

WHY I BELIEVE IN ADVENTIST EDUCATION

The goals of the gospel of Jesus Christ in the plan of salvation and the purpose of Christian education are one and the same. It is the restoration of the fallen to the likeness of God and fellowship with Him. It is the harmonious development promised in God's everlasting covenant promise, of the mind, the body, the social life, and the spiritual capacity of the human soul.

During the first twenty-five hundred years of this world's history, the home school was the only means of educating God's people. From it came the greatest statesmen, the most brilliant scholars, the mightiest intellects of which humanity can boast. The farther we come from creation the more lax was home education. When children were improperly taught by their parents, or when their training was entrusted to others, Satan was not slow to mould the mind and train the children for his service. God brought judgments to show how he regarded these lax disciplinary methods. But this became so common that it lost its effect.

Samuel was given to God before his birth. When weaned, he was taken to the temple of the Lord, and placed for training under the charge of Eli the priest. Instead of finding an ideal home and family, he saw the house of God desecrated, and God's worship brought into contempt because the home training was neglected by over-indulgent parents. The proper home training of Samuel preserved him in this household, where the members lived in opposition to God's most positive instruction. Samuel was but a child when God gave him a message, a most solemn warning, for the priest. It prefigured the time when the child Jesus sat at the feet of the learned doctors, and instructors were taught by the pupil.

"Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle. In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin, I will also make an end. For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering forever." 1 Samuel 3:14. Such was Samuel's first testimony. Eli did not neglect the education of Samuel in those things necessary for the work of a priest, for Samuel

ministered unto the Lord before Eli. The impression given by this education clung to the mind of the young prophet. It may have been that which led him, when Saul rejected his testimony, to build schools for the education of those who, later in Israel's history, became leaders and counselors.

The home of Samuel was at Ramah near Bethlehem. At this place he founded a school for the education of young men who wished to become useful in the service of God.

As a judgment of God because Eli did not restrain his children, the ark was taken by the Philistines, and God's providence, after seven months, returned it to Beth-she-mesh, but the people were not prepared to receive it, so the "men of Kirjath-jearim came, and fetched up the ark of the Lord, and brought it into the house of Abinadab in the hills, and sanctified Eleazer his son to keep the ark of the Lord." 1 Samuel 7:1. This was in a woods, and here the ark remained for twenty years. Samuel established another school at this place. The devoted in Israel, young men who were pious, intelligent and studious were gathered here for instruction. They communed with God, studied his word, and his works. They cultivated the soil and supported themselves. These schools were conducted by Samuel for the purpose of searching deeper into the truths of God's word, and to serve as a barrier against corruption that was at that time so prevalent in Israel, and to be a means of saving the nation from future calamity. The instructors were men well versed in divine truth, who enjoyed communion with God, having received a special endowment of the Holy Spirit.

The law of God was the basis of all their study. Sacred history, God's providences, music and poetry were taught. The Bible was written in prose and poetry. Both instrumental and vocal music were taught. In these schools the students learned the first principles of responsive singing as illustrated by David and his company when the ark was taken to Jerusalem, and repeated when Christ ascended to heaven, and which will again be heard when the saints ascend with Christ at his second advent. If the reader will give thought to the songs mentioned in Holy Writ previous to this time; to the judgments of God that came as a warning from time to time; to the victories gained, the circumstances which called forth these songs: and to the renaming of men and places, with their history, they will find suggestions of a curriculum imparting an education broader than most of the scientific schools of the present day. It was the Spirit of

God that directed in the establishment of these schools. Are they not worthy of the most careful consideration at the present time?

After re-anointing David king of Israel, Samuel died. David developed music, and special features of the education begun by the prophet Samuel. Other prophets came in Samuel's stead; but Israel gradually turned aside from the correct methods of education. The prophets were despised. Elijah, the fearless prophet, who advocated correct principles of education, had to flee for his life. The effect of wrong principles was so marked that Israel, after one hundred and fifty years of waywardness, came to their senses, and God revived them and sent them help. Elijah and Elisha re-established the schools of the prophets in various parts of Palestine, and the youth of Israel were again taught according to God's plan. Schools of opposition were also established, for whenever Satan sees any method adopted by God's people that is a success in establishing his kingdom, he introduces a counterfeit which is a mixture of good and evil. There were schools of the prophets at Bethel, Gilgal, Jericho and near Jordan. The prophets visited these schools and gave instruction in the branches taught, in manual training, and in Biblical etiquette. Every youth was taught some trade. These schools were not designated to take the place of home training. God never delegated parents to place into the hands of strangers the welfare of their children, but these schools were to supplement the instruction given at home.

Their methods of instruction can be gathered only from incidental statements. One thing is evident: they were far different from theological schools of the present day. The grand object was to learn the will of God and every man's duty toward him. As they studied the records of past history, they were taught to trace the footsteps of Jehovah. The types and ceremonies of the law were explained so that faith grasped the central object of that system, the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. By carefully studying the prayers recorded in the Bible, it is evident that students were instructed how to pray.

My first experiences with Adventist education were in a one-room school at Cadillac, Michigan. I was thoroughly enamored with our single teacher Madeline Kowalski. Her confidence and wisdom and Christian example were an inspiration to me. Through the influence of my mother and father, and Miss Kowalski, an insatiable desire was instilled to dig into the Word of God to find its message. I would listen to my father during family worship, the Sabbath morning message in

worship and Sabbath-school, and Bible classes at the school, all stimulated a spirit in inquiry into the Sacred Scriptures.

My grandmother Penno had given me a small black Bible, my first. So at home and in school I would read it through. The narratives captivated my attention, though I did not necessarily comprehend their deeper significance. Yet the simple beauty of the Bible, the love of God for sinners, the cross of Jesus made their impression upon my young mind.

I would walk to school over the sand dunes from home. They were large enough that during the winter time they made good ski hills. There was a rope tow on the hill behind our school. And so during recess we would strap on our boots and skis and hang onto the tow up hill, then slid down on the two pieces of wood. The cold, brisk, winter mornings nipped at our nose and after spending time outdoors it was always a cheering relief to come into the schoolhouse where the fire was stoked in the pot-bellied stove, the center of warmth in the room. But it was Miss Kowalski's personality and loving disposition that endeared Christian education to my heart during my first grades in school.

We sat at these old desks attached to the one in front with the ink wells. Sometimes it was tempting to pulling the hair of the girl sitting in front of me. We learned to socially interact with one another and lessons of courtesy and etiquette.

Later my father took a call to pastor a church in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. It was an even more remote spot than was Cadillac in the Lower Peninsula. I attended an Adventist school out in the country near Wilson. We had to drive thirty miles from the town in which we lived to get to the only Adventist school. We carpooled with some other families.

There was a dedicated layman, Jerry Snowden, in our church, who took an interest in us kids and formed a Pathfinder Club. He did lots of fun things with us. We went camping. We did craft projects. He took us on Sunday-morning pancake breakfasts. The most outrageous thing he ever did was to take us kids for a Sunday-morning ice cream feed.

One time he organized a bike-a-thon. We were supposed to ride with the kids from our school for some thirty miles. For some reason they trusted us kids on the road. I thought it would be a good idea to lead a few adventurous ones on a side trip, a little bit longer, than the planned route. It turned out to be a lot longer and very tiring. Our

parents got very anxious not knowing where we had gone. Eventually they caught up with us, but we were so tired out by the end of the day that they didn't have the heart to speak too sternly to us for our misadventure.

Thinking back on it all I have a very positive impression of Adventist adults in the church and the school. It was a good place to be to learn about God, how to get along with others, and how to use these bodies which God has given to us.

I even learned some much needed discipline. We had a very tall, lean, teacher in the Escanaba Adventist school whose name was David Lee. I must have gotten out of line for something I can't remember. Anyhow, he took me out to the shed for a good talk. My father had told me that when I got disciplined at school I could expect to get the same at home. Dad always backed up the teacher.

In tenth grade I went to boarding academy in Centralia, Missouri. I learned how to get along with other guys in a dormitory. There was a young Bible and Spanish teacher, Mr. Lincoln. There was many opportunities to sing in choir and tour the various churches in the area on Sabbaths. Serving others was a fulfilling and wonderful experience.

The school business manager, Mr. Ott, took an interest in me. He gave me a job balancing the check book of the school and office work. He kept encouraging me to think about ministry and service. So did the school counselor. He thought I would make a good pastor. With those seeds planted in my young mind along with the encouragement of my parents that is the direction I began to move. When it came time for graduation, I began to realize how important it is to have friends sharing mutual lessons from life.

Some of the big questions in life were beginning to take shape by the time I entered college at Southern Missionary. Will I give my life to Jesus? What will be my life's work? Who will be my life's companion? What is God's will for my life?

With the Bible classes, chapels, morning worships, week of prayers, teachers who took a personal interest, and fellow students, there was continual support to dedicate my life to Jesus as a Christian. Some were choosing to become Christian business majors, others went into medical related fields, some teachers, some into the trades and other fields of endeavor. So I took a religion major. They sent me out to learn in a church how to work with people sharing Bible truths. As people made decisions for the Saviour it was exciting work.

Some of my friends were into camping, hiking, caving, mountaineering, climbing and outdoor activities. The friendships formed during these experiences have been remarkable.

One day I saw a girl in the library and later I learned her name and asked her for a date. We found that we had a similar interest in Christian values and life goals. We were involved in a lot of mutual activities that interested us. We fell in love and got married. I believe that God brought us together.

I'm not sure what direction my life would have taken had I gone to schools other than the Christian schools I attended. I probably would have learned service to others. I probably would have been developed academically. I would have chosen a career. Undoubtedly I would have met a girl to marry. One thing I am certain of, going to Christian Adventist schools shaped the direction of my life in terms of spiritual transformation in Jesus, a profession of ministry and service for others and a companion who was committed to the same goals and values in life.

Professor Ed Banks, in graduated school, organized us students for a field school of evangelism in which we were responsible for putting on a meeting: preaching, visiting, ministering to people's needs.

The teachers I had in both college and university were professional and yet took a personal interest in their students. They provided a safe learning environment in which the intellect was challenged as well as opportunity for exploration. They did not confine and control students in their learning. They invited the tough questions and provided answers or pointed to places where the answers could be found. I am thankful for all the open-hearted, dedicated teachers who stimulated my intellectual, spiritual, and physical growth. I have found them to be inspiring in their personal example as well as leadership.