

The history of Adventist education in South America dates back to 1893, when some of the early church members banded together to pay for a teacher who, using the home of one of the believers, would prepare their children for Christian service.

Today, Adventist education is firmly implanted in the 35 conferences and missions of this vast territory, which encompasses eight countries totaling 5,900,449 square miles, with a population of some 230 million people.

We now have 682 elementary schools, an increase of 36 percent over the past eight years. These schools are administered almost completely by churches, with many of them located in the great metropolitan areas.

Many of the rural schools are located in northern Argentina, north and northeast Brazil, the altiplano of Peru and Bolivia, and the Amazon jungle.

Our 3,702 primary teachers are distributed among the most diverse climates, temperatures, altitudes, customs, and geography, yet they all demonstrate the same desire to see that the 96,035 students enrolled in their schools find, through education, the road to success in this life and the assurance of victory in Christ.

Our schools are being strengthened by the use of Bible textbooks prepared by the General Conference, of which 11 have been translated and adapted to Portuguese, and two to Spanish. Books reflecting our philosophy have also been prepared in Portuguese, and these are being sold to our own as well as other schools. Elias Mendes, coordinator for the publication of textbooks at the Brazil Publishing House, tells of a recently baptized couple whose first contact with the church



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resulted from their leafing through one of our primers. We have had many positive experiences because of the sale of our books to other schools.

In Chile, our religious education program made such a good impression on the education authorities that it was placed with that of the Catholic Church as one of the two required options in religious education to be offered to parents and students by all nondenominational educational institutions in the country.

Our 54 secondary institutions accomplish a notable work on behalf of the church for their 10,833 students. In our division the goal is to establish a boarding school at the secondary level in each of the conferences. At present we have 19 boarding academies, with eight under construction or in the planning stages. The eight remaining conferences are looking for adequate property on which to build boarding schools.

Many of these schools offer not only the traditional academic program, but also training of a practical-professional nature, such as technical courses in

agronomy, agriculture and animal husbandry, electricity, nutrition, accounting, mechanics, automobile mechanics, nursing, and other areas.

Our institutions of higher learning have done their best to prepare workers to serve the church. Aside from the five officially recognized institutions of higher learning, we also have two secondary-level schools that offer teacher training: Bolivia Training School and Juan Bautista Alberdi Adventist Institute, in northern Argentina.

Besides theology, which is offered by all five institutions of higher learning, other study options include nursing, economics and finance, music, school administration and supervision, elementary education, Spanish, biology and chemistry, mathematics, social studies, secretarial science, educational guidance, and specialized nursing areas.

Some recent happenings are substantially changing the status of higher learning in Adventist institutions in South America:

- Adventist College of the Plata, amid its historical and traditional facilities, recently inaugurated a modern administration building.

- By ministerial decree in 1982, Colegio Adventista de Chile became Instituto Profesional Adventista (Chile Adventist College), the Chilean equivalent of a university/college.

- In Brazil, Northeast Brazil College and Brazil College in São Paulo both inaugurated new churches in 1984.

- God has worked in a miraculous way to make it possible for Brazil College to move to an excellent property of almost 1,000 hectares one hundred miles from São Paulo, where ground was broken recently for the new school, which will be called the Universidade Adventista do Brasil (Brazil Adventist University).

- In Peru, by presidential decree, university status was conferred on the Centro Educacional Superior Union (Inca Union University), which began operations under the new arrangement on April 1, 1984.

The more than 1,000 students attending our five theological schools each year have a new training program designed especially for them. This program will help produce pastors who have a deeper understanding of theology and contemporary society, and who recognize the urgency of evangelizing the world. The new program,

Nursing students, Brazil College, São Paulo.

Seminário em Missão (seminary in mission), is offered by the Latin-American Adventist Theological Seminary during four consecutive vacation periods on the campuses of our colleges in Brazil, Argentina, and Peru.

After four vacation periods, the seminary has awarded the degree of Master in Theology or in Religion to 67 pastors.

A wide variety of religious activities are carried on by our schools. Each year, in conjunction with the Youth Department, the schools hold a "Spring Baptism and Fruit of Christian Education" event. In Argentina, the White Smock Baptism (when students are baptized in their school uniforms) is joyfully anticipated each year. Our schools hold baptismal classes for students and Bible research classes for parents and non-Adventist students. A large number of students participate in the annual Ingathering drive, and each school promotes the reading of the Spirit of Prophecy books.

Recently, the school in Guarapuava (Paraná, Brazil) held a different kind of graduation ceremony. More than 200 Bible correspondence school certificates were awarded to students and parents by the chaplain of the school. This was followed by the baptism of 18 parents and students.

As his son went down into the baptismal waters, a non-Adventist father remarked, "It was a real miracle; he is a totally different person thanks to Adventist education."

Among the secondary boarding schools, Concepcion Day Academy in Chile stands out as a school with mis-

sionary inspiration and imagination. In 1983 85 persons, both parents and students, were baptized as a result of missionary projects directed by George Araya, school principal. A minibranch of the Bible correspondence school, maintained at the high school, awarded some 250 certificates for its courses, whose lessons were graded by students. As a direct result of this work, seven people were baptized.

In 1984, more than 3,000 students from all three levels of education participated in colporteurage. This work helps young people attain financial independence and trains them to become missionary leaders as they participate in spreading the gospel through the selling of religious books.

Theology students, as part of their training, participate in evangelistic campaigns and lead out in experimental missions formed by churches and groups in the vicinity of their schools. These and other activities, along with the efficient work carried on by our 4,652 teachers, reveal that education and redemption truly are one and the same work. Thanks to the influence of education, 5,193 students and other converts were baptized in 1983.

In conclusion, we express our firm conviction that with an educational system solidly and firmly bound to our spiritual beliefs, we will help establish the children and youth of our church in the faith; we will give our church the dedicated and well-prepared leaders and human resources it so desperately needs so that, through the Spirit of the Lord, we can finish the work entrusted to us. □