

Integration of Faith and Learning Seminar

March 11-23, 2007

Hong Kong Adventist College

## Adventist Education, Witnessing and Mission

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### I. INTRODUCTION

Adventist education is a special blessing from God. According to the 2006 report, the Seventh-day Adventist Church operates 6,845 educational institutions around the world, with a student enrollment of almost 1.3, and growing every day.

When the Adventist Church started operating schools in the early 1870s, its primary objective was to train young people for the ministry. However, the study of other subjects was also considered important to meet the needs of fellow men and women in the community. (CT, 86)

Adventist education is holistic, that is, it fosters the balanced development of body, mind and spirit. If any of these human dimensions is neglected, education is crippled and negatively affects the future life of students. True education should prepare students not only for the present life but also for eternity. It also emphasizes the importance of Christian mission and trains young people for a faithful and successful witnessing life. In order to reach these goals, Adventist schools must be intentional and creative in offering curricular and co-curricular mission activities and programs to their students.

To emphasize the multidimensionality of the education we offer, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Northern Asia has established schools and called them "Sahmyook," "San-iku" or "San Yu" schools, which means "three-fold education."

### II. PURPOSES OF ADVENTIST EDUCATION

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has emphasized the importance and need of Christian education from the early stages of its organization. The philosophy of Adventist education is in line with the ultimate goals of human existence. Adventist education is offered to help young people reach the highest goals of their life.

Ellen G White understood Christian education as one of the most important areas of work that the church should engage in because it is related with the eternal life of students as well as with the people they would impact. The following are some purposes of Adventist education that Ellen White has specially stressed.

#### A. Restoration of God's Image on Men and Women

Man and woman were created in the image of God and His likeness. (Gen 1: 26-27) They were perfect when they came out of the hands of the Creator. They fully reflected the image of God not only internally but also externally. The image of God made man and woman so distinct from other creatures. "His [man's] nature was in harmony with the will of God. His mind was capable of comprehending divine things. His affections were pure; his appetites and passions were under the control of reason. He was holy and happy in bearing the image of God and in perfect obedience to His will" (PP, 45).

The image of God has moral, social, physical as well as spiritual aspects. There were no flaws or defects in every aspect of the image of God in Adam and Eve until sin damaged it. As long as they would remain faithful to God, they would enjoy a happy and eternal life. But when sin came into this world, there was a drastic change. The image of God has almost been defaced since sin entered the heart of human beings. True joy and happiness departed from them, and as a result, wickedness and death came to this planet.

Hence, "The true object of education is to restore the image of God in the soul. In the beginning God created man in His own likeness. He endowed him with noble qualities. His mind was well balanced, and all the powers of his being were harmonious. But the Fall and its effects have perverted these gifts. Sin has marred and well-nigh obliterated the image of God in man. It was to restore this that the plan of salvation was devised, and a life of probation was granted to man" (PP, 595).

By the forgiving grace of God, men and women are saved from sin and the lost image of God begins to be restored in them along with their noble status. This is the science of salvation, a life-long process.

"To bring man back into harmony with God, so to elevate and ennoble his moral nature that he may again reflect the image of the Creator, is the great purpose of all the education and discipline of life" (CT, 50)." This process takes time. Therefore, the school should work with great patience and innovative effort so that students may achieve the great goals of Adventist education.

## B. Character Formation

The character of a person reveals who he or she is. Character formation cannot be completed in a few days, but is developed through a person's entire life. It is formed by habitual behaviors and conduct, and it can be improved by persistent educational programs and a dynamic spiritual life.

Adventist education aims at the formation of the noble character of students. This is considered more important than knowledge, because all of us will be accountable before the judgment of God at the end of time. In other words, by helping students develop a Christ-like character, teachers prepare them for eternal life in the kingdom of heaven.

"The great work of parents and teachers is character building - seeking to restore the image of Christ in those placed under their care. A knowledge of the sciences sinks into insignificance beside this great aim; but all true education may be made to help in the development of a righteous character. The formation of character is the work of a lifetime, and it is for eternity" (CT, 61).

"The development of character, the seedbed of personality, is the great aim of the Christian teacher" (Arthur W Spalding, Origin and History of Seventh-day Adventists, 1962, 102).

## C. Missionaries for God

Another important purpose of Adventist education, which Ellen White emphasized, is to prepare students and involve them in the gospel commission. Students must be educated for missionary work.

"With such an army of workers as our youth, rightly trained, might furnish, how soon the message of a crucified, risen, and soon-coming Savior might be carried to the whole world" (Ed, 271). "Every soul whom Christ has rescued is called to work in His name for the saving of the lost" (COL, 191).

God needs well-educated young people to spread the refreshing word of God to a dying world. God wants them to work as His missionaries in the foreign fields as well as in the homeland territories. The home is the first and closest mission place.

Just prior to His return to heaven, Jesus told His disciples to be His witnesses: "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). The mission territory Jesus defined was from Jerusalem, where the disciples were living, to the ends of the earth. The whole world is the mission field to

Christ's followers. Adventist education aims at making them missionaries for God.

"True education is missionary training. Every son and daughter of God is called to be a missionary; we are called to the service of God and our fellow men; and to fit us for this service should be the object of our education" (MH, 395).

"The great object of education is to enable us to use the powers which God has given us in such a manner as will best represent the religion of the Bible and promote the glory of God" (3T, 160).

One of the important purposes of Adventist education is to train young people to be life-time missionaries for God.

#### D. Useful Workers for Mankind

One more important aim of Adventist education that Ellen White has stressed is to "gain knowledge and wisdom that we may become better Christians, and be prepared for greater usefulness..." (CT, 49). In order to be useful workers for mankind, students should have a thorough preparation in many areas of knowledge, both theoretical and applied.

Thus, students in Adventist schools are to be led to become friends of God, develop a noble character, learn how to share the good news of salvation in Christ wherever they are, and be prepared to help men and human to live better lives in their own communities.

### III. PURPOSES OF WITNESSING AND MISSION

As we have seen, one of the key objectives of Adventist education is to train students to be witnesses for Jesus and to carry on His mission faithfully and effectively during the rest of their lives. Why is witnessing and mission so important in Adventist education? Why does God ask His people to be involved in mission?

#### A. For God's Glory

God loves human beings because they are His children. He created them. All creatures exist to give glory to their Creator by fulfilling the purpose that He has towards them.

Adam and Eve failed by showing their unfaithfulness to God's commands. The result of that sin was fatal. They should have died the eternal death that has no hope of

resurrection. But God loved the world so much that He gave His only Son, and whoever would believe in Him may have eternal life (John 3:16). God loves sinners and wants to save all of them. Therefore, He is telling His people to “go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation” (Mark 16:15).

God does not want anyone to perish (2 Pet 3:9). Jesus offered His life on the cross to take away the sins of many people (Heb 9:28). When a sinner repents and returns to the Lord the whole heavens rejoice (Luke 15:7).

God wants His followers to get involved in missionary work for the salvation of other people. By witnessing for Jesus to others, the followers of Jesus are giving glory to God.

#### B. For God's people

God does not use angels but human beings to communicate the good news of salvation to others. (ChS, 7) By sharing the message of eternal life Christians themselves are spiritually blessed and benefited. “It is more blessed to give than to receive,” as Jesus said (Acts 20:35).

When the followers of Jesus participate in witnessing and mission, they pray that God will prepare their own hearts in order to be ready to share the gospel message with others and also others' hearts to be receptive of the message of the Savior of the world.

In order to explain about the God of the Bible to others, they will spend time to study the Bible themselves. It will become their daily food and thus they will be able to overcome all temptations and challenges by the power of the word of God as Jesus did while on earth. (Matt 4: 1-11)

When they go out to visit the people with the gospel message, they will understand that it is not their work but the Lord's work, and the Holy Spirit and the heavenly angels will work with them for the salvation of men and women. Through witnessing and mission, their understanding of God's love is deepened and their faith in God is strengthened. In the process of man's salvation, God's people become the first beneficiaries.

#### C. For the salvation of others

God has prepared a provision of salvation for all mankind. Jesus died for all, and the only condition for salvation is to believe in Jesus who is the Savior of the world.

“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Rom 10:13).

“How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?” (Rom 10: 14) How can the gospel message be available to those who are living in the world of darkness without the knowledge of Jesus Christ? “And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!” (Rom 10:15)

God is telling His followers to go into all the world and share the good news with the people who are living in darkness with no knowledge of the living God. Our honor and responsibility is to tell the world of the good news of Jesus Christ. Through witnessing and mission, the people who have been doomed to eternal death find the marvelous truth of the Scriptures and receive the mercy of God. (1Pet 2:10)

#### D. For the Completion of God's Mission

Jesus strongly emphasized the need and importance of witnessing and mission as He was nearing the close of His earthly ministry. “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matt 28: 19-20). “And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature’” (Mk 16:15).

Then, why did Jesus stress so much the need of witnessing and mission? When Jesus was departing from the world, He anxiously desired to come back to take His loved ones to heaven. Jesus knew that it will be realized when the gospel work is completed in the entire world. “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all nations, and then the end will come” (Matt 24: 14).

Witnessing and mission, then, should be priority in the life of Christian believers. All church activities and plan should focus on it. “We must be laborers together with God; for God will not complete His work without human agencies” (RH, March 1, 1997).

#### IV. CURRICULAR AND CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES FOR WITNESSING AND MISSION

While in school, students are learning the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will allow them to carry out their vocation and engage in useful work. The school should also provide students with curricular and co-curricular activities designed to prepare

them for witnessing as faithful and efficient missionaries for God throughout their lives. These activities can be classified into four categories: spirituality, evangelism skills, missionary spirit and participation in witnessing and mission.

#### A. Spirituality

True spirituality is the essential basis of witnessing and mission. When the students' friendship with God is nurtured and strengthened,, they will be more motivated to participate in witnessing and mission activities. And when the students participate in these activities, their spirituality will be further strengthened. The school needs to provide curricular and co-curricular mission activities to strengthen the spirituality of students.

##### 1. Personal Devotion

Individual Bible study and a personal prayer life are essential for the enhancement of the spirituality of students. "As an educator, the Holy Scriptures is without a rival. The Bible is the most ancient and the most comprehensive history that men possess" (CT, 52). In order to encourage students to be close to the Scripture, the school may need to develop Bible reading programs for them.

A designated place for private prayer and meditation in the school campus will provide students opportunities to strengthen their personal relationship with God everyday. Through regular prayer life, the students learn how to depend on God. Students must be encouraged to have personal devotional time everyday.

The school may recommend students books of the month for spiritual nourishment. It will be ideal to include some Ellen White books in the reading list. In order to encourage students to read the books, the school may need to develop various activities/programs and a reward system.

##### 2. Mission Emphasis Week

One week may be set aside for mission emphasis in the school campus. It should be planned well so that the week has a positive impact on students. Some special programs such as a seminar on mission, prayer sessions, testimonies of missionaries, distribution of religious materials on the streets organized. The mission emphasis week will remind the students of the importance of witnessing and mission.

The personal stories and testimonies from those who have served as missionaries in the past would provide great inspiration and have a deep impression on

the students.

The mission week could be an occasion of celebration of mission, and at the same time it would motivate students to commit their life to witnessing and mission..

### 3. Mission Club

A mission club could be organized as one of the student's campus activities. The club members may have regular meetings to discuss the gospel commission and how to do witnessing and mission work effectively. They may have special prayer sessions and encourage each other to be more faithful in their personal witness for God.

The club members may study the life of missionaries and share it with other members. This will broaden the worldview and understanding of witnessing and mission of the members. They may also plan for mission trips to visit missionaries in the field. The mission trips will strengthen the spirituality of the students.

### 4. Bible Classes

Ellen White wrote that Bible study must take priority in Adventist schools. "Biblical lectures should be given; the study of the Scriptures should have first place in our system of education" (CT, 86). The Bible classes should provide students not only information of the Bible but also the inspiration and enthusiasm for mission work. Here is the reason why the Bible subject should be offered to all students regardless of their specific areas of study.

It is the responsibility of Bible teachers to help students to know, love, and obey God. They should focus on spirituality as they teach Bible subjects to students.

## B. Evangelism Skills

### 1. Mission Courses

Mission courses should be offered to all students regardless of their major areas of study not only to strengthen their missionary passion and spirit, but also to equip them with evangelism skills. "To everyone who becomes a partaker of His grace the Lord appoints a work for others.... It is our work to reveal to men the gospel of their salvation. Every enterprise in which we engage should be a means to this end" (MH, 148).

The school may organize evangelistic teams and send them to conduct meetings and provide services to people in need. The students will have an opportunity to practice what they have learned in the classroom. Once they are sufficiently



equipped with evangelism skills, they will be more confident and active in witnessing and mission.

## 2. Church Planting

Church planting is important but not always easy in many places. Although it may be challenging and costly in many places, church planting is not an option but a must. It is one of the most essential ways to expand the kingdom of God here on earth.

In order to help students to work as effective church planters, class lectures alone are not enough. The students should be given an opportunity to participate in church planting activities, guided and encouraged by their teachers. The school needs to select and undertake some church planting projects so that students may learn the necessary skills for the establishment of new Adventist congregation.

## C. Missionary Spirit

The very reason of the existence of Christ's church on earth is to carry on the gospel commission. "The church of Christ is God's appointed agency for the salvation of men. Its mission is to carry the gospel to the world" (SC, 81). It is also the purpose of every Christian life.

The school needs to provide programs to strengthen the missionary spirit of students.

### 1. Mission Trips

One of the most effective means of awakening and strengthening the missionary spirit is to participate in a mission trip. When they visit the mission field, observe the work of active missionaries, and hear their stories, they will be thrilled by the dynamism of missionary work. They will also become aware of the large numbers of people that have not yet had the opportunity to hear the message of salvation through Jesus Christ. They will notice not only the spiritual needs but also material needs of the people. The trip will open the eyes of the students and the Holy Spirit will kindle the mission spirit in their hearts.

To maximize the effect of a mission trip, the school needs to develop a comprehensive plan ahead of time. By participating in the program, students will have a better understanding of the importance of mission work. Upon their return to the campus, those who participated should be given an opportunity to present a report on their mission trip to the other students.

## 2. Publications and Media on Mission

Students learn a lot from reading and watching videos on mission. The school needs to prepare a list of some good reading and visual materials that can help strengthen the mission spirit of students. Stories of great missionaries will help students to foster their own mission spirit.

## 3. Prayer Sessions

Prayer sessions may be organized for the purpose of fostering missionary zeal in the hearts and minds of students. In the upper room, when the disciples met together, they prayed for the power of the Holy Spirit for the work of soul saving.

“The days of preparation were days of deep heart searching. The disciples felt their spiritual need and cried to the Lord for the holy unction that was to fit them for the work of soul saving. They did not ask for a blessing for themselves merely. They were weighted with the burden of the salvation of souls. They realized that the gospel was to be carried to the world, and they claimed the power that Christ had promised” (AA, 37).

## D. Participation in Witnessing and Mission

“It is necessary to their complete education that students be given time to do missionary work--time to become acquainted with the spiritual needs of the families in the community around them” (CPTS, 545).

The students should be given opportunities to participate in actual outreach and service activities. By participating in these initiatives, students will grow spiritually and broaden their vision for world mission.

### 1. Students Missionary Program for Foreign Mission

“From our colleges and training schools missionaries are to be sent forth to distant lands. While they are at school, let the students improve every opportunity to prepare for this work” (CPTS, 549). Adventist colleges and universities need organize a foreign mission program that will allow students to dedicate 6-12 months in the mission field to share spiritual and material blessings with the people. By spending some time in this activity, they will learn the high value of each human being in the sight of God and involve them in their salvation.

In order to encourage the students to participate in the mission program, the

school may develop a scholarship program for those who have completed their service in the mission field. It is important to provide an orientation and a reentry program to student missionaries before and after their mission services.

## 2. 1000 Missionary Movement in Asia

The 1000 Missionary Movement was launched in 1992 in the Philippines to train and send young people to the frontline mission fields where they are to serve for one year as full-time volunteer missionaries.

The 1000 Missionary Movement has three major purposes:

- 1) To protect Adventist young people from the evil influences of the world.
- 2) To quickly finish the gospel work, particularly in un-entered territories of the Asia-Pacific region.
- 3) To strengthen the local churches with volunteer missionary spirit.

As of March 2007, 4,115 Adventist youth have joined the 1000 Missionary Movement and devoted one year of their lives to Adventist mission in the field. When they return to their homes and churches after finishing their service, they will never be the same people. They will remain in the church during the rest of their lives and become leaders in their respective congregations. They will share the missionary spirit with other church members, and thus the mission awareness and involvement of churches will be strengthened.

In order to encourage students to join the mission program, the school needs to develop plans to assist students with finances and academic credits. It also needs to regularly promote the mission program.

## 3. NSD His Hands Mission Project for Homeland Mission

“Wherever possible, students should, during the school year, engage in city mission work. They should do missionary work in the surrounding towns and villages” (CT, 547).

The Northern Asia-Pacific Division has developed a proposal on Homeland Mission by Adventist youth. For more information about this project, the author may be contacted through [jrlee@nsdadventist.org](mailto:jrlee@nsdadventist.org).

## V. CONCLUSIONS

Adventist education must prepare students for a life of service in this world and, more importantly, for an eternal life with God. As part of their program, Adventist

educational institutions should equip students to become effective witnesses for Christ and for the salvation of men and women. With that goal in mind, Adventist schools are expected to offer excellent curricular and co-curricular activities designed to promote witnessing and mission among the students. They should be given opportunities for witnessing and mission while they are in school. This will prepare them to be effective, service-oriented missionaries during the rest of their life. When Adventist education successfully accomplishes this goal, the second coming of Christ will be hastened.