

# Quantity or Quality?

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The financial implications of founding a Seventh-day Adventist law school are of towering importance in view of the current crisis. Since tuition furnishes only a fraction of the funds needed to provide classroom and office space, library, administrative and teaching personnel, and the usual “overhead” facilities for a new school, additional burdens would have to be borne by the church and donors whose contributions might better be used to solve existing problems.

Granted that these considerations could be overlooked with equanimity if a law school were *really* needed — consider the following propositions relative to the supposed needs:

1. Presumably Adventist medicine is different from general medicine. Presumably Adventist theology is different from general theology. In these two departments the question is not whether the Seventh-day Adventist church should furnish professional schools, but whether in either or both professional schools the training given is indeed Adventist.

2. Presumably Adventist natural science is different from general natural science, especially in the life science departments. Presumably Adventist behavioral science is different from general behavioral science. In these two disciplines the question is not whether the church should furnish graduate and professional programs but whether at this point in time there are scholars capable of staffing the departments. “Capable of staffing” has deep implications: a biology-geology research scholar who has been a ten-year member of a fifty-year-old, fifty-man research institute in creationism (instead of what we now have) which has developed a truly Seventh-day Adventist body of knowledge sufficient to mark the “difference” we so glibly

refer to; a behavioral science scholar who has done sufficient original research to assert a truly Seventh-day Adventist philosophy of psychology, sociology, and anthropology in place of the thinly veneered article we now boast — in short, one who has made the synthesis between current academic viewpoints and Seventh-day Adventist Christian viewpoints.

3. It remains to be shown that an Adventist-trained lawyer would necessarily be a better attorney (a more *Adventist* attorney?) than one trained in an established law school. Has it, in fact, been shown that a genuine Adventist history teacher needs doctoral training in a special Adventist graduate-professional\* school in place of an established graduate-professional school? or the same for art, music, English, et cetera? No religion is taught in the “established” schools, true. But at the graduate-professional level in the Adventist institutions are the “religion” courses taught to satisfy a convention? Does a graduate-professional student need to be wet-nursed in this respect?

4. Wouldn't the energies of the church better be directed toward improving undergraduate education in terms of the following?

a. More administrators who are educators.

b. More department heads who are interested in good teaching more than in empire building.

c. More teachers who know what has been going on in higher education in the past ten years.

d. More administrators and teachers who know what Adventist education is supposed to be, who have the courage to achieve distinction in Adventist education, who have the initiative to achieve excellence before being forced to advance by “worldly” accrediting agencies.

e. More than the present few open minds.

No aspersion is here aimed at any individual persons — certainly not at those few accomplished teachers who fail only because there has been no tradition within the church educational system toward the development of their specialties, not at those whose limitations have been determined by the subculture which nurtured them.

5. Seventh-day Adventist undergraduate education has been plagued by overextension, duplication of effort, and false standards based on quantity rather than quality. As a result, efficiency, innovation, and excellence have been in short supply, in strange incongruity with the expense, effort, and dedication lavished on the project by many generous-hearted people.

6. What the colleges need is a demand, within the organization, for educated young people who have the “power to think and to do,” who are

“thinkers, and not mere reflectors of other men’s thoughts.” Such a demand would challenge more of our best students to attend Adventist colleges and to seek employment within the denomination.

I submit that these issues must be debated and some solid conclusions reached before the founding of a school of law; before the continuance, beyond the level required for staffing the academies, of some graduate-professional programs now authorized. Let us beware of vested interests!

#### NOTE

- \* This hyphenated terminology is a concession to a nonsensical tradition. The distinction between “graduate” school and “professional” school is unrealistic, outdated, hypocritical, and snooty. Graduate schools are professional schools. Those who attend them have professional objectives in mind; their curriculums are as professionally oriented as those of the avowed professional schools, and their entrance requirements are equally non-liberal arts. The refusal of “graduate” schools to accept credits from “professional” schools is usually arbitrary and groundless. On the undergraduate level, liberal arts still live, but not on the graduate level.