

# Do Adventist Colleges Have a Future? A Symposium

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*No one cares more about Adventist education than those who have devoted their professional lives to it. Recently, some of Adventism's most distinguished educators have spoken out on the direction they think Adventist schools ought to take. They have expressed their views in commencement addresses, alumni weekends, teachers' workshops, campus newspapers, and Adventist Forum conferences. With their permission, we have taken the following excerpts from their presentations to form a lively and diverse symposium of ideas about the future of Adventist education.*

—The Editors

## The Customer—The Student—Is *Numero Uno*

by William Loveless

If a simple change were made in the mission statements of Adventist colleges, a case could be made that instead of closing colleges, Adventists could double the number of their colleges in North America. That simple change would state that the mission of Adventist education includes not just meeting the needs of the Adventist denomination, but responding to the educational and training demands of the local community. Once a college assumes that it has an obligation to serve the institutions of the community in which it is located, all kinds of new constituencies and markets open up. While production of workers for the Adventist church is

a major mission of all of our colleges, another important mission could be serving the educational requirements of the community. This change in mission would change everything.

Already, Adventist colleges and universities are changing from ivory-tower enclaves to consumer-driven businesses. The marketplace has suddenly become very important, and the customer, the student, is *numero uno*. It is interesting that the American Council on Education estimates that 75 percent of freshmen entering college now say that they are doing so to get a better job, and that is the most important reason they have gone to college. As more people equate college with career advancement, student bodies become more diverse. The most rapidly growing groups of college students are women and those over age 25. Less than half of all students now earn their college degree in the traditional four-year situation.

Because of the baby bust, the number of high school and academy graduates peaked at 3.2 million in 1977, and then began a 15-year toboggan slide. According to the Center for Education Statistics, high school and academy graduates were down 16 percent in 1977 to an estimated 2.7 million in 1987. By 1992—and this has captured the attention of all of us—this number will drop another 11 percent to 2.4 million. A careful look at the projected number of graduates from Adventist academies in North America the next five years shows exactly the same picture as the public high school. Thus, Seventh-day Adventist educators in higher education are concerned about what the future holds. We have been very complaisant, but now the numbers have given us a good, swift kick to get going.

We must thank David W. Brenneman, the

author of the monograph, *The Coming Enrollment Crisis—What Every Trustee Must Know*, published in 1982, and Harold Hodgkinson, American Council on Education senior fellow who wrote, *Guess Who's Coming to College?* These documents, published in the early 1980s, warned us all of what was coming. Some have listened and profited and some haven't.

Many colleges and universities have adopted a new strategy that seems to be working. Despite the loss of half a million high school graduates in the past 10 years, total enrollment in two and four-year colleges during the same period rose from 11.5 million in 1977 to 12.4 million in 1986, contradicting the projection of a decline made by the Center for Education Statistics. But between 1985 and 1986, as the number of high school graduates declined by 68,000, the number of college freshmen increased by 150,000. The same

phenomenon in freshmen classes appeared in the Adventist system across the nation. (There is an air of relief among many college administrators today, but we must be careful. The estimates indicate that a decline of 11 to 15 percent is still to come in the next three to five years.)

The grim enrollment projections were probably naive because they left out the fact that the economy was equally important. When times are relatively good, more people are confident enough to go to college. A surging stock market and lower interest rates have been good for college and university endowments and for our students in the Adventist system as well.

Colleges and universities also benefit as the United States economic base shifts from manufacturing to services and information. As the demand for professionals and technicians grows, people with college degrees earn a lot more, and

## How to Finance a College Education

by William Loveless

I know Columbia Union College best, so I will use its actual fees as the basis for showing how a person can still finance an Adventist college education. A student taking 16 hours a semester will pay \$6688 a year for tuition, \$800 for food, \$300 for books and supplies, and \$1260 for housing. That's a total of \$9048 a year (a little more for men and a little less for women), roughly \$36,000 for four years.

What kind of grant money is available to the student? While the cost of Adventist higher education has grown at a rapid pace, there is more money available to students than ever before in our history.

So, to meet the costs at Adventist colleges, students first of all can obtain scholarships. At my school students with a 3.0 grade-point average receive a \$1000 scholarship each year. In essence, this is a tuition discount of approximately 20 percent, which is not insignificant. If the student comes from a family that qualifies for a government Pell Grant at the median level of \$1400, add that to the total. If the student comes from a state that offers a state scholarship, credit the minimum, \$300 a year. That makes a total of \$2700 in grants that the student need not repay, or a total of \$10,800

over a four-year period. That essentially cuts the \$36,000, four-year bill down to less than \$26,000 or \$6500 per year that the student and/or parents must supply.

Numerous loan programs are available to students today. The most attractive is the Guaranteed Student Loan, from which the student can borrow up to \$2625 per year as a freshman and sophomore, and up to \$4000 per year as a junior and senior. Repayment is at 8 percent interest, must begin six months after the student leaves school, and does not need to be completed for 20 years.

The Perkins Loan Program offers the student the possibility of borrowing up to \$2250 a year at five percent interest, with pay back due within 10 years after graduation. Nursing students can borrow up to \$2500 per year at six percent, also to be paid back within 10 years of graduation.

Many students are electing to borrow money and graduate from college in debt. This is not something which we recommend on a large-scale basis, but it is an attractive option for many students. They recognize the value of such a strategy when they realize that the average differential in income between students with a high school or academy diploma and those with a college degree is \$9552 per year. Within three years, the difference in earning power between a high school and college diploma could totally pay for a college education. A college education remains one of the best investments in the world.

the gap gets wider. There is a dramatic difference in the ability to earn money as a direct result of higher education.

There is no question that for Adventist colleges to survive they will have to undertake fundamental changes in their shape and character. Most important, in order to continue to exist in our world, Adventist educational institutions will have to expand their mission from training denominational employees to what their communities define as their educational needs. I am firmly convinced that if we do expand our mission, we can look forward to more, rather than fewer, Adventist colleges.

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William A. Loveless is president of Columbia Union College. His 10 years in that post make him the senior president among heads of North American Adventist colleges. Formerly pastor of the two largest Seventh-day Adventist congregations in North America, the Sligo and Loma Linda University churches, and president of the Pennsylvania Conference, Loveless received an Ed.D. from the University of Maryland. This selection is taken from a lecture to a conference on "Crises in Adventist Higher Education," held in November 1987 by the Loma Linda chapter of the Association of Adventist Forums.

## Sustaining an Adventist Ethos

by Michael Pearson

Many Adventists in Europe have grown up with a feeling of inferiority about being Adventists. This is based on our deep-seated feelings about being obliged to be different at school, about attending small, unimpressive churches, where there were a lot of old and a few odd people. A feeling of inferiority comes from knowing that we belong to a church that is small and not influential in the wider society. We are saying things that few want to hear, and we live in a culture where numbers are important.

In our educational system, one of the chief

ways in which we attempt to compensate for corporate feelings of inferiority is by seeking high academic qualifications at secular universities. There is nothing wrong with seeking such qualifications, unless we do so to cope with a sense of personal or institutional inferiority.

On the question of encouraging our workers to gain high educational qualifications, it must be noted that there is a kind of naive belief among many Adventists that education is a good thing, that whatever further studies we pursue they will inevitably confirm the Truth—the kind of world view for which Adventists stand. It is a naive view because many of the concepts, many of the ways of looking at the world that are taken for granted in the world of higher education in Europe, in fact strike at the very foundation of the Adventist world view.

I am not for one moment suggesting that Adventists stop pursuing excellence in secular institutions of learning. What I am suggesting is that we do our best to perceive the alien attitudes when we come across them, that we are careful not to import them untreated into our schools and colleges, that we form our own thoughtful response to such hostile ideas, and that, when exposing our students to ideas which they may well find threatening we provide them with a way of dealing with them. In doing so, Christian teachers need to formulate ideas that are robust and attractive. Flat, defensive rejections of ideas hostile to the faith will not do. On well-chosen occasions we need to share our doubts with students. They will know that those who shout loudest about their convictions sometimes do so to paper over the cracks of their own doubt. They need to know that the existence of doubts is no indication that one has ceased to be a believer.

In short, we need to teach our students respect for the tradition of our faith, and provide freedom for them to move beyond (notice, I am not saying, away from) that faith, to make it their own. We need to help students live in a certain tension: that we don't have all the answers, that we have to live with mystery and paradox; that we believe in an imminent return of Jesus but continue to plan new

buildings and make provisions for the 21st century. The alternative is that they will become secularized, either by lapsing into agnosticism or by developing a rule-bound, programmed spirituality that is far removed from true discipleship.

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Michael Pearson, professor of religion at Newbold College in England, recently received his doctorate from Oxford University. His 1986 dissertation, *Seventh-day Adventist Responses to Some Contemporary Ethical Issues* is being published by Cambridge University Press. His address to the July 1987 teachers' convention of the Trans-European Division included the comments printed here.

## On the Importance of *Not* Knowing

by Dean Hubbard

Churches place a high premium on knowing. After all, people come to church for answers, not questions. So churches spend their time refining answers, which over time they claim to know with ever-increasing certainty. Universities, on the other hand, place a high premium on not knowing. In fact, not knowing is a notion that is embedded in the very heart and soul of a university. Universities claim that their primary objective is to help students learn how to learn. This involves learning how to question, probe, challenge, doubt. The whole process implies that we don't know, and this kind of ambiguity can be upsetting, particularly to the sponsoring church.

The problem seems intractable because questioning is endemic to scholarship. Not knowing is an inescapable byproduct of all true scholarship. A scholar by definition is one who goes out to the edge of knowledge, past the previous questions and answers to a new set of issues. That's the reason that every dissertation worth its salt ends not with a final answer, but with a set of questions to be explored. It is at precisely this point that churches and their universities inevitably lock horns. When intellectuals raise questions, par-

ticularly about doctrines that churches vehemently claim to know with certainty, they are often misunderstood and labeled as disloyal and subversive.

Now let me state my thesis: *Not knowing (i.e., questioning), coupled with an appropriate tolerance for ambiguity, is absolutely essential for corporate as well as individual growth, vitality, and relevance.*

Many believe the basic product of a church is answers. In response, as a church matures it often congeals its answers into precisely worded, broad-ranging, and elaborate creeds. Or, for those who do not like creeds, statements that have the same function.

It is with this quest for certainty that the maturation cycle of universities differs from that of their sponsoring churches. For a variety of reasons, as universities mature, instead of becoming more confident with the old answers, they become more sensitive to the limits of human knowledge (uncertainty, if you please), and to the ethical imperative of preparing students to live with ambiguity.

I would recommend that as an Adventist church we rethink and reaffirm what is *really*

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basic and fundamental. Instead of formulating more and more answers, that are longer and longer, we should seek an appropriate balance between knowing and not knowing. We must do all in our power to prevent our colleges and universities from becoming immobilized, intimidated, or decimated by those who insist on knowing too much. Hopefully, realizing that not knowing (i.e., questioning), coupled with an appropriate tolerance for ambiguity, is absolutely essential for corporate as well as individual growth, would help us

appreciate the true basics, which all of us could enthusiastically endorse.

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Dean L. Hubbard, president of Northwest Missouri State University since 1984, was the president of Union College from 1980-1984. Earning a doctorate in administration from Stanford University, Hubbard earlier served as a pastor and an educator in the Far Eastern Division. Honored at the 1986 Andrews University alumni weekend, Hubbard gave the Sabbath morning sermon at Pioneer Memorial Church, from which this excerpt is taken.

## The Passion for Excellence: A Thirst for the Divine

by Frank Knittel

I believe it is a lack of interest in excellence that has fostered a significant element of anti-scholarship among our members. The summer of 1986, at church convocations featuring church leaders, some of the speakers betrayed their lack of support for church education, especially on the collegiate or university level. Some sermons included comments such as: "Friends, I do not have one of those higher degrees. I have not studied higher criticism. I am not an intellectual. I am just a simple believer of the Word." And the audience silently, sometimes even audibly, applauded. The speaker was saying that one cannot be highly educated and still be a "simple believer of the Word."

I abhor that. I disbelieve it. I defy it. Such a statement is opposed to God. God, after all, created the human brain, that organ of unending capability, that transmitter of God's own self to a reeling world. God calls us to educational endeavors so that we may be vastly more than simple believers of the Word. God calls us to be nothing less than reasonable facsimiles of himself, and there is nothing simple about that. To be like God is to be wise, to be intellectually curious, to be demanding of ourselves, to be thinkers of our own creative thoughts. Being created in the image of God prohibits us from suggesting that our spiri-

tual concepts never rise above the merely simple. And presenting a God—of which we are an image—to the world that both wants Him and yet does *not* want Him, requires skill, knowledge, and cultural awareness. That is a highly complex calling to which we have been called; one that demands nothing less than excellence. And that, I affirm, is what our schools are all about: creating in our students, in our church, in our community a hunger and thirst for excellence, and thereby for God.

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Frank Knittel, professor of English at Loma Linda University, was president of Southern College of Seventh-day Adventists from 1971 to 1983, its period of highest enrollments. His reflections on excellence were part of a presentation to the conference on Adventist education organized last year by the Loma Linda chapter of the Association of Adventist Forums.

## In Defense of Pluralism

by Richard Hammill

Seven years ago, I experienced a major ending and beginning when 44 years of my active service to the church as an educator came to an end, and I began the new experience of retirement. I have read extensively in the field of Old Testament studies, trying to catch up in my own discipline after 25 years of neglect caused by administrative assignments that took me from the classroom. In the process of that study, I have been almost bowled over by the multiplicity of belief one encounters in the scholarly publications about the interpretation of the Bible.

I decided also to investigate pluralism in the Adventist church. In carrying out my research project into Adventist diversity, I attended a privately sponsored seminar advertised as centering on biblical fundamentals. There I heard an able retired minister belabor at length a narrow, speculative view on Christology, which he maintained as an absolute essential to believe in order to be an Adventist. It appeared that many in the audience agreed with him, although he used only the data that agreed with his thesis.

Thanks to research carried on by some Adventist historians in the past two decades we have learned that there has always been far more diversity of belief among Seventh-day Adventist than we realized. Right now, in some countries, the differences about proper relationships between the church and government run very deep among Adventists. Pluralism has become an important issue among us, and I want to share my ideas on pluralism in the Adventist church.

To begin with, we must accept that some diversity of opinion about the Bible is normal, and will always be with us. This represents a new and radically different viewpoint on my part. I know that ultimate truth is one; that truth is self-consistent. And all my adult life I have believed that if sincere Christians take the Bible as their guide they will achieve unity of faith and spirit. But now, I have finally been forced to conclude that this ideal will not be attained on this earth. In view of the personal nature of religious experience I now accept that pluralism in the church is inevitable. Biblical history shows that the religious pilgrimage is a personal one. Adam, Eve, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David, Matthew, John—all had unique relationships with God. The New Testament church, and that which followed it, was full of diversity.

**T**he Holy Spirit helps believers understand the Bible and leads them toward all truth. It is God's own impulse that leads believers to search. And in the process, human opinions from many sources intrude, leading to diversity of belief.

Moreover, the gospel message itself embraces both the impulse to hold what one has and the impulse to reach out for something new. This paradox, evident in the Christian church for centuries, is coming to the fore in the Adventist church. Some Adventists are oriented toward the past, and conceive of our church as a small, embattled remnant consisting of victorious, perfected believers who must entrench themselves from the world. They look back to primitive Christianity and to the early Adventist believers as their models.

Other, equally dedicated and biblically in-

formed Adventists, look upon the church as a divinely established community that must change the world, casting a wide net to bring in all kinds of "fishes;" or to use another of Jesus' metaphors, to entertaining "guests" from the highways and byways, and help them accept the divinely proffered wedding garment. To these Adventists, the church is a group of pilgrims moving toward a future ideal.

As I see it, both orientations are part and parcel

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of the gospel message, and we should be thankful to God for both perspectives. Apparently, there are paradoxes in religion just as there are in the natural world. Scientists have not been able to find a unified field theory to account for the four diverse forces at work in the universe. Neither can theologians find a unified theory that includes all the orientations wrapped up in the gospel.

These diverse orientations within our church greatly alarm some believers, but as I see it, the danger of schism or loss of momentum are much greater from other problems than from pluralism. In fact, since I became an Adventist as a college freshman in 1932, the church has been enriched and strengthened by the ongoing search for understanding of God, and of our part in his program of redemption. Of course, pluralism should not shatter the unity of spirit and the core beliefs that characterize a genuine Christian community. The community must ultimately separate itself from those who would destroy it. However, it is not good for a religious community like ours to become greatly upset by some diversity in biblical interpretation. Such pluralism is as endemic to human nature as polarity of positive and negatively charged molecules are a part of physical objects.

Diversity of opinion is tied closely to the uniqueness of each human being. How else can persons see, except through their own eyes? And how can we comprehend language except through

our own mind and unique experience? When individuals use language to understand God, indeterminacy and diversity of understanding immediately become apparent. Adventists need to acknowledge this pervasive phenomenon, and not be unduly exercised about the unavoidable pluralism of ideas on at least noncentral biblical teachings. If proper approaches are used, out of the pluralism in our church, an enriching synthesis may be found.

**H**ow do we make pluralism a positive experience in Adventism? First, persons searching for truth must use all the data they can get on a topic. Careful researchers not only try to prove theories, they also try to disprove them. This scientific method of attempting to falsify a proposition, to test if it is really true, could be used with great profit by persons developing their theories about religious things. Humans very easily become so enamored with their own ideas about religion that they are blind to fallacies contained in them.

Martin Luther once said that the human mind is a factory, making idols. Ellen White, one of the founders of our church, made a similar observation about the tenacity and insistence with which the titular head of our church and some of his associates promulgated a certain explanation of Paul's epistle to the Galatians. She wrote, "they were approaching idolatry by placing the commandments of men where God and His requirements should be." "Any pet theory," she said, can be made "as sacred as an idol, to which everything must bow. . . . Any idea so exalted as to be placed where [nothing of] light and evidence cannot find a lodgment in the mind, takes the form of an idol, to which everything is sacrificed" (Manuscript 55, 1890).

My second suggestion is that we must foster more open discussion of ideas. Conscientious searchers for religious truth should be willing to have their ideas tested by other competent, qualified searchers of the Word. Exposure of our ideas to criticism, evaluation, and correction by persons competent in the field of investigation is compatible with the Christian spirit of humility and charity.

More than 1000 years ago, Plato said in his dialogues that only when our usual encumbrances of pride of opinion are cast aside, can real conversation take place, can the subject matter of our discussion carry us toward the experience of understanding. A century ago John Henry Newman, a leading Christian thinker, defined *The Idea of a University* as a community fostering Plato's kind of conversation,

a place in which the intellect may safely range and speculate, sure to find its equal in some antagonist activity, and its judge in the tribunal of truth. A university is a place where inquiry is pushed forward, and discoveries verified and perfected, and rashness rendered innocuous, and error exposed, by the collision of mind with mind, and knowledge with knowledge. . . . It is the place where the catechist makes good his ground as he goes, treading in the truth day by day into the ready memory, and wedging and tightening it into expanding reason. It is a seat of wisdom, a light of the world, a minister of the faith, and Alma Mater of the rising generation.

I do not fear pluralism of views in the church one-half as much as I fear the refusal to discuss these views openly and without rancor, for it is this attitude that prevents God's Spirit from using the creative power of one mind to stimulate and sharpen that of another searcher.

My third suggestion for making pluralism a blessing to the church is to always remember that religion embraces mystery, the greatest mystery in the universe. In his revealed word, God in his goodness has helped us penetrate some of that mystery, but each one of us has his or her own journey, in the company of others, toward that mystery.

Karl Barth, a Swiss theologian, was one of the most influential religious leaders of the 20th century. I have never been much of a follower of Barth's theology, but I do admire very much his willingness to change his mind when his fellow biblical scholars pointed out flaws in his voluminous publications. Because his own views kept maturing, while his many followers were still dealing with views published in his early books, Barth once said to a friend, "I am not really a Barthian."

Genuine Christians do grow in their understanding of the Bible as they carry on their search.

At some stages in our lives we are able to comprehend truths which we could not at an earlier time. Pluralism may bother us at times, but knowing that it results from human searching for understanding, we will trust God to guide the church during that process, secure in the knowledge that God “will have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth.” (1 Timothy 2:4)

In my retirement I sometimes become lonely—not because I am no longer in the midst of busy activity, but because I cannot find people with trained minds who are willing to discuss frankly and honestly issues that greatly concern me. So often they become upset, suspicious, even hostile. Often, while I am trying to discuss a matter of biblical interpretation that is meaningful to me, I can tell that those with whom I am talking are not listening but thinking of which label to attach to me. I hope that in the coming years in our colleges and in our church, we will honestly face all the data, and learn the art of listening without suspicion or ill will to other earnest seekers after truth. If we do, I am confident that God will be able to make of all our lives a pilgrimage of faith seeking understanding.

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Richard Hammill was a general vice-president of the General Conference at the time of his retirement in 1980. He came to the General Conference from Andrews University, where he was president from 1963 to 1976, the longest presidency in its history, including the days when it was Emmanuel Missionary College. He previously earned a doctorate in biblical languages and literature at the University of Chicago and taught at Southern College of Seventh-day Adventists. His thoughts published here were originally part of his summer 1987 commencement address to the Andrews University graduate divisions.

## What We Really Need: A Nondenominational Adventist University

by Harold T. Jones

A “self-supporting” Adventist college or university is a concept I’ve fantasized about from time to time. Although I’ve

been told by some pretty important people that it is a silly idea, I still fancy that it could function as a saving institution.

One of the most crippling consequences of a university being owned and operated by the church is that it is expected to be a model of Seventh-day Adventist perfection. Long after church members far from Berrien Springs were watching a wide variety of motion pictures, Andrews University ventured nothing more daring than “Bambi.” Although a significant fraction of Seventh-day Adventists are not vegetarians, the Andrews University cafeteria maintains vegetarian menus. Although Seventh-day Adventists of the most conservative stripe can be seen in shorts in public places, persons wearing shorts on the Andrews University campus put themselves in jeopardy of embarrassing reprimands, or worse. The list of such examples could be extended by anyone who has lived on the campus and has also had some contact with Adventist society at large.

This situation can handicap a church educational institution in certain of its primary functions. One of these is surely strengthening the commitment of young people to the church by providing an atmosphere in which they can mature spiritually, intellectually, and socially, and which is, at the same time, congenial to the lifestyle and doctrinal positions of the church.

However, the conflict arises because, on the one hand, the university is supposed to be a model of Adventist heaven on earth. On the other hand, it must maintain a nurturing relationship with a large number of young people who are at the stage in their lives when they are expressing independence in almost every aspect of their lives. It is almost essential for young people at this stage to make mistakes, and hence they must live in a forgiving environment. When these two conflicting demands on the university collide, it is almost always the needs of the student that are neglected. In order to maintain the image of perfection required of the university because it is owned and operated by the church, it must dismiss any student who does not conform to a certain prescribed behavior pattern. The result is that the university loses its opportunity to further influence the lives



of precisely those young people who need its influence the most.

A prime example of this conflict is the perpetual feuding that takes place between student newspapers and the administrators of Adventist institutions of higher learning. The students, wishing to try out new ideas and perhaps also wishing to tweak the noses of the authority figures in their lives, do and say things that outrage the mainstream Adventist membership. There is no doubt that the administration must deal with such situations with a firm hand, guided by wisdom and cool judgment. More often than not, however, the administration, conscious that its every move is being watched by church administrators and the constituency on which it relies for financial support, reacts nervously to maintain its image rather than to help the maturing young people involved. Only the greatest statesmen can avoid an outbreak of revenge in these situations. The young people involved are often future leaders, either inside or outside the church. There are those who somehow survive this trauma. They become leaders in the church and return to the campus on alumni weekends to declare what a great blessing it was for them to be dismissed from school. But I know of some graduates who have achieved considerable stature outside of the church, and who have a different view.

A second area in which close and official ties to the church organization can impair the effectiveness of an institution of higher learning is in the matter of its apologetic function. In the community of scholars on its college and university campuses, the church has its greatest resources to maintain its relevance to the issues under discussion in the intellectual world at large. In the formulation of its position vis-a-vis such matters as evolution, ethics, the fine arts, a view of history, theology, and psychology (to name only a few areas that can present problems), the church must rely on this community of scholars for guidance. But forging a sound and defensible Adventist view of such matters requires a great deal of time, and involves false starts and mistakes. False starts and mistakes in these sensitive areas are almost intolerable in an institution that is an official arm of the church.

Hence, I see a place for a university that is deeply committed to Adventist values and Adventist life-style, but which is not subject to the requirement that it speak for the church in every detail. I believe it could function as a link to the church for a large number of talented young people who feel alienated and rejected but still find much in Adventism that they value. And it could provide a home for a large number of committed Seventh-day Adventist scholars who would relish the opportunity to grapple honestly with the problems of synthesizing an Adventist intellectual stance that is worthy of the serious consideration of the world at large.

Sure, it's a silly idea because the financial resources for such a venture are not at hand, but I still think it's a useful mental construct. And if anyone decides to start up such an institution, I know where you could hire a pretty good mathematics teacher.

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Harold T. Jones is professor of mathematics at Andrews University, where he has trained several generations of mathematicians. We have reproduced in its entirety his January 20, 1988, contribution to the "Faculty Forum," a regular feature of the *Student Movement*, the Andrews University campus newspaper.

## College: Community of Memory, Not Corporation

by Otilie Stafford

**A**t my college, registration lines for business majors outnumber most other majors put together. College freshmen (particularly the young men) arrive at their first classes in suits, vests, bow ties, and carrying attache cases. Even the young women wear grey flannel suits, and look like the chairman of the board. They are bright, respectful, carefully assessing how to walk down the corridors of power. A recent poll of thousands of entering college freshmen across the United States revealed that 80 percent of them have as their main goal learning

how to make money. One student quoted in *Time* magazine said his primary goal was to enjoy life and retire young.

Should a different vision of what it means to be human flourish in Adventist colleges and universities? Robert Bellah's book, *Habits of the Heart*, explores the conflict in American society between the self-absorption of individualism, and the need for establishing a "community," within which the public and private realms are united into a just social order. Bellah suggests that churches establish what is not just desirable but essential—"communities of memory," that take isolated individuals and connect them with the past. In the late 20th century, "We have imagined ourselves a special creation, set apart from other humans," Bellah says. "We have attempted to deny the human condition in our quest for power after power. It would be well for us to rejoin the human race." For Bellah, communities of memory are necessary for us to be fully human, for us to know the world as morally coherent.

In an age like ours, where wealth and power are worshiped, how the church's colleges conduct themselves is crucial, not only to hold the present generation in its community of memory, but to help the larger society establish a necessary link with the future. . .

I suppose that every teacher has had the experience of shaking her head over a student who seemed discouragingly slow and uncomprehending, feeling that student is hopeless, and then years later encountering that person, now an impressive adult. I always think of an English major who, many years ago, was in a department in which I taught. The student was a plodder, not brilliant at all, never impressive, doing only barely adequate work. We debated every semester whether or not we should advise the student to change majors or at least not to plan to teach English. But we hated to give up hope for that person. The student finished college (taking more than four years to do it), and did indeed become a teacher.

Not long ago I sat in that person's classroom, warmed by the obvious affection between students and teacher. The teacher was now alive with a quickness and confidence that stimulated the

students' thinking. One community of memory had nurtured a person who was fostering another that would, in turn, shape the memories of the future. . .

The mission of the church and its colleges is to create communities that do not condemn society, but remind it of what being human truly means. If that mission is to be fulfilled the church and its colleges must be communities whose horizons extend beyond our present self-absorption, whose memories and shared beliefs link us to the past, and whose imagination moves us toward the future. The church and its colleges are to be communities that enlarge our lives with meaning. . .

The mission of the church and its colleges is to create communities whose traditions and memories remind us that to be truly human we must live beyond contemporary self-interest, communities where we realize that if we scorn others we diminish ourselves. Our colleges are to be communities that draw us out of individual isolation into identification with others, young and old, rich and poor, weak and powerful, women and men; communities in which we respect both the lowly and highly placed in society, in which we learn that we are most fully human when we are most steadily serving others.

Such a vision of education, if serious, would shape our degree requirements and unite theoretical study with civic service. It would establish a common subject matter to bring together fragmented basis of knowledge. It would encourage students to view life not as a pathway to money and pleasure, but as a process of growing in more of a purpose. It would change shared memories, shared beliefs, and shared worship experiences into creative power that might move us toward greater justice and harmony.

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Otilie Stafford, chairman of the English department at Atlantic Union College, has probably taught more students who are now professors of English on Adventist college campuses than anyone before her. She founded the adult degree and honors programs at Atlantic Union College, and this year prepared her college's self-study report for accreditation. She has written, translated, or adapted several hymns in the new *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*. In November 1986, she delivered the Scales Lectures at Pacific Union College, from which the comments published here were taken.