

**Institute for Christian Teaching
Education Department of Seventh-day Adventists**

A CHRISTIAN APPROACH TO THE TEACHING OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

by

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I. INTRODUCTION

God expects every social science teacher to be a model teacher. If he is totally dedicated he should be a Christ-centered teacher. He beholds, loves, accepts, obeys, lives for and teaches Christ. He believes and seeks to share the Lord's message to fulfill His commission. Such a teacher's motivation, objectives and life call center in Jesus Christ. This should be the trait of every social science teacher.

The work of a godly teacher is not subject-centered nor student-centered but rather his teaching is focused on the Creator-Redeemer. To reach such a level of teaching excellence required more than professional competence. Ellen White wrote that "Christian education means the acceptance, in sentiment and principle, of the teachings of the Saviour. It includes a daily conscientious walking in the footsteps of Christ." (Fundamentals of Christian Education, p. 534)

This study on the Christian approach to teaching of social sciences will help many of our teachers who are dualists. Teachers who may not have felt the need of integrating his subject matter with that of our own doctrine. He may not have the chance to be schooled in our own Seventh-day Adventist schools and this will surely serve him as a model.

There might be some teachers although trained in our own schools but have neglected this most important aspect in teaching and now he can be challenged to integrate faith and learning in his academic discipline.

It is the purpose of this study to present Christian approaches to the teaching of social sciences from the elementary up to the college level.

II. ADVENTIST PHILOSOPHY IN TEACHING SOCIAL SCIENCES

Before we begin we must first of all, ask ourselves these questions:

1. Is social science knowledge a vital importance in our everyday life?
2. Are we kept abreast with the significant events happening around us?
3. Does our present curriculum meet our values education goal?
4. Do our Seventh-day Adventists teachers possess the right world mission?

Social science knowledge is vital as we learn from the experiences of others. It also helps us to understand people's culture. We can truly see the hand of God moving in a very mysterious way as He leads all nations since the beginning of the history of mankind. The Bible is the best source of wisdom.

We are all aware and are kept abreast with everyday happenings through our knowledge of history, geography, social studies and political science. We are kept in touch with the current issues that are happening around us and even with our neighboring countries.

But what do we need to emphasize in our everyday curriculum—

Mrs. Ellen G. White tells us that:

The very heart of Christian education is not the number of volumes we have in our library, neither the number of buildings we have put up in school but it is the extent of the moral power pervading the college that is the test of prosperity. (Testimonies, Vol. 5, pp. 31-32)

The word of God should have place, the first place, in every system of education as educating power, it is of moral value those the writings of all philosophers of all ages. (Testimonies, Vol. 5, p. 542)

Therefore, when we teach social sciences our curriculum should call for more than mere facts, dates and places but it should be enriched with the values education and moral power to reach God's standard.

Every Seventh-day Adventist teacher who teaches social sciences should be oriented with our world mission. Our teaching of social sciences should be Bible based. Teachers should make the Bible as basis for knowledge. In every line of instruction, teachers are to seek, to impart light from the word of God, and to show the importance of obedience to a 'Thus saith the Lord.' The education should be such that the students make right principles the guide of action. This is the education that will abide through eternal ages. (Fundamentals of Christian Education, p. 534)

The Holy Scriptures are the perfect standard of truth, and as such should be given the highest place in education. (Education, p. 17)

In our Adventist philosophy in teaching social sciences the teacher's knowledge of the Bible, his creativeness and dedication. His love for teaching will surely enhance every branch of learning.

III. TEACHING STRATEGIES

A. History--"Adventist history is profitable for identity, for interest, for instruction and for insight." (Teaching History from an Adventist Perspective, p. 3)

One approach that can be used in teaching history is the lecture method which is but a universal one. Students can be allowed to take notes while the teacher discusses the lesson. This method can be made more interesting if the students are given the chance to react and give their input.

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Aside from giving lectures in the classroom, a history teacher can use group discussion, problem solving, team teaching, guest lecture on specialized topics, lecture discussion, seminar methods, individual and group reports, documentary films and field trips to historical locations. The use of historical maps can help the students see where and how events took place.

Games can also be introduced as to test the memory of students regarding dates, places and people which have been significant events of history. The Adventist history teacher can share the lives of our great men in the Bible such as Abraham, Moses, Ruth, Esther, Paul and Jesus himself. Here we can learn the lessons trust in God. Joseph showed the forgiving value, when he forgave his enemies.

What a privilege to have in our very own denominational history a woman, whose life can be said to be the prophet and founder of the Seventh-day Adventist church, Ellen G. White. Her life and teachings will be of great interest in our SDA history classes.

B. Social Studies can be taught by using a variety of techniques that can help maintain a high student interest level.

Example: Underline the best answer:

What good trait did Daniel show when he was thrown into the lion's den?

- | | |
|------------------|-------------------|
| (a) cruelty | (b) bravery |
| (c) truthfulness | (d) prayerfulness |

Queen Esther's life was saved because of her

- | | |
|------------------|----------------|
| (a) loyalty | (b) humbleness |
| (c) trust in God | (d) honesty |

School projects or community projects will be helpful as they may apply their skills in working for a church or school project.

Children can be taught to work more independently for example in putting up their own lamb shelter building or a device that they may use in their social studies classes. Celebrating special events such as Thanksgiving Day or Christmas, and parents' day should be felt by every child. He should know its significance and can also be celebrated by parents and teachers. A child's birthday should be remembered too as to let know his importance of being born to this world.

A musical program can be presented with its history background, introducing the composer of each song in a narration. Children should be acquainted with our own SDA composers and establish their values through our very own songs and music.

Nature slides will be very appropriate to show to children, pictures of animals, trees, flowers, rivers, mountains and people will help them to understand God's love.

Dramatization can also be interesting by putting an empty chair and letting someone to fill to take the place of Pharaoh, Herod or Darius to answer all question biblically based.

Role playing can give a variety to improve the children's skill as they make positive or negative decisions, for example, breaking traffic rules, littering, disrespect to elders or teachers, all of the traits should lead to valuing.

What Christian values do we really want our children to learn?
All values are learned first from the home, extrinsic or intrinsic.
Mrs. White tells us again:

Christian homes, established and conducted in accordance with God's plan are among His most effective agencies for the formation of Christian character and for the advancement of His work. (Counsels to Parents, Teachers and Students, pp. 145, 430)

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The community and the school are the second factors that may influence one's life. The teaching of civics and character education is very vital. It does not only reflect the values learned from the home but the community as well. It has to do much with the culture taught in school. But as Seventh-day Adventists we teach more of that neighborly love, kindness, helpfulness, industry, honesty and thoughtfulness, these are the traits for eternity.

Nothing can be more effective in teaching social studies than the teacher's knowledge of the Bible. The influence of the teacher is great much more if she demonstrates Christian virtues and concern for the youth. This will be her greatest task as Ellen White points to the ultimate goal in education:

Higher than the highest human thought can reach is God's ideal for His children. Godliness, God likeness is the goal to be reached. (Education, p. 31)

C. Geography. Geography education is a living, moving subject constantly being called upon, to help interpret news and views.

Another definition of geography is the study of people in their places. This includes the study of how people create and modify places, what human activities occur in these places, the interaction between places and the variations in living standards between places.

According to James Michener, a famous author of epics in social education, he said:

The more I work in the social studies field the more convinced I am become that geography is the foundation of all. When I begin to work on a new era something I have been called upon to do rather frequently of my adult life, I invariable start with the best geography, I can find. This takes precedence over everything else, even history for I need to ground myself in the fundamentals which have governed and in a sense limited human development.

If I were a young man with any talent for expressing myself, and if I wanted to make myself indispensable to my society, I would devote eight to ten years to the real mastery of one of the earth's major regions. I would learn languages, the religions, the customs, the value systems, the history, the nationalisms, and above all, the geography, and when that was completed I would be in a position to write about that region, and I would be invaluable to my nation, for I would be the bridge of understanding of the alien culture. We have seen how crucial such bridges can be. (Journal of Adventist Education, pp. 12, 36)

Geography can be taught through the use of globes and maps knowing all the different cultures of people. We do not want to be ignorant of the world in which we live and so through the study of geography will help develop in our young people a realistic vision of service to humanity.

Trained geographers can also play an important role in the work of the church. Insights gained from geography can help guide church work in towns and cities, as they offer information about the economic factors, and physical environment that may influence evangelism. This will also help the church for a world wide mission.

To a farmer, the knowledge of geography is very important and so it is true to the learners of geography who may specialize in agriculture. Knowing the different seasons, learning how to prepare the soil and applying what crops are adaptable and available for each season, such information will be very helpful. In a sense we follow the biblical injunction by teaching our students to give importance to labor:

God Himself had planned for work in the Garden of Eden. He commanded man to earn his food by the sweat of his brow. (The Role of Work in Adventist Education, p. 2)

There is a great demand for trained geographers as consultants in business, industry, travel and other humanitarian services. Students can be exposed more to learning geography by visiting some industrial

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firms, museums, and other historical spots. We can introduce our students to the different ways of peoples dressing, eating, and acting. We let them explore other world to broaden their horizon. We make them aware that there's no one culture but the meeting of cultures makes a man.

D. Political Science. It is the making of rules and regulations that have a binding effect on a significant group of people in a given society.

As Adventists the relationship of politics to religion is of special concern to everyone of us. Religious liberty and freedom of conscience are defined by the state in our country; we have a freedom of state and religion. Our young people should be oriented with what we stand for as Seventh-day Adventists.

Teachers in political science can be of great help in affirming our world view. Our students should be trained to be able to make their own stand between politics and religion. Whom is he to serve God or man? There are some of the crucial question asked. Is politics right or wrong?

The Christian student must be given the opportunity and be encouraged to express his personal values and religious convictions verbally, in writing artistically, or in song. There are many kinds of activities that lend themselves to this purpose: short devotionals, Sabbath School discussions based on the Bible, participation in public worship, spiritual retreats, weeks in spiritual emphasis, poster and literary contests, dramatic representations, missionary visits, public singing, and musical tours. (Do Christians and Politics Mix?, Journal of Christian Education, May 1988, p. 17)

Debates can also be conducted on a higher level. Oratorical contest is acceptable based on a selected topic—How to Stop Smoking.

We can think of more strategies but the most important role in a Christian teacher may play is to help his students to establish a

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a positive relationship with God, with himself and with his fellow human beings. In other words to see God as a Father and Jesus as a friend; to consider sin as the breaking of those relationships and bring out of the alignment with the fundamental faith and the restoration of the God-man relationship; to recognize his immense worth as God's creature and heir of eternal life through Jesus' death and resurrection; to accept his privilege to value and to serve others, to share with others God's plan to restore human beings to the perfection of Eden and help them to be ready to enter God's eternal kingdom.

III. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Every social science teacher should be a model teacher. He should be oriented with the Seventh-day Adventist world view. His teachings should be Christ-centered. And the Bible should be the basis of all his teachings.

The teacher should be creative as he develops one's personality and values. His resourcefulness and interest should lead to his students' self-confidence and worth. His teaching should create a desire to appreciate God's power and goodness.

Strategies in teaching, whatever it may be, should lend a helping hand to innocent minds and young hearts. Teachers should be aware that teaching in any discipline may amount to nothing not unless values are internalized. In an Adventist perspective we teach social sciences being a part of this global world. But as an Adventist teacher we would like to restore in our students the lost image of our Creator. As Christian teachers, this is our objective, this is our goal.

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SUPPLEMENTS

