

## EDITORIAL

# EXCELLENCE— A Hallmark of Christian Education

**B**y teaching their students the meaning of good education, they are teaching America as well.”<sup>1</sup> This was the concluding statement of President Ronald Reagan’s address delivered to the principals representing the 152 outstanding U.S. secondary schools honored at a White House ceremony on September 28, 1983. Then in a burst of confidence that the American secondary schools can accomplish the national objective for educational excellence, the President exclaimed, “America can do it.”

President Reagan’s confidence stemmed from the fact that the records of these schools showed outstanding characteristics such as: (1) a team effort by school personnel and parents in promoting the goals of the schools; (2) shared basic ideas of what constitutes a good education; (3) resourcefulness; (4) a vigorous emphasis on good teaching; and (5) a desire to maintain a high standard of education, disregarding the common approach. Academic excellence flourishes in such a school climate.

Despite the presence of all these educational correlates that consti-

tute an excellent secular education, one notable dimension is not properly addressed in the secular system. This ingredient serves as a leaven that raises education to greater heights of true excellence. That vital ingredient is the knowledge of God. In the words of Ellen G. White, “In a knowledge of God all true education and real development have their source.”<sup>2</sup>

Christian education should not stay under the shadow of secular education; instead, it should cast its enlightening rays to benefit mankind. Dr. George Akers, Dean of the School of Education at Andrews University, has this to say: “We have not been called just to be a pale, faint xerox copy of the prevailing secular schools of the day. . . .”<sup>3</sup> How do we respond to this call to be an original?

It is accurate to say that Christian education assumes a similar educational framework to that of secular education, for it values and promotes a high level of scholarship in its teachers and students and embraces modern educational trends when they are in harmony with its philosophy and objectives. However, there is a vast difference in its substance. The substance of Christian education has the power to influence students’ lives now and in the hereafter, for it “prepares the student for the joy of service in this world [the goal of secular education], and for the higher joy of wider service in the world to come.”<sup>4</sup> Are we truly in the business of providing this kind of education?

Occasionally, in our desire to obtain a high rank on the educational scoreboard of society, we have the tendency to sideline Christian values in our schools and, instead, emphasize programs and activities that society can readily appreciate and praise. There appears to be an imbalance when our recognition of our students’ religious leadership performance is compared with our enthusiasm when they triumph in sports competition. We extoll the literary and academic achievements of our pupils in glowing descriptions, but our remarks are dull and muted when we discuss their religious experience in the school. We should not simply follow general practice; instead, we should reveal the true excellence of Christian education.

By educating the youth of the church in the essential knowledge that will prepare them to meet the exigencies of life and by inculcating Christian values in their hearts and minds, we are opting for a high educational standard. With faith and determination, such excellence can be achieved.—  
A.C.S. □

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Ronald Reagan, “Educational Excellence 1982-83,” *American Education* (December, 1983), p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1903), p. 14.

<sup>3</sup> George Akers, “Education as Ministry,” *Administration* (Winter, 1983), p. 12.

<sup>4</sup> White, *Education*, p. 13.