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Dear Brethren,

A friend told me of the upcoming International Conference on the Adventist Philosophy of Education, April 7-9, 2001, and urged me to send my thoughts if I felt impressed to do so. I sincerely hope and will pray that God's will shall be the highest priority. We are definitely in the perils of the very last days. Inspiration tells us that "All schools among us will soon be closed up." Special Testimonies on Church Schools. 39. Noting the "Newsbreak" article in the March 8, 2001 issue of the Review regarding a California State ruling that church institutions can no longer hire only those of their own faith could very well lead to closures.

I do hope that the counsel of the Lord through the Bible and Ellen White will take precedence above all other counsel.

I write mainly as a mother of now grown children who attended our schools and as one who also attended our schools and served on the local church school board for several years. We are told by the pen of inspiration that when we have concerns we should voice them in an appropriate manner to those at the head of the work., and I assume that you brethren are among them I am concerned about the following areas in the education of our children.

## CURRICULUM CONTENT

I remember, as a 4th grade student, that the conference decided that the reading books for grade school were too difficult for the children. They decided to eliminate the 6th grade reading book and move the 5<sup>th</sup> grade book up to 6th and the 4th grade book to up to 5th. We were falling into the common worldly notion that children could not learn such "difficult" material. As I looked at the True Education Readers of my mother's day we had already taken several steps down before my generation. My children were so bored by the lack of challenge that grade school and academy did not stimulate them. College finally provided them with something that stretched the brain. My concern is that we need to challenge the minds of our children, not give the message that learning is too difficult.

A great concern to me, and many others I know, is the worldly and even devilish content of some of the books given our students to study. When my son brought home some books from his academy classes I was shocked to find that some contained writings from infidel authors that are condemned by the Lord through Ellen White's pen - Ingersoll, Thomas Paine, Shelley, Keats, Voltaire, etc. We really need to ban any and all books that can lead our children astray.

A few years ago there was a book (can not remember the name just now) that was a required

course for all first year students at Andrews University. It was a book that taught only hypnosis, out-of-body experiences, mind control, and the related inspirations of the devil. It gave many Adventists grave concern. I contacted a professor in the Old Testament department, whom I know, and asked him about that book. He said that it had been used but that due to the outcry of many Adventist members they had discontinued the use of the book. Praise the Lord! Please see following statements.

"The youth of today will be likely to meet skeptics and infidels wherever they may go, and how necessary that they be equipped, so that they may be able to give a reason of their hope with meekness and fear. Thomas Paine has passed into his grave, but his works live to curse the world, and those who doubt the truth of God's word will place these infidel productions in the hands of the young and inexperienced, to fill their hearts with the poisonous atmosphere of doubt. The spirit of Satan works through wicked men to carry on his schemes for the ruin of souls."MYP, 85.

"There is another class of books that you should avoid,-- the productions of such infidel writers as Paine and Ingersoll. These are often urged upon you with the taunt that you are a coward, and afraid to read them. Frankly tell these enemies who would tempt you -- for enemies they are, however much they may profess to be your friends -- that you will obey God, and take the Bible as your guide. Tell them that you are afraid to read these books; that your faith in the word of God is now altogether too weak, and you want it increased and strengthened instead of diminished; and that you do not want to come in such close contact with the father of lies." FE, 93.

"In rejecting the truth, men reject its Author. In trampling upon the law of God, they deny the authority of the Lawgiver. It is as easy to make an idol of false doctrines and theories as to fashion an idol of wood or stone. Satan leads men to conceive of God in a false character, as having attributes which He does not possess. A philosophical idol is enthroned in the place of Jehovah; while the true God, as He is revealed in His Word, in Christ, and in the works of creation, is worshiped by but few. Thousands deify nature, while they deny the God of nature. Though in a different form, idolatry exists in the Christian world to-day as verily as it existed among ancient Israel in the days of Elijah. The god of many professedly wise men, of philosophers, poets, politicians, journalists, the god of polished fashionable circles, of many colleges and universities, even of some theological institutions, is little better than Baal, the sun-god of Phoenicia." ST, 07-04-1899.

"The messenger of God then took from the hands of several teachers those books which they had been making their study, some of which had been written by infidel authors and contained infidel sentiments, and laid them aside, saying: "There never has been a time in your lives when the study of these books was for your present good and advancement, or for your future, eternal good. Why will you fill your shelves with books that divert the mind from Christ? Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? Christ calls you: 'Learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart.' You need to eat of the Bread of life which came down from heaven. You need to be more diligent students of the Holy Scriptures and to drink from the living Fountain. Draw, draw from Christ in earnest prayer. Obtain a daily experience in eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of God. Human authors can never supply your great need for this time; but by beholding

Christ, the Author and Finisher of your faith, you will be changed into His likeness." 6T, 165.

"Just so when infidel authors are studied. These men have sharp intellects, and their sharp ideas are presented, and the mind of the student is influenced by them; they are pleased with their brilliance. But where did those men obtain their powers of intellect? Where did they get their sharpness? From the fountain of all knowledge. But they prostituted their powers; they gave them as a contribution to the devil, and don't you think the devil is smart? Many are traveling in the devil's tracks in reading infidel authors. Satan is sharp, and they fall in love with his learning and smartness."--Ms 8b, 1891, pp. 3, 4. (Talk to teachers, Harbor Heights, Michigan, July 27, 1891.)

#### Results of Neglecting the Treasure

"Satan works on human minds, leading them to think that there is wonderful knowledge to be gained apart from God. By deceptive reasoning he led Adam and Eve to doubt God's word, and to supply its place with a theory that led to disobedience. And his sophistry is doing today what it did in Eden. Teachers who mingle the sentiments of infidel authors with the education they are giving, plant in the minds of youth thoughts that will lead to distrust of God and transgression of His law. Little do they know what they are doing. Little do they realize what will be the result of their work." COL. 108.

"Whenever books by these infidel authors are given the precedence, and the word of God is made secondary, there will be sent out of the schools a class of students no better fitted for the service of God than they were before they received their education." CPT, 424.

"Books from the pens of infidels should have no place in the libraries of those who would serve God. They will make better kindling material for your stove than food for the mind. Infidel books have been a cause of ruin to many souls. Men have studied these books of Satan's inspiration, and they have become confused in regard to what was truth. Satan stands at the side of him who opens an infidel book, and he will educate the mind that peruses such literature, and so bewitch the soul that it will be almost impossible to break the infatuation. Let no believer flatter himself that his mountain standeth sure, and that he will never be moved away from his position of faith." OHC, 276.

"With solemn voice the Speaker continued: "Do you find with these [infidel] authors that which you can recommend as essential to true higher education? Would you dare recommend their study to students who are ignorant of their true character? Wrong habits of thought, when once accepted, become a despotic power that fastens the mind as in a grasp of steel. If many who have received and read these books had never seen them but had accepted the words of the Divine Teacher in their place, they would be far in advance of where they now are in a knowledge of the divine truths of the Word of God, which make men wise unto salvation. These books have led thousands where Satan led Adam and Eve--to a knowledge that God forbade them to have. Through their teachings, students have turned from the Word of the Lord to fables."--RH, Mar 12, 1908. "I am given words of caution to the teachers in all our established schools. The work of our schools must bear a different stamp from that borne by some of our most popular schools. The mere study of the ordinary textbook is not sufficient; and many of the books that are used are unnecessary for those schools that are established to prepare students for the school above. As

a result, the students in these schools are not receiving the most perfect Christian education. The very points of study are neglected that are most needed to prepare the students to stand the last great examination, and to fit them for missionary work in home and foreign fields." FE, 516.

"The Lord expects our teachers to expel from our schools those books that teach sentiments which are not in accordance with his Word, and to give place to those books that are of the highest value. The Lord designs that the teachers in our schools shall excel in wisdom the wisdom of the world, because they study his wisdom. God will be honored when the teachers in our schools, from the highest grades to the lowest, show to the world that a more than human wisdom is theirs, because the Master Teacher is standing at their head." RH, 11-07-1907.

## SPORTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

It has been my observation that sports and entertainment have taken the lions share of the thought processes of the young people in our schools. Not only are we encouraging such things among our students but we are in many cases now having our sports teams join in the leagues with other private as well as public schools. This flies completely in the face of all divine counsel. I have had much opportunity to listen to the students of our elementary schools and academies talking among themselves. I would have to say that sports and entertainment as well as frivolous talk about the opposite sex and sex in general (even at the first grade level) are the common threads that run through 99% of the conversations. See following statements.

"Vigorous exercise the pupils must have. Few evils are more to be dreaded than indolence and aimlessness. Yet the tendency of most athletic sports is a subject of anxious thought to those who have at heart the well-being of the youth. Teachers are troubled as they consider the influence of these sports both on the student's progress in school and on his success in afterlife. The games that occupy so much of his time are diverting the mind from study. They are not helping to prepare the youth for practical, earnest work in life. Their influence does not tend toward refinement, generosity, or real manliness." AH, 500.

"In April, 1900, a holiday was appointed at the Avondale school for Christian workers. The program for the day provided for a meeting in the chapel in the morning, at which I and others addressed the students, calling their attention to what God had wrought in the building up of this school, and to their privilege and opportunities as students.

"After the meeting, the remainder of the day was spent by the students in various games and sports, some of which were frivolous, rude, and grotesque.

"During the following night I seemed to be witnessing the performances of the afternoon. The scene was clearly laid out before me, and I was given a message for the manager and teachers of the school.

"I was shown that in the amusements carried on at the school that afternoon the enemy gained a victory, and teachers were weighed in the balances and found wanting. I was greatly distressed

and burdened to think that those standing in responsible positions should open the door and, as it were, invite the enemy in; for this they did in permitting the exhibitions that took place. As teachers, they should have stood firm against giving place to the enemy in any such line. By what they permitted they marred their record and grieved the Spirit of God. The students were encouraged in a course the effects of which were not easily effaced. There is no end to the path of vain amusements, and every step taken in it is a step in a path which Christ has not traveled.

"This introduction of wrong plans was the very thing that should have been jealously guarded against. The Avondale school was established, not to be like the schools of the world, but, as God revealed, to be a pattern school. And since it was to be a pattern school, those in charge of it should have perfected everything after God's plan, discarding all that was not in harmony with His will. Had their eyes been anointed with the heavenly eyesalve, they would have realized that they could not permit the exhibition that took place that afternoon, without dishonoring God.

"On Wednesday morning when I spoke to the students and to the others who had assembled, the words that the Lord gave me to speak, I did not know anything of what was to take place afterward; for no intimation of it had come to me. How could those at the head of the school harmonize with the words spoken the proceedings that followed, which were of a character to make of no effect the instruction that had just come to them from God? If their perceptions had not been greatly beclouded, they would have understood this instruction as rebuking all such proceedings."I felt deeply the importance of the words that the Lord gave me at this time for teachers and students. This instruction presented before the students duties of the highest order; and to efface by the amusements afterward entered into, the good impressions made, was virtually saying, "We want not Thy way, O God; we want our own way; we want to follow our own wisdom."In the night season I was a witness to the performance that was carried on on the school grounds. The students who engaged in the grotesque mimicry that was seen, acted out the mind of the enemy, some in a very unbecoming manner. A view of things was presented before me in which the students were playing games of tennis and cricket. Then I was given instruction regarding the character of these amusements. They were presented to me as a species of idolatry, like the idols of the nations.

"There were more than visible spectators on the ground. Satan and his angels were there, making impressions on human minds. Angels of God, who minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation, were also present, not to approve, but to disapprove. They were ashamed that such an exhibition should be given by the professed children of God. The forces of the enemy gained a decided victory, and God was dishonored. He who gave His life to refine, ennoble, and sanctify human beings was grieved at the performance.

"Hearing a voice, I turned to see who spoke to me. Then with dignity and solemnity One said, "Is this the celebration for the anniversary of the opening of the school? Is this the gratitude offering you present to God for the blessings He has given you? The world could render as acceptable an offering on this memorial occasion. The teachers are making the same mistake that has been made over and over again. They should learn wisdom from the experiences of the past. The careless, godless world can offer an abundance of such offerings as these, in a much more acceptable manner."

"Turning to the teachers, He said, "You have made a mistake the effects of which it will be hard to efface. The Lord God of Israel is not glorified in the school. If at this time the Lord should permit your life to end, many would be lost, eternally separated from God and the righteous."

"These things are a repetition of the course of Aaron, when at the foot of Sinai he allowed the first beginning of wrong by permitting a spirit of reveling and commonness to come into the camp of Israel. Moses was in the mount with God, and Aaron had been left in charge. He showed his weakness by not standing firmly against the propositions of the people. He could have exercised his authority to hold the congregation back from wrong-doing; but just as in his home he failed with his children, so he showed the same defective administration in his management of Israel. His weakness as a general was seen in his desire to please the people, even at the sacrifice of principle. He lost his power of command at the very first permission that he gave which allowed them to go contrary to God's commands in the least particular. And as a result the spirit of idolatry came in, and the current set in motion could not be stayed until stern and decisive measures had been taken." CPT, 348-351.

"It seems that teachers and students were too stunned to speak. But the message sank into hearts and was effective. Faculty and students did some prayerful studying and thinking. Hughes reported that the equipment was disposed of, and recreation was found in activities other than sports and games." The Australian Years 1891-1900, p. 445.

"Many of the amusements popular in the world today, even with those who claim to be Christians, tend to the same end as did those of the heathen. There are indeed few among them that Satan does not turn to account in destroying souls. Through the drama he has worked for ages to excite passion and glorify vice. The opera, with its fascinating display and bewildering music, the masquerade, the dance, the card table, Satan employs to break down the barriers of principle and open the door to sensual indulgence. In every gathering for pleasure where pride is fostered or appetite indulged, where one is led to forget God and lose sight of eternal interests, there Satan is binding his chains about the soul." MLT, 87.

"You have no time to devote to the theater or the dance hall. You have no time to grumble. It is lost, lost. You have no time to play cards. You have no time to attend horse races. You have no time to attend shows. How is it with my soul? . . . Have I a living connection with God? If I have, I must seek to win these souls that are attracted with these outward pleasures. Satan has managed it. Satan has devised it that one pleasure should crowd on the heels of another, a feverish excitement. No time to contemplate God, no time to think of heaven or heavenly things, no time to study the Bible, no time to put forth interested efforts for those that are out of Christ." RC, 247

"Many place themselves on the enchanted ground by frequenting scenes of amusement where fallen spirits congregate. Professing Christian, when you resort to the theater, remember that Satan is there, conducting the play as the master-actor. He is there to excite passion and glorify vice. The very atmosphere is permeated with licentiousness. Satan presides, also, at the masquerade and the dance; he throws around the card-table its bewitching power. Wherever an

influence is exerted to cause men to forget their Creator, there Satan is at work, it matters not how innocent the guise under which he conceals his purpose." ST, 05-18-1882.

"The Theater the Hotbed of Immorality.--Among the most dangerous resorts for pleasure is the theater. Instead of being a school for morality and virtue, as is so often claimed, it is the very hotbed of immorality. Vicious habits and sinful propensities are strengthened and confirmed by these entertainments. Low songs, lewd gestures, expressions, and attitudes deprave the imagination and debase the morals. Every youth who habitually attends such exhibitions will be corrupted in principle. There is no influence in our land more powerful to poison the imagination, to destroy religious impressions, and to blunt the relish for the tranquil pleasures and sober realities of life than theatrical amusements. The love for these scenes increases with every indulgence as the desire for intoxicating drink strengthens with its use. The only safe course is to shun the theater, the circus, and every other questionable place of amusement." AH, 516.

"Never can the proper education be given to the youth in this country, or any other country, unless they are separated a wide distance from the cities. The customs and practices in the cities unfit the minds of the youth for the entrance of truth. The liquor-drinking, the smoking and gambling, the horse-racing, the theater-going, the great importance placed upon holidays,--all are a species of idolatry, a sacrifice upon idol altars." LS, 351.

## MODESTY AND DEPORTMENT

I was taught by my mother and grandmother as a child to maintain the standards of modesty in dress that the Lord has given us through inspiration in the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy. During my academy years it became a real trial. The schools I attended began lowering the standard of dress in those years. Not only were girls encouraged to dress like boys, wearing pants, but any who felt it was inappropriate were ridiculed by many other students. The hemlines and necklines, etc. were receding as well. As I go onto our school campuses now it seems there is no dress standard. And with standards in modesty of dress the standards in deportment also disappeared (even among the faculty).

When my daughter left home for college she was shocked and disappointed. As she spoke to me of the professors and prominent church members who were shopping after sundown on Friday or going out to eat on Sabbath, things that stood out to young people, she said "Mom, we were not raised that way, this church is not like our little church. I don't feel comfortable here." My son upon attending the same college for a time decided he could live at home and attend a community college and have less unchristian influence and for far less cost. The following statement is on this subject.

"When those who have reached the years of youth and manhood see no difference between our schools and the colleges of the world, and have no preference as to which they attend, though error is taught by precept and example in the schools of the world, then there is need of closely examining the reasons that lead to such a conclusion. Our institutions of learning may swing into worldly conformity. Step by step they may advance to the world; but they are prisoners of hope, and God will correct and enlighten them, and bring them back to their upright position of

distinction from the world. I am watching with intense interest, hoping to see our schools thoroughly imbued with the spirit of true and undefiled religion. When the students are thus imbued, they will see that there is a great work to be done in the lines in which Christ worked, and the time they have given to amusements will be given up to doing earnest missionary work. They will endeavor to do good to all about them, to lift up souls that are bowed down in discouragement, and to enlighten those who are in the darkness of error. They will put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof." Review and Herald, Jan. 9, 1894.

I truly hope that this conference will be a step to bring about the needed changes mentioned above. Surely there are those who will be attending who will see the need of change and have the courage to institute reform.

Just about 8 years ago I took an academy senior to college days at one of our campuses. I was going for a few days to see my daughter who lived in that area and this girl wanted to go early as well since her sister was also living there. Her sister was due to have her first child and she hoped she could be there for the occasion. It turned out that she had her baby and her sister was there for the full time, missing the college day activities. I went to meet the leader, who had brought a busload of seniors, to let him know she would not be coming. Driving through the campus I would never have known it was supposed to be Christian by looking. A very loud rock group made up of students were "entertaining" the seniors. Across the street a couple, very scantily clad, were making out on the lawn. I thought to myself, "she was better off being with her sister." I guess I am wondering if the word "standards" has meaning any more. I certainly hope so. Most of our young people are struggling at best and leaving at worst. Please help. See below.

"The teachers of truth must be wise men, very careful of their words and actions. They must be men who will give meat in due season to the flock of God; men who will not give the least sanction to low standards of living; men who have that faith which works by love, and purifies the soul from all carnal thoughts and desires. Workers of this character will not grovel in earthliness; they will not be in bondage to human beings or to Satan's temptations. They will quit themselves like men, and be strong. They will turn their faces to the Sun of Righteousness, rising above all base things into an atmosphere free from spiritual and moral defilement." GW15, 127.

"Cherish the precious, priceless gem of modesty. This will guard virtue. . . . I feel impelled by the Spirit of the Lord to urge my sisters who profess godliness to cherish modesty of deportment and a becoming reserve. . . . I have inquired, When will the youthful sisters act with propriety? I know there will be no decided change for the better until parents feel the importance of greater carefulness in educating their children correctly. Teach them to act with reserve and modesty." CG, 144, 145.

"Pride, self-esteem, and boldness are marked characteristics of the children of this day; and they are the curse of the age. . . . The most sacred lessons of modesty and humility are to be taught to the children, both at home and in the Sabbath school." CG, 144.

## PRINCIPLES

I grew up a very shy person. When my children were in the first few grades of primary school several things happened that drew me "out of my shell" and into an active roll in the schools. In first and second grades my daughter would talk to me about the things other children talked about at school. I mentioned earlier that sex was much talked about even in those grades. She was dressed in dresses and wished to be so. Pressure from friends was hard for a young child. By fourth and fifth grades drugs were being brought to school by one of her friends. These things concerned us very much. In the middle of her fifth grade year her teacher told us that if we valued our daughter we should immediately remove her from this school. This we did. Nothing was being done. There were other problems, lack of discipline and lack of support from the principal. About two thirds of the parents wanted to do something about this. I was asked by several other parents if I would talk to the board. I told them that I would only if they would all speak up. At a special board meeting, all but one of the concerned parents showed up. We each one presented our case to the board and gave our suggestions for reform. They told us there would be no change. The following year two thirds of the parents moved their children to other schools. It was the only way to improve their situation and have standards and discipline.

I tell you these things because I know that drastic changes for the better are desperately needed. It is my decided belief, from studying the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy, that the very first things we need to be teaching our children, in every grade, every year, are the principles they need to apply what they learn. As a child I can remember many "do's and don'ts" being "taught". It was not until adulthood and into parenthood (sadly) that I understood (from study and prayer) that do's and don'ts are not our salvation. They are necessary. Rules, well chosen, ARE necessary. But, and I believe this is a big but, I needed to understand the reasons, the whys and wherefores, the principles of action, what was behind the do's and don'ts. The Bible is full of "how to". This is the foundation that our children need at home and in school. From first grade up, advancing in knowledge and application of principles with each grade level. One concern I have is, that like myself, far too many of us adults in the church have not learned or are just beginning to learn the principles and how to apply them to their own lives. Our educators and church leaders need to be learning, living, and teaching these principles. I have been trying in my own church, as Sabbath School Superintendent, to help people understand these principles. God help us to retrieve our children before it is too late.

## MISSION

I believe that every student in every Adventist school should go, at some point, on at least one good mission trip. Everyone that I know of who has done this has said they have been profoundly changed for the better. Since mission is our reason for existence what better training can we give.

"The home missionary work will be farther advanced in every way when a more liberal, self-denying, self-sacrificing spirit is manifested for the prosperity of foreign missions; for the prosperity of the home work depends largely, under God, upon the reflex influence of the evangelical work done in countries afar off. It is in working actively to supply the necessities of the cause of God that we bring our souls in touch with the Source of all power." Testimonies, vol. 6, p.27. God bless you and each person who participates in this Conference, I will be praying that

the Holy Spirit will be present in great measure.

Praying that every heart and mind will be filled and used to bring about the needed changes.

Following are a couple thought provoking statements with which I will close.

"There is great need of elevating the standard of righteousness in our schools, to give instruction after God's order. Should Christ enter our institutions for the education of the youth, He would cleanse them as He cleansed the temple, banishing many things that have a defiling influence. Many of the books which the youth study would be expelled, and their places would be filled with others that would inculcate substantial knowledge, and abound in sentiments which might be treasured in the heart, in precepts that might govern the conduct. Is it the Lord's purpose that false principles, false reasoning, and the sophistries of Satan should be kept before the mind of our youth and children? Shall pagan and infidel sentiments be presented to our students as valuable additions to their store of knowledge? The works of the most intellectual skeptic are works of a mind prostituted to the service of the enemy, and shall those who claim to be reformers, who seek to lead the children and youth in the right way, in path cast up, imagine that God will be pleased with having them present to the youth that which will misrepresent His character, placing Him in a false light before the young? Shall the sentiments of unbelievers, the expressions of dissolute men, be advocated as worthy of the student's attention, because they are the productions of men whom the world admires as great thinkers? Shall men professing to believe in God, gather from these unsanctified authors their expressions and sentiments, and treasure them up as precious jewels to be stored away among the riches of the mind?--God forbid." FCE, 174. CPT, 25. CE, 71. RH, 11-17-1891, par. 2.

"In every school Satan will try to make himself the guide of the teachers who are instructing the students. It is he who would introduce the idea that selfish amusements are a necessity. It is he who would lead students, sent to our schools for the purpose of receiving an education and training for the work of evangelists, ministers, and missionaries, to believe that amusements are essential to keep them in physical health, when the Lord has presented to them that the better way is for them to embrace manual labor in their education, and thus let useful employment take the place of selfish amusements. These amusements, if followed, soon develop a dislike for useful, healthful exercise of body and mind, such as would make students efficient to serve themselves and others." 8MR, 151, 152.

Again God bless you.

Sincerely yours in Christ.

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