

# THE GREENWOOD BULLETIN

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## **Are We Secularizing Our Children?**

**By Sewell Hall**

Several years ago, a Christian who was the president of a large state university stated his belief that students do not lose their faith because of evolution in the science department or humanism in the philosophy, psychology, or sociology departments. Rather, he felt that they become so absorbed with secular studies and secular activities that they do not take time for spiritual things. They neglect attendance at services, neglect Bible study and make their friends among worldly people. They die spiritually, not from poison but from spiritual malnutrition. Today, this is happening to children long before they get to college. And some of the finest, best intentioned and most sacrificial and loving parents are contributing to it.

Please pardon a personal reference. My parents were very concerned about

keeping control of their children. My father complained 50 years ago that the schools were trying to take over the rearing of children and he was determined not to let that happen to his family. Anything the school planned that conflicted with church activities was considered an encroachment by the school. We did not participate in organized sports, either in school or in summer programs. We did not play in the band or join the scouts. As a rule, when school was out we came home.

You may think my parents extreme. Perhaps they were. But one thing was certain: We had time for whatever Christians were doing anywhere in the areas where we lived. We not only attended every regular service and every service of gospel meetings in our home congregation, but we attended most services of any meeting anywhere in driving distance even when meetings lasted the greater part of two weeks.

Preachers who came preaching

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in the area learned to expect the Hall family near the front of the building night after night. I never remember going out of town for a ball game, but I remember many trips out of town to gospel meetings and lectureships. Those gospel preachers became our heroes and the members of those congregations became the friends whose respect and confidence we most desired.

This is not to say that all parents should adopt the policies of my parents. I did not adhere to all of them in raising my children. But surely some limits need to be imposed on the runaway secularism now so common. Children are the busiest people in town. Schools have lengthened the school day and long bus rides often require children to leave home very early in the morning and return late in the afternoon. Then they have homework to get. Much extra time in school is spent in humanistic activities. Children are constantly exposed to vulgarity and profanity not only from fellow-students, but even from teachers. They desperately need counteracting spiritual influences.

Many conscientious parents, however, want still more

secular opportunities for their children than the standard curriculum provides. They encourage participation in extra-curricular sports organized by the school and in others that are privately organized, occupying afternoons and Saturdays and even portions of Sundays as well as the summer months. Students not inclined to sports are encouraged to join the band with long hours of after-school practice, summer band camps, compulsory Friday night football in the fall and concerts in the spring. In addition, there are often private music lessons. Scouts also provide wholesome experiences, and parents want their children to be involved. In fact, they feel that their children are deprived if they miss any of these opportunities, and so to provide them parents pack their own schedules full, taxiing the children here and there and sacrificially spending their energy and money.

What is wrong with these things? Generally nothing. The problem is that they are dominating children's lives. No wonder it has become impossible to plan a gospel meeting at a time when it does not conflict with some kind of secular activity! No wonder it is

exceptional when students attend every night of such a meeting! No wonder very few parents and even fewer young people are to be seen at special services beyond their own congregation!

A negative attitude seems to be developing toward anything the church plans beyond the usual Sunday morning, Sunday night, and Wednesday night assemblies or toward any extension of evening activities beyond one hour. The church is considered insensitive when anything is planned that encroaches on children's busy secular activities.

When do we expect our children to change from this heavily weighted emphasis on this world to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness?" If they become accustomed to a secular schedule in elementary school, high school will only increase the pressure. College allows still less time for the Lord unless there is a purposeful determination to keep the lid on secular demands. If such priorities have not been learned under the guidance of parents, it is unlikely they will be developed when students are on their own in college. By the time those

school years of immersion in secularism are over, there is usually very little spiritual life left in them.

And it all begins when they are young!