

Building Up the Culture

EDITOR

VICTOR S. GRIFFITHS

ASSOCIATE EDITORS

G. H. AKERS

M. L. HARTLEIN

GORDON MADGWICK

HUMBERTO M. RASI

C. B. ROCK

A. C. SEGOVIA

F. R. STEPHAN

ASSISTANT EDITOR

BEVERLY J. ROBINSON-

RUMBLE

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

G. F. CLIFFORD

GERALD F. COLVIN

CLARENCE DUNBEBIN

T. S. GERATY

R. L. HILDE

C. B. HIRSCH

ERMA J. LEE

MELVIN NORTHRUP

R. L. REYNOLDS

C. R. TAYLOR

BOOK REVIEW EDITOR

C. E. BOYATT

RESEARCH EDITOR

GEORGE KNIGHT

DESIGN CONSULTANT

HOWARD BULLARD

LAYOUT ARTIST

RAYMOND C. HILL

THE JOURNAL OF ADVENTIST EDUCATION (ISSN 0021-6460) publishes articles concerned with a variety of topics pertinent to SDA education. Opinions expressed by our writers do not necessarily represent the views of the editors or the official position of the Department of Education of the General Conference.

Issued bimonthly, October through May, and a summer issue for June, July, August, and September by the Department of Education, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 6840 Eastern Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20012. (202) 722-6407 or 6412. Subscription price, \$11.95. Single copy, \$2.50. Price may vary where national currencies are different. Printed by University Printers, 537 Grove St., Berrien Springs, MI 49103, to whom all communications concerning change of address should be sent, giving both old and new address. *When writing about your subscription, please enclose the address label from the wrapper in which you received the journal.* Address all editorial and advertising communications to the Editor. Copyright © 1988 by University Printers.

Recent surveys of various church constituencies reveal that a broad spectrum of the membership still cherish the basic vision of the SDA Church's mission through its services and institutions. Many members are still motivated to sustain the unique identity of this movement.

However, there is evidence that, at least in pockets, we are experiencing shifts in consciousness regarding what values should be promoted aggressively and what life-styles are acceptable for faith-affirming Adventists. Increased drug usage, movie watching, and indulgence in alcoholic beverages suggest the willingness of many to yield certain distinctive beliefs and behavior in the interest of personal satisfaction.

Through their experiments with drugs, sex, and nontraditional life-styles, it appears that many Adventists are willing to accept aspects of the secular culture without first testing such practices against church standards or teachings. The church has aged and become more affluent and educated in the ways of a liberal society. Because of this, it must confront certain evils nesting within its ranks, evils that once were readily denounced as alien to its mission. In recent times such evils seem more difficult to expurgate.

Church administrators and educators must constantly wrestle with these challenges to the character and spiritual vitality of our movement. In a sense the faith has fallen victim to strong cultural bias. This bias has been produced in part by the failure of the nation to affirm strongly held views of the past.

Allan Bloom, in *The Closing of the American Mind*, describes the gradual debasing of a once robust social, philosophic, and intellectual consciousness, which has led to a type of moral bankruptcy. In analyzing this trend, he places the blame squarely on the American educational system. Teachers no longer emphasize values worth espousing and defending. Rather, they advocate an "openness" that homogenizes and trivializes all values, creating an era of superficiality.

The attitude that questions all traditions and opens itself to all ideologies, without any sense of unchanging principles, has left today's youth rootless and searching for instant gratification. Even if they have heard of Moses, Ulysses, Christ, Michelangelo, Columbus, Lincoln, or Martin Luther King, they do not find such people admirable or worthy of emulation. Protective self-interest is now their idol.

As Bloom says, "This is the first fully historical or historicized generation, not only in theory but also in practice, and the result is not the cultivation of the vastest sympathies for long ago and far away, but rather an exclusive interest in themselves."—Page 108.

In a sense we still represent the general loss of depth of spiritual insight, concern, or responsibility as T. S. Eliot has pictured it:

We are the hollow men
We are the stuffed men
Leaning together
Headpiece filled with straw, Alas! . . .
Shape without form, shade without color,
Paralysed forces, gesture without motion;
"The Hollow Men" (lines 1-4 and 11, 12).

This picture does not infer less intelligence or a lessened need for
Continued on page 38

competent persons I know is a miserable failure as a teacher because he cannot relate to people. He does not want to bother to learn who his students are or where they come from, either literally or figuratively. To him the subject is the only important thing. Consequently students dislike him and learn little from his classes.

Teachers who genuinely love and respect their students irrespective of color, race, background, sex, intelligence, or any other factor will find that they are always remembered as a good teacher. If, in addition, a teacher makes successful use of the other points listed above, he or she will find, as I have, that parents will send their children to his classroom even to the third generation! □

CONTRACTING—A WAY TO INCREASE STUDENT LEARNING

Continued from page 17

help they need. When I am busy with others they know they should look at their picture contracts and find something that they can do on

their own such as work a puzzle, color a picture, look at a book, or feed the class pets. Using the contract system, first graders become quite independent by Christmas break.

When students finish their contracts for the day they have four choices. They may begin the next day's contract (You would be surprised at how many want to do that!), listen to a story tape, read, or work in one of the dozen or so learning centers.

As a rule primary students work best on a daily contract system while students in grades four and above handle a weekly contract without difficulty.

Weekly Work Contracts

As a rule primary students work best on a daily contract system while students in grades four and above handle a weekly contract without difficulty. Some junior high students can handle monthly

contracts. However, I have found that even older students find it simpler to start with a daily contract and work up to longer time periods.

History of Contracting

Contracting as a technique for individualizing was conceived by Helen Parkhurst based on ideas she gleaned from Edgar Swift, Frederic Burk, and Dr. Montessori. Her ideas were first tried in Dalton, Massachusetts in 1919. Known as the Dalton Plan, contracting soon found a place in thousands of schools around the world.

Popular during the 1920s, contracting went out of style, not to reemerge until the 1970s. Although contracts are used at the elementary level, most educational research in the 1980s has taken place at the secondary or college level.

Advantage of Contracting

Contracting has many advantages for both teacher and student:

For the Teacher . . .

Contracts do:

1. Free the teacher for more individualized time with students.
2. Allow the preparation of up-front presentations.
3. Transfer the responsibility for learning to the student.
4. Make it easier to individualize assignments.
5. Expedite reporting procedures.

Contracts do not:

1. Demand specialized training.
2. Require expensive equipment.

For the Student . . .

Contracts:

1. Help students take responsibility for their own education.
2. Enable students to regulate their work pace.
3. Give students more choices with timing and order of work.
4. Allow students to work independently.
5. Challenge students to seek answers in a variety of ways.
6. Teach students to work closely with the teacher in meeting their objectives.
7. Help students set reachable, yet challenging goals.

EDITORIAL *Continued from page 3*

the substantive culture that once gave us great art, great warriors, great statesmen, great religious leaders, and great educators. It does imply that both home and school need to cooperate to arrest the intellectual and spiritual malaise that pervades our society. Parents and educators need to inspire our youth to deeply regard the values we treasure, the life patterns that lead to significant living, and the vision that sees beyond personal or immediate gratification to the realizing of long-term and eternal objectives.

Bloom's work highlights the seriousness with which we need to take the Christian teacher's mission in education, its tremendous potential to shape the future for the better. To fail to see a well-defined system of values as important and necessary to the sacred work we share is to admit our own impoverishment, our urgent need to be renewed in mind and spirit.

While it may be futile to try to recover the past, we can affirm in our modern context those eternal principles that speak to deep-seated human need. We can captivate the imagination and passion of our youth and inspire them to be honest, noble, responsible, and courageous. We can work to overcome the abuse and exploitation of our neighbors by identifying and strengthening those principles and practices worthy of defending against accommodation or superficiality.—V.S.G.