MORAL DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS:
THE ROLE OF ADVENTISTS HIGHER EDUCATION

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Moral education is becoming an increasingly popular topic in the fields of psychology and education. Media reports of increased violent juvenile crime, teen pregnancy, and suicide have caused many to declare a moral crisis in the world. While not all of these social concerns are moral in nature, and most have complex origins, there is a growing trend towards linking the solutions to these and related social problems to the teaching of moral and social values in our schools. However, considerations of the role schools can and should play in the moral development of youth are themselves the subject of controversy. Should schools include moral education in the curriculum? This is a question that has been debated on over the years.

The question is even more prominent when it comes to Adventist education. Seventh-day Adventists exist for the preparation of better citizens in this world and of a people for the kingdom of God soon to come. As such, preparation of a people with the highest possible moral and spiritual development is fundamental. Ellen White, one of the founders of SDA Church has said, "Higher than the highest human thought can reach is God's ideal for His children. Godliness--godlikeness--is the goal to be reached" (White, *Ed* 18.3).[1] How does Adventist education reach this goal? Why should moral development become a primary focus of Seventh-day Adventist education? Another question to consider is: What is the role of higher education in promoting ethical development?

This essay is an attempt to answer these questions by (1) defining moral development, (2) understanding major theories on moral development as advanced by Piaget, Kohlberg, Turiel, and Fowler, and (3) postulating the role of Adventist higher education in the field of

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[1]For full reference, see works cited at the end

moral development.

MORAL DEVELOPMENT: WHAT IT IS

Moral development has to do with ethics. Higgins has defined ethics as the "science and art of man as man" (6). It has to do with the acquisition or repudiation of all those qualities which form character, good or bad. It is concerned with behavior and the causes of behavior. The sort of influence each class and each student has in forming the tone of the school depends upon how fully ethical principles are accepted and used as the basis of conduct, or to what extent they are ignored (Gladwin 20). The word *ethics* is a transliteration into English of a Greek word which is equivalent to the term *morals*. Higgins further defines ethics as: "the philosophic science which establishes the right or moral order human acts, that is, in the light of first principles, ethics determines the absolutely necessary norms of free acts whose realization in practice truly makes us men" (8).

As educators, it is our duty to make our students understand that education is not a preparation for what they hope will be an easy, well-paid life. It does not set out to make a boy capable of a 'white-shirt' job. Its primary aim is to make it possible for a man to live as full and as happy a life as possible. It tries to make him like and appreciate the things that are worthwhile in life. It tries to show him that there are more things in life than the pursuit of money and the power that money brings. It tries to show him a way of life good for his soul, his mind, and his body (Byrne 2).

In her book *Child Guidance*, White emphasizes that children are in great need of proper education in order that they may be of use in the world."But any effort that exalts intellectual culture above moral training is misdirected. Instructing, cultivating, polishing, and refining the youth and children should be the main burden of both parents and teachers" (296). She further states that "if the moral qualities of children are neglected by parents and teachers, they are sure to be perverted" (480).

MORAL DEVELOPMENT:

THEORIES OF PIAGET, KOHLBERG, TURIEL, AND FOWLER

Four names appear foremost in any discussion on moral development: Jean Piaget, a Swiss child psychologist, Lawrence Kohlberg, a professor for many years at Harvard University; Elliot Turiel, the Chancellor's Professor of Yale University; and James Fowler, a Methodist minister who was also a professor at Harvard University.

MORAL DEVELOPMENT: PIAGET'S COGNITIVE-DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH

This approach is called *cognitive* because "it recognized that moral education, like intellectual education, has its basis in stimulating the *active thinking* of the child about moral issues and decisions." The *developmental* part means that it "sees the aims of moral education as movements through moral stages." Piaget's model consists of two stages as explained by Dudley (87-89).

Stage 1: "Heteronomous morality" or "morality of constraint"

This first stage of moral development occurs from approximately 6 to 10 years of age. The distinguishing marks are:

1. An obligation to obey rules because they are sacred and unalterable.

2. The judging of behaviors as totally right or totally wrong—no gray areas.

3. The magnitude of the consequences as the determination of the rightness or wrongness of an act.

4. Whether an act conforms exactly to the rules and/or whether it elicits punishment.

5. The concept of "imminent justice"—violations of a rule are followed by misfortunes that are construed as punishments.

Stage 2: "Autonomous morality," "morality of cooperation," or "reciprocity"

Children from 11 years on up are said to enter this stage. During this stage:

1. Rules are established and maintained through reciprocal social agreement and thus are subject to modification in response to human needs or other situational demands.

2. Diversity in views of right and wrong, rather than moral absolutism, is seen as possible.

3. Right and wrong are determined not simply by the consequences of an act but by the motives and intention to deceive.

4. Punishment is not impersonally ordained. Natural consequences exist. Punishment should be reciprocally related to the misdeed.

5. Duty and obligation, rather than being merely obedience to authority, are more likely to revolve around (a) peer expectations, (b) gratitude for past affection and favors, and (c) above all, putting oneself in the place of others.

MORAL DEVELOPMENT: KOHLBERG'S THEORY

Kohlberg took the findings of Jean Piaget further and fine-tuned the developmental process into six stages which could be more generally classified into three levels. Kohlberg's classification can be outlined in the following manner:

LEVEL	STAGE	SOCIAL ORIENTATION
Pre-conventional	1	Obedience and Punishment
	2	Individualism, Instrumentalism, and Exchange
Conventional	3	"Good boy/girl"
	4	Law and Order
Post-conventional	5	Social Contract
	6	Principled Conscience

The first level of moral thinking is that generally found at the elementary school level. In the first stage of this level, people behave according to socially acceptable norms because

they are told to do so by some authority figure. This obedience is compelled by the threat or application of punishment. The second stage of this level is characterized by a view that right behavior means acting in one's own best interests.

The second level of moral thinking is that generally found in society, hence the name "conventional." The first stage of this level (stage 3) is characterized by an attitude which seeks to do what will gain the approval of others. The second stage is one oriented to abiding by the law and responding to the obligations of duty.

The third level of moral thinking is one that Kohlberg felt is not reached by the majority of adults. Its first stage (stage 5) is an understanding of social mutuality and a genuine interest in the welfare of others. The last stage (stage 6) is based on respect for universal principles and the demands of individual conscience.

MORAL DEVELOPMENT: TURIEL'S DOMAIN MODEL

Elliot Turiel conducted an experimental study to test several Kohlberg hypotheses. He advanced what is called as the domain theory.

Within this theory a distinction is drawn between the child's developing concepts of morality, and other domains of social convention. According to domain theory, the child's concepts of morality and social convention emerge out of the child's attempts to account for qualitatively differing forms of social experience associated with these two classes of social events. Actions within the moral domain, such as unprovoked hitting of someone, have intrinsic effects (i.e., the harm that is caused) on the welfare of another person. Such intrinsic effects occur regardless of the nature of social rules that may or may not be in place regarding the action. Because of this, the core features of moral cognition are centered around considerations of the effects which actions have upon the well-being of persons. Morality is structured by concepts of harm, welfare, and fairness.

Moral Issue: : Did you see what happened? Yes. They were playing and John hit him too hard. Is that something you are supposed to do or not supposed to do? Not so hard to hurt. Is there a rule about that? Yes. What is the rule? You're not to hit hard. What if there were no rule about hitting hard, would it be all right to do then? No. Why not? Because he could get hurt and start to cry.

Conventional Issue: Did you see what just happened? Yes. They were noisy. Is that something you are supposed to or not supposed to do? Not do. Is there a rule about that? Yes. We have to be quiet. What if there were no rule, would it be all right to do then? Yes. Why? Because there is no rule.

MORAL DEVELOPMENT: FOWLER'S FAITH DEVELOPMENT MODEL

The first three stages in Fowler's model (including "Stage 0") are driven largely by the child's evolving cognitive abilities, corresponding to the first three stages in Piaget's theory (sensorimotor, preoperational , and concrete operational). Prior to adolescence, a child's religious conceptions are heavily influenced—and therefore limited—by their immediate surroundings, particularly the views expressed by parents and older children. The adult stages of faith (stages 3 to 6) are neither achievements, nor progressive steps to salvation, but simply degrees that one's faith goes through as it develops. The following is a short description of each of these stages:

Stage 3: Synthetic-conventional. In this stage, a person knows why he/she believes. One pulls together various parts of faith and tends to conform to the majority, and people are rewarded or punished for following rules laid down by the proper authority (the church or Bible). Views at this stage are often stereotyped.

Stage 4: Individuative-reflective. There is a relocation of authority within the self, along with a critical reflection of one's beliefs. Faith becomes uniquely one's own. In addition, there is

usually a struggle to grow and understand.

Stage 5: Conjunctive. Individuals realize the paradoxes in faith, and learn to live with their faith in their questions. This stage involves a dynamic, trusting relationship with God.

Stage 6: Universalizing Faith. This stage is defined by feeling at one with God. People here invest their lives in a larger cause without being concerned by the personal cost. These stages are simply frameworks of understanding people and where they are in regard to their faith.

Hoffman asserts that Piaget's and Kohlberg's theories of moral development may be generally related to three philosophical doctrines of the nature of man (82, 83) which are as follows:

1. Mankind is basically sinful and corrupt. Because children are naturally evil with antisocial impulses, they must be "redirected." This was the position of the medieval church and still influences contemporary religious thought, and captured by psychoanalysis which would define morality as " the need to keep antisocial impulses from conscious awareness."

2. Mankind is innately good but the child is corrupted by society. The cognitive development approach of Jean Piaget and his followers is based on this doctrine. To them a moral act is based on "conscious prior judgment of its rightness or wrongness."

3. **A newborn infant is neither corrupt nor pure but malleable—a tabula rasa, or blank tablet, on which we may write whatever we choose.** This doctrine defines morality as "specific acts or avoidances that are learned on the basis of rewards and punishments."

In *Education,* Ellen White says in every heart there exists a perception of right, a desire for goodness. However, there is an antagonistic power that's struggling against these principles. In every man's experience, the result of the eating of the forbidden fruit is manifested. "There is in his nature a bent to evil, a force which, unaided, he cannot resist. To withstand this force, to attain that ideal which in his inmost soul he accepts as alone worthy, he can find help in but one power. That power is Christ" (29).

Here we can see that in man is a mixture of good and evil. This is also reflected in Romans 7. In utter desperation Paul declares, "It seems to be a fact of life that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. I love God's law with all my heart. But there is another law at work within me that is at war with my mind. This law wins the fight and makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me " (Romans 7:21-23 *NLT*)

Which of the three theories then should we accept as Seventh-day Adventist educators? Yes, there is some truth in each of these theories, but we cannot just take any one of them in their entirety. What we want to know is how we can use the explanations of theorists and the findings of behavioral scientists to inculcate values that strengthen our relationships and those of our children with God and with our fellow human beings.

MORAL DEVELOPMENT:

ROLE OF ADVENTIST HIGHER EDUCATION

In view of what we have seen thus far, what should be the role of Adventist education in moral development?

MORAL DEVELOPMENT AND ADVENTIST MISSION

"True education…is the harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers. It prepares the student for the joy of service in this world, and for the higher joy of wider service in the world to come." (White, *Ed* 13). Proper education includes "not only mental discipline, but that training which will secure morals and correct deportment" (White, *Counsels* 64). The aim of education is preparation for life. Education is thought of as a preparation for every part of living: for the satisfaction of man's material needs, for the growth of his/her personal talents as well as for the formation of his/her personality and character.

This is a call to accountability and action. It is a call to ensure that our agenda consistently extends beyond the preparation of professionally competent graduates (Behrens

9). To Adventist educators is given "the most important work ever entrusted to human

beings" (White, *Educ.* 225) It is our task to build and reshape character . (Behren 10).

Ellen White was shown that our college was designed of God to accomplish the great

work of saving souls (White, *CE*. 32). "It is one of God's instrumentalities to make himself

known to man" (White, *CE* 30). This is the mission of the Adventist school.

VALUES: WHAT ADVENTIST EDUCATION SHOULD DEVELOP

One of the fundamental values which Jesus preached by both word and example, and

which has a profound impact on the way we live; and relate to other people, is that of respect:

self-respect and respects for others. As Christians, we believe that every human being is

created in the image of and likeness of God (Gen. 1:37), and as such, is worthy of respect.

Teachers have a golden opportunity of helping the students to grow in self-respect by

treating all of them with a certain degree of reverence, and by refusing to favour some of them

to the detriment of others on account their intelligence, appearance or pleasant personality.

Young people who feel accepted by those who love them can face life confidently, and they,

in turn will learn to have a profound respect for their fellow human beings—a respect which is

not based on factors such as class, creed or colour, but on the dignity of each person. This

respect will show itself in an underlying courtesy, compassion, gentleness and tolerance

towards others, thus propagating these values which are at the heart of our relations with one

another.

Jesus says in John 13:34, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have

loved you, so you must love one another." Then in Matthew 7:12 we read the "Golden Rule":

"Do to others what you would have them do to you." These texts call us to devote ourselves to

the service of others without seeking any temporal reward. This service of our brothers and

sisters, in a spirit of self-forgetfulness, helps to create bonds of solidarity, togetherness and

fraternity which break down ethnic divisions and cement solid human relations built on

genuine love.

V. Bailey Gillespie, chair of the Project Affirmation Task Force on Faith, Values, and Commitment, shares some findings of the research in his article "Nurturing Essential Values." It was found out that many parents, teachers, and pastor groups are concerned about the core values that are taught to Adventist youth. They suggest that "love for God and humankind; commitment to God, faith, honesty, respect, service equality; learning of God's plan for one's life, integrity, excellence, and promotion of life-affirming values were the minimum which Christians should possess" (6).

Service-oriented values, values which reflected attitudes toward God and the church; values which enhanced Christian character—including those of self-esteem, honesty, self-discipline, positive and creative growth, and attitudes of courage; and values which promoted a positive lifestyle in light of the dangers of a sinful world—including healthfulness, responsibility, carefulness in eliminating life-threatening lifestyle choices and in accepting life-affirming lifestyle choices were also stressed by the same groups above (Ibid. 7, 8)

STRATEGIES: HOW ADVENTIST EDUCATION SHOULD DEVELOP THE VALUES DISCUSSED ABOVE

How can these values be transmitted to our students? In the Gospel of Luke 6:47-49, we read of the wise man building his house upon the rock, while the foolish man built his on the sand. The rain fell down and the floods came up, the house on the sand fell flat, while the house on the rock stock firm. When we reflect on our present day society, so marked by moral decadence that is in danger of disintegrating, we could ask ourselves if this is not partly due to the fact that so little attention has been given to "the building of our house" on the solid foundation of sound human values which uphold and promote the dignity of every human person and which are therefore, in reality, Gospel values. Instead, we seem to have "built our house" on the sands of materialism, greed, falsehood, hypocrisy, violence and suspicion of our

fellow men—attitudes which violates the dignity of the human person.

Below I have spelled out three categories of strategies we may use so we could give help our students "build their house" on the rock. These are: the curriculum, the hidden curriculum, and service-oriented activities.

1. **Curriculum.** The curriculum is the primary vehicle for accomplishing the two-fold task of a quality Adventist education, namely: (1) to develop students who live by moral principles and are committed to God and the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church; and (2) to graduate students who are capable of interacting and participating effectively in today's global society (*Valuegenesis*: Report 2, p. 26). Here are a few things I feel if included in the curriculum could help achieve the tasks mentioned above.

a. *Work Education.* Ellen White writes that "true education is the preparation of the physical, mental, and moral powers for the performance of every duty; it is the training of body, mind, and soul for divine service. This is the education that will endure unto eternal life." (White, COL 330). It is sad to note, though, that in most of our colleges today the mental training takes priority over the moral development. Physical training is there in terms of sports, but the value of manual labor is overlooked.

We cannot underestimate the importance of manual labor in relation to the moral development of the students. Ellen White speaks of it "as a safeguard against the vicissitudes of life. " She further says that "...even if it were certain that one would never need to resort to manual labor for his support, still he should be taught to work. Without physical exercise, no one can have a sound constitution and vigorous health; and the discipline of well-regulated labor is no less essential to the securing of a strong and active mind and a noble character" (CE 69). Then she continues to say that students should devote a portion of each day to active labor. This will help them form habits of industry, encourage a spirit of self-reliance, and shield them from "many evil and degrading practices that are so often the result of idleness."

She concludes the paragraph by saying that this is "all in keeping with the primary object of education; for in encouraging activity, diligence, and purity, we are coming into harmony with the Creator" (CE 69.2).

When I was in college, it was a must that students work four hours every day whether the student was rich or poor. So instead of finishing the bachelor's degree in four years' time, we finished it in five years. I'm not saying that we require our students to do the same thing I did. But at least, our schools must require them to do some useful labor.

b. *Vocational courses.* Then we can also add vocational courses in our curriculum as the inspired prophetess has counseled us above. In a college in Africa where I was for 14 years, we required the students to earn six credit hours of vocational courses like baking, sewing, scientific gardening, and maintenance before they could finish their two-year diploma. Male students were at first protesting when I required them to take bakery because it's not in their culture for men to be in the kitchen. However, a year or two later, students came to visit me at the College and expressed their gratitude that the administration "forced" them to take those courses. They have found an extra source of income aside from their jobs because they could bake cakes for weddings, birthdays, etc.

In her book *Child Guidance,* White instructs that schools should be established that shall provide the best possible facilities for physical development and industrial training in addition to the highest mental and moral culture. There should be instruction in "agriculture, manufactures—covering as many as possible of the most useful trades—also in household economy, healthful cookery, sewing, hygienic dressmaking, the treatment of the sick, and kindred lines skilled instructors" (357.2).

c. *Bible subjects.* "If morality and religion are to live in a school, it must be through a knowledge of God's Word" (White, *CE* 42). She further states:

> Some may urge that if religious teaching is to be made prominent, our school will become unpopular; that those who are not of our faith will not patronize the College.

Very well, then, let them go to other colleges where they will find a system of education that suits their taste. Our school was established, not merely to teach the sciences, but for the purpose of giving instruction in the great principles of God's word, and in the practical duties of everyday life. (Ibid.)

Many of the students who come to our colleges as non-Adventists get out with the message of truth and salvation etched in their hearts. This is because of what they learn in their Bible classes. If we remove them from our curriculum, then we cease to be truly an Adventist institution. It is sad to note though that in some of our institutions in non-Christian countries, Bible classes are not offered because of government restrictions.

d. *Other academic courses.* All courses, even in disciplines such as mathematics or statistics that on their surface may appear to lack obviously moral content, offer rich opportunities for helping students develop their skill in moral reasoning. Every course can become a learning community where values of mutual respect, sensitivity to others' needs, and cooperation are emphasized and discussed. Here are some strategies we can employ in order to foster students' moral development in the classroom.

• Have students discuss controversial moral dilemmas. Identify disciplinary issues with moral content—that relate to moral values. Develop cases, problems, or scenarios that involve these values for students to discuss.

• Have students play the roles of and explain the reasoning used by others to resolve moral dilemmas.

• Ensure all students have ample out-of-class contact with faculty members.

2. Hidden Curriculum. Allan Glatthorn defines hidden curriculum as "…those aspects of schooling other than the intentional curriculum that seem to produce changes in student values, perceptions, and behaviors" (20). He points out that in spite of "the proven negative influence of the hidden curriculum on pupil learning, its potential contribution to values education made it desirable 'from the viewpoint of one desiring optimal human

development' " (Kennedy 2).

    • *Modeling.* According to Fraenkel, "Students acquire their values to a large extent through observing and imitating both peer and adult models" (137). The presence of a model makes it easier for a student to comprehend what a value is actually like in practice (Raths 229). John Gardner appropriately summed it up when he said that young people "do not learn ethical principles; they emulate ethical (or unethical) people" (124).

    Students will always learn more from what they see parents and teachers do than from what they hear them say. As what Linda and Richard Eyre aptly say, "Example is always the best teacher--and what we *do* always overwhelms and overshadows and outteaches what we *say*" (31). Preaching high values is simply not effective.

    Johnson, et al. (286) state that "teachers often become important role models for their students." That being so, it behooves teachers to behave like role models, which essentially means that they should exhibit virtuous qualities when in the presence of their students. However, "faculty cannot convey to students a relationship between God and their discipline if they themselves do not grasp the relationship" (Poe 49).

    Fraenkel illustrates how a teacher may use a class discussion to model the value of deep respect for human beings as created in the image of God and therefore important and worthwhile (138-141).

1. Accept all statements that students offer, no matter how silly or unusual they may seem when first presented.

2. Do not require students to talk if they do not want to.

3. When a student is having trouble getting his thoughts out, it is helpful sometimes to restate what he has expressed without indicating approval or disapproval of his ideas.

4. Tell students that you want them to offer their ideas.

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5. Take care not to impose your views on students.

6. Don't hesitate to introduce ideas contrary to those expressed by students in order to bring out other aspects of an issue.

In his book *Adventist Education at the Crossroads*, Raymond Moore (157) has made three suggestions that teachers must observe:

1. Teachers should be continually aware of the value of example, and of the crucial importance of mutual involvement of teacher and student in all curricular and extracurricular activities including teaching, community service, and systematic work experience.

2. Teachers should be alert to values as taught in other classes..., recognizing their value and cooperating with other teachers.

3. Teachers should be conscious of values in the selection of all teaching materials, so that reading, science, and other subjects are clearly constructed characterwise.

• *Congenial relationships*

When an adult has a congenial relationship with the young, the latter tends to adopt the value of the former. This was confirmed by the studies made by Strommen (33). It is a challenge then to college lecturers and professors to maintain this type of relationship with their students because values are absorbed from those one loves and respects.

•*Personal Witness*

This method can be used in the classroom whenever possible. It is also very useful for College Chapel services. Topics on love, courtship, and marriage; career preparations; moral issues, music, honesty, etc. are excellent for convocation periods. By sharing our thoughts and rationale with adolescents, we can help them develop their own basis for saying "no" to unethical behaviors.

•*Co-curricular activities*

Club meetings and outings, sports, choir, socials, and other co-curricular activities

provide opportunities for students to absorb values. They learn to cooperate with each other, to be better sports, to respect each other, to be courteous, etc. The presence of the faculty members will also make the students feel that they are important and worthy of our precious time.

3. Service-oriented Activities. "True education…prepares the students for the joy of service in this world, and for the wider joy of higher service in the world to come" (White, *Ed* 13). Below are some of the activities that our students can do:

•*Revelation Seminar*

Students can organize Revelation Seminars in neighboring communities. This will help them learn more about techniques of sharing their faith with others (especially Theology students) and develop the sense of responsibility.

•*Community Clean-up Day*

This can be done on a Friday or Sunday morning then with their packed lunch, students and teachers can eat together under the trees and socialize with each other.

•*Tree Planting Activities*

This activity provides camaraderie between faculty and students. It fosters the spirit of cooperation, and provide financial resource in the long run. A college that I know is now earning some money from the rubber trees the students and staff planted some time ago.

CONCLUSION

Adventist Education in moral development and value education is near crisis. With majority of student enrollment in many parts of the world being non-Adventist, with Bible teaching in many non-Christian countries being either absent or reduced to a minimum, with Adventist life-style and standards being eroded in many institutions, with the commanding role of the Bible losing its standing, and with work education almost in the verge of extinction

in many institutions, Adventist education requires a fresh and renewed commitment on the part of the administrators, board members, faculty, and students to the core values of Adventist education, particularly in the area of moral and value development. Let us "focus on the strategic issue of how to fulfill the mission for which [we] are founded" (Poe 61). "To restore in the human family the image of their Maker, to bring them back to the perfection in which they were created, to promote the development of body, mind, and soul, that the divine purpose in their creation might be realized—this was to be the work of redemption. This is the object of education, the great object of life" (White, *Ed* 16).

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