

Institute for Christian Teaching
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THE ADVENTIST SECONDARY BOARDING SCHOOL AS WITNESS:
A STRATEGY FOR AND AN OUTCOME OF
THE INTEGRATIVE PROCESS

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I. Introduction

Seventh-day Adventist secondary boarding schools are intended to operate in the tradition of the schools of the prophets fulfilling their mission as training centers for the youth as well as bastions of church standards. In order for the training to be effective, and for their young people to experience the joy of engaging in soul-saving work, these schools need to provide the opportunity for translating their faith into action.

This paper seeks to establish that students in an Adventist boarding school respond more whole-heartedly to a programme of out-reach which leads the way to eternal life. Once they understand their responsibility and see the community response to their service and witnessing, it is inconceivable that they would not want to be a part of this great experience.

It then proposes that this consciousness is brought about by successful integration of faith, learning, and life in all areas and activities of the school.

The rationale attempts to justify our expectations of the Adventist secondary boarding school. Section II defines integration of faith, learning and life (hereafter referred to as IFLL). Section III suggests broad guidelines for the implementation of IFLL in the school programme. Section IV discusses three expected results of the integrative process, namely, a high spiritual tone, witnessing, and community service projects. It then attempts to provide impetus to the administrators and the faculty of an Adventist boarding secondary school for planning these activities.

The Rationale

Seventh-day Adventists believe that their students are the children of God, their teachers servants of God. Their schools are commissioned, therefore, to follow after the mind and will of God. This will of God for proper education of His children was outlined by the Spirit of Prophecy exactly 118 years ago in 1872. According to this inspired counsel, education in an Adventist school was to prepare students (1) to face the challenge of this world and (2) for citizenship of His coming kingdom. The first requires knowledge of the sciences and arts, knowledge of the world of work, and acceptance of a world-view arising out of the student's understanding of the great controversy between God and Satan.

The second purpose envisages the development of a Christ-like character, the imbibing of Christian virtues, and a genuine and empathetic concern for fellow humans. Thus the Seventh-day Adventist Christian is not

a static individual, but one who consistently lives his faith.

The administrators and staff of the Adventist school need to constantly remind themselves that our schools are to be training grounds to make our young people conscious of their role in their community as defined by the haunting question: "Who is my neighbour?" The truth that they are a power for good and as Christians, they are to have the same burden for souls and the betterment of their lot as their Master. The sooner they realise this, the better they can grasp the implication of their world-view.

The Adventist boarding secondary school is well set up to bring about this awareness. The students in a secondary school range from 13 to 16 years of age. Most of them have, by then, made their own personal commitment and can be helped to realise that a dynamic Christian experience is not possible without translating their faith into practice. Jesus was twelve years of age when he gave evidence of the fact that he knew what His father's business was and that he intended to transact it to the best of his knowledge and ability. His words, "know ye not that I must be about my father's business?" leave no doubts in the minds of Adventist young people what their own response ought to be.

The hesitation to witness and to serve is brought about, among other things, by the fear of getting 'soiled'. But the consequences of withdrawal are greatly undesirable:

"Seventh-day Adventist young people who have spent their entire lives in Christian schools sometime feel that they are out of touch with the 'real world.' While many of the students eventually express appreciation for the protection Christian schools offer from the full onslaught of corrupting influence, there are times when they feel too far removed from the world ever to make an effective encounter with non-believers. If Adventist youth spend sixteen years of denominational seclusion in elementary school, academy, and college, how shall they have the necessary exposure to face a confusing secular world?...Does a person with a responsible faith huddle quietly in the corners of Sabbath School, church, worship services, MV meetings, and prayer groups and long for the ultimate isolation of heaven?" (Community, p.7)

Also, the call to "...come out from them, and be separate from them..." and James' warning that "...whosoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God" (James 4:4) leaves the majority of our young people confused as they face the compelling commission of Christ to "Go... therefore, and teach all nations." (Math. 28:19)

Our students need to understand that being separate does not mean withdrawal, but distinction from the world and that they stand a better chance of influencing the "world" for good while interacting with it in a wholesome Christian way. And who can communicate this understanding to them but their school and their teachers who model and demonstrate through their life and example that faith and action are two sides of the same coin and

each fulfills the other.

II. The Essence

What is IFLL?

Frank E Gaebelein offers an expanded definition of IFLL:

" . . . external meaning of Christian education has to do with God's truth. . . internal meaning . . . relates to the inner workings of education, to all its courses, and everyone of its policies . . . a merging of the internal into the external . . . This is the heart of integration and the crux of the matter . . . So with integration in Christian education. It is the living union of its subject matter, administration, and even of its personnel, with the external and infinite pattern of God's truth . . . Nevertheless, in respect to a thorough-going integration of Bible study, with all kinds of students' activities, with all phases of administration, there remains much land to be taken. (1968:816)

Simply stated, IFLL is the process of weaving threads of faith and spiritual truths through all of the learning experiences of the student. This strengthens his spiritual commitment and facilitates value assimilation. Holmes speaks of viewing integration as an intellectual activity in which learning will effect integration of faith into the character and life of a student. (Holmes, 1975:46 ,47)

Why IFLL?

Holmes declares that a school is for education, and a Christian school is for Christian education. We can take the arguement further and add that an Adventist school is for Adventist education. Since one of the primary objectives of the Adventist secondary school is the transmission of values, IFLL becomes imperative in order to avoid the disorienting dichotomy of faith and learning.

III. The Effort

Considerable planning and soul-searching precedes the integration particulars. The model of the principal and his staff and the quality of their spiritual experience are major factors in deciding the effectiveness of the attempt. Students are keen judges of human insincerity and are turned off by hypocritical attitudes. The encouraging fact is that they are able to tune out of their lives those teachers unworthy of their respect and attention.

However, careful teacher selection and orientation are the launching pad for integration as, according to Holmes, the teacher is a

guide and a catalyst (1975:46) and thus, a facilitator of the integrative process. Gaebelien holds that there can be no Christian education without the Christian teacher as the teacher is one of the two approaches to the issue of integration: the other is the particular subject. (1968:36). Thus, the life and the influence of a teacher in the classroom will have a tremendous impact upon the lives of the students.

Having assumed that teachers of the school have the needed commitment, possess knowledge of their responsibilities, and mastery of their subject, we now approach the various facets of the "school experience".

A. The Environment

Since humans interact with their environment and are influenced by it, the physical aspects of the school have much to do in the creation of a climate conducive to the growth of faith. The surroundings should be clean, orderly, quiet, and beautiful. Care must be taken to ensure that the whole set-up affirms that God is desirous of order, beauty, and precision in all that we undertake.

He who created for man a beautiful world, and planted a lovely garden in Eden with every variety of trees for fruit and beauty, and who decorated the earth with most lovely flowers of every description and hue, has given tangible proofs that He is pleased with the beautiful. (White, 1948:258)

Selected pictures in the halls and the classrooms, appropriate quotations on bulletin boards, and soft inspirational music played over the loud-speakers before Friday vespers and Sabbath School are great help in setting the right mood and creating desired atmosphere. These speak volumes about the emphasis and direction of the school.

B. The School Programme

1. Curricular - This is the primary area of attention for IFLL. The faculty needs to understand the full import of the endeavour and firmly believe that IFLL is God's will for the school. The principal can then meet with teachers of a particular discipline, discuss the rationale, and participate in the re-structuring of the syllabus based on a thematic approach, i.e., the various units of the subjects are to be arranged under biblical themes and truths. Since faith and values belong to the affective domain, teachers need to be cautioned in their handling of the re-structured syllabus. Overdoing it will nullify the effort. Applications must be natural and not forced.

This re-structuring of learning materials and content should extend to the selection of reading material, topics for written assignment, selection of visual aids (films), and essays for examinations. A list of papers dealing with integration in various subjects is given at the end and will be helpful to those interested.

2. Co-curricular- These activities constitute the next area for attention as integration applies to the whole programme. We shall consider two aspects: namely, work programme and social activities.

A. Work Programme

Rightly organized and conducted, the work programme of the school helps to underscore the faith-life and the Christian response to the world of work. It is also intended that students learn and appreciate the dignity of labour which enables them to participate readily in community service projects. Carol Dennis points out that work helps a student integrate faith and learning in three areas:

i. Reality learning - This includes an understanding of God and his world. It also includes a greater understanding of the human nature, including self-awareness. (Holmes, 1983:6). As a person engages in work, evidences of God's orderliness and over-all design become obvious.

ii. Value development - Working with a variety of people helps one to see the different attitudes and practices. One learns to appreciate characteristics such as humility, craftsmanship, integrity, honesty, godlikeness, etc. At the same time, negative characteristics like deceit, pride, arrogance, and corruption become unattractive.

iii. Recreative aspects- Work makes persons anew. New learnings and insights make for growth. It also stimulates thinking and goads the imagination. One who loves his work, experiences transformation of mind and character. (Dennis, 1989:11-15)

It is suggested that work programme be well-organized under the supervision of staff who will work with the students and guide them in the learning of skills. Students should be given work according to their preference and ability. When students are not supervised properly and are given credit for work not done, they learn to be dishonest and untrustworthy. For IFLL and value education, careful planning and supervision are essential.

B. Social Activities

This is one area in the total programme of the school where carelessness can cause the greatest damage. Often, the nature of these activities leaves much to be desired and undermines the effect of integration. Those incharge seem to be passing the message that in the case of recreation and amusements, one's faith and values must take a back seat. Thus there is a dichotomy of faith and life.

We need to emphasize social conduct and tastes of the highest order in these activities. An attempt to affect integration in this area will take the following broad principles into consideration:

1. All social programmes should represent the work and the character of the Christian school.

2. Programmes should not be offensive to the standards of the church, but in keeping with the Adventist understanding of recreative activities.
3. School should avoid the types of entertainment which encourages selfishness, vanity, or theatrical display.
4. Programmes in which students participate in scenes portraying wordly conduct, drinking, smoking, lewdness, and violence should not be presented.
5. Profanity, vulgarity, blasphemy, swearing and impure suggestions should be avoided.

Paul sets before us the selection criteria for social activities as a quick guide to implementing IFL in this important area: "...whatsoever things are true...honest...just...pure...lovely...of good report;...think on these things." (Phil 4:8)

C. Religious life

Chapel exercises, dormitory worship hours, Mid-week prayer meetings, prayer bands, Sabbath Services, AY programmes, and Religious Emphasis weeks are activities that cater to the religious life and nurture of the students in a secondary boarding school. These become meaningful when students work with their teachers to plan and conduct them. As in the case of social programmes, disinterestedness and neglect give a negative message to the youth. If these are important activities—and we believe that they are—then the utmost care needs to be exercised to schedule and plan them. Each of these serves to strengthen the faith-life and to provide beautiful worship experiences. Taken seriously, they will help to create a true spiritual climate on the campus. Entertainment is not worship, and it is possible to substitute the former for the latter.

There is a significant statement in the book Education, page 77, which has a direct bearing on this issue: "With the people of that age, the value of all things (spiritual) was determined by outward show. As religion had declined in power, it had increased in pomp. The educators of the time sought to command respect by display and ostentation. To all this the life of Jesus presented a marked contrast." The quiet prayer life of Jesus built the inner strength and resilience of the spirit. Our students need something solid and enduring, not glamorous and ephemeral.

The pen of inspiration has counsel to offer in the matter of planning these activities:

Of all the features of an education to be given in our school homes the religious exercises are the most important. They should be treated with the greatest solemnity and reverence, yet all the pleasantness possible should be brought into them. They should not be prolonged till they become wearisome, for the impression thus made upon the minds of the

youth will cause them to associate religion with all that is dry and uninteresting; and many will be led to cast their influence on the side of the enemy, who, if properly taught, would become a blessing to the world and to the church. The Sabbath meetings, the morning and evening service in the home and in the chapel, unless wisely planned and vitalized by the Spirit of God, may become the most formal, unpleasant, unattractive, and to the youth the most burdensome, of all the school exercises. (White, 1901:174)

D. Discipline

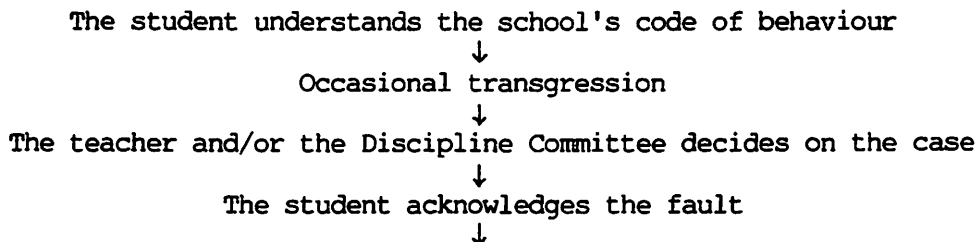
Frank Gaebelein wrote of Christian discipline:

The acid test of a Christian school or college is its handling of discipline. The manner in which an erring student is dealt with speaks volumes about the one who deals with him. Here the centre of integration shifts to fundamentals such as love, justice, and responsibility...and the greatest of these is love. (1968:91)

If the faculty is modeling Christ in an Adventist school and if the Christian virtues of love, compassion, understanding, and justice are practised, then it follows that student discipline will be redemptive in nature. A school cannot be Christian and have punitive discipline as its policy.

Redemptive discipline...involves the creation of an educational environment in which students may—in the context of a principled code of conduct—exercise their freedom and assume responsibility in order to develop a Christ-like character, knowing that they will be treated with dignity as valued human beings. The approach of Christian teachers and administrators will be redemptive because it will seek by precept and example to restore in each student the image of the Creator, defaced by the fall. (Rasi, 1990:2)

According to Dr Rasi, student mis-conduct, if approached correctly, can lead to positive character development. He suggests the following steps in dealing with student discipline (Rasi, 1990:8):



If appropriate, those responsible for the student are informed



Reasonable punishment is administered with loving concern



Forgiveness is assured



The student learns, grows, and matures

Redemptive discipline, thus substantiates and lends meaning to the faith-life integration.

IV. The Expectation

In the foregoing pages, an attempt has been made to suggest broad guidelines to facilitate integration in the various activities and programmes of the school. Two expected results of total integration are: an improved spiritual tone, and a greater awareness and interest in outreach activities.

Improved spiritual tone

Successful and total integration is expected to bring about a high degree of spirituality in the students and the staff. There will be fewer problems involving discipline. Dormitory life will be pleasant. More students will consider accepting Christ and getting baptized. A spirit of belonging and trust will be evident.

The indispensable role of God-fearing and committed teachers in improving the spiritual atmosphere as an expected consequence of successful integration cannot be minimized. Their sincere, although not perfect, attempts to live an exemplary life will be a steadying influence upon the youth in search of answers and models.

D Douglas Devnich, in his article Christ-centered Religious Life Activities, believes that "Since the youth come ... to learn from appointed teachers, meaningful testimony about Jesus Christ must therefore begin with the teachers. The faculty must be ready to respond when the youth indicate a Christ-centered experience...The youth who come to one of our schools must know immediately that the conversation and the activities of this school are filled with the blessed name of Jesus. When this happens, Christian education will not be merely a pill of secular education with a chocolate coating, but it will be integrally Christ-centered."

He suggests that we de-emphasize religious life activities and emphasize religious life experiences. This, he says, "may call for a complete change of attitude toward Christian service. All the energies of the educational process will then be turned toward leading students into an experimental religion with Christ. Indoctrination and theorization about the Christian faith are part of an ineffective methodology in religious education. The contemporary answer for developing spiritual maturity is

found in sharing relationship of a growth group". He believes that opportunities for students to witness in their classrooms, chapel periods, social activities will prepare them for witnessing to strangers and non-Christians.

Outereach activities

Thus motivated, the school should find greater urgency in organizing and planning activities which will help it fulfill its role as Walter S Athearn envisages. The church school, according to him, exists "(a) to develop intelligent and efficient Christian lives consecrated to the extension of God's kingdom on earth, and (b) to train efficient leaders for all phases of church work." He goes on to say that "the church that fails to provide a school for the training of workers for its various activities will be forced to call into leadership men and women who are unprepared for the duties they are asked to perform, and the work of the church will suffer as a consequence. Efficient church work demands trained leadership, and training for leadership is one of the functions of the church school." (Athearn, 1914:1)

It follows, then, that in the light of its mission as set forth above, the Adventist boarding secondary school cannot be indecisive about its responsibilities for providing well-organized outreach activities which will help the students find fulfilment and the genuine joy of exercising their Christian faith. The faculty will discover that, as a result of IFL in all areas of school life and activities, students will involve themselves more willingly in the two outreach activities to be organized by the school, namely, witnessing and community service, thus fulfilling the Athearnian vision of training for the future.

1. Witnessing

Witnessing is a whole-life experience, because Christ enters into every phase of our lives. When witnessing becomes a separate compartment, it loses its true meaning...Witnessing is primarily what one is, not what one does. It is showing one's concern for others...It is giving one's self to others...It is life with Christ." (Witness, p. 12).

In other words, witnessing is the integration of faith and life. Students whose lives are touched by living faith as inspired by the integrative process, will find meaning and joy in telling others about their own experiences, and the positive response of their listeners will lift their own faith to new heights.

The Adventist Youth department prepares a lot of material and visual aids to help young people with witnessing activities. Singing bands, friendship teams, and prayer bands are some of the opportunities for sharing their joy of salvation. It is saddening that many school programmes are so structured that these activities are neglected for want of time. Administrators who have not prayerfully considered the need for integration will ever have this excuse available.

2. Community Service

Paul gives us the rationale for engaging in service activities in and for the community: "For the grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all men, training us to renounce irreligion and worldly passions, and to live sober, upright, and godly lives in this world, awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity and to purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds" (Titus 2:11-13). Paul recognizes that while Christians wait for the appearing of their Saviour, this waiting is dynamic, and involves "godly lives" including zeal for "good deeds". Ellen White held up the importance of practical religion before the church by confirming that "The world will be convinced, not by what the pulpit teaches, but by what the church lives. The minister in the desk announces the theory of the gospel; the practical piety of the church demonstrates its power." (White, 1902:16)

Thus participation in community service projects makes the student understand that he is part of his community and can contribute towards easing the lot of its members. He becomes conscious of the mission of the church. He gains confidence to look at the world as his arena of service and comprehends issues causing global concern. He becomes a true "neighbour".

Three principles are to be in mind while selecting a community service project (Community, pp. 28-30):

1. It should help people in their basic needs. The Bible includes the poor, blind, lame, weak, hungry, homeless, fatherless, needy, widows, orphans, thirsty, criminals, strangers, sick, oppressed, and afflicted as people who need our help. God makes it clear that acts of piety are of no use if the poor go hungry and the oppressed remain in bondage. The one who invests in such causes has a two-fold reason to be happy: first, because he has met the needs of a fellow human; and second, because he receives Heaven's blessings in return.

2. It should lead people to Christ. Any service that does not have this in addition to principle 1, will be no more than a social gospel. While we do not perform acts of kindness to trick people into joining the church, we joyously acknowledge that it is Christ's love that leads us to care about them. Our goal should be to extend our ministry of helping to a ministry of teaching, which in turn should lead to an invitation to become part of God's church.

3. It will be motivated by service to Christ ("Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me." Matt 25:40). This is the ultimate criterion for judging our efforts in serving others.

Ellen White has this to say: "When the nations are gathered before Him, there will be but two classes, and their eternal destiny will be determined by what they have done or have neglected to do for Him in the

person of the poor and the suffering" (White, 1940:637).

Guided by the above principles, young people can choose from a wide variety of concerns. Issue-oriented causes such as ecology, community goodwill, national integration, crime prevention, and opposition to dowry deserve youth involvement.

Students in a secondary boarding school can take up projects which help their immediate neighbours, thus bringing about goodwill and healthy public relations. Projects like adult education, clean-up drives, health education, disaster relief, social forestry, and temperance are suitable activities which they can plan and carry out with assistance from their teachers.

To a faculty dedicated to make the secondary years of their students worth-while and witness/service-oriented, and determined to live their faith, there will be plenty of ideas for involvement.

V Conclusion

In the light of the contention of this paper, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. The Adventist secondary school has the dual responsibility of providing balanced education as well as nurturing faith.
2. This nurturing necessitates the integration of faith, learning activities, and the personal life of the student.
3. Successful integration creates an awareness of one's Christian privilege to witness and to serve.

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