THE FUTURE OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA — A CASE STUDY: AVONDALE COLLEGE[1]

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This paper uses Avondale College as a case study of the future of theological education in Australia. The best, and perhaps only, indications of the future are the past and the present. The past shows the philosophical and pragmatic concerns which have led to the current state of theological education, and most of these concerns will continue to guide future directions. The present is equally important because it is out of the present that the immediate future will grow.

A. THE PAST: Critical Periods in the Developmentof Theological Education at Avondale

1. The Early Years of the Development of Avondale

The small group of Americans Seventh-day Adventists and their new converts clearly articulated their purpose in setting up a school for Christian workers, first in 1892 in St Kilda, VIC, then in 1897 in Cooranbong, NSW.[2] They stated in the 1899 *Calendar*: "The primary object of the school is to afford young men and women an opportunity to prepare for gospel service."[3] The means by which they would accomplish this purpose was "to develop and train every part of the being — physical, mental and moral."[4] Education was viewed in terms of the whole individual, and much attention was given to the proper balance between the physical, social, mental and spiritual aspects. The daily program published in the *Announcements* between 1903 and 1916 reveals that each five-day week was organised in a way which allocated the following number of hours: 8.75 to religious exercises (including morning and evening worships, and chapels), 22 for classes (including 1 hour to spelling; 1 hour to music; 5 hours to industrial training; and 15 hours for academic study); 11.25 for study, 12.5 for work.[5] Saturdays (observed strictly as a sabbath) were devoted to religious exercises and evangelism, and most of Sundays were spent in a physical labour program.

The physical component of the curriculum was provided by useful manual labour, which was considered essential. Every student was expected to work,[6] and the staff worked alongside the students. The early *Announcements* carefully document the establishment of the orchards and vineyard, the gardens, the dairy,

the printing shop, the sawmill, the brick factory, the health food factory, etc. Training was provided in these and other areas.

The social aims of the school were clear:

> Too often it is considered important by parents to send their children from the country to some large town where they may learn its "polished city ways," but at this school we desire to take young men and women from the towns and teach them "country ways;" in fact, make ladies and gentlemen of them of the good, hard-working, thrifty type.[7]

The intellectual sphere was expected to revolve around Scripture:

> The Holy Scriptures ... should hold the first place in every educational system, ... Higher education is that which places the Bible as the very foundation of all education. ... There is no special position, no phase of human experience, for which the study of the Bible is not an essential preparation.[8]

For many years, for example, world history was studied as an adjunct to biblical history. The history of Mesopotamia, Egypt, and medieval Europe and the papacy were studied because of the light that they threw upon the interpretation of biblical prophecies, particularly those of Daniel and Revelation — the Bible books studied first by all College students at least till 1903.[9] Biology and astronomy illustrated the wonders of creation, God's second book.[10] Other curriculum concerns centred on such areas as spelling, arithmetic, and bookkeeping,[11] as well as the strong stress noted already on the development of the practical skills necessary for physical labour.

Overarching all these concerns was a great urgency, bought about by the expectation of the soon return of Jesus:

> Long years of preparation are not a positive necessity.
>
> Those who come to the school should be speedily and thoroughly pushed through such a course of study as would be of practical value in the healthy development of the body and holy activity of the soul ... Long periods of continual study are injurious to physical, mental, and moral well-being.
>
> The thought to be kept before students is that time is short, and that they must make a speedy preparation for doing the work that is essential for this time.[12]

The sense of urgency remained, but the experience of running an educational institution brought with it the need to regularise entry requirements into the different classes, and develop course sequences. By 1901 a four-year Biblical Course was in place:

Year 1: Bible (Daniel); Physiology, Hygiene and Nursing; Rhetoric; Bookkeeping

Year 2: Bible (Revelation); General History; Algebra, Zoology; Botany

Year 3: Bible (Acts, Epistles); History of the Great Empires of Prophecy; Geometry, Physics

Year 4: Bible (The Two Israels, Sanctuary), Missionary Class; History of the Reformation; History of the Three Angel's Messages (i.e. a history of the Seventh-day Adventist movement); English Literature; Astronomy.[13]

This program (named either the Biblical-Academic course or the Ministerial Course),[14] with minor variations and some upgrading, formed the pattern of ministerial training for the next fifty years. It is interesting to note that of the twenty subjects listed, only four deal specifically with the Bible, two with professional matters, four with History, and eight with Mathematics and General Science. This mix changed slightly over time,[15] but the ministerial course

retained a strong general education component, linked with one Bible-oriented subject each year.

There is a clear development in entry requirements to the course. Initially, the school was "open to all worthy persons of both sexes." The stress was on "worthy": "no one who uses indecent or profane language, or who indulges in the use of tobacco or alcoholic drinks, or who is in any way vicious or immoral, will knowingly be admitted or retained."[16] Thus the admissions criteria was moral, not academic. By 1908, admission to the Biblical-Academic Course was open to those over the age of 15,[17] who either had satisfactory completed a primary education curriculum of eight grades, or had passed examinations in Reading, Spelling, Penmanship, Vocal Music, Grammar, Arithmetic, English and Scottish History, Physiology, and Geography. Those without the necessary primary background could quickly complete the deficiencies in their knowledge by means of specially designed courses.[18] The course was, as a result, the equivalent of secondary-level education.[19] The passing of time bought a gradual upgrading of the program, and by the late 1940s the last two years of the Ministerial Course was considered to be of tertiary standard, although the entrance requirement was still "completion of the Primary School Course."[20]

2. The Introduction of the LTh and the BA(Theol) degrees

A variety of factors contributed to the establishment of the LTh and BA(Theol) degrees in the early 1950s. The College found itself meeting the needs of an increasingly sophisticated employment marketplace, and while many of its graduates were insulated from these demands, the school teachers were not. Not only this, the church was in the process of establishing secondary schools in several locations and needed qualified teachers. There was considerable interest in providing adequate qualifications so that they would be able to continue to teach at both primary and secondary levels.[21]

> Perhaps we could have graduated ministerial students without a degree, but not our secondary teachers. Had we failed in this direction we would have no high schools today. But should we have a lesser qualification for our ministers?[22]

As an interim measure, the College began to offer an LTh degree, something which called for teaching at a tertiary level, but which did not require government permission.[23] This course was announced in the denominational paper, the *Australasian Record* in December of 1950,[24] and details of the course were listed in the 1952 *Calendar*. The first students graduated from the course in 1953,[25] and the last in 1956.[26]

Several avenues were explored in the wider effort to gain the ability to offer degrees. At the time, the prevailing philosophy of Australian higher education could be summed up by the phrase, "one state, one university." This meant that there was little opportunity for private Colleges to attract any sympathetic hearing on the issue of degree status from government. One of the Catholic Colleges in Sydney had approached the government of New South Wales only to be turned down on this score. College principal, William G.C. Murdoch explored other avenues — writing to London University, Canterbury University (New Zealand), and the University of Queensland. For a while the contacts with the University of Queensland looked as though they would bear fruit,[27] but in the end the College and church administration looked to affiliation with a church institution in

California, Pacific Union College (PUC). It was this affiliation that dominated the theological training at Avondale (of all three kinds: general, ministerial training, and matriculation into higher degrees) for the next four decades.

Matriculation to the BA(Theol) degree required a Leaving Certificate plus a general knowledge of Scripture (demonstrated by written examination). There was provision for a two-year preparatory course for students lacking this qualification. The BA(Theol) degree as taught at Avondale in 1954 consisted of the following subjects:

First Year: Bible Survey; English 1; Greek 1; Science; Fine or Applied Arts
Second Year: Life & Teachings of Jesus; Greek 2; English 2: Ancient History; Public Speaking
Third Year: Major and Minor Prophets; Evangelism; Hebrew; Christian Evidences; Medieval & Modern History
Fourth Year: Biblical Theology; Art of Preaching; New Testament Epistles; Church History; General & Educational Psychology[28]

As might be expected, this course followed the American model of two years general education, followed by two years professional education.

On the whole the result has had both notable strengths and weaknesses. Ministerial training, for example, was able to take advantage of the flexible curriculum opportunities offered by having forty different subjects — at various times Typing, Computer Literacy, History and Philosophy of Science, Accounting, Church Building, Musical Conducting, and Flying have all been either part of the course or available as options, alongside of more traditional subjects such as Greek, Exegesis, Theology, Homiletics, Practicums, etc. The liberal arts components — English, History, Science — have lead to a better informed clergy. The negative aspect of this is the great difficulty of finding adequate time for reflection and deeper development of one specific subject area. This, however, has only rarely been a criticism of the course as professional education; the criticisms have generally been about too-high an academic expectation at the expense of practical skills.

As preparation for further study the course has also proved successful, although, ironically, only outside Australia. The Avondale-taught, PUC award of BA(Theol) has been recognized as an appropriate undergraduate degree by such universities at Manchester and Aberdeen University in Britain; Hamburg and Uppsala in Europe; and Harvard, Princeton, and Andrews University it the United States. Indeed, of the 425 BA(Theol) graduates between 1954 and 1986, at least 38 have earned doctoral degrees, and more than 50 have masters degrees,[29] almost all built upon an Avondale-taught, PUC awarded BA(Theol). The greatest disadvantage this degree had as preparation for higher theological degree was that Australian universities have been very reluctant to recognize an American degree, thus, graduates have been forced to go overseas for further study.

3. The Legacy of Desmond Ford

Charismatic and controversial, Desmond Ford has left a significant legacy to the teaching of theology at Avondale. A gifted speaker and formidable controversialist, Ford was much in demand. Tension between town and gown had existed prior to Ford's arrival at Avondale in 1961, but Ford's personality was such that he acted as a catalyst. He was either passionately liked or disliked, and

provided a high-profile target for his enemies, which included several who described themselves as brethren of experience. Controversy flared over whether the battle Armageddon was literal or spiritual (Rev 16), whether Turkey was king of the North (Dan 11), whether Christ had a sinless nature like Adam before the fall, what was the importance of works in salvation, and whether the 2300 days of Dan 8:14 pointed to a prophetic time period which ended in 1844. It was this later controversy (which developed in 1979-1980) which proved to be Ford's undoing. He was dismissed from the Adventist ministry in 1980, although he retained his church membership.

Ford's legacy to Avondale has been mixed. On one hand, during his leadership, the standard of theological education undoubtedly improved. Students were exposed to the best evangelical scholarship, and, after his return from Manchester, journal articles.[30] Theological discussion generated great interest in all sectors of the church body. The negative legacy has also been large. During his time at Avondale a large rift arose between Avondale and many of the key elements of its constituency — church administration, older non-degreed members of the ministerial work force, and a proportion of the church membership. Controversy has bought in its train discouragement and mistrust.

4. The MA degree

In the late 1970s, pressure for further study had been building on the church leadership. Because this required study overseas (normally the United States) it was potentially very expensive to the church. The idea of a locally taught MA proved attractive to the church leadership, who requested that Avondale seek affiliation with the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University.[31]

As initially negotiated, the MA had a strong religious studies and counselling component. On the academic side the degree required seven subjects (21 credit points), which included at least one subject in each of the following: Old Testament, New Testament, Theology, Church History/World Mission. On the professional side the degree required five subjects (15 credit points), which included at least one subject in each of the following: enabling functions, outreach, counselling, leadership. In addition, either a thesis or a project was required.[32] In other words, it was a mini-MDiv, courses from several of the major subject areas were represented, and the student could then specialise in either the professional subjects (and produce a project), or the academic subjects (and produce a thesis).

The MA was taught mainly by lecturers at Avondale (the departmental teaching staff had been strengthened), with a visiting lecturer from the Seventh-day Adventist Seminary during the summer school. The full-time program started in 1981. While the summer schools were well supported, the numbers doing the full-time MA dropped, and the program ceased in 1988. In its place was instituted a new program which involved one winter school and three summer schools. This MA degree, also in affiliation with the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, has dropped the project/thesis and added a comprehensive examination. It is taught in terms of four subject areas: Old Testament, New Testament, Theology, Christian Ministry, and Church History. Compared to the previous degree, this represents a strengthening of the theological component of the course. Negotiations are proceeding with the Church administration and the Seventh-day

Adventist Theological Seminary concerning the mechanism by which an BA(Theol), two years internship, and an MA degree becomes the basic ministerial training for the South-Pacific Division of SDAs.[33]

5. The BA(Theol) Degree as Recognized by the NSW Higher Education Board

The formation of the National Council for Awards in Advanced Education provided Avondale with an opportunity for external accreditation which had hitherto been denied. About 1970, the then College principal Eric Magnusson floated the idea of local accreditation for both the teacher and ministerial training courses at Avondale, and received a positive reception.[34] In preparation for the process, Magnusson further upgraded the qualifications and numbers of his teaching staff, and introduced a College-wide reorganisation of subject levels. Australian degrees, following a British model, are tightly structured into three levels of work. The PUC degrees had, in common with many United States degrees, essentially two levels. Magnusson instituted a new set of names for the different subject areas, and instead of teaching Gospels and Epistles, the theology department now began teaching New Testament 1, New Testament 2; New Testament 3; Theology 1, Theology 2, Theology 3 etc.

Almost immediately upon his appointment as chairman of the theology department, Arthur Ferch began a process of curriculum review, particularly including the input of the church administrators. By 1984 he had in place a new degree sequence which incorporated most of the elements which were desired by the department, but which still fitted the requirements of a PUC degree. A submission incorporating a very similar degree program was prepared for the HEB by the department, but actual submission of the proposal was deferred pending the successful outcome of negotiations over other degrees the College was wishing to offer.[35]

The submission made to the HEB (under the chairmanship of Alwyn Salom) has been the basis of the BA(Theol) as it is currently taught:[36]

First Year: Gospels A & B; World of the NT; Introduction to Church Ministry; Behavioural Science; General English A & B; Computer ad Keyboard Packages; Fundamentals of Theology

Second Year: World of the OT: OT Law History and Writings; OT & NT Apocalyptic; Reformation in Europe; NT Greek 1; Contemporary Communications A & B; Issues in Science; Elective

Third Year: Prophets A & B; Philosophy of Religion; Contemporary Religion in Australia; NT Greek 2; Homiletics and Ministry; Public and Personal Evangelism

Fourth Year: NT Epistles A & B; Systematic Theology A & B: Early Church; Historical Theology (Modern); Church Growth and Revitalization; Church Administration; Elective A & B.

B. THE PRESENT Strengths, Disadvantages and Uncertainties

As theological education at Avondale faces the future it does so with considerable advantages, some disadvantages, and several uncertainties:

Strengths

Academic Staff:

The year 1991 marked the fruition of plans to upgrade the qualifications of the theology department made by Arthur Ferch soon after he took up the position of head of departmental in 1980. The last of four members of the department has returned from study leave, and now, of the seven full-time academic staff who teach at the undergraduate and post-graduate level, six have earned PhDs (from Manchester, Sheffield, St Andrews, Andrews University in their major teaching fields — New Testament, Old Testament, Church Administration, Systematic Theology). Not only does the academic staff have strong educational qualifications, the criteria used by the constituency to determine who should be invited to teach at Avondale includes a strong expectation of successful ministerial experience. Thus, there is a well qualified, able teaching academic staff in the department.

Australian Accreditation

Australian accreditation, and the process of self evaluation and development that accompanied it, has meant that Avondale has been able to come closer to the kind of curriculum it would choose to teach if left free to do so. No longer does it have to work within the parameters of an institution in a different country, with a different educational tradition. No longer are its graduates forced to travel oversees to seek further post-graduate training (although some will still choose to do so).

Library

The Avondale library consists of approximately 85,000 books, of which roughly 20,000 are in the area of theology, exegesis and religious studies, as well as considerable journal holdings.[37] While there is always room for improvement, the library has a very good collection of English-language books in the areas of Biblical Studies, Systematic Theology, and Church Growth Studies, as well as reasonable holdings in many other disciplines (e.g. Education).

An Increasingly Professional and Informed Church Leadership

Because it is actively training young adults for ministry within the Seventh-day Adventist church, and because it is heavily financially supported by the church, the church leadership has always been a very important source of advice and admonition for the college. It is interesting to compare the qualifications of the present church leadership at the Division level[38] with those of ten years ago. Today (1991) the president has an earned PhD in history from London University, and the Secretary has a BA(Theol) from Avondale. The field -secretary of the division has an earned ThD in Old Testament exegesis. Of the approximately seventeen in specialist departmental leadership roles, no less than five have earned doctorates, and a further three have MAs. Ten years ago of those listed in the *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook, 1980*,[39] none amongst the division president, Secretary, Treasure had a degree. The field Secretary (A.S. Jorgenson) had a BA. Amongst the departmental directors, only those working in education and health

had degrees (including one EdD, and one MD). Most of the rest were graduates of the pre-1950 Avondale ministerial training program.

An Increasing Openness in Australian Higher Educational and Professional Circles

The increasing openness of professional circles in Australia allows opportunity for professional association between the Avondale academic staff and others teaching theology in Australia. By and large, these contacts can only be helpful to Avondale, and be educational to both the Avondale academic staff members and those of other teaching faculties who whom we come in contact.

An Increasing Number of Post-graduates in Church Leadership Roles and Pastoral Roles

Approximately 50 pastors have MA qualifications in biblical or professional studies.[40] This year a further 20 will become qualified with an MA in family-life studies. These can only act as improved role models for future students wishing to engage in the a life of the church's ministry.

Disadvantages

Anti-intellectualism and Loss of Image for Clergy

Despite gains made in the upgrading of clergy qualifications, and the retirement from active service of most of those trained at Avondale when the course was little more than a glorified high-school course, there is still a strong anti-intellectual current in the constituency, and in certain sections of the clergy and church administration. While this is probably endemic to Australian society, it has been exacerbated by the personalities involved in theological controversy. Interestingly enough, one of the contradictions within Seventh-day Adventism is that this strong current of anti-intellectualism has always existed alongside of a strongly-developed and cherished program of church-sponsored education.

One of the results of the crises of the late 1970s and early 1980s[41] has been the definite loss of clergy image. A veritable storm of protest and frustration passed over the church, battering many pastors, who felt under siege. Many found they could no longer be content working in the church; those who remained tended to be either naturally conservative, or felt constrained in what could be said about what they really thought. All of this did not happen without the notice of potential ministers, and for several years incoming theology students were generally of an older age group, and were much more conservative theologically. This trend has recently ceased, and while each class has its own unique make-up, school leavers are again making up significant numbers of first-year enrolments.

A Hostile and Vocal Right Wing

Another of the legacies of the 1960s and 1970s is a well-defined, very hostile and vocal right wing which carries as part of its ideology the scenario that Avondale has abandoned the historic roots of Seventh-day Adventism, and that increasing education equals apostasy from the biblical roots of the church. Documents like "Is Avondale College In Jeopardy??," accused the teachers of Avondale of promulgating "views that were clearly in conflict with what they were

paid to teach," in "a sinister climate of liberalism,"[42] had a wide circulation (Liberalism was equated with teaching the views of Desmond Ford). The early 1980s saw the establishment of a number of right-wing publications, amongst which were the *Adventist Observer*, *The Anchor*, and *Landmarks*.[?] Most of the early issues of these periodicals were devoted to outlining the shortcomings of Avondale. In more recent times, their attention has shifted to other matters (notably the so-called "celebration service" style of worship), although Avondale is still the focus of occasional attacks.

It is probably fair to say that this segment of the right wing does not constitute the majority of opinion. It is not even a large minority, but it is very visible, and a great deal of attention is given to them. As can be readily seen from the material towards the beginning of this paper, these attacks can draw upon some elements of the early Adventist culture, and this makes many uncomfortable in dealing vigorously with them. The majority can only say that they too draw upon authentic strands of early Adventist culture, and that they consider that they have it right.

Loss of Sectarian Identity Plus Acceptability of Non-parochial Degrees

Part of the reason for the establishment of a strong educational system, starting in primary school, continuing through secondary school, and continuing at Avondale, was a great suspicion of "worldly" ideas and education. Church schools were established because they were safe havens which would protect the youth from worldly influences.[43] Great personal sacrifices were made so that the children would receive a proper education.

With the establishment of the educational system came an upgrading of teacher's qualifications, and an erosion of the perceived difference between church and "worldly" education. Within ministerial training this has not been a discouragement to enrolment, but within the wider course structures at Avondale, there is a much stronger need to compete with other institutions for students.

Transferability of Qualifications of Academic Staff

A well qualified academic staff finds that it has transferable qualifications. The theology department has at times lost well-qualified, capable members to other jobs (some to church administration, others to other tertiary teaching institutions). This provides an improved network of contacts within the wider higher-education scene, and this is a plus. On the negative scale, though, is the need to replace well-qualified established scholars, something which takes a long time, and drains College resources.

Shift in SDA Career Choices

At one time, the brightest Seventh-day Adventist students looked to teaching or ministry as a career. Increasingly, such students are looking towards other professions. Their possible job horizons now include work as lawyers, doctors, dentists, accountants, insurance adjusters, stock market brokers, etc. Most of these jobs take them outside of the church as an employing body, and most of these careers require training that it not available from Avondale.

This, again, has a positive aspect — it increases the visibility and acceptability of the church in the wider community, but it does mean that the potential pool of ministers is diminished markedly.

Some Gaps in the Curriculum

Even with 40 separate subject slots, and four years training, it is still not possible to include everything in the BA(Theol) curriculum which is desirable. At present it is felt that there are some important areas which are neglected: spiritual formation has received inadequate attention, and ethics should be upgraded from part of another subject to a full subject in its own right. Counselling skills need more development, and the College is struggling (as are other institutions training future ministers) just how to design the practical components of the course to put old heads on young bodies. How does one teach what has always only been learned from experience?

Lack of Human Resources in Several Critical Curriculum Areas

While the present academic staff of the school of religion is very strong, there is little depth to the available resources the College can call upon in several important areas. Financial limitations have meant that the church has not been able to afford to develop a pool of highly qualified persons on which to draw. This is exacerbated by the fact that Avondale is virtually the only institution of theological higher education that the church operates in this Division, and thus it forms the primary place in which lecturers with PhD level-qualifications can work.[44] This means that the one PhD in church ministry that is working in the department is the only individual with that qualification in this Division of the world church. There is a great need, also, for suitably qualified individuals to teach and practice in counselling and family therapy. This latter lack is an Australian-wide lack, not necessarily confined to one particular denomination, but it does mean that the College is vulnerable in this area. This means that when one of the existing staff accepts a position elsewhere, there is a time-lag of three to five years between the need for a suitably qualified Australian, and their eventual availability.

Uncertainties

Accreditation and Status of Avondale in General

The initial accreditation of the BA(Theol) degree was achieved under the auspices of the Higher Education Board (the HEB). The winds of change sweeping Australian higher education have reduced the importance of this body, and Avondale is not alone in feeling this (the Sydney Consortium, for example, is also accredited through this body). At the present time, Avondale's accreditation is assured by the Higher Educational unit of the NSW minister of Education and Youth Affairs. At the same time, Avondale in the process of attempting to refine the status and mechanism of its accreditation. It would be premature to even discuss the options that it is pursuing, but the very process of seeking a new means of accreditation brings a certain level of uncertainty, together with opportunities for change.

Future of MA Program

The full time MA program ceased in 1988, and a four-year program involving one winter school and three summer schools has been instituted in its place. This has proved successful, and appears to be viable in the long term. The reason for listing it amongst the uncertainties is that the details of a wider range of post-graduate level education are being negotiated at the moment. It is intended that the basic ministerial training of SDA ministers will become a four-year BA(Theol), followed by at least two years experience in a church, followed by involvement in a further educational program, leading at least to a Masters-level qualification.

The other uncertainty about the MA program is its future accreditation. There is no thought at the moment of seeking local accreditation for the MA program (although the suggestion was floated by some involved in the HEB accreditation process at one point), but once the locally-accredited BA(Theol) degree becomes better known, the logic of seeking a locally accredited MA degree may well recommend itself, although this would involve a major reorientation of current viewpoints and expectations.

Future Structure of BA(Theol) Degree

One of the matters which is occasionally debated (although, admittedly in a desultory manner) concerns the appropriateness of the current degree structure. The current structure marries the broadness of the American BA (with its 40 separate subject offerings) with the depth of the British BA model (with progression through three distinct levels of achievement). Providing adequate depth over this many subjects does provide a challenge to teachers, which at times translates itself into unreasonable demands made of the students. It is hard to predict exactly, but any process decreasing the number of subject offerings will inevitably lead to certain areas of the curriculum being dropped or de-emphasised (we may no longer be able to teach computer literacy, for example). This alone will probably preclude any such change, but as long as most Australian higher education is based on British models the question will be asked concerning the appropriateness of the degree's structure.

Financial Future of Church and College

As with almost all privately funded educational institutions (as well as many publicly funded ones) it has continually been a challenge to provide adequate financing for the institution. The currently bad economic climate happens to coincide with a budget deficit which has reached large proportions. This is perhaps not a critical issue as there is little doubt that the College will continue to exist, and will somehow find funding to cover its running costs, but it is and will continue to be a source of uncertainty.

C. THE FUTURE of Theological Education at Avondale College

It is a truism that predictions concerning the future can only be made by studying past and present trends. Without even the customary denial of the ability to forecast the future accurately, these trends will now be examined.

Trends from the Past Which Might Indicate the Shape of Future Theological Education at Avondale

Australianising the Content (but what is Australian?)

All education in Australia, theological and non-theological, has derived its models from overseas. Avondale is somewhat unique in that it derived its educational model from the United States, rather than Britain. The early founders of Avondale established what they considered to be an ideal American school here.[45] Right from its inception, there were some things in the American way of doing things which did not take root. With the increasing number of Australian and British teachers, trained, as many of them were, by a British model of education, there was inevitable cross fertilisation of ideas. Even so, the College initially sought accreditation for its degrees in the United States. This American BA(Theol) degree was progressively Australianised, and while it is possible to trace the American ancestry of the present degree, it has developed an independent life. So much so, that it was deemed "Australian" enough to warrant Australian accreditation, even though the members of the accrediting body clearly needed a moment or two to reorient themselves to the kind of things we were doing.

This increasing Australianisation appears to be an irreversible trend. So it might safely be said that the degree will become increasingly Australianised over time. True though this statement is, and clearly defined though it sounds, increasing Australianisation may not be a certain indicator of the future, because it is no longer so clear what is "Australian." At one time Australia was a homogeneous white, upper-working-class society, with the ideology and ideals one might expect of such a society. Today, Australia is reluctantly feeling its multi-lingual and multi-cultural nature. Australian society is also becoming more segmented. The differences between the "haves" and the "have-nots" is becoming greater.

This might mean that as theological education becomes more Australianised it will equip students with cross-cultural and multi-lingual skills. It may also better prepare them to meet the needs and expectations of specific segments of the population. In any event, the future holds change for theological education that is becoming more Australianised.

Other Trends:

The past reveals a clear improvement in teaching staff qualifications. Currently, all of the teaching staff have degrees which make them competent in research, as well as interests which lead to greater involvement in professional societies.

The need to better equip graduates with cross-cultural skills has long been noted. It is to be expected that cross-cultural skills will become more important as Australia itself struggles with these issues.

The task of equipping students with practical skills will never be an easy one. The past has shown continual experimentation in this area. One of the features of the curriculum review under Arthur Ferch was the increasing stress placed on subjects which provided practical skills. This has not stilled the complaints from both students and employing organisations that training in practical skills needs

further upgrading. Currently, during their four years at College, students are expected to become involved in a local church, and have a specific number of practical requirements to meet, which are expressed in terms of number of sermons preached, seminars run, Bible studies given, and so on. This is a good program, but if the past is any indication, there will be continual experimentation with the teaching of practical skills.

Counselling and interpersonal skills, once absent from the degree, have now found a secure place in the curriculum. Because there is an un-met need for better skills in these areas in the ministerial work force, this component of the curriculum will probably become much more important.

Another clear trend of the last nine decades has been the progressive upgrading of the minimum professional training requirements made of ministers entering the work force. These have changed from a enhanced high school-level certificate, to a baccalaureate degree. There is strong pressure to increment them to Masters-level qualifications. It is not possible to predict whether these will remain an MA, or become an MMin, or, as is currently true of SDA ministers in other parts of the world, a 9 quarter MDiv. Which of these options becomes the norm has yet to be determined, but that one of them will is highly likely.

Challenges and Issues

The Need for Better Communication with the Different Constituencies

There are several urgent challenges that need to be met, as well as unresolved issues. Perhaps the most pressing of these relates to the need to communicate more clearly with the different constituencies of the College: employing bodies, the church membership, parents of prospective students, prospective and current students. Each of these groups have different expectations of the task of theological education at Avondale, many of which are unfulfillable and unreasonable. For example, there is no secure way to take a teenager through higher education and automatically produce a committed Christian as the result. In the area of ministerial training, there is no process by which age and experience can be given to undergraduate students. This only comes with age and experience! Students often expect to be able to learn without personal application, and are almost always startled by the fact that Philosophy, Issues in Science, and General English are a necessary part of the ministers intellectual landscape. Avondale is quite successful in meeting more realistic educational goals, the challenge is to communicate these to the different constituencies.

Demographic and Sociological Matters

The sociological future of Australia and the Church provides further challenges. Like the general population, the proportion of aged church members is growing. Generally speaking, this is the segment of the church most resistant to change, especially change in the realm of ideas. As Avondale struggles to equip its students to function in a rapidly-changing, increasingly-sophisticated society it must provide them with new ways of acting and thinking. This will inevitably cause continued friction.

Where the church differs demographically from society is in the baby-boomer generation. This largest segment of society is remarkable under-represented in the

church. There are a number of reasons for this, not least of which is the way the crises of the early 1980s were handled. But whatever the reasons, this means that the church is becoming at least two different groups sociologically — the under 35 age group, and the over 45 age group. These two groups are completely different sociologically. Avondale primarily serves the needs of the younger group, but is administered by, and is responsible to the older segment of the church community. This will continue to provide a difficult challenge.

Professional vs. Academic Education

One of the issues which will continue to be the centre of discussion is the balance between professional and academic training. Currently the academic side of the program has the advantage, and hence the degree is called a BA, not a BMin. The increasing demands for practical skills may lead to a fundamental change in the direction of the degree towards professional training. Although this is not contemplated anytime in the near future, it remains an unresolved issue, but one which may well affect the future of the degree.

CONCLUSIONS

At every stage of its development, theological education at Avondale has faced daunting challenges and uncertainties: always under-resourced, always at threat from within and without the church. Despite this, the past has been a time of continued growth and positive development. The future is uncertain. Avondale again finds itself at a crossroads. It again faces daunting challenges, but it is probably better equipped to meet these challenges at this moment than at any other time in its history.

Theological education at Avondale has been presented as a case study of the larger question of the future of theological education in Australia. How typical is Avondale, and how much does it reveal about the wider question? As with most case studies, the particular example under review shows peculiarities which make it exceptional and other features which illustrate the wider experience. Space does not permit a careful investigation of these, but perhaps the following suggestive comments might be made.

The experience of Avondale has been a-typical of theological education in Australia in some respects. Most notably, it has looked to the United States rather than Great Britain for the degree pattern it has chosen to adopt. Indeed, the early philosophy of the school was developed by Americans from their American experiences.

Other aspects of Avondale's theological education mirrors the wider experience of theological education in Australia. The need to extend intellectual horizons beyond the boundaries of one particular denomination, and the stresses associated with the flood of new ideas and impulses is not confined to Avondale. Its earlier exclusion from degree-granting status was shared by most Australian theological schools, as was (and is) the process of negotiating an acceptable degree with different accrediting bodies. The struggle to find suitably qualified teachers, and adequate finance finds many parallels. Perhaps, like Avondale, theological education in Australia also stands at a crossroads, at a place where there are difficult challenges yet unparalleled opportunities.

NOTES

1. An earlier version of this paper was read at the joint annual conference of The Australian and New Zealand Association of Theological Schools and The Australian and New Zealand Society for Theological Studies held in Sydney, NSW, July 1991. The writer wishes to thank those present for their helpful insights, as well as to thank Arthur Ferch, Norman Young, Arthur Patrick, and Noel Clapham, who read and greatly improved an earlier, much-expanded version of this paper.
2. Perhaps the most comprehensive account of the establishment of the Avondale school is the unpublished EdD dissertation of Milton R. Hook, *The Avondale School and Adventist Educational Goals, 1894-1900* (Andrews University, 1978 [Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, #7912439, 1978]). Hook has also provided two other shorter accounts: "The Avondale School: A Holy Experiment," *Adventist Heritage* 7 (1982) 34-45; "Avondale College," in *Seventh-day Adventists in the South Pacific: 1885-1985*, edited by Noel Clapham (Warburton, VIC: Signs, [1985]), 143-165. See also Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: Volume 4: The Australian Years* (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 1983), passim, esp. 22-27, 42-47, 287-314; A. G. Daniells, *The Abiding Gift of Prophecy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1936), 308-21. Noel Clapham, now retired and who began work as a history teacher at Avondale in 1948, has a book manuscript in preparation on the history of Avondale, which he kindly made available to the writer. The unpublished MEd thesis by W. G. Gilson entitled "The History of Seventh-day Adventist Education in Australia and New Zealand" (University of Melbourne, 1963) has a chapter dealing with the history of Avondale (pp. 167-211). Gilson has also collected a selection of the key primary documents dealing with the establishment of the school, which are bound in two volumes (available at the Ellen G. White/SDA Research Center, Avondale College [hereafter EGWRes]). There is an extensive collection of original primary documents available at the South Pacific Division of Seventh-day Adventists Heritage Room [hereafter SPDHR], attached to the EGWRes, which holds, amongst other things, nearly complete minutes for both the College and the church administration throughout the early period.
3. *Third Annual Calendar [of] The Avondale School for Christian Workers, 1899*, p. 32. This is the earliest extant *Calendar* or *Announcement* (so Louise Dederen, Curator Adventist Heritage Center, Andrews University, Michigan, in a May 16, 1991 letter to Eleanor M. Scale, Director EGWRes; it is the earliest Calendar available at the EGWRes). The SPDHR has announcements for 1901, 1902, 1903 and a nearly complete set of college Announcements/Calendars/Prospectus/Bulletin/Handbooks from 1907 following (with some important gaps, e.g. it holds no calendars for 1922-23, 1950, which were years of significant changes). These publications were called *Announcements* from 1901 to 1949 (except 1919, 1925), *Calendars* from 1951 to 1978, *Prospectus* in 1919, 1925, 1980 to 1981, *Bulletin* in 1982, and *Handbooks* from 1983. The 1899 *Calendar* is in the EGWRes document files, DF 170.
4. *Fifth Annual Announcement of the Avondale School for Christian Workers, 1901*, 9.
5. Cf. W. G. Gilson, "History," p. 171.
6. "Every faculty of the mind may be exercised with comparative safety if the physical powers are equally taxed, and the subject of thought is varied." *Calendar, 1899*, p. 28.
7. *Calendar, 1899*, pp. 37, 39.
8. *Calendar, 1899*, p. 26.
9. The *Announcements* for 1904-1906 are not available.

10. "In our school classes the predominating influence of the Bible was felt in almost every subject taught, Bible prophecy, Bible doctrines, Bible history, Bible chronology, Bible geography, Bible literature, Bible arithmetic, Bible missions, Bible hygiene, Bible music and poetry, and so on." A. H. Piper, [speaking of his early experiences as a student at Avondale at the turn of the century] "Old Avondale" in *Avondale Far and Near*, May 1947, p. 20. EGWRes DF 170-c.
11. On bookkeeping see Hook, "The Avondale School," pp. 41-42. Spelling drills were regularly scheduled.
12. *Calendar, 1899*, p. 30.
13. These are the subjects listed on pp. 15-16 of the *Announcement, 1901*. Also listed in the same *Announcement* were a two-year missionary course, and a one-year teacher's course and a one-year business course.
14. It was called the "Bible-Academic Course" from 1903-1914, 1924-1927; and "Ministerial Course" in 1902, 1915-1923, 1928-1953.
15. Greek was introduced in 1902. By 1915 the Life and Teachings of Jesus had replaced Daniel and Revelation as the first-year Bible subject (Daniel and Revelation was moved to the third year). By 1947 there were 26 subjects: six in Bible and Theology, five in English, six in Mathematics and General Science, three in History, and two in Language [Greek]).
16. *Calendar, 1899*, p. 43.
17. This was raised to 16 in 1919. Most of the boarding students would be over this age, although missionary children needing secondary education would be accepted at an earlier age. The children in the primary school were from the local district.
18. *The Avondale School for Christian Workers Twelfth Annual Announcement, 1908*, p. 22.
19. "In academic development one would say that . . . the Biblical-Academic Course, was equivalent to a completed high school level today." So Hook, "Avondale," *Seventh-day Adventists in the South Pacific*, p. 162.
20. *Australasian Missionary College 1947*, p. 7. E. G. McDowell, president 1959-1970, wrote concerning the level of the pre-1950 Ministerial Course: "In 1950, Avondale College gave serious consideration to providing more advanced training for both ministerial students and teacher trainees is secondary education. Up to that time teacher-training was limited to the primary teachers' course, while ministerial training covered little more than two years of post-secondary work." "The Academic Future of Avondale," *Australasian Record*, 17 July 1967, p. 10.
21. A. E. Savige, "Tertiary Education at Avondale College 1945-1974," (unpublished 1979 MEd thesis, University of Newcastle, NSW), pp. 11, 17-18.
22. E. G. McDowell. "Years of Change: Avondale College 1959-1970," in *Avondale College Alumni Association News* 1/4 (September 1990) 2.
23. Savige, "Tertiary Education," p. 25.
24. W. G. Murdoch, "The Australian Missionary College," *Australasian Record* 11th December, 1950, pp. 6-7: "Plans are now laid to grant the Licentiate of Theology to our ministerial graduates who pursue successfully the course which has been approved by the Australasian Inter-Union Conference, and also by the Australasian Inter-Union Educational Department. This course will be of the same standard as that required for the B.A. and the B.Sc. degrees."
25. The names of the four students are listed on p. 52 of *Australian Missionary College Calendar, 1955*.
26. As listed in the *Calendar* for 1957.
27. Savige, "Tertiary Education", pp. 38-46 discusses the various stages of negotiation in some detail. In fact the negotiations reached such a stage that Murdoch felt free to write in the church paper, "The University of Brisbane also has been very generous in

granting us certain concessions so that students who have necessary pre-requisites can pursue a B.A. degree course externally." *Australasian Record*, 11 December 1950, p. 6.

28. *Australian Missionary College Calendar, 1954*, pp. 19-20. This was the year the first students graduated with the PUC PA(Theol).
29. This count is based on an internal departmental document on which we listed those which we knew to have doctorates. The real figure may well be higher.
30. Avondale's collection of theological journals did not really begin until Ford and Norman Young returned to Avondale at the completion of their PhD programs at Manchester University (they both studied under F. F. Bruce). When the writer was a student (1980-81), most sets of journals went back as far as 1975, although Avondale now has complete sets of almost all the key English-language journals for biblical studies.
31. Interview 16 July, 1991 with Eric Magnusson, principal Avondale College 1971-1980.
32. "Affiliation Agreement Between Avondale College and Andrews University," October 4, 1980, pp. 4-6.
33. Ministerial Training in the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists has typically involved an MDiv since 1964. Moves are currently afoot to introduce a ten-year ministerial training program involving an integrated progression through a BA, MDiv, internship and ordination. While Australia is less affected by what happens in the United States church than heretofore, these trends will impact somewhat on Australia. See also the unpublished papers by Gerald Winslow, "Educating Adventist Ministers: History and Hope," presented at the 1990 Andrews Society of Scholars; and Bert Haloviak, "A Brief Sketch of SDA Ministerial Training" [EGWRes DF 97].
34. Interview, 19 June 1991, with Eric Magnusson.
35. Interview 19 June 1991 with Arthur Ferch.
36. *Avondale College: 1990-91 Handbook: Degree and Diploma Courses*, p. 53.
37. These figures are rough estimates provided on 26 July 1991 by Brian Townend, head librarian.
38. The level of church administration which runs Avondale College. The South Pacific Division of Seventh-day Adventists is one of 11 world divisions, and comprises the territory of Australia, New Zealand, New Guinea, and many of the Pacific Island groups.
39. Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1980.
40. This information comes from a variety of sources, not least Miss Dorothy Cottier, assistant registrar, who was kind enough to go though the complete list of Avondale graduates with me.
41. See comments above on Ford. During the same time period the church was facing a financial scandal (the so-called Davenport affair which involved considerable loss of church moneys and several notorious cases of financial conflict of interest amongst the church leadership), and controversy over the writings of Ellen G. White (focused around the person of Walter Rae).
42. "Is Avondale in Jeopardy," pp. 1, 5. EGWRes DF 975.
43. This is well documented by the a-historical and somewhat one-sided article by the ex-Seventh-day Adventist John Knight, "Fundamentalism and Education: A Case-study in Social Ambiguity," *Discourse* 5 (1985) 19-38.
44. The church has established a university-level institution in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. While PhD qualifications will eventually become the normal qualification in that institution as well, this is several years off.
45. Hook, "The Avondale School: A Holy Experiment," 45.