

Middle East Union

Education Through Sacrifice

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*Johnny Manassian
Director of Education*

As the Seventh-day Adventist Church has begun mission work in various parts of the world, a major ingredient of its mission activities has been education. Schools were opened in many countries in the Middle East. Even though several of these schools were either closed or nationalized due to political or religious reasons, there still remains a strong and growing educational program in the Middle East Union.

In the nine fields and sections presently making up the Middle East Union, the church has an education presence in six. The elementary schools have a current enrollment of about 3,000, the secondary schools have about 400 stu-

dents, and Middle East College currently enrolls about 160-170 students.

We have recently begun a new type of school program in Sudan designated as "self-help schools." There are two self-help schools in Khartoum and seven in war-torn areas of south Sudan. These schools are organized and operated by church members to make schooling available for refugee children. The only help given by the fields is textbooks, copy books, and blackboards. The members provide simple classrooms and benches and help support the teachers. The total enrollment in these schools is about 1,000.

The two largest schools in the union are El Zeitoun School in Cairo with 1,300 students and Mouseitbeh School in Beirut with 1,000 students. Approximately 95 percent of the students in these schools come from Muslim homes.

Government decrees for examinations on Sabbaths have occasionally caused problems for our schools, especially in Egypt and Jordan. But through persistent work from the field and educational leaders, and in answer to prayers, exemptions have been granted for examinations on the Sabbath in these countries, both in our own schools and for our youth attending state schools.

Our Iraqi young people have also faced the problem of Sabbath examinations. Most have been steadfast, like Daniel, even if they had to repeat a full school year.

Despite the devastation caused by

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Students from "self-help" school in Khartoum, Sudan.

the war in Beirut, classes continued at Middle East College, sometimes in underground bomb shelters. For several months, Middle East College was the only school of higher education functioning in Beirut. The administration and teachers have showed great courage and dedication during these difficult times.

In the past several years, much effort has gone into repairing and renovating the buildings and campus from war damage. The library, equipment, and staff are being upgraded. Currently, three staff members are engaged in doctoral studies with sponsorship from the union and the General Conference.

The college has for many years enjoyed an affiliation with Loma Linda University (Loma Linda, California, U.S.A.), and in the past two years has had association status with La Sierra University (Riverside, California, U.S.A.). Recently, Middle East College was granted recognition as a university college by the Government of Lebanon.

Future educational plans involve continuing upgrade of Middle East College in terms of staff, enrollment, and additional majors; work toward financial self-support for all the schools; start-up of one or more secondary schools in Sudan; and plans for a two-year ministerial certificate training program in Sudan to provide pastoral training for the growing church in that country.—*Svein B. Johansen, President, Middle East Union.*

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In a church school similar to this, the Moslem colonel learned to sing Christian songs when he was a child.

Middle East Union

A Moslem Colonel Sings Christian Songs

Having completed basic training and another four and one-half months of signal school, I was appointed as a translator for the logistical command in one of the countries of the Middle East. Our job as translators was to facilitate military communication between top local personnel and the foreign advisors who were overseeing the military modernization of the host country.

Each month, there was a review and analysis to see whether the goals and objectives were being met. The need to prepare charts and overhead transparencies brought us into contact with a slightly above middle-aged colonel with a cheerful outlook on life.

One day, as we were being driven to the supreme commander's office, the colonel suddenly turned to me and said, "Lieutenant, I heard you are a Seventh-day Adventist."

"Yes, I am," I replied.

"Now tell me," he asked, "do you know this song?" With a wizened, cracking voice, he began to sing. "I'm but a stranger here, Heaven is my home."

I was shocked. How could a Moslem man of his age and career have come to

know this song? "Oh," he told me, "long before you were born, I attended an SDA boarding academy, and Mr. Brown* took us to worship morning and evening. We sang many songs, including this one."

Political upheaval in the country later caused a change of regime and eliminated many of the leading military personnel. Whether he was among the victims, I do not know.

We may not see or know in tangible ways the impact of Adventist education on the lives of those who have attended our schools and have become acquainted with the SDA way of life, beliefs, and activities. Perhaps only in eternity will we become aware of the results of such encounters.—*Johnny Manassian, Director of Education, Middle East Union.*

*A pseudonym.

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Administration building, Middle East College, Beirut, Lebanon.