

Sports in Adventism



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Many Seventh-day Adventists want to be amused with sports idolatry than have their characters purified as their records are reviewed in this antitypical Day of Atonement. They forget that: “Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (James 4:4). You ignore at your peril Scriptures that condemn sports. As you read on, keep this inspired quotation in mind:

“What force of powers is put into your games of football and your other inventions after the way of the Gentiles – exercises which bless no one! Just put the same powers into exercise in doing useful labor, and would not your record be more pleasing to meet in the great day of God?” (Ellen G White, Fundamentals of Christian Education, p. 229).

Sports are one aspect of our secular society that, unfortunately, many Seventh-day Adventists fail to see the negative effects of them in developing a heavenly character fit for the sealing before the close of probation. Amusement in sports is one area where we have made no difference with the world.

Put away childish things

As God's people, we carry an end-time message to give to the world. We must act and talk with a Christ-like mind. In 1 Corinthians 13:11 we read: "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things."

The world today is gone mad with grown up men doing "childish things" in sports. Take Rugby game for example. It is beyond "childish things" that the whole world system with its lovers of money and self cannot see the "childish things" in grown up men running up and down on what looks like a cow pasture, throwing what looks like a pig's bladder to each other to cross a goal line and then kicking that pig's bladder through what looks like two gold posts.

Even members of the remnant church find these "childish things" entertaining, with worldly audience not really caring what those children on the field really do, as the audience just want to get drunk, yell, scream, curse, and take the Lord's name in vain. We cannot build Christ-like character that way.

We are called to put away "childish things" and be Christ-like; to do that we have to have a renewed mind. Romans 12:2 tells us "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good,

and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” Is it a minor issue to write on this subject?

Sports leads to vainglory and selfishness

When we sit in our living rooms before our television sets to watch world games, we forget that God has a panoramic view. These games invented by Satan are about ensnaring the world into “vainglory”. God watches the drunken throng on the football pitch, the vulgar language used by the football fans, taking God’s name in vain, the drugs used, the fornication involved, the precious soul winning time wasted, and all the effects on the entire human race that these games create.

God watches, as if powerless to stop His remnants from getting involved. He watches His holy angels stand aside as His children are amused by these inventions of Satan who once sought to derail Jesus from paying the cost of our salvation. Angels holding the four winds begin to let go, Jesus watching the remnants glued on television screens, cries to God His Father, “My blood, Father, My blood, My blood, My blood!” (EW 38.1). Is it a minor issue to write on this subject? Is it not God’s love to call us through this booklet to urgent repentance?

Among the principles of Christian behaviour presented in the Bible is a special care for how and

what we do as this impacts what we become. We notice the counsel of Paul: “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves” (Philippians 2:3). The passage continues by showing how Jesus voluntarily descended from the glories of heaven to the humble state of fallen humanity. In verse 7 Jesus “made Himself of no reputation” so that He sets us an example. He would rely upon no power we ourselves cannot access.

Now we like Him must empty ourselves and be acquainted with Him who made Himself of no reputation. But the trend of sports is anything but making oneself of no reputation! It is very difficult to see how having the mind of Christ can mesh with having the mind of an athlete bent upon defeating his foe through strength of might and through various plays which trick his opponent.

We find nowhere in Scripture any slightest hint from Jesus that He would have us feed the kind of nature in sports that inclines us to selfishness. “Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted” (Matthew 23:12). “Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: even as

the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:26-28). "For he that is least among you all, the same shall be great" (Luke 9:48).

A peculiar person, a truly Seventh-Day Adventist, would have a difficult time competing if he held to the Christ-like nature and understanding of humility outlined in scripture. In all sports, whether be the so-called Church sports, widely practiced in our Seventh-day Adventist schools, there is always a winner, as there is always a loser. But in the Christ-like view, all who strive for God's will can win; there need be no losers. There is a fundamental disconnect between the gospel of God and the philosophy of sports. Following the words of Jesus in Luke 9:48, being "least among you all", would result in a poor showing in sports.

Paul did not teach a philosophy of sports

Some may pose a question: 'what about Paul's use of imagery borrowed from Grecian sports competitions?' Others may insist that we can develop 'a philosophy of sport' on the basis of such texts. Rather than condemn such minds, let us put the doctrine "to the law and to the testimony" (Isaiah 8:20) and see if that holds any truth.

First, we turn to 1 Corinthians 9:24-27: "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

How readest thou? Paul points out the giant cleavage, the great contrast between the Grecian competition and the Christian life. Many run in a Grecian competitive footrace, but there is only one winner. Like a race, there is something to be obtained at the end of the Christian pathway. We too are to be active so that we may successfully obtain that. But in what particular way are we to be active?

As the runners strive for mastery, they engage in a careful, temperate lifestyle to reach peak performance. And if they win, what do they receive? A corruptible crown. What do we in the Christian walk receive? An incorruptible crown. In other words, the contrast is between a temporal victory as passing as the wind, and an eternal result in value beyond measure. Paul is not promoting sports at all.

In fact, Paul insists then that he is not running uncertainly, not competing for a prize which odds are, he is unlikely to obtain. With the value of the prize before him in mind, Paul runs, he fights, he exercises self-discipline. He is very alert to the necessity of maintaining control over the sin nature. He knows that it is ever ready to rise up and express itself in evil poured out of us and into the world, shaming our Christian witness for God. And so Paul, by analogy of a sportsman, strives daily to surrender his will to the Lordship of Jesus Christ our saviour, until he can say: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

That surely is the correct reading of Paul's writing. There is nothing in that passage upon which we can build up an artificial philosophy of sport. The whole thrust of Paul's argument is that if even the worldly person is willing to go to so great lengths to obtain a temporary crown that wilts, how much more should the saints of God strive to live-out the fullness of Christianity! There is no advocacy here for a remnant of God to participate in sports. A lesson is being drawn from a worldly practice and used in the

context of a letter written to a church composed mostly of people from the Greek culture that are very familiar with surrounding culture of sports. That is all.

We turn to Paul in Hebrews 12:1, 2: “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Here, Paul likens the remnant’s journey to a running race, although this time to an audience that is predominantly Jewish. He points to the victory of Christ at the cross as the basis and reason for our patience in the Christian journey. Looking unto Jesus we steadfastly strive to surrender our will to the Lordship of Christ so that we gain His power to lay aside every sin. He shows us that our eyes must focus on the finish line, Christ-likeness. He points to Christ’s suffering, not to obtain an earthly crown, but eternal life for the believer. The suffering of Christ is put in the centre rather than the suffering of the remnant as he participates in the journey home.

In the same passage, Paul refers to the cloud of witnesses, these are those spoken of in Hebrews chapter 11 – those who have breasted the evils and difficulties in their way, and who in the name of the Lord have braced themselves successfully against the opposing forces of evil. We too, must now magnify the truth before the world and other witnesses watching us. Again, the goal here is one that involves a moral imperative, the renunciation of sin, and an eternal reward for the believer. There is nothing here to create a philosophy of sports from. The remnant must be active, he must actively submit to God so that sin may be put away. No advocacy of participation in trickery aggression of sports here.

By analogy of what Paul is teaching by use of imagery, Ellen G White also tells us of the battle we have to fight. She says: “The Christian life is a battle and a march. In this warfare there is no release; the effort must be continuous and persevering. It is by unceasing endeavor that we maintain the victory over the temptations of Satan. Christian integrity must be sought with resistless energy and maintained with a resolute fixedness of purpose” (Ministry of Healing, p. 453).

In your further study, you will find that the same spiritual meaning applies to other texts that use

cultural imagery. These texts include: Galatians 2:2; Galatians 5:7; 2 Timothy 2:5; 2 Timothy 4:7; and Philippians 3:13, 14. Read these texts prayerfully.

A usage of images from Grecian athletic competitions in some illustrations is no license or library from which to develop a 'philosophy of sports.' We can no more create a philosophy of sports than we can develop a philosophy of adultery, a philosophy of car-theft, or a philosophy of murder. Remember, the physical must be kept in harmony with the spiritual, else our character will not be truly transformed to Christ-likeness but instead harmonise with the world to perish through sports.

A closer examination reveals that the nature of sports wars against the Spirit of God. In Galatians 5:22-23 we read: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." We find no where in Scripture any room for the type of mindset that spurs a remnant to compete against and prevail over someone else, to also bring forth the fruit of the Spirit as recorded in Galatians 5:22-23. When examining these fruit, with a Spirit of God, we have to come to the conclusion that the beautiful fruit that God expects to grow in us, for His glory, as we divorce ourselves from the world and its

lusts, are at serious war with the bitter and poisonous fruits that are produced in a life that continues to be influenced by trickery and aggression that is common to sports.

We are running the race, not of earthly things, but of spiritual. We dare not succumb to false scholarships that are damaging to our heavenly character development. We dare not push our young people into participation in such operations. They have enough challenges without us pushing them into this pit. We dare not make the physical misshapen and put it in opposition to the spiritual. In all who are under the training of God is to be revealed a life that is not in harmony with the world, its customs, or its practices. That is where we need to stand. Sports may have a ubiquitous place in society, but it is not so firmly entrenched that we must surrender the gospel of Jesus Christ. Let us beware of this insidious disease that has crept into our midst, and let us reject altogether the concept of all amusements. Let us be open to the guidance of the Spirit of Christ in the remnant church.

Some may argue that it is only competitive sports that are to be shunned. Indeed ministers and our Adventist institutions may argue so. But this is a very deceptive excuse, as most of our schools do

compete, count scores, declare winners, and collect sports awards. Moreover, this argument has no scriptural basis (no Bible or Spirit of Prophecy basis).

Others may argue that they watch or do sports for exercise. It is a lame excuse, for in watching games one does not exercise but self-amuse. Of course ministers claim are active in sports to keep physically fit, and all this in the name of following counsel of God's prophet Ellen G White about exercise. We can settle this argument by quoting Ellen G White, in *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 229, she says: "I have not been able to find one instance where He educated His disciples to engage in amusement of football or pugilistic games, to obtain physical exercise, or in theatrical performances; and yet Christ was our pattern in all things."

A professed pastor scorned the above passage saying, 'football was not even played in Jesus' time.' Many miss the principle God is telling us through His prophet Ellen G White. Moreover, a careful reading of Isaiah 22:18, "toss thee like a ball into a large country", would suggest the ball game of some kind has long been around than we may think. A game of some sort was played on Jesus, when they covered His head with an old garment, blindfolding Him, and

then struck Him in the face and cried out, "Prophecy, who is it that smote Thee?" (Matthew 26:68).

Many Greek games – boxing, wrestling, beast fights – were around during Jesus' time, yet He never partook of them. Inspired writings of Ellen G White are telling us that Jesus never "educated His disciples to engage in amusement of football or pugilistic games, to obtain physical exercise." Leave these games alone! 'So, how must we exercise? We need exercise and are used to exercising through games;' you may say. If we are faithful in obeying the truth it should never be based on finding alternatives to sports first. Truth should be obeyed for it being the truth. Those who fear God will never lack means outside sports to do exercise.

Spirit of prophecy condemns all sports

Clearly, no true Seventh-day Adventist should participate or encourage the use of amusements prohibited in the principles of the Bible. These include: Card-playing, chess, Football, Tennis, Cricket, Baseball, Croquet, and any other amusements of such category or that fall under the principles by which these are prohibited. We are a remnant church, that keeps the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus (Revelation 12:17), which testimony is the Spirit of Prophecy

(Revelation 19:10). With Ellen G White writings, we have no excuse for engaging in sports. If we were any other church, we could humanly have argued that the Bible does not say: football or baseball should not be played. The faithful witness is plainly against us making any lame excuse.

Let us consider these passages from the Spirit of Prophecy (they clearly condemn sports amusement):

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 1 John 2:15. The true Christian will not desire to enter any place of amusement or engage in any diversion upon which he cannot ask the blessing of God. He will not be found at the theater, the billiard hall, or the bowling saloon. He will not unite with the gay waltzers, or indulge in any other bewitching pleasure that will banish Christ from the mind” (That I May Know Him, p. 311).

“To those who plead for these diversions, we answer, We cannot indulge in them in the name of Jesus of Nazareth.... Go in imagination to Gethsemane and behold the anguish which Christ endured for us. See the world’s Redeemer wrestling in superhuman agony, the sins of the whole world upon His soul. Hear His prayer, borne upon the sympathizing breeze, ‘O my Father, if it be possible,

let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt' (Matt. 26:39). The hour of darkness has come. Christ has entered the shadow of His cross. Alone He must drink the bitter cup. Of all earth's children whom He has blessed and comforted there is not one to console Him in this dreadful hour. He is betrayed into the hands of a murderous mob. Faint and weary, He is dragged from one tribunal to another. . . . He who knew not the taint of sin pours out His life as a malefactor upon Calvary. This history should stir every soul to its depths. It was to save us that the Son of God became a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. . . . Let a sense of the infinite sacrifice made for our redemption be ever with you, and the ballroom will lose its attractions" (That I May Know Him, p. 311).

"Not only did Christ die as our sacrifice, but He lived as our example. In His human nature He stands, complete, perfect, spotless. To be a Christian is to be Christlike. Our entire being – soul, body, and spirit – must be purified, ennobled, sanctified, until we shall reflect His image and imitate His example. . . . We need not fear to engage in any pursuit or pleasure that will aid us in this work. But it is our duty to shun everything that would divert our attention or lessen our zeal" (May Know Him, 311).

“The mind thus educated to enjoy physical taxation in practical life becomes enlarged, and through culture and training, well disciplined and richly furnished for usefulness, and acquires a knowledge essential to be a help and blessing to themselves and to others. Let every student consider, and be able to say, I study, I work, for eternity. They can learn to be patiently industrious and persevering in their combined efforts of physical and mental labor. What force of powers is put into your games of football and your other inventions after the way of the Gentiles – exercises which bless no one! Just put the same powers into exercise in doing useful labor, and would not your record be more pleasing to meet in the great day of God?” (Fundamentals of Christian Education, p. 229).

“Whatever is done under the sanctified stimulus of Christian obligation, because you are stewards in trust of talents to use to be a blessing to yourself and to others, gives you substantial satisfaction; for all is done to the glory of God. I cannot find an instance in the life of Christ where He devoted time to play and amusement. He was the great Educator for the present and the future life. I have not been able to find one instance where He educated His disciples to engage in amusement of football or pugilistic

games, to obtain physical exercise, or in theatrical performances; and yet Christ was our pattern in all things. Christ, the world's Redeemer, gave to every man his work and bids them 'occupy till I come.' And in doing His work, the heart warms to such an enterprise, and all the powers of the soul are enlisted in a work assigned of the Lord and Master. It is a high and important work. The Christian teacher and student are enabled to become stewards of the grace of Christ, and be always in earnest" (Fundamentals Christian Education, 229).

"The public feeling is that manual labor is degrading, yet men may exert themselves as much as they choose at cricket, baseball, or in pugilistic contests, without being regarded as degraded. Satan is delighted when he sees human beings using their physical and mental powers in that which does not educate, which is not useful, which does not help them to be a blessing to those who need their help. While the youth are becoming expert in games that are of no real value to themselves or to others, Satan is playing the game of life for their souls. Taking from them the talents that God has given them, and placing in their stead his own evil attributes. It is his effort to lead men to ignore God. He seeks to engross and absorb the mind so

completely that God will find no place in the thoughts. He does not wish people to have a knowledge of their Maker, and he is well pleased if he can set in operation games and theatrical performances that will so confuse the senses of the youth that God and heaven will be forgotten" (Messages to Young People, 213; RH 3 Oct 1912).

"The world is not a croquet ground, on which we are to amuse ourselves; it is a school where we are to study earnestly and thoroughly the lessons given in the word of God. There they may learn how to receive and how to impart. There they may learn how to seek for souls in the highways and byways of life. How earnestly the games of this world are engaged in! If those who engage in them would strive as earnestly for the crown of life which fadeth not away, what victories they would gain! They would become medical missionaries, and they would see how much they could do to relieve suffering humanity. What a blessing they would be! What we need is practical education. Ministers and people, practice the lessons Christ has given in His word, and you will become Christlike in character" (Medical Ministry, p. 318).

"The true Christian will not desire to enter any place of amusement or engage in any diversion

upon which he cannot ask the blessing of God. He will not be found at the theater, the billiard hall, or the bowling saloon. He will not unite with the gay waltzers or indulge in any other bewitching pleasure that will banish Christ from the mind" (The Adventist Home, p. 515).

"To those who plead for these diversions we answer, We cannot indulge in them in the name of Jesus of Nazareth. The blessing of God would not be invoked upon the hour spent at the theater or in the dance. No Christian would wish to meet death in such a place. No one would wish to be found there when Christ shall come" (The Adventist Home, p. 516).

"Such an example makes an impression upon the minds of youth. They notice that lotteries and fairs and games are sanctioned by the church, and they think there is something fascinating in this way of obtaining means. A youth is surrounded by temptations. He enters the bowling alley, the gambling saloon, to see the sport. He sees the money taken by the one who wins. This looks enticing. It seems an easier way of obtaining money than by earnest work, which requires persevering energy and strict economy. He imagines there can be no harm in this; for similar games have been

resorted to in order to obtain means for the benefit of the church. Then why should he not help himself in this way?" (Counsels on Stewardship, p. 201).

"Some of the most popular amusements, such as football and boxing, have become schools of brutality. They are developing the same characteristics as did the games of ancient Rome. The love of domination, the pride in mere brute force, the reckless disregard of life, are exerting upon the youth a power to demoralize that is appalling" (The Adventist Home, p. 500).

"God designs that the body shall be a temple for His Spirit. How solemn then is the responsibility resting on every soul. . . . How many there are, blessed with reason and intelligence, talents which should be used to the glory of God, who willfully degrade soul and body. Their lives are a continual round of excitement. Cricket and football matches and horse racing absorb the attention. The liquor curse, with its world of woe, is defiling the temple of God. . . . By the use of liquor and tobacco men are debasing the life given them for high and holy purposes. Their practices are represented by wood, hay, and stubble. Their God-given powers are perverted, their senses degraded, to minister to the desires of the carnal mind" (Temperance, p. 142).

“Every day there is housework to be done – cooking, washing dishes, sweeping, and dusting. Mothers, have you taught your daughters to do these daily duties? . . . Their muscles need exercise. In the place of getting exercise by jumping and playing ball or croquet, let their exercise be to some purpose” (Child Guidance, p. 352).

“Washing clothes upon the old-fashioned rubbing-board, sweeping, dusting, and a variety of other duties in the kitchen and the garden, will be valuable exercise for young ladies. Such useful labor will supply the place of croquet, archery, dancing, and other amusements which benefit no one” (Fundamentals of Christian Education, p. 74).

“God would have all His gifts appreciated. All fragments, jots, and tittles are to be treasured carefully, and we are carefully to become acquainted with the necessities of others. All that we have of Bible truth is not merely for our benefit, but to impart to other souls, and this is to be impressed upon human minds, and every kindly word spoken to prepare the way to make a channel through which the truth will flow forth in rich currents to other souls.

“Every working of Christ in miracles was essential, and was to reveal to the world that there was a great work to be done on the Sabbath day for

the relief of suffering humanity, but the common work was not to be done. Pleasure seeking, ball playing, swimming, was not a necessity, but a sinful neglect of the sacred day sanctified by Jehovah. Christ did not perform miracles merely to display His power, but always to meet Satan in afflicting suffering humanity. Christ came to our world to meet the needs of the suffering, whom Satan was torturing” (Selected Messages, Vol. 3, p. 258).

“The true followers of Christ will have sacrifices to make. They will shun places of worldly amusement because they find no Jesus there, – no influence which will make them heavenly minded and increase their growth in grace. Obedience to the word of God will lead them to come out from all these things, and be separate” (Messages to Young People, p. 376).

Do not follow world standards

In matters of sports, it is with much sadness that most ministers and leaders in our institutions reading the above Biblical and Spirit of Prophecy quotes may dismiss them as not relevant to modern times, or simply ignore counsel to keep their institutions in line with the world standards. To many, school ratings in the world are more important than following the plain word of God. These leaders turn up on pulpits and steer the train with the remnants deceived on board.

But more fearful is the thought that Satan knows that as long as the remnants are amused in these games, they cannot develop a perfect heavenly character, they will not be sealed, they will end up worshiping the beast and eventually Satan will claim victory over them in the great controversy.

As we end the subject of sports, we must not be silent about the objectionable use of television sets to watch amusements in most of our living rooms.

One question we ought to ask is how much spiritual empowerment can a true remnant get out of watching an amusement show on a television set?

We commonly argue for having a television set in our living rooms to use it as an educational tool for the family. But how often the lust of the eyes lures us beyond the boundaries!

Most, if not all programmes, even the most educational documentaries, do not build our characters for the sealing before the close of probation.

Whereas evil is all around us in the streets of most cities, whereas therefore we struggle to turn away from the enticing scenes of evil we cannot avoid while walking down the street, we have enough temptation to occupy all of our time and effort without bringing a deliberate source of

temptation right into the living room. The Lord through the prophet has repeatedly warned against the likes of bowling, going to movie theatres, and we must apply the same warnings to movies we watch in our living rooms. The devil would have us think that the Lord is only against watching a movie in the theatre and the movie becomes a 'Christian movie' once bought for family use in the living room.

World TV programmes are not produced by people who have come in the spirit of Elijah or John the Baptist to prepare us for the sealing. No wonder Satan manipulates the effects of these scenes. Most of our senses have been damned over the years of abuse with what the world offers us through the TV, that we have come to rationalise snatches and phrases of gutter talk that creep into most educational shows as innocent. The often-short clips of immoral acts that appear in TV documentaries, we have come to rationalise as acceptable innocent looks.

We fail to detect how this innocent look is a sin. We fail to trace back in history the innocent looks of our mother Eve in the Garden of Eden. Her innocent looks on the forbidden tree led into all the multiplied sorrows and eventual deaths of billions of human beings over six tragic millenniums.

We fail to trace back in history the innocent looks of King David. He awoke from an afternoon nap and coincidentally saw his neighbour's beautiful wife taking a bath on her Mediterranean roof garden. His innocent looks led to adultery and murder, sins which influenced a whole nation to forget God. The results of King David's immorality with Bathsheba so marked the family of David that four of his own children were taken from him by tragedy or apostasy. How bitterly he later lamented the scarring consequences of his innocent looking!

We must not set up those who are already overwhelmed with sinful thoughts in their minds for avoidable assaults of the enemy through so-called innocent looks at evil on our television screens.

Jesus tells us that "Ye have heard that it was said of them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matthew 5:27, 28). Our creator, the all wise Jesus, is simply telling us the science of our wonderfully made beings: that since the brain is the decision centre for the body, every act performed must first be conceived in the mind before it can be translated into action.

To our movies on TV, Jesus is simply telling us that by beholding we become, and that we vicariously participate in the actual act. Even though the viewer may be mature enough to know that the scene is only a fabricated, pretend-situation, yet he becomes as emotionally involved in the picture as if he were actually living out the experience. The heart pounds with fright, the eyes fill with tears, and the viewer is mentally projecting himself into the movie scene. Whether fighting and shooting his way out of a desperate situation, suffering the trauma of incurable disease, addicting to immoral habits, or yielding to the excitement of a provocative bedroom scene, the viewer is caught up in the plot, taking part by proxy in the adventures of the hero or heroine. Jesus said that this kind of participation is just as wrong as the actual physical involvement in sin.

Jesus tells us the solution to the lusts of the eye: "And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell" (Matthew 5:29).

If we apply the principle to our TV scenes, Jesus is saying that if the eye is looking at a movie that is liable to lead the mind to harbour sin, the most drastic action should be taken to put those scenes

out of view. Jesus is saying here that if we have a TV set in the home which we cannot control, it is better to cast it out of the house onto the junk pile than to be led into sin by its influence.

Better to lead a so-called one-eyed existence without television than to lose our soul by defiling through sinful thoughts created by television. The only way to be pure-minded is to look at, listen to, and speak only the things that are pure.

Concluding remarks

Paul tells us: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever, things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Philippians 4:8).

The secret of being pure, honest, and virtuous is to think that way, and the way we think is determined by what we see, hear and speak. Saints, let us learn from the lessons King David learnt and say, "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes" (Psalm 101:3). Put on Christ "and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof" (Romans 13:14).

To recognise the dangers of amusements, dangers of sports, which most of our institutions and leaders enjoy at the peril of souls, is not an attack on

our church or its institutions. Satan would be pleased to let you believe that addressing sports is an attack on the church, as many pastors have been corrupted by this evil. This and similar dangers have been recognised in the past. For example, in 1985, the president of the North Pacific Union stated, “we are at a crossroads in the church as to whether we will go the way of what we classify as mainline, nominal Protestantism, or whether we will uphold the standards of Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy” (Adventist Review, August 1, 1985, p. 14).

Sadly, some of our pastors have chosen the “mainline” route and they brag on pulpits what sports club they support. One pastor stated: “Where sports is concerned I am a great enthusiast of sports as a means of exercise or even enjoyment as a former runner, and footballer etc” (14 July 2009). What a sad “mainline” route some of our pastors have taken! Shall these pastors repent and lead the church to salvation, or will they pursue “vainglory” and cause others to perish with them? Will sanctified laymen awaken sleeping souls or will they, for fear of disfellowship from church, enjoy sports and remain silent as souls perish? Saints, “every one of us shall give account of himself to God” (Romans 14:12).

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