public institution, then what right do I have to take the hard-earned money of my constituents? The answer is both obvious and frightening. Adventist education that does not provide a biblical understanding of the arts, sciences, humanities, and the world of work is not Christian. One major aim of Adventist education must be to help students think christianly.

The Balanced Curriculum

Beyond the realm of specific subject matter in the Adventist school is the larger issue of the integration of the curricular program in such a way that it provides for the balanced development of the various attributes of students as they are being restored to their original position as beings created in the image and likeness of God. In the section on the nature of the student, we noted that at the Fall humanity, to a

large extent, experienced a fracturing of that image in the spiritual, social, mental, and physical realms. We also saw that education is basically an agent of redemption and restoration as God seeks to use human educators to restore fallen individuals to their original state.

The curriculum must, therefore, establish an integrated balance that facilitates that restoration. It cannot focus merely on mental development or career preparation. It must develop the whole person—the physical, social, spiritual, and vocational as well as the mental needs of each student.

Unfortunately, traditional education focused almost exclusively on the mental. Greek idealism set the stage for more than two millennia of miseducation that ignored or denigrated both physical development and preparation for useful vocations.

By contrast, the Bible is neither anti-physical nor anti-vocational. After all, God created a physical earth He deemed “very good” (Genesis 1:31),⁴³ and He intends to resurrect human beings with physical bodies at the end of time (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Philippians 3:21). Beyond that, Jesus was educated to be a carpenter, and the wealthy Paul was trained as a tent maker even though it appeared that he would never need to work at the trade.

But those biblical principles were obscured in the early centuries of the Christian Church when its theology amalgamated with Greek thought. That resulted in some very non-biblical educational theory and practice.

The 19th century experienced a wave of reform, with calls for a return to balanced education. Ellen White spoke about that needed reform. In fact, it was at the center of her educational philosophy. We saw that in the very first paragraph of *Education*, in which she noted that “true education . . . is the harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers.”⁴⁴

To restore individuals to wholeness, Adventist education cannot neglect the balance between the physical and the mental. The importance of that balance is highlighted by the fact that it is the body that houses the brain, which people must use in order to make responsible spiritual decisions. Whatever affects one part of a person affects the total being. Individuals are holistic units, and the curriculum of the Adventist school must meet all their needs to ensure that they achieve wholeness and operate at peak efficiency. Ellen White was speaking about the traditional imbalance in education when she wrote that “in the eager effort to secure intellectual culture, physical as well as

moral training has been neglected. Many youth come forth from institutions of learning with morals debased, and physical powers enfeebled; with no knowledge of practical life, and little strength to perform its duties.”⁴⁵ The practical aspects of life were important to Ellen White’s sense of educational balance. Thus she could write that “for their own physical health and moral good, children should be taught to work, even if there is no necessity so far as want is concerned.”⁴⁶

Balance is equally important in the informal or extracurricular aspects of the school’s curriculum. This includes a multiplicity of organizations and activities, such as clubs, musical groups, athletics, work experiences, school publications, and so on, which must all be brought into harmony with the purpose of the institution and integrated with the Christian message, just as is the formal curriculum, to ensure that the school does not give a dichotomous message to its students, constituency, and onlookers. The Adventist school has two major tasks in regard to the informal curriculum—the choice of activities and the creation of guidelines for the implementation of the activities selected. Both of those tasks must be based on biblical values.

That thought brings us to the topic of values education throughout the curriculum. Arthur Holmes made an important point when he noted that “education has to do with the transmission of values.”⁴⁷ The issue of values is central to much of the conflict over education today. What we find in most places, including schools, is an ethical relativism that goes against the very core of the Bible’s teachings. When modern culture lost the concept of an eternal God it also lost the idea that there are universal values that apply across time, individuals, and cultures. Ronald Nash was correct when he asserted that “America’s educational crisis is not exclusively a crisis of the mind,” but also a crisis of the “heart,” a values crisis.⁴⁸ This crisis is evident not only in schools, but also in the public media, which all too often promotes values that are non-Christian or even anti-Christian.

These are realities that the Adventist school cannot afford to ignore. The good news is that Christian educators, operating within the biblical framework, have a strategic advantage over those with other orientations because they have an epistemological and metaphysical grounding for their value system, which is not available to others. As Robert Pazmiño puts it, “the Christian educator can propose higher values because he or she can answer such questions as:

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not provide a
biblical understand-
ing of the arts,
sciences, humani-
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Christian.

What are persons and their ultimate end? What is the meaning and purpose of human activity? What, or rather, who is God? These questions can be answered with a certainty and surety which is not possible outside of a revealed faith.”⁴⁹

Pazmiño also points out the existence of a hierarchy of values, with spiritual values providing the context for evaluating options in ethics and aesthetics, as well as in the scientific, political, and social realms.⁵⁰ That being the case, Christian educators must purposefully develop formal and informal curricula in the light of biblical values. The biblical value system stands at the very foundation of Christian education.

And, we need to note, the values taught in a biblically based school system will not relate only to individual decision-making but will also reflect upon the social whole. Like the Old Testament prophets, Adventist education will raise significant issues related to social justice in an unjust world because biblical valuing involves the public as well as the private world of believers.

As we view the Christian curriculum in all of its complexity, we must never forget the controversy between the forces of good and the powers of evil within our metaphysics, epistemology, axiology, and our individual lives. The conflict between Christ and Satan is evident in the curriculum. Each Adventist school is a battlefield in which the forces of Christ are being challenged by the legions of Satan. The outcome will, to a large extent, be determined by the position given to the Bible in the Adventist school. If Adventist schools are to be truly Christian, then the biblical perspective must be the foundation and context of all that is done.

Methodological Considerations for Adventist Educators

A major determinant of the teaching and learning methodologies of any philosophy of education is the educational goals of that perspective and the epistemological-metaphysical framework in which those goals are couched. The aims of Adventist education go beyond accumulating cognitive knowledge, gaining self-awareness, and coping successfully with the environment. To be sure, Adventist education shares those aspects of learning with other systems of education, but beyond that, it has the more far-reaching goals of reconciling individuals to God and one another and restoring the image of God in them. The methodologies chosen by the Adventist educator must take those

pre-eminent purposes into consideration.

That does not mean that somehow Adventist education will invent unique and original ways of teaching in the same sense that Christianity is a unique religion and Christ is a unique person. Obviously, Adventist educators will use many, if not all, of the same methods as other teachers. They will, however, select and emphasize those methodologies that best aid them in helping their students to develop Christlike characters and reach the other goals of Adventist education.

Education, Thinking, Self-Control, and Discipline

Central to the issue of the development of Christian character is recognizing that human beings are not simply highly developed animals that respond to reward and punishment. The Bible pictures human beings as being created in the image of God and having, even in their fallen state, the ability to think reflectively.

Because humans can engage in reflective thought, they can make meaningful decisions about their own actions and destiny. Students in an Adventist school must be educated to think for themselves rather than merely be trained, like animals, to respond to environmental cues. Human beings, created in God’s image, are to be educated “to be thinkers, and not mere reflectors of other men’s thought.”⁵¹ It is true that there are some training aspects in the human learning process, but those approaches generally dominate only when the person is very young or mentally impaired. The ideal, as we shall see below, is to move as rapidly as possible, with any given student, from the training process to the more reflective educative process.

At the heart of Adventist education is the goal of empowering students to think and act reflectively for themselves rather than just to respond to the word or will of an authority figure. Self-control, rather than externally imposed control, is central in Adventist education and discipline. Ellen White put it nicely when she wrote that “the discipline of a human being who has reached the years of intelligence should differ from the training of a dumb animal. The beast is taught only submission to its master. For the beast, the master is mind, judgment, and will. This method, sometimes employed in the training of children, makes them little more than automatons. Mind, will, conscience, are under the control of another. It is not God’s purpose that any mind should be thus dominated. Those who weaken or destroy individuality assume a responsibility that can

When modern culture lost the concept of an eternal God it also lost the idea that there are universal values that apply across time, individuals, and cultures.

result only in evil. While under authority, the children may appear like well-drilled soldiers; but when the control ceases, the character will be found to lack strength and steadfastness. Having never learned to govern himself, the youth recognizes no restraint except the requirement of parents or teacher. This removed, he knows not how to use his liberty, and often gives himself up to indulgence that proves his ruin.”⁵²

It is for that reason that Ellen White never seemed to tire of driving home the point that “the object of discipline is the training of the child for self-government. He should be taught self-reliance and self-control. Therefore as soon as he is capable of understanding, his reason should be enlisted on the side of obedience. Let all dealing with him be such as to show obedience to be just and reasonable. Help him to see that all things are under law, and that disobedience leads, in the end, to disaster and suffering.”⁵³

Please note that in the above quotations Ellen White ties together education, thinking, self-control, and discipline. That is an important insight and one that we too often overlook. In fact, most people equate discipline and punishment. But they are two quite distinct concepts. Ideally, punishment comes into play only after discipline has failed. Punishment is a negative, remedial activity, whereas discipline is positive and stands at the core of developing a Christian character.

In a Christian approach to education, human beings must be brought to the place where they can make their own decisions and take responsibility for those choices without continually being coaxed, directed, and/or forced by a powerful authority. When that goal is achieved, and the power to think and to act upon one’s thoughts is internalized, then people have reached moral maturity. They are not under the control of another, but are making their own moral decisions about how to act toward God and other people. Such is the role of self-control in the shaping of human beings in the image of God. Psychiatrist Erich Fromm makes the same point when he writes that “the mature person has come to the point where he is his own mother and his own father.”⁵⁴

Discipline is not something an authority figure does to a child, but something that adults help children learn to do for themselves. John Dewey, America’s most influential 20th-century philosopher, reflected on that point when he wrote that “a person who is trained to consider his actions, to undertake them deliberately . . . is disciplined. Add to this ability a power to en-

sure in an intelligently chosen course in the face of distraction, confusion, and difficulty, and you have the essence of discipline. Discipline means power at command; mastery of the resources available for carrying through the action undertaken. To know what one is to do and to move to do it promptly and by use of the requisite means is to be disciplined.”⁵⁵

Discipline as self-control has its roots deep in the Christian concepts of character development, responsibility, and perseverance. We noted earlier that character development is one of the major aims of Adventist education. Character development and discipline are inextricably entwined. “Strength of character,” Ellen White wrote, “consists of two things—power of will and power of self-control.”⁵⁶ The will, furthermore, “is the governing power in the nature of man, the power of decision, or choice.”⁵⁷ Part of the function of Christian discipline in the home and school is to guide and mold the power of the will as students move toward maturity.

Internal discipline concentrates on developing children’s wills through allowing them to make choices and to experience the consequences. Arthur Combs has pointed out that “responsibility is learned from *being given* responsibility; it is never learned from having it withheld. . . . Learning to be responsible requires being allowed to make decisions, to observe results, and to deal with the consequences of those decisions. A curriculum designed to teach responsibility needs to provide continuous opportunities for students to engage in such processes. To do so, however, requires taking risks, a terribly frightening prospect for many teachers and administrators.”⁵⁸

But even the very problem of allowing others to make mistakes arises from the nature of God and His love. After all, He created a universe in which mistakes are possible when He could have established one that was foolproof—but only at the price of creating humans as something less than beings in His image. Beings without genuine choices are automatons rather than free moral agents. God created humans in such a way as to make character development a definite possibility. It is important to remember that when people do not have the option of making wrong choices, neither do they have the ability to make correct ones. People cannot develop character if they are constantly controlled through having their choices curtailed. They are then, in essence, merely complex machines rather than moral agents created in God’s image. Love and freedom are risky and dangerous, but they are the way God

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has chosen to run His universe.

In a Christian framework, the answer to a lack of discipline is not bigger and better strategies to bring young people under control, but conscious development and application of techniques to build self-control and a sense of responsibility in each child. We gain nothing if by authoritative methodologies we manage to produce quiet, order, and student conformity while sacrificing intelligent behavior, responsibility, and creativity.

Developing intelligent self-control in others is not an easy task. Ellen White writes that “this work is the nicest [most delicate and discerning], the most difficult, ever committed to human beings. It requires the most delicate tact, the finest susceptibility, a knowledge of human nature, and a heaven-born faith and patience.”⁵⁹

The number of biblically based books written on this crucial aspect of Adventist education is not great. The best place to begin is the chapter entitled “Discipline” in Ellen White’s *Education*.⁶⁰ It is perhaps the most insightful chapter that she ever wrote in the field of education. Deeply rooted in a Christian philosophy, it is a methodological exposition second to none. Reading those 11 pages every week for their entire career, would enrich every teacher’s ministry. Here are a few samples from that chapter:

- “The wise educator, in dealing with his pupils, will seek to encourage confidence and to strengthen the sense of honor. Children and youth are benefited by being trusted. . . . Suspicion demoralizes, producing the very evils it seeks to prevent. . . . An atmosphere of unsympathetic criticism is fatal to effort.”⁶¹

- “The true object of reproof is gained only when the wrongdoer himself is led to see his fault and his will is enlisted for its correction. When this is accomplished, point him to the source of pardon and power.”⁶²

- “Many youth who are thought incorrigible are not at heart so hard as they appear. Many who are regarded as hopeless may be reclaimed by wise discipline. These are often the ones who most readily melt under kindness. Let the teacher gain the confidence of the tempted one, and by recognizing and developing the good in his character, he can, in many cases, correct the evil without calling attention to it.”⁶³

Such are the challenges and possibilities of redemptive discipline in line with Christ’s ministry of seeking the lost and shaping the characters of those in a relationship to God through Him. Many of the principles of redemptive discipline are expounded upon in a very practical way in Jim Roy’s *Soul Shapers*,⁶⁴ which describes the methodologies that lie at the foun-

dation of the practice of Adventist education.

One model that describes the progressive internalization of discipline appears in Figure 5⁶⁵ on page 51. It illustrates in a general way the relationship between internal and external control and the weaning process that is the goal of redemptive discipline. Infants and extremely young children need a great deal of external control, but the maturation process should lead progressively to greater self-control and less external control, until individual children have reached the point of moral maturity. At that time, they are ready to take their place as responsible persons in the adult world. Christian discipline, therefore, is both a positive and liberating power. It “is not,” A. S. De Jong points out, “to keep the child down or to break him, but to lift him up or to heal him; for that reason discipline may be called upon to repress only in order to set free, to train children in the exercise of the freedom of the children of God.”⁶⁶ The end product of Christian discipline will be young people who “do right because they believe it is right and not because some authority tells them to.”⁶⁷

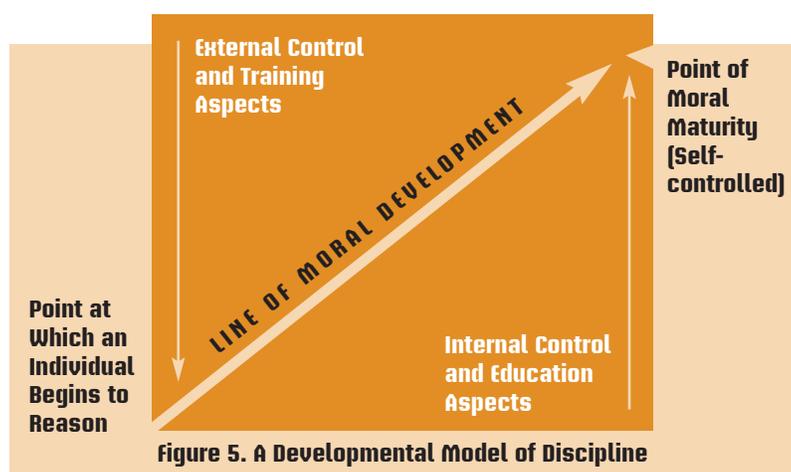
The connection between the developing of self-control and the restoration of the image of God has serious implications for educators as they select appropriate methodologies for the Christian school. That concept should act as a screening device for Adventist educators as they choose learning and teaching strategies for the classroom. They must utilize those methodologies that will help to develop what Harro Van Brummelen refers to as “responsible disciples.”⁶⁸

Beyond Cognition to Commitment and Responsible Action

Closely related to the above discussion is the idea that Christian knowing is not merely passive. It is, as we noted in our discussion of epistemology, an active, dynamic experience. Thus, in a Christian school, instructional methodology must move beyond strategies for passing on information. Nicholas Wolterstorff forcefully argues that Christian education “must aim at producing alterations in what students tend (are disposed, are inclined) to do. It must aim at tendency learning.” He points out that Christian schools must move beyond techniques for merely teaching the knowledge and abilities required for acting responsibly, since students can assimilate those ideas without developing a “tendency to engage in such action.” Thus “a program of Christian education will take that further step of cultivating the appropriate *tendencies* in the child. It will have tendency learning as one of its fundamental goals.”⁶⁹

Donald Oppewal has developed a teaching

methodology explicitly based upon the dynamic epistemology of Scripture. While noting that actual practice is the ideal, Oppewal suggests a three-stage instructional methodology aimed to produce a dynamic learning experience. In the *consider* stage, the learner is presented with the new material. During the second phase—the *choose* phase—“the options for response are clarified and their implications better understood. . . . If the first phase dramatizes what it *is* the learner faces, the second phase highlights whatever *oughts* are involved.” In the third stage—the *commit* phase—students move “beyond intellectual understanding, beyond exposure of the moral and other considerations and toward commitment



to act on both the *is* and the *ought*.” Commitment to a form of action, claims Oppewal, is the very minimum expectation in the context of biblical knowing and teaching.⁷⁰ A fourth stage, of course, needs to be added whenever possible and practicable; namely the *action* phase. In that phase opportunity for acting on those commitments is provided.

The Bible and Instructional Methodology

The central epistemological source for Christians, the Bible, provides a wealth of information related to methodologies used by God in the process of educating human beings. Even a casual reading of the Old Testament reveals that ancient Israel was immersed in a total educational environment, which was consciously constructed to aid in the spiritual, intellectual, social, and physical development of its citizens. This environment was structured to provide life-long learning experiences through holidays, sabbatical years, historic memorials, the arts, home instruction, public reading of the Torah, and a host of other devices.

The Bible makes it plain that this educational environment was to be used to awaken inquiry and develop curiosity in the minds of the young. The interest thus developed was to be followed by deliberate instruction. Note, for example, the instructions given for the highly symbolic keeping of the Passover. Moses wrote that this ritual would lead the young to ask, “What do you mean by this service?” and that the family elders would then have a natural opportunity to engage the minds of the youth in a meaningful learning experience (Exodus 12:25-27; see also 13:3-16; Deuteronomy 6:20-25).

A major principle underlying Old Testament pedagogy is that instruction should not be forced upon unready minds. Rather, instructional methods used in the Old Testament capitalized upon human beings’ natural interest in a topic in order to engage the people’s minds in a dynamic interchange. Central to the whole educational complex of ancient Israel was the sacrificial system, which pointed forward to the life, death, and work of Jesus. That system, with its pageantry, beauty, and life-taking awesomeness, provided one of the major object lessons of the ancient world. It was an educational device that taught through both its appeal to the senses and the curiosity it generated.

Moving into the New Testament, we find Jesus as the ultimate teaching model. “In the Teacher sent from God,” Ellen White asserts, “all true educational work finds its center.”⁷¹ We can learn a great deal about appropriate methods for conveying the Christian message, both in schools and elsewhere, through an examination of the specific teaching techniques Christ used and the way He related to people. We examined the relationship aspect of His teaching above in the section on the ministry of teaching. Here our focus will be on His instructional methods. This short discussion is at best an introduction to that topic. But the Christian educator can glean a great deal about the subject through an inductive and analytical study of Christ’s methods in the Gospels. Ellen White’s education-related books are also very insightful on the topic.⁷²

Roy Zuck has noted that “Jesus succeeded as a masterful Teacher” largely because of “his remarkable ability to capture the interest of his audience.” He aroused “their desire to learn what he was teaching.”⁷³ That was especially true in His use of parables, object lessons, and provocative questions.

Perhaps the most obvious teaching method of Jesus was His use of illustrations. Two of His most frequent illustrative formats were the parable and the object lesson. Parables form a

large portion of Jesus' teachings recorded in the New Testament—about 25 percent of Mark and 50 percent of Luke is in the form of parables. The parable has the advantage of being concrete, appealing to the imagination, and having intrinsic interest. John Price has written that “people who turn away from facts and arguments will listen readily to stories. Not only that, but they will remember them and be influenced by them.”⁷⁴

Part of the power of Christ's parables comes from their relevance to the everyday lives of His hearers. When He dealt with the lost sheep, the sowing of seeds, and the good Samaritan, He was describing things in people's daily experience. That aroused interest, engaged their minds, and helped them remember the story and its lesson as they interacted with the topics of His parables in their daily living.

A second method of illustration used by Jesus was the object lesson. While standing on a hillside, He discusses the topic of anxiety. Reaching down to pluck a lily, He notes its beauty, and gives the lesson that if God so clothed “the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you” (Matthew 6:30). His use of the coin in His discussion about the paying of taxes certainly made His accompanying words more effective (Matthew 22:15-22).

Commenting on Christ's teaching methods, Ellen White wrote that “in parables and comparisons He found the best method of communicating divine truth. In simple language, using figures and illustrations drawn from the natural world, He opened spiritual truth to His hearers, and gave expression to precious principles that would have passed from their minds, and left scarcely a trace, had He not connected His words with stirring scenes of life, experience, or nature. In this way He called forth their interest, aroused inquiry, and when He had fully secured their attention, He decidedly impressed upon them the testimony of truth. In this way He was able to make sufficient impression upon the heart so that afterward His hearers could look upon the thing with which He connected His lesson, and recall the words of the divine Teacher.”⁷⁵

Another of Jesus' teaching methods was the use of thought-compelling questions. He used the 213 separate questions recorded in the Gospels to drive home spiritual truths, to draw out responses of commitment, and to deal with His detractors. Regarding that last point, teachers at times have students who would like to put them “on the spot.” Jesus answered His de-

tractors' questions by asking questions. By using that strategy, He could maneuver them into answering their own questions. His success in the disciplinary use of questions can be seen from the fact that the Gospels record at the close of a series of questions engineered to trap Him that “after that no one dared to ask him any question” (Mark 12:34).

In regard to the use of questions as a learning device, John A. Marquis has written that “teaching is not telling, because a great deal of our telling elicits no mental response. So our Lord had a habit of throwing in a question now and then that broke up the serenity of his class and made them sit up and think.”⁷⁶ The aim of the Christian teacher is not to control minds, but to develop them.

Jesus' pedagogical methodology utilized both theory and practice. For example, He alternated periods of instruction devoted to the disciples with times when He sent them out to apply what they had learned (Matthew 10:5-15; Luke 10:1-20). That undoubtedly helped them realize their need for further instruction, fixed the successful lessons in their minds, and kept them from separating the theoretical from the experiential. The practical side of education is a most effective teaching device. Jesus was more interested in conveying knowledge that would help men and women in their daily lives than He was in presenting knowledge as an abstraction. In the process, He united theoretical knowledge with both daily life and the eternal realities of the kingdom of God and the great controversy between good and evil.

So much more can be said about the teaching methods of Jesus, but will require your future study. Meanwhile, we will close with three insightful quotes from Ellen White. First, “Christ always used simple language,” yet His words had depth of meaning and spoke to the heart.⁷⁷ Second, “in His teaching He came down to” the level of His students.⁷⁸ And, third, “Jesus did not disdain to repeat old, familiar truths,” yet “He separated [them] from the companionship of error,” and “reset them in their proper framework.”⁷⁹ That last statement is the informative, integrative, and interpretive function of Christ's teaching methodology; a function, we noted in our study of the Christian curriculum, that must stand at the center of all Adventist education.

The Social Function of Adventist Education

Before delving into the specifics of Adventist education's social function, we need to con-

A major principle underlying Old Testament pedagogy is that instruction should not be forced upon unready minds.

sider the cultural transmission function of education. We find that function in the Bible. Abraham was chosen because God saw that he would be faithful in teaching his household (Genesis 18:19). God through Moses gave the Israelites an educational system that touched every phase of their lives, and Jesus' parting words were "teach all nations" (Matthew 28:19, 20, KJV).

The Strategic Role of Education

Education holds a strategic position in every society because all youth must pass through some type of educational experience to prepare them to fill society's responsible positions. The future of any society will be shaped by its current youth. And the direction they will take that society will to a large extent be determined by their education. Thus the control of educational institutions and the content to be taught in those institutions has been a perennial social issue.

George S. Counts has noted that "to shape educational policy is to guard the path that leads from the present to the future. . . . Throughout the centuries since special educational agencies were first established, the strategic position of the school has been appreciated by kings, emperors, and popes, by rebels, reformers, and prophets. Hence, among those opposing forces found in all complex societies, a struggle for the control of the school is always evident. Every group or sect endeavors to pass on to its own children and to the children of others that culture which it happens to esteem; and every privileged class seeks to perpetuate its favored position in society by means of education."⁸⁰

Likewise, Counts observed, the failure of revolutions has been a record of their inability to bring education into the service of the revolutionary cause. Revolutionary bodies will possess no more permanence than the small bands of idealists who conceived them if the children of the next generation cannot be persuaded to embrace the values of the revolution. Therefore, the history of both the Soviets and the National Socialists has demonstrated that one of the first measures taken by revolutionary governments is to place all educational agencies under the direct control of the state and to give the schools a central part in building the new society.⁸¹

A similar logic, of course, stimulated the formation of the American and other democratic educational systems. And in that logic we find the genesis of the Adventist interest in education in all its forms. Ellen White picked up on

that thinking when she wrote that "with such an army of workers as our youth, rightly trained, . . . how soon the message of a crucified, risen, and soon-coming Saviour might be carried to the whole world! How soon might the end come—the end of suffering and sorrow and sin! How soon, in place of a possession here, with its blight of sin and pain, our children might receive their inheritance where 'the righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein forever.'"⁸²

Adventist Education's Conservative and Revolutionary Roles

God's ideal for Seventh-day Adventist education reflects both a conservative social function and a revolutionary one. It is to be conservative in the sense that it seeks to transmit the unchanging truths of the Bible across time, but it is to be revolutionary as a change agent of a righteous God in a sinful world.

In that latter posture, it seeks to change the *status quo* on the individual level through the conversion of human beings from their old way of life to the Christian way. *Transformation, conversion, and death and rebirth* are some of the words that the Bible applies to the dynamics of Christianity as it transforms the lives of individuals, moving them from an orientation of self-centeredness to one of God-centered service to both Him and other people.

But change at the individual level is only one aspect of the church's revolutionary role. It is also to be an agent for broader change in the ongoing struggle for social justice in a sinful world. It is part of God's ideal not only to feed the poor (Matthew 25:31-46), but also to help make this earth a better place to live through social reform.

But once again, the revolutionary role must not stop there. According to the Bible, social reform, for all of its good points, is insufficient to straighten out a crooked world driven by the forces of sin and human greed. The only real solution to the sin problem as pictured in the Bible is the Second Advent. While the Gospels set forth that truth (see Matthew 24), it is especially evident in the Book of Revelation. That book in particular indicates the divine solution to earth's woes. Thus the apex of the church's revolutionary function is not merely to transform people from sinful selfishness to a life of service or to organize them to become change agents for earthly reform, but to preach a message that helps prepare the world for the end of history and the establishment of a new earth built upon God's principles. That new earth, the Bible tells us, does not come about through

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human effort, but as the result of God's breaking into human history through Christ's second coming. That event is the Event of events in world history. It is the ultimate revolution.

Seventh-day Adventism from its beginning has viewed itself as an agent of God in that ultimate revolution. In particular, it has seen its calling to be the preaching of the apocalyptic message of the three angels that stands at the heart of the Book of Revelation (Revelation 14:6-12); a message that God commanded to be given immediately before the Second Advent (vss. 14-20). It is a worldwide message that calls people back to faithfulness to God, even as human societies move toward their final end. It is a message of the coming Christ who will not only feed the poor but abolish hunger; who will not only comfort the grieving but eradicate death (Revelation. 21:1-4). Adventism has been called to preach to a lost world the ultimate Hope that by comparison pales all other hopes. The central purpose of Adventism is to preach that ultimate Hope. And the primary reason for the establishment of Adventist schools is to prepare people for that event and for the task of spreading the good news of the coming Savior.

Within that revolutionary apocalyptic context, the conservative function of Adventist education is twofold: (1) to pass on the legacy of Bible truth, and (2) to provide a protected atmosphere in which that transmission can take place and in which Christian values can be imparted to the young in their formative years through both the formal curriculum and the informal aspects of the educational program, such as the peer group and extracurricular activities.

The Christian Church and its adherents have the unique role of being in the world, without being of the world (John 17:14-18). How to achieve that seemingly contradictory position has remained a challenge to the church since the time of Christ.

The separatist strand of the paradox has led the church to establish protected atmospheres for its youth during their formative years, such as religious schools and youth groups. Such agencies act as refuges where young people from Adventist families can learn skills, attitudes, values, and knowledge without being overwhelmed by the worldview and cultural mores of the larger society. The atmosphere in which these activities take place is designed to be conducive to the transferring of Adventist culture to the younger generation. Parents and church members are willing to support this type of education financially because they recognize that it differs philosophically from the

cultural milieu of the larger society, and they believe that the Adventist worldview is the correct one in terms of metaphysics, epistemology, and axiology.

Seen from such a viewpoint, the primary function of the Adventist school is not to be an evangelistic agency to convert unbelievers (even though that may be a side result), but rather to help young people from Adventist homes meet Jesus and surrender their lives to Him. Implicit in this function is a distinct realization that if the majority of the student peer group in a denominational school does not espouse Adventist values, then the school's spiritual mission probably will not be accomplished. Adventist education's conservative function therefore provides a protected atmosphere for the nurturing of the church's youth; an environment in which all values, skills, and aspects of knowledge can be taught from the Adventist philosophic perspective.

Beyond the conservative function of Adventist education is its revolutionary role. At the beginning of the Christian era, Christ's great gospel commission sent His disciples into all the world to make disciples of all nations, and to teach people everything that He had commanded (Matthew 28:19, 20). And at the end of the Christian era Christ has commanded that the good news of salvation, Second Advent, and coming judgment also be preached "to every nation and tribe and tongue and people" (Revelation 14:6). While the commission of Matthew 28 has been sounded by Christianity at large, the Church has neglected the imperative of Revelation 14. It is that latter commission that forms the basis for the existence of Seventh-day Adventism. From its inception, the church has believed that it has a unique commission to preach the three angels' messages of Revelation 14:6-12 to all the earth before the Second Advent (vss. 14-20). Adventism's message is a call to faithfulness to God as earthly history moves toward its final days. The evangelistic imperative of Revelation 14 has literally driven Adventism to every part of the earth.

Christian churches (including Seventh-day Adventism) have too often been conservative bastions of society, when they should function as agents for change. The life of Jesus as portrayed in the Bible can best be seen as modeling change rather than conservatism. He was the Reformer of reformers. And He called out a people to become change agents in His ongoing mission.

The conservative functions of a Christian school are important because they play a role in the church's revolutionary task of preparing

its youth to become evangelistic workers. That does not mean, it should be emphasized, that all students will be educated for church employment. Each one will, however, be trained to be a witness to the love of God in a sinful world, regardless of his or her career goals.

As such, the Adventist school can be seen as a staging ground for Christian activism and missionary work. It provides, ideally, not only the knowledge underlying the evangelistic imperative of the church, but also practical, guided activities in the larger community that ensure that students develop the skills necessary to meet people with the message of Jesus and to perform their individual roles in the context of God's church on earth. Edward Sutherland wrote that in God's plan "the Christian school should be the nursery in which reformers are born and reared—reformers who would go forth from the school burning with practical zeal and enthusiasm to take their places as leaders in these reforms."⁸³

In summary, the social function of the Adventist school has both a conservative and a revolutionary aspect. The commingling of those two roles empowers the developing student to be in the world but not of the world. In essence, the function of the Adventist school is to educate the youth of the church for service to God and their neighbors, rather than to train them for self-service through the acquisition of a "good job" and a comfortable income. Those outcomes, of course, may be by-products of Adventist education, but they are not central to its purpose.

Service to others was the essence of Christ's life, and it is therefore the ultimate aim of Adventist education. In harmony with the Bible, Adventist education will develop Christians who can relate well to others in this world. But even more important, Adventist schools will educate students for citizenship in the kingdom of heaven.

Closing Perspective

"The education that does not furnish knowledge as enduring as eternity, is of no purpose."⁸⁴ That frank statement was not made by a narrow religious bigot, but by a person who in the same paragraph writes that "it is right that you should feel that you must climb to the highest round of the educational ladder. Philosophy and history are important studies; but your sacrifice of time and money will avail nothing, if you do not use your attainments for the honor of God and the good of humanity. Unless the knowledge of science is a stepping-

stone to the attainment of the highest purposes, it is worthless. . . . Unless you keep heaven and the future, immortal life before you, your attainments are of no permanent value. But if Jesus is your teacher, not simply on one day of the week, but every day, every hour, you may have His smile upon you in the pursuit of literary acquirements."⁸⁵ For Ellen White, the value of education was related to perspective. A broad literary education was of great value *if* it kept eternal realities, goals, and values at the forefront.

That perspective brings us to the ultimate questions regarding Adventist education that must be asked by parents, school boards, Adventist educational professionals, and the church at large: Why have Seventh-day Adventist schools? Why should the church spend hundreds of millions of dollars each year to support thousands of schools around the world when free, high-quality public education is often available? How can the denomination justify such expenditures in the light of the other pressing needs of the church and the world it serves? The answer to such questions obviously has a link to the purpose of Adventist education. If Adventist schools fulfill a sufficiently distinctive and important purpose, the achievement of that purpose is worth the expense.

That answer brings us to the frontier of why there should be Christian (rather than specifically Adventist) schools in general. We have noted throughout the study of the topic that Christian education is the only education that can meet people's deepest needs because only Christian educators understand the core of the human problem. The redemptive aim of Christian education is what makes it Christian. The primary function of Christian education is to lead young people into a transforming, saving relationship with Jesus Christ. It is in the context of that relationship that such secondary functions as academic achievement, character development, the formation of a Christian mind, and education for social responsibility and the world of work must of necessity take place. But it is crucial to realize that all but one of those secondary goals can take place in a non-Christian school. Thus, when Christian educators aim only at the goals that fall within the realm of all education they have failed even before they begin. As a result, ***when Christian educators neglect to emphasize the redemptive role of their schools, they make their schools both unimportant and unnecessary.***

But what about distinctively Adventist Christian schools? What justifies their existence if all Christian schools ideally aim at the redemptive

According to the Bible, social reform, for all of its good points, is insufficient to straighten out a crooked world driven by the forces of sin and human greed.

function of education? The answer to those questions brings us to the heart of why the Seventh-day Adventist Church even exists as a separate Christian denomination.

Too often, we see Adventism as merely another denomination with a few different doctrines and some countercultural dietary practices. But the core of Adventist identity from its very inception has been its conviction that it is a movement of prophecy, a church with a special message to proclaim to all the world as set forth in the heart of the Apocalypse of John.⁸⁶ And there are sound biblical reasons for that understanding. Revelation 12:17 highlights the fact that at the end of time God will have a people that keep all His commandments and that their commandment keeping will eventually stimulate a reaction from the last-day dragon power. “And the dragon,” John wrote, “was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God” (KJV). Revelation 13 and 14 pick up that theme, with chapter 13 expanding on the dynamics of the last-day dragon power, and chapter 14 presenting the message of the last-day woman (church) and climaxing with the second advent of Christ. In that context, the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14:6-12 highlight an everlasting gospel that is to be preached to all the world, a judgment-hour emphasis as earth’s history moves toward its conclusion, a call to worship the Creator God in contrast to honoring the beast, and a declaration regarding the fall of oppressive Babylon that has confused humanity by substituting human words for the word of God. The third angel climaxes its message in verse 12, which reads: “Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus” (KJV).

Seventh-day Adventists noted from their beginning that the Sabbath commandment is emphasized in Revelation 12-14. At the end of time, we are told in Revelation 14, everybody will be worshipping somebody: either the Creator God of the Sabbath who made heaven and earth and sea (14:7; Exodus 20:8-11; Genesis 2:1-3) or the beast (Revelation 14:9). And Adventists have been quick to note that immediately after the giving of the three angels’ messages Christ comes to harvest the earth (vss. 14-20).

While the general Christian community has largely ignored those messages in their eschatological context, Seventh-day Adventism found in them its marching orders and purpose as a distinct denomination. It is that purpose that has literally driven Adventism to the ends of

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the earth until it has become the most widespread unified Protestant body in the history of Christianity. Adventists have been willing to sacrifice their lives and their money to achieve that goal. And in the process they developed a church organization to spearhead that thrust and an educational system and publishing ministry to enlighten and convict its membership and prepare them to either go to all the world themselves or to sponsor others to fulfill the denomination’s unique mission. It is no accident that Adventism sent its first overseas missionary and opened its first denominationally sponsored school the same year (1874). Nor is it coincidental that every major revival in Adventist education has been stimulated by a revival in its apocalyptic mission.⁸⁷

We dare not become bashful about that mission. It is the only valid reason for the existence of Seventh-day Adventism. The possibility of losing its apocalyptic vision and Adventism’s place in prophetic history is the greatest threat that the denomination and its educational system face.⁸⁸

That threat brings me to my next point. *An Adventist educational ministry that has lost its hold on the apocalyptic vision has failed—not just partially, but totally.*

Let me illustrate the depth of the problem. Some time ago, I received a call from an academy principal who had been inspired by my keynote at the 2006 North American Division educational convention on “Seventh-day Adventist Education and the Apocalyptic Vision.”⁸⁹ As a result, he determined to hire teachers who truly understood the uniqueness of Adventism and its mission to the world. With that commitment in mind, he went to the local Adventist college and interviewed each of the graduating education majors. His question to each was the same: What is the difference between Adventist education and evangelical Christian education? Not one student could tell him. Somehow, he concluded, that college had failed in passing on Adventism’s unique identity and mission, even though the institution had been established to develop educational professionals.

That thought brings me to the bottom line—*Adventist education is important only if it is truly Adventist.* A school that has lost sight of its reason for being, that has forgotten its message and mission, will eventually lose its support. And it should. To be absolutely frank, **a Seventh-day Adventist school that is not both Christian and Adventist is an unnecessary institution.** All its functions can be achieved by schools in the evangelical sector, and most of

them by the public sector.

Pastor Shane Anderson is right on in his recently published *How to Kill Adventist Education* when he points out that “Adventist parents increasingly aren’t willing to pay the price to send their kids” to institutions that have lost their purpose. “After all,” he writes, “why pay thousands of dollars to send your child to a school that is now no longer substantially different from the average Christian school—or the local public school—down the street?”⁹⁰

With that insight, we are back to the importance of the study of the philosophy of education and KNIGHT’S LAW and its two corollaries. Put simply, KNIGHT’S LAW reads that “It is impossible to arrive at your destination unless you know where you are going.” Corollary Number 1: “A school that does not come close to attaining its goals will eventually lose its support.” Corollary Number 2: “We think only when it hurts.” The purpose of the study of Adventist educational philosophy is to get those who teach and administer in Adventist schools thinking before it hurts and to put them in a proactive mode to develop schools that are educative in the fullest sense while at the same time being both self-consciously Christian and Adventist. ✍️

POINTS TO PONDER

- Discuss why the Bible is so important in Christian education.
- In what ways does Herbert Spencer’s question (“What Knowledge Is of Most Worth?”) help us understand a Christian curriculum?
- What do we mean when we say that the Bible is the foundation and context of a Christian approach to curriculum?
- Why is it that a Christian teaching methodology will not be unique?
- What are the main methodological lessons that we can learn from the teaching ministry of Jesus?
- How is it that the Christian school can have both a conservative and a revolutionary social function? Is one function more important than the other? Why?
- Discuss the implications when we say that the denomination’s schools must be both Christian and Adventist.

This continuing education article has been peer reviewed.



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