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**HEALTH EVANGELISM IN A UNIVERSITY CAMPUS:
A ROMANIAN PERSPECTIVE**

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The purposes of this essay are:

- to show how the Adventist message, both evangelistic and medical, can penetrate secular universities.
- to provide Adventist students from secular universities the knowledge and skills needed to become a positive agent wherever they may be, serving others, sharing their faith, and preparing themselves and others for the second coming of Jesus Christ.
- to orient and encourage our students to give priority to their personal spiritual development.

A. A student community observation

1. Student's definition:

a. a social privileged person, with children's advantages and adult's rights.

b. the best position for the best self-esteem

c. spirit of adventure, having the personal stress of limited time, irregular meals, lack of sleep, and inadequate exercise.

d. highly desirous of information, greedy for occidental lifestyle, so many years prohibited. After 1989, the bad commercial part of America invaded Romania: cigarettes, Coca-Cola, McDonald's. Since then, there has been considerable smoking publicity in our mass-media. According to Health Ministry, about 65% of Romanian highly-educated persons smoke (in America only 6%). (1)

The use of drugs among students is increasing daily.

e. open for existentialist and philosophical topics. This is the time of the big questions: Who am I? Where did I come from? Does God really exist? What happens after death?

f. intrinsic limits:

- arrogance (he has survived communist bullets)
- misjudge ("the good" capitalist life-style, so many years prohibited). But this is not unique.

The students are almost the same all over the world.

A recent Carnegie Commission survey of American undergraduates reveals that these best-educated people are darkly pessimistic about the future of their country and their world. They are, among other things, "fearful of the economy, pollution, crime, morals, energy, and nuclear war." But at the same time they are brightly optimistic about their personal futures. They believe that the knowledge they have gained through education, especially with the access it gives them to their professions, will enable them to carve out a niche of private safety and sanity in the midst of public calamity. They believe that they can "win" while everyone around them is losing.

The researchers cite this interview as typical:

Interviewer: Will the United States be a better or worse place to live in the next ten years?

Student: The U.S. will definitely be a worse place to live.

Interviewer: Then you must be pessimistic about the future?

Student: No, I am optimistic.

Interviewer (with surprise): Why?

Student: Because I have a high grade point average, and I am going to get a good job, make a lot of money, and live in a nice house. (2)

2. Environment in which he lives:

a. A secular world with a popular unhealthy lifestyle

The *Oxford English Dictionary* definition of "secularism" is "the doctrine that morality should be based solely on regard to the well-being of mankind in the present life, to the exclusions of all considerations drawn from belief in God or in a future state". (3)

Secularism excludes consideration of God and the religious dimension as a matter of principle.

The secularist's position can be defined only in negatives. There is no life except this life in time. There is no order of being except this which we explore with our senses and our instruments. There is no condition of well-being except that of healthy and comfortable life in time. There is no God to be worshipped, for no God created us. There is no reward to be sought and no punishment to be avoided except those which derive

from earthly authority. (4)

In other words, secularism is a multifaceted cultural phenomenon through which religious thinking, institutions, and practices lose their relevance in society and in the daily life of individuals.

"Secularists" may initially have seen the system as a way to free themselves from what they think of as the restrictions of the Biblical faith. As a matter of fact, they evidently wanted more: a dismantling of Christianity, at least in its public expressions. Let us look at the following snapshots:

1. Moving Textbooks from "Neutral" to Attack

"Secularists" proclaimed at the beginning of this century that they just wanted to bring science into public school textbooks, not to eliminate religion from them. Indeed, one result was that both creation and evolution often were taught. Now, almost only evolution can be taught. In 1985 and 1986, when psychologist Paul Vits and his associates studied 60 representative western social study textbooks, they found Christianity virtually excluded. (5)

During the 45 years of Romanian communism, everything was based on Marxist philosophy and evolution theory. There was no alternative in public schools. Even now, in books for grades one through four that introduces children to an understanding of Romanian society, you find not a single word about Christianity.

2. Restrictions on the Free Exercise of Religion

It is very well known how difficult it is for Christians to live in a communist or Moslem country. But in all countries, some Christians have problems.

-In Colorado, a district court judge fined a pastor \$12,500 and compelled him to serve 80 hours of community service. The pastor's terrible crime was to hold a prayer meeting and Bible study in the basement of his home.

-In Rockford, Illinois, the Family Christian Fellowship was fined \$1,000 for holding outdoor services. If the Fellowship had been holding a street carnival instead, it would not have been violating the law.

-In Rockford, it is easier to get permission to establish a liquor store or a junkyard than it is a church. There are reports showing that problems like those above are cropping up with increasing frequency. (6)

Dismantling can involve restrictions on access to universities. Right after the Romanian Anticommunist revolution, it was easy to find a place in the University to present a religious protestant topic. Now it is quite complicated for the

non-orthodox. It is easier for those who proclaim the new-age doctrine.

Even America has the same problem. Josh McDowell, the popular evangelist and Christian apologist, was scheduled to speak at Tennessee Tech. The school barred him from the campus because his message was religious. (7)

Christians are excluded in some circumstances, but campuses are free to load up with Marxists, since Marxism is "secular". As Professor Bertel Ollman has noted in his book, *The Left Academy*, "A Marxist cultural revolution is taking place in American universities."

3. Androgyny and Sexual Revolution

Androgyny is the doctrine that male and female characteristics ought to blend together in such a way that virtually all distinctions between men and women should be eliminated. Therefore they are free to have any kind of sexual behavior.

Henry Grunvald, former editor-in-chief of Time Inc., observed:

"One of the most remarkable things about the twentieth century, more than technological progress and physical violence, has been the deconstruction of man and woman. The Age of Reason exalted humankind but still admitted God as a sort of supreme philosopher-king or chairman of the board who ultimately presided over the glories achieved by reason and science. The humanist nineteenth century voted him out. It increasingly saw reason and science irreconcilably opposed to religion, which would fade away. Secular humanism...stubbornly insisted that morality need not to be based on the supernatural. But it gradually became clear that ethics without the sanction of some higher authority was simply not compelling. The ultimate irony, or perhaps tragedy, is that secularism has not led to humanism.

We have gradually dissolved-deconstructed-the human being into a bundle of reflexes, impulses, neuroses, nerve endings. The great religious heresy used to be making man the measure of all things; but we have come close to making man the measure of nothing." (8)

b. Rock generation.

Generation which protests against almost any social and moral rules. There is no place for God in this subculture. Instead, there is place for drugs, uncontrolled instincts, satanism.

B. A holistic health approach

At the end of 1990, when I had just graduated from the Medical University, a group of Adventist students from different universities began to ask God to show them what they could do for the students on their campuses. I was a part of this group made up of students with religious backgrounds. Six months we prayed and waited. We came to know Jesus Christ personally and this was our real conversion.

Then in 1991, Timisoara Adventist Church organized a long-term evangelism in the biggest cinema in town. We gave personal invitations to other students and visited them on campus. After two months, five students and a veterinary professor were baptized. It was a very encouraging experience for us. We continued to pray and we had a deep conviction that God would use us to communicate His love to the unchurched students.

With that in mind, we arranged with the universities to have a public place to present religious topics. In the next 10 weeks, four groups of Adventist students presented small group Revelation seminars in different places. One of the groups was led by a student who had only recently come into the Church. As a matter of fact, the most active were those five students who came from nonreligious backgrounds. They invited their friends, many of them agnostics or atheists, to attend the seminars where a student speaker was dealing with apologetics, and one of the Christian students would give a testimony followed by refreshments and opportunities for discussion and interaction. We began to understand how to share the Gospel with non-Christians, and people began to respond to our ministry.

Our purpose was to introduce students and young career people to history's greatest person, Jesus Christ, and connect them with the Adventist Church. Many with whom we talked have not rejected Him, but have rather a poor caricature of Him. Few have ever understood the enormous implications of His sacrifice on the cross for them, that it brings pardon, confidence, and hope.

We met students through opinion surveys, materials tables, and personal invitations. But our most effective method was through the friendships of people already involved in our ministry. We have done friend-to-friend evangelism. There is a great statement of Ellen White in "The Ministry of Healing":

"Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Savior mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, "Follow Me." (9)

This is the best method to make disciple for Christ. Friend-to-friend evangelism.

A public reunion had always started and ended with prayer,

then a short welcome, a presentation relating the gospel to the theme of the evening, followed by an opportunity for everybody to give feedback. During the week, we arranged visits for those very interested, we gave more information and prayed together. In the first year of working on campus, 10 students were baptized and became members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In the next two years, another 15 students were baptized.

The purpose of our evangelism, and subsequent nurturing and individual follow-up, was to encourage people to become involved in campus Bible fellowship groups. Each group had between three and five students who met weekly during the school year. In groups the members studied a topic from Spirit of Prophecy and a passage of Scripture individually, interpreting and then applying it to their lives. We would also spend time in sharing schedules, in bearing one another's burdens, and in conversational prayer about the expressed needs and concerns.

At the beginning of 1993, we discovered that it became more and more difficult to get a public place on campus to present a religious topic. All the religious activities for students were controlled by a fundamentalist orthodox student association.

So we focused our attention on health programs and general subjects such as: "Love and marriage", "How to communicate with your mate", "Self-esteem", "Yoga and Christianity". Those topics were presented on campus, twice a year, by a pastor or a professor from the Romanian Union. The participation was excellent and our Church became known by the publicity for those meetings. Two Adventist pastors were invited to participate in local radio talk-shows. More than 200 students have come into the fellowship of the Adventist Church. But we had difficulty involving them in Bible fellowship groups. None of them became church members.

We discovered in our prayer groups a well-known passage in "The Ministry of Healing":

"Medical missionary work is the pioneer work of the gospel. In the ministry of the word and in the medical missionary work the gospel is to be preached and practiced." (10)

Passages like these continued to encourage us:

"The medical missionary is to be connected with the third angel's message as the hand is connected with the body; and the education of students in medical missionary lines is not complete unless they are trained to work in connection with the church and the ministry." (11)

"Medical missionary work brings to humanity the gospel of release from suffering. It is the pioneer work of the gospel. It

is the gospel practiced, the compassion of Christ revealed. Of **this work there is a great need, and the world is open for it.** God grant that the importance of medical missionary work shall be understood, and that new fields may be immediately entered. (12)

"The proclamation of the third angel's message, the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus, is the burden of our work. The message is to be proclaimed with a loud cry, and is to go to the whole world. The presentation of health principles must be united with this message, but must not in any case be independent of it, or in any way take the place of it." (13)

"The principles of health reform are found in the word of God. The gospel of health is to be firmly linked with the ministry of the word. It is the Lord's design that the restoring influence of health reform shall be part of the last great effort to proclaim the gospel message." (14)

Our first program was a Five-Day Plan to Stop Smoking for students. We prayed and organized a student team led by a doctor and pastor. After campus publicity, 26 students started this seminar and 22 completed the program. It was simple for us to obtain a classroom in Timisoara Medical University.

After a year we discovered "Breathe Free, the Plan to Stop Smoking", and presented it to the students. Thirty students started this program, with 28 completing. Because the results were very encouraging and interesting, we communicated scientific observations of "Five-Day versus Breathe Free" at the Romanian Respiratory Medicine Reunion-Bucharest-1997.

"Breathe Free" programm was made by J.W. McFarland, a physioterapist and pastor E.J. Folkenberg in 1959. Since than, more than 20 millions of people gave up smoking.

| Elements | 5 Day Plan-Group A | Breathe Free-Group B |
|---------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Number | 26 | 30 |
| Sex | 12 Males, 14 Females | 16 Males, 14 Females |
| Average Age | 28 | 32 |
| Duration of Smoking | 10-15 years | 10-15 years |

| | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Intensity | 15-20 cig./day | 20 cig./day |
| Cigarettes | Unfiltered (predominant) | Unfiltered (predominant) |
| Co-morbidity: | 13 | 11 |
| -chronic bronchitis | 8 | 10 |
| -chronic hepatitis | 2 | 0 |
| -gastric ulcer | 1 | 1 |

The inclusion in groups was voluntary. None of the participants tried another therapy to quit smoking. During the seminars we developed relationships. After the seminars we had meetings and phone calls where we talked about their problems, encouraged them, even prayed together. Some of the participants abandoned the groups after a few days and were not included in our observations.

Results

| Time | Group A: still non-smokers | Group B: still non-smokers |
|-----------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 2 weeks | 22 (84.61%) | 28 (93.33%) |
| 2 months | 20 (76.92%) | 24 (80%) |
| 6 months | 14 (53.86%) | 20 (66.66%) |
| 12 months | 12 (46.15%) | 18 (60%) |

Comments:

- "Breathe Free" seems to be superior, in efficiency, to the Five-Day Plan

- Success is higher than usual, probably because the included persons have been self-selected and highly motivated.

- The team is very important in supporting, assisting, sustaining the relationships between participants.

- After a year and a half, a person from group A became an Adventist and after two years a person from group B became an Adventist, too. Both knew Adventists before the seminars.

Right after the first seminar, our team was invited to present this method at Timisoara Radio (western part of Romanian National Broadcasting Corporation), one of the most popular regional stations. Because our program was successful, they invited us to present medical topics as well. Doctors have presented life-style tablets twice a week just before the morning news, based on the "New Start" Program, since 1994. And they are continuing still.

Because we have friends at Timisoara Radio, Adventist pastors have many times been invited "on air" after a public conference for students.

"Christian Medical Student Association" has invited us to present health Adventist topics since 1996.

Local magazines have offered the opportunity to write articles about our health vision.

C. Results

-Our programs have worked and some students have changed their lives.

-Health programs open the door for the Adventist Message.

-Secularism is not a social disease. It is an individual disease. Students need personal relationships. They should be evangelized in small groups, person-to-person. After each public health conference, small Bible fellowships groups must be organized on campus.

-After graduation, some of the Adventist students went to other churches in other towns and found that they were growing in Christ through our ministry.

-As people experience the fellowship of a Christ-centered, grace-oriented, and loving church, they naturally inquire about Adventist distinctness and church membership.

-Adventist Ministry to College and University Students (AMiCUS) is a registered association and one of the central objectives is to fellowship, develop friendships with one another, and seek spiritual strength to enable students to be strong witnesses on their campus. This organization can play an important part.

-To penetrate secular Universities, we need **students with strong Adventist identity.**

-The best way of fighting against Adventist secularism is to involve our students in evangelistic work for their colleagues. Some of these are examples of Adventist secularism: "success orientation as opposed to a servant church, self-preoccupation as opposed to self-sacrifice, passive-spectator attitude as opposed to involvement, elitism as opposed to Christian community, competition as opposed to cooperation, striving for affluence as opposed to Biblical stewardship, the end justifying the means as opposed to means consistent with Biblical goals." (15)

-Scientific cooperation with secular universities is a good opportunity to make known and develop respect for the Adventist Church (visiting professors, summer schools, developing common programs or scientific studies, etc.).

D. Perspectives

The following are some options available to enable our students to become involved in this wonderful program of caring, winning, and training for Christian service:

1. Literature distribution

The printed word is still a powerful tool for evangelism, and its distribution can be effected in many ways:

- a. Literature evangelism-many students or young people can be involved in the sale of literature (books or magazines) or may follow up literature evangelists interests.
- b. Special student groups give out literature, tracts, magazines, Bible course enrollment cards, temperance literature. This can be done door-to-door on the University campus six months before a public seminar or conference.

2. Prayer groups

Many have discovered the satisfaction of praying for specific individuals and seeing answers to their prayers. This may be done by special student prayer groups. Adventist students must pray for their colleagues every day and ask the Lord to show them what can be done to help their prayers be answered.

3. Temperance Outreach

In all countries and communities the temperance approach to evangelism has proved most successful and is ideally suited to student involvement. Here are some options:

- a. Home Help plan

This provides personal counseling in the home for those with alcohol, tobacco, diet, or drug problems. The aim is not to offer professional service. Instead it offers church-related counseling on temperance and better-living principles, along with spiritual aid. Practical and successful church-related and community programs can be geared for home application through films, literature, cassettes, records, and other materials. Guidelines are given for living without alcohol, drugs, or tobacco.

The temperance executive committee (usually church board) should be consulted for approval and support when the Home Help project is launched. It is imperative to inform the church members of the plan.

b. Tobacco Survey.

A good way to obtain interest is to conduct a tobacco survey in the designated community. The membership may be divided into teams with two persons in each team. The teams go out into mapped territory to visit every home.

The tobacco survey is a method of gathering statistics and procuring interests for conducting Home Help studies that eventually will lead to other witnessing projects.

c. Five-Day Plan

Another good method of obtaining interest is the Five-Day Plan to Stop Smoking. Selected students can be a major help in the following activities:

- Working as counselors.
- Serving as a receptionist and ushers.
- Arranging facilities, projecting films, controlling lights, and storing materials.
- Distributing invitations and posting notices, preparing ads for newspapers, and compiling reports and stories after the program.
- Directing the program in the absence of the pastor and doctor.

In the absence of trained medical help, the Five-Day Plan can be conducted by students using film or videos of the series.

d. Public School Program

Plan a temperance or drug education program with the principal or superintendent of a public school. Have an Adventist doctor join the group and also show a film.

e. Scientific cooperation between Adventist and secular universities.

An Adventist medical team could present top subjects for professors and students from non-Adventist universities.

4. Health and Nutrition

Society is becoming far more conscious of health and good

nutrition. The Health and Temperance Department in the local conference office can provide the details, materials, resources and training for many project such as:

- Cooking classes
- Nutrition school
- Weight control classes
- Health assessment programs
- Stress management seminars
- Health action units-organized action units for the promotion of healthful living

5. Door to Door Witnessing

a. Follow-up Visits

A follow-up visit is a visit to someone who has had some kind of contact with Adventists or Adventism. There are many names in the interest files of our churches, names of people who have responded to offers from our radio programs or purchased books from our literature evangelists. Others have received one of our missionary journals. Some have attended a Five-Day Plan to Stop Smoking. Some have Adventist relatives and some are actually former members. What most of these people need is friendship, and no friendship is treasured more greatly by those of all ages than the friendship of students.

b. Service Visits

A service visit is a visit where you are performing a service by delivering information. "Hello. We called to tell you about a cooking class (or) a stop smoking program (or) a vacation Bible school."

c. Surveys

A community religious survey is a good way to make friends and discover the spiritual needs and conditions of those we meet. Many of these contacts will develop into Bible studies and, with the blessing of God, friendship will in some cases lead to conversion and baptism.

6. Neighborhood Radio

Many radio stations, particularly FM and community access radio, are willing to accept student radio programs. A special group of carefully selected persons must be formed. They should:

- interview students on current events and happenings of interest in their community
- have live discussions
- describe last day events
- offer interpretation of prophecy
- answer Bible-related questions
- dramatize stories and recount them with the human touch

- discuss social issues
- offer practical Christian solutions

7. Day Camps

Day camps are an ideal way to "break the ice" in an unchurched or non-entered area.

8. Video Evangelism

Video Evangelism is an exciting way to share the gospel and it can be used in many ways:

- Public Evangelism-a video series is used instead of a guest or student speaker.
- Home Bible Studies-study with individuals or families in your home or theirs. This is the best way of making disciples for Christ.
- Neighborhood Bible Studies-find some students who would be willing to invite other neighbors to their room for a video series of Bible Studies.
- Video Lending Library-to be used by the students in sharing and personal evangelism, using a student video lending library.

The challenge of secularism appears formidable. The human dimensions of this third mission frontier are staggering. However, we continue to trust in the Christ who not only warned us about the dramatic decline of faith prior to His coming, but also encouraged us with the words, "Surely I will be with you always, to the very end" (Matthew 28:20) as we faithfully endeavor to fulfill His commission.

Where love is felt, people listen. I pray that local churches will become increasingly exciting centers of Christ's redemptive love, where those who are coming from secularism to faith in Christ can grow into spiritually reproductive people who can be the salt of the earth and alight to the world.

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