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### **A missional rationale for theological education and training**

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# **A MISSIONAL RATIONALE FOR THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

By

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Dissertation submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the  
Faculty of Arts, Department of Theology, University of Wales, July 2007

## **ABSTRACT**

Theological education and training is an enterprise that takes place in one form or another wherever there is a group of Christian churches. In the West the training is most often associated with academic process and is quantifiable through educational methodology that emphasises rationalism and reductionism.

This fact, amongst others, has spawned a debate on the validity, viability and even the sustainability of theological education. Those involved in this debate include church leaders, the administrators of theological colleges and training programmes, faculty and students.

Establishing the major components of this debate builds a foundation for this thesis to explore a means by which a conceptual and theological base can be found that will assist in developing the viability and validity of the theological training enterprise and the preparation and formation of Christian leaders. This conceptual base is identified as a missional rationale for theological education.

The thesis addresses the important components of this missional rationale and, based upon careful research, makes recommendations for the inclusion of this rationale within the task of training people theologically. Drawing upon the experience of theological educators leading Colleges within the evangelical tradition of the church in the United Kingdom the thesis is examined through a window defined by their respective colleges and their understanding of the task of training people for ministry in a missional way.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The writing of this thesis has been a very enriching experience. From the outset my study days have been special and enjoyable times and I have been granted a rare privilege to be able to research a subject so closely related to my work and calling. None of this would have been possible without the help of a large number of kind and generous people.

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I hope it is evident throughout this work that I am a passionate follower of Jesus Christ. Without this commitment the conclusion drawn would have very little value. And so to Him I express my gratitude and worship and commit myself to use the benefits gained through this project to His honour.

Paul Alexander

Mattersey, England, July 2007.

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## INTRODUCTION

As far back as 1987 in an article by the then Dean of Harvard Divinity School, Ronald F. Thiemann, a surprising call was made for “Making Theology Central in Theological Education”.<sup>1</sup> His call came from one of the most reputable institutions in the Western world and constituted a part of the growing debate at the time regarding the viability and validity of the training offered in such schools. The suggestion in Thiemann’s article is that there is insufficient reflection on theology itself within theological education.

Presuming that Thiemann’s call for theological reflection within the training enterprise is true, it must be realised that it issued from an environment that is not truly representative of the wider context of ministry training and preparedness. Thousands of people are being trained for Christian ministry in programmes and institutions that can only dream of having a fraction of the resources that are available at Harvard. The sheer diversity of settings and contexts in which such training takes place is vast and very difficult to quantify. Consider the historical trajectory of some ministry training with its varied emphases and theological idiosyncrasies. For example, the context from which Thiemann writes is one that has had a long history of a perceived escalation of theological liberalism<sup>2</sup> (responsible in part for the establishment of Yale College in

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<sup>1</sup> Thiemann, R. F., ‘Making Theology Central in Theological Education’ in *Christian Century*, 4 – 11 February 1987, pp. 106 – 108. See <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?i=360> (accessed 10<sup>th</sup> August 2006).

<sup>2</sup> In this early New England context, theological liberalism can be defined as a growing movement of those applying a theology that was not centred on the incarnation of The Word of God in history but on a faith response to providence. For a more detailed description of both old and new theological liberalism see Bloesch, D. G., *A Theology of Word and Spirit: Authority and Method in Theology* (Downer’s Grove, InterVarsity Press, 1992), pp. 114 – 115.



1701), leading in 1805 to it embracing a Unitarian tradition.<sup>3</sup> This can be multiplied across the complicated milieu of cultural and national identity, various political regimes, the demands of church constituencies and, to no small degree, the availability of financial resources. The result is an enterprise almost impossible to define or fully describe. The dilemma is an obvious one: If the enterprise itself is difficult to describe, how can the individual components – reflection on theology or any other - be understood?

As a theological educator this issue had faced me again and again. I asked questions regarding whether there could be some standard of ministry training that was quantifiable in terms other than that of academic achievement. I also continually grappled with ways to engage the constituency whose interest in the training programme is greatest, feeling so often that ministry training and the church at large coexisted in an awkward tension. Issues relating to student recruitment and, possibly more importantly, the placement of graduates, creating a systematic approach to preparing people for ministry, seemed to have elusive answers that required attention.<sup>4</sup>

It was the challenge of finding a foundational concept that could so validate theological education and training that led me on the journey to research and write this thesis. To be honest it was a fascination as well as a frustration. I wanted to know if there was a component, a kind of missing link, which could assist in developing trust, commitment

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<sup>3</sup> Gambrell, M. L., *Ministerial Training in the Eighteenth Century* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1967), p. 57. It must be noted that Unitarianism was not just the result of encroaching theological liberalism. It was also the result of an insistence upon *Sola-Scriptura*, stating that the Trinity as a doctrine could not be found in the Bible.

<sup>4</sup> For a fuller discussion of the issues within this debate see Finke R., and Dougherty K. D., 'The Effects of Professional Training: The Social and Religious Capital Acquired in Seminaries' in *Journal for Scientific Study of Religion* 41:1 (2002), pp. 103 – 120. See especially p. 104 'Debates on Seminary Education: Past and Present. This section is helpful in identifying some of the historical issues underlying the current debate.

and enthusiasm both in a specific constituency and the church at large for this vital aspect of the Church's mission in the world.

I knew what to exclude from the equation. It was mostly that which could be easily quantifiable. For example, though finance and resource generation is almost universally included in any discussion on theological education and training, I knew that it was not to be included in any serious research on the long term viability and validity of the enterprise. If the Harvards of this world, which apparently have no real issue with finance, have to reconceptualise theological education and training, then this did not seem to be a source or foundational issue no matter how much it fills the minds and thoughts of theological educators.

Likewise, pedagogical issues did not strike me as being at the root of the problem as I perceived it. Course construction, curriculum structure and faculty qualifications are not areas that seem to be lacking in theological education generally. Admittedly there are hundreds of colleges and programmes around the world that are desperate for just one or two highly qualified faculty and believe that recruiting such people would resolve all of their problems. I was unconvinced that this was the case. Partly this was due to my many years as an educator in various contexts but also, as I began reading I discovered that this element alone did not seem to resolve the combined issues of viability and validity.

Then there was the issue of facilities and technology. Although technology fascinated me and gave me a glimmer of hope as to the potential it possesses training more and more people, I was almost immediately confronted with a theological tension. I could

not escape the conviction (valid or otherwise) that theological education somehow had to involve more than the transmission of knowledge which, in turn, could be examined and quantified, ensuring a certain level of quality assurance throughout. These concerns are supported by an in-depth study conducted in forty-five seminaries in America by Steve Delamarter. Nearly ninety representatives took part in the review,<sup>5</sup> in which they list their concerns in three areas. The first is practical and personal concerns, the second pedagogical and educational concerns and the third is concerns related to philosophical and theological matters.<sup>6</sup> In all three areas the concerns raised are valid and support the view that technology should only add to and support the educational process. No matter how much I tried, I could not persuade myself that a highly effective delivery system with the use of cutting edge technology was going to resolve the issues of ministry formation, connection with the church community and, most importantly, the sending of motivated men and women into Christian ministry around the world.

Thus, it should be clear from the outset that the research contained in this thesis has deliberately excluded detailed examinations of the roles of finance and resourcing and technology. As the missional components for theological education and training are identified it will be shown that these areas do not specifically impinge upon them, essential as they are to the whole training enterprise. These are valid fields and deserve to be examined in parallel with this thesis but for practical reasons had to remain beyond the scope of this work.

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<sup>5</sup> The study is entitled *Theological Educators and Their Concern about Technology* (see footnote 6 below).

<sup>6</sup> Delamarter, S., 'Theological Educators and Their Concerns about Technology' in *Teaching Theology and Religion*, vol. 8, no. 3, 2005, pp. 131 – 143. Here Delamarter describes how institutions tend to have become polarised on the basis of providing distance education using advanced technology on the one hand and those that resist this trend preferring traditional delivery, normally in a classroom environment, on the other hand. He suggests that the latter group are largely misinformed about technology and its value. He certainly does not foresee everyone who understands the value of technology developing distance education programmes.

Having concluded what should be excluded from my research I began to list the potential areas that could be included. For example, I wondered if the issue was more one of motivation within the learning context. Was a study on active learning strategies a good place to start? Would this help eradicate some of the tension between church and academy by showing that the students were indeed being prepared more for church ministry than for theological achievement? Lake Lambert challenged my thinking by linking the dynamics of a democratic community with the learning process. He proposes an active learning strategy which envisions the Christian church as a living tradition with students as dialogue partners and contributors to it.<sup>7</sup> Another way of describing Lambert's strategy is the concept of peer learning or the adoption of a posture of "fellow-journeymen". This represented a helpful trajectory but was not enough. Although the paradigm of learning versus that of teaching is noble and deserving of attention, I felt it still lacked conceptual or even theological dimension. Discipleship seemed to suggest a basis for the theological dimension but my experience of those whose learning had been restricted to some form of discipleship training or another was enough to cause me concern about this method of training on its own.

I further investigated the concept of community, character formation and criticism. This took Lambert's active learning concept one step further to include the critical element. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen suggests that too much traditional theological work is overly individualistic with little or no connection with the community. In the context of Pentecostal scholarship he contends that this can be overcome because of the emphasis

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<sup>7</sup> Lambert, L., 'Active Learning For the Kingdom of God' in *Teaching Theology and Religion*, ISSN 1368 – 4868, 2000, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 71 – 80.

on community.<sup>8</sup> He argues further that when this occurs theological reflection and education becomes an exercise in formation.<sup>9</sup> Continuing this line of reason Kärkkäinen argues that one of the theological tasks of the Pentecostal academy is to reflect the “right balance between critical and constructive work on the one hand and passing on the tradition on the other hand”.<sup>10</sup> He explains that both are needed but inevitably academia creates pressure on one, and the church culture emphasises the other, often in a way that is mutually exclusive.<sup>11</sup> Although he is writing from a Pentecostal perspective this did not seem to me to be a uniquely Pentecostal issue. It was helping me identify the elusive component within theological education and training that could successfully provide the conceptual and practical foundation for the whole enterprise to enjoy both viability and validity. Could there be a way to effectively combine community, character formation and the virtues of critical scholarship in one theological training package that could meet the expectations of those preparing for ministry, the community they represented and the world that needed the vibrant faith of committed people of God?

Kärkkäinen effectively stated exactly what I was searching for in the same paper:

If it is true that mission is far more than one of the many tasks that the church does – namely, the church *is* mission, mission is something that has to do with everything the church is doing, its *raison d’être* – then it means the ultimate horizon of theological education is the mission of the church.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Kärkkäinen is Pentecostal and this might be the cause for this emphasis. There is no reason why this community should not exist amongst people of any Christian background.

<sup>9</sup> Kärkkäinen, V-M., ‘Pentecostal Theological Education in a Theological and Missiological Perspective’ in an unpublished paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the European Pentecostal Theological Association, Iso Kirja College, Finland, 17 – 20 July 2006, p. 11.

<sup>10</sup> Kärkkäinen, V-M., ‘Pentecostal’, p. 11.

<sup>11</sup> For another Pentecostal perspective relative to the dichotomy that is often created between rationalistic learning and the role of the Holy Spirit in formation see Ruthven, J. M., ‘Are Pentecostal Seminaries a Good Idea?’ in *Pneuma* 23:2 (2001), pp. 217 – 244.

<sup>12</sup> Kärkkäinen, V-M., ‘Pentecostal’, p. 12.

If somehow, a foundation for training could be established in the theological commitment that mission is the mode of existence for the church, its very lifeblood, then theological education would not have to exist on the fringe or be marginalised by financial or political control. It could be an essential aspect of the church in mission. I had found what I was looking for – the need to establish a missional rationale for theological education and training.

The next task was to define exactly what is meant by the term “missional”. There is no definitive way to discover the etymology of the term missional.<sup>13</sup> M. Minatrea suggests that the term was first used by Charles van Engen of Fuller Theological Seminary in 1991.<sup>14</sup> It is true that van Engen’s book on the purpose of the local church, written in that year makes use of the term “missional” however he makes no effort to provide a specific definition of the term.<sup>15</sup> Certainly, the concept (if not the actual word) preceded van Engen’s usage. It became prominent in the conceptualisation of mission found in the writings of Lesslie Newbigin. Upon returning from a long period of missionary service in India, Newbigin was appalled at the loss of influence in society of the church in his native Britain. He began to conclude that the most underestimated cultural force, as far as the church was concerned, was that of Western culture. He saw the influence of pluralism and the Church’s apparent ignorance of its power. Starting with the challenge posed by the forces of the Enlightenment on the Christian faith he gave a

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<sup>13</sup> The *Cambridge Online Dictionary* has no definition for the term ‘missional’ at all and *Dictionary.com* simply defines it as an adjective to the noun mission. See <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/missional> (accessed 5th July 2007).

<sup>14</sup> Minatrea, M., *Shaped by God’s Heart: The Passion and Practices of Missional Churches* (San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 2004), p.18.

<sup>15</sup> Van Engen, C., *God’s Missionary People: Rethinking the Purpose of the Local Church* (Grand Rapids, Baker, 1991), see especially pp. 179 – 194 where the term is frequently used in the context of local church administration.

particularly lucid expression of his thesis by publishing *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* in 1989.<sup>16</sup> Increasingly Newbigin's aim was to make the church think about mission being its very essence not just an expression of outreach to people overseas.<sup>17</sup> In a rapidly changing world, increasingly characterised by terms such as "post-modern", "post-colonial", "post-missionary" and "globalisation" it seemed apparent that the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century paradigm of mission was coming to a close. Jet den Hollander in more recent years has continued this theme. She asks whether, in the light of these global shifts, mission can still be spoken of in terms of a 'project' of disciplining nations and spreading the gospel around the world.<sup>18</sup> She not only asks whether this is appropriate language but actually where mission should be done now that the myth of the "Christian West" has been exposed.<sup>19</sup> This global shift and rapidly changing cultural milieu has prompted the Christian community in the West seriously to question existing paradigms of mission just as den Hollander has done.

Ironically, whilst this re-examination takes place many Christians in the West remain largely ignorant of the rapid changes that are taking place in global Christianity. A contributor to this discussion is Phillip Jenkins who claims that by 2050 the centre of gravity of the Christian world will have shifted firmly to the Southern Hemisphere.<sup>20</sup> His work not only demonstrates the shift southwards of the Christian faith, but it argues

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<sup>16</sup> See Newbigin, L., *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1986) and Newbigin, L., *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1989). (Newbigin's contribution to mission theology will be dealt with later in this thesis).

<sup>17</sup> Newbigin, L., *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, Revised edition, 1995). See especially pp. 41 – 56.

<sup>18</sup> Den Hollander, J., 'Some European Notes' in *International Review of Mission* 94:373 (2005), p. 218.

<sup>19</sup> Den Hollander, J., 'Some European Notes', p. 220.

<sup>20</sup> Jenkins, P., *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 3.

convincingly that the West was never really Christian in the first place.<sup>21</sup> A similar argument to Jenkins and den Hollander is offered by Lamin Sanneh, who notes that what is happening concerning the southwards shift of Christian faith, receives little attention in the West.<sup>22</sup> The insights of these scholars underline the fact that there are huge shifts in the global identity of Christianity.<sup>23</sup>

Thus the combined forces of cultural shift in the West and the exposure of the myth that the West is Christian began a process of honest appraisal, initially by a brave few but increasingly, in the twenty first century, by a growing number. A prominent contributor to this journey of discovery was David Bosch, a South African missiologist. In his voluminous writings and especially his monumental work *Transforming Mission*, Bosch makes a great contribution to explaining the classical doctrine of *Missio Dei*.<sup>24</sup> He reminded the church that God is a missionary God in as much as he sent His Son. In response the church is compelled to be a missionary church as an expression of God's mission on the earth. Mission, argues Bosch, should be the essence of the church.<sup>25</sup> V. Ramachandra adds to this rediscovery of *Missio Dei* by pointing out that Christians cannot ignore the fact that mission is no longer mono-cultural, mono-denominational and mono-directional.<sup>26</sup> Alan J. Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk point out that simply repackaging terms and analogies of church growth do not constitute a missional model.

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<sup>21</sup> See Jenkins, P., 'After the Next Christendom' in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, vol. 28, no. 1, Jan. 2004, pp. 20 – 22. In this article Jenkins, in my opinion, astutely shows how relatively uninformed European and American Christians are relative to the southward shift of Christianity.

<sup>22</sup> Sanneh, L., *Who's Religion is Christianity?: the Gospel beyond the West* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2003), pp. 2 – 3.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Anderson, A., *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 15. See also Sugirtharajah, R. S., *Post-Colonial Reconfigurations: An Alternative way of Reading the Bible and Doing Theology* (London, SCM Press, 2003), p. 169. He states "cultural differences are also invoked to reinforce the idea that serious theological work is the domain of Western academics. (p. 169).

<sup>24</sup> Bosch, D. J., *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, Orbis, 1991).

<sup>25</sup> Bosch, D. J., *Transforming Mission*, p. 390.

<sup>26</sup> Ramachandra, V., 'Global Religious Transformations, Political Vision and Christian Witness' in *International Review of Mission*, vol. 94, no. 375, Oct. 2005, pp. 477 – 492.



They find resonance with Bosch when they insist that ‘missional’ is aligning ourselves entirely with God’s mission in the world.<sup>27</sup> Another way of stating this is as posited by Earl Creps. It is his conviction that before a leader can develop a missional ministry they must first be “transformed into a missional person”.<sup>28</sup> This strengthens Bosch’s position confirming that a missional dynamic only really occurs when Christians understand their position as those who are sent. In this sense ‘missional’ fully embraces apostolic function and thus ‘missional’ and ‘apostolicity’ are two concepts that should not be perceived as distinct from each other.

In another work more specifically aimed at encouraging the church to cease viewing mission as a project designed to reach those living at a geographical or cultural distance, Bosch was explicit in locating the theological centre of mission in the Trinity. As the Father sent the Son, so the Father and Son sent the Spirit and the Father, Son and Spirit now send the church. Because God is a missionary God, God’s people are missionary people.<sup>29</sup>

Thus the concept of ‘missional’ goes a step beyond, but remains related to, the better understood concept of ‘missionary’. It takes missionary from being an activity undertaken by a select few in remote parts of the world or in obvious cross-cultural contexts to being a constant component of church life in all places that the church exists. However, in my opinion, it goes even further than this. As the paradigm of mission has shifted, a new critique of missionary methodology has also developed.

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<sup>27</sup> Roxburgh, A. J., and Romanuk, F., *The Missional Leader: Equipping your Church to Reach a Changing World* (San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 2006), pp. 3 – 6.

<sup>28</sup> Creps, E., *Off-Road Disciplines: Spiritual Adventures of Missional Leaders* (San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 2006), p. 3.

<sup>29</sup> Bosch, D. J., *Believing in the Future: Toward a Missiology of Western Culture* (Harrisburg, Trinity Press, 1995), p. 32. See also Bosch, D. J., *Transforming Mission*, p. 390.

Sensitivity to the close association between 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century mission activity and European colonialism has spawned a new generation of writers and thinkers who are building on Bosch's work and emphasising the need for a non-paternalistic or coercive form of life and ministry. A desire for authenticity that is devoid of control, manipulation and superficial triumphalism is what characterises this group. Amongst the more articulate of this growing group mention should be made of Leonard Sweet, Brian McLaren, Michael Frost, Alan Hirsch, and Dan Kimball.<sup>30</sup> Of course there are many others. In the writings of all these who are contributing to the discussion the term "missional" emerges. Offering a timely warning in this regard is Stuart Murray who reminds us that "missional language has become familiar with this generation", but this is not enough. A change of vocabulary will not result in a change of church or mission. This is a helpful reminder, in the context of this thesis, that the use of the term "missional" does not mean the same to everyone who uses it.<sup>31</sup>

So, just what is missional? In synthesising the writings of those mentioned above and others, it appears to mean the activity of the church revealing the love of Christ in every way possible. It embraces evangelism and outreach as mission always has but it also is committed to expressing the life of Christ in the world through acts of care, compassion and kindness.<sup>32</sup> Missionally minded Christians take their citizenship of planet earth seriously, engage culture, care for the environment, reach out to those suffering from

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<sup>30</sup> For examples of these authors see Sweet, L., *Postmodern Pilgrims: First Century Passion for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century World* (Nashville, Broadman and Holman, 2000). (This book is built around the acronym EPIC). See also Sweet, L., (ed.) *The Church in Emerging Culture: Five Perspectives* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2004). McLaren, B. D., *A Generous Orthodoxy* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2004). Frost, M., and Hirsch, A., *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Church* (Peabody, Hendrickson, 2003). Kimball, D., *The Emerging Church: Vintage Christianity for New Generations* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2003).

<sup>31</sup> Murray, S., *Post-Christendom: Church and Mission in a Strange New World* (Milton Keynes, Paternoster, 2004), p. 137.

<sup>32</sup> Whilst caring acts have always been characteristic of Christian mission this emphasis and shift in paradigm is an effort to bridge the dichotomy that has existed between mission as just one activity of the Church to it being the essential reason for the existence of the Church.

injustice and create a cohesive expression of faith with no private/public divide. The missional church combines the trajectory of social action, ‘care for the widows and orphans’ with the emphasis on Bible teaching, church life and the maintenance of good doctrine often espoused by those who considered themselves more theologically conservative and were nervous of what might be perceived as a ‘social Gospel’. This is what it means to be missional and it is creating cohesion between this concept and the task of training the next generation of leaders theologically that will be the focus of the research in this thesis.

## **Methodology**

The thesis has two parts to it. In the first part I have created a synthesis of some of the pertinent literature. Although there is not a significant historical dimension involved, research of this nature cannot ignore the way in which the current state of theological education has developed. G.J. Mouly states that “any investigation of history requires that we know what has happened and how and why the men of the time allowed it to happen”.<sup>33</sup> A detailed history of theological education and training is beyond the scope of my present task however, it has where possible, informed the research. There are sections of the research that required an investigation into how we have arrived at the present state. In order to do this I have been largely dependent upon two main sources, namely secondary sources in the form of existing literature and primary sources most of which have been in the form of interviews with practitioners and educators.

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<sup>33</sup> Mouly, G. J., *Educational Research: The Art and Science of Investigation* (London, Allyn and Bacon, 1978), p. 159.

Although I have made every effort to be objective and neutral in my research, I am aware of some challenges in this regard. They would include the following:

- The first is my own bias coming from my role as an educator. David Bebbington observes that “value-neutrality is impossible”.<sup>34</sup> I have been involved in one way or another with theological education for the past twenty five years. I acknowledge the potential of my bias influencing the work but have sought to apply the disciplines of careful analysis to avoid this from influencing the outcomes.
- The second challenge has been the availability of major works. Although there is no shortage of such works it will be noted that most of them are written either by North American authors or tend to use the North American theological educational (and indeed the liberal arts educational) context as the norm. Although efforts have been made to write from other contexts the preponderance of literature is from this source. I will seek to identify universal principles wherever possible.
- The third, and very significant challenge, will be to set this work in a cultural context. My primary goal is to discover principles that can be applied to the task of theological education and training everywhere but it is not possible to undertake research of this nature without anchoring it within a particular context. The context for this work is a predominantly Western one. In a much narrower sense, it is Western, evangelical - meaning the theological and ecclesiastical context is essentially Protestant, conservative and largely northern hemisphere.

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<sup>34</sup> Bebbington, D., *Patterns in History* (England, InterVarsity Press, 1979), p. 6.

The second part of the thesis is constructed on the basis of a number of interviews conducted with the Principals of various Colleges located in the U.K. This section is prefaced by its own methodology; however a brief overview is fitting here. I have taken advantage of my membership of the Association of Bible College Principals (U.K.) to access a defined group of my peers. Although the first part of the thesis is primarily theoretical, identifying, analysing and drawing conclusions regarding the component parts of a missional rationale for theological education and training, part two is an attempt to test the findings of the research in a particular context. I chose the British context for a number of reasons.

Firstly, it was accessible. All of the Principals I have interviewed are serving colleges within reach of my location and this afforded me the opportunity of both an interview and a visit to the various college campuses. I deliberately created a context for the interview by meeting other members of staff and faculty (where possible) and investigated any innovative strategies being implemented in the respective colleges. The next reason for choosing a population within the U.K. for research purposes is to try to compare those with similar issues facing them. It was important to test the components described in the first part of the thesis in a context where they could most likely be implemented. Whilst this would not preclude training institutions anywhere in the world the UK provided an opportunity to make comparisons within a relatively homogenous group. As chapter 8 will show, the group was chosen from a larger population using specific criteria allowing a fairer basis of comparison. This would not be possible if the geographical or cultural spread was wider. Finally, the British context

has interest in that it attracts significant numbers of international students, has a tradition of training people from around the world and serves a multi cultural society.

It is inevitable that, at times the research has leant upon the theological perspectives of Bosch and Newbigin. This is not to over-emphasize their influence but simply because they have been responsible for helping to develop a missiologically-driven concept and practice of faith. My intention is that the research represented in this thesis has added another dimension to this faith journey. I have examined ways by which the implications of a missional orientation towards theological education and training can produce positive outcomes ensuring both the viability and validity of developing future generations of leaders for Christian ministry. These outcomes have been more orientated towards values than strategies. This does not diminish the importance of strategy but simply acknowledges that the formulation of strategy is not the primary goal of this research. It is my goal that my research should produce a momentum for change. I acknowledge that older paradigms of mission and education might not die easily but I have added a voice, authenticated by objective research and analysis, to the momentum for change. Newbigin stated: “The mystery of the gospel is not entrusted to the church to be buried in the ground. It is entrusted to the church to be risked in the change and interchange of the spiritual commerce of humanity.”<sup>35</sup> The essence of being missional takes the enterprise of theological training from being simply a servant of the church to existing as a specific aspect the church, thus making Newbigin’s words equally applicable to the task of education and training.

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<sup>35</sup> Newbigin, L., *The Open Secret*, p. 189.

On a similar note I have sought to make a contribution to the task of theological education by identifying areas that are underrepresented in the literature. For example, I intend in Chapter 7 to investigate the role of the “hidden curriculum” in theological education and training. Whilst this is a well understood concept in education generally, the evidence suggests that it is underrepresented in literature relating to theological education. I propose that this is a significant area where the missional dimension of training can be exercised, especially in dealing with things that do not normally preoccupy the thinking of theological educators. For example, where, outside of the explicit curriculum do issues of race, gender, environment and justice and equity find an expression within the theological training institution? I have endeavoured to make a contribution to the task of training by examining effective ways to introduce these vital areas to those being trained in such a way as to ensure that they inform their value system and build their life skills. I made similar discoveries in areas such as governance, community involvement and spiritual formation generally.

In summary, I have, throughout this thesis, to described the component parts of what constitutes a missional theological education and training. I have drawn distinctions at the appropriate points between training, education and programmes but at all times, I have sought to investigate those things that enable educators to identify whether a concept, vision or strategy is missional. The investigation begins with an effort to establish context. Just as my interest was initiated through a personal struggle regarding theological education, so there is a context for this research too. I show that there is a debate going on and that it is not taking place on the fringes. It is a debate that, although described mainly in North American literature, is prominent wherever people are trained for Christian ministry. Building on this foundation, chapter 2

researches mechanisms and ideas that can enable a process of conceptualisation relative to the theological training enterprise. I argue that concept must precede strategy but often does not to the expense of the training institution or programme.

Building on these two foundation stones my research concentrates on the often awkward relationship between ministry and character formation on the one hand, and critical scholarship on the other. I demonstrate that this is not an issue being dealt with by contemporary educators alone but has, to a greater or lesser degree been a part of the experience of the Church throughout its history. As the tension between formation and scholarship is so often the most visible expression of the debate regarding viability in theological education, it takes a this prominent place within the thesis.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 will identify key areas where missionality can be tested. Investigating levels of connectedness is a key indicator of whether a missional rationale has taken root. Put another way, isolationism whether demonstrated by the exclusivity of a governing board or a disconnectedness from the wider or global community will suggest agendas within the training programme other than a missional one. Likewise, a poor engagement with contemporary culture and its demands will reveal a lack of missional commitment. And, chapter six mirrors the argument for a missional rationale in theological education and training but in regard to the global context.

I have already referred to my intentions in researching and writing chapter 7. I have found that the hidden curriculum is just as active and influential within the theological training institute or programme as it is in any educational context. This being the case it became my task to discover if it is consciously developed and managed and, if not why.



Finally, as described in the methodology above, the thesis has been tested through a process of interview and analysis.

I have endeavoured to make a contribution to the enterprise of training people for ministry in at least two ways. Firstly, by alerting educators to the importance of having a conceptual foundation for training that is missional through and through. Secondly, by identifying at least the major components that support the outworking of this missional rationale. With this in mind I gladly submit these writings to the scrutiny of my peers, the consideration of theological faculty and, equally importantly, the church community without whom there would be no reason to establish training institutions in the first place. My greater desire is to see a renewed compatibility and commitment between church and academy and a higher level of mobilisation of men and women for the Christian ministry into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

**PART 1**

**SYNTHESIS AND ANALYSIS - REVIEWING THE  
LITERATURE**

## CHAPTER 1

### REASSESSING EDUCATIONAL METHOD IN CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

#### **Investigating the current debate**

Even a cursory reading of issues central to training Christian leaders for the church reveals numerous tensions. Interestingly, these tensions are not unique to Western theological institutions but seem to plague the very concept of Christian leadership training throughout the world. The issues are not only theological in nature. They are inevitably linked to the question of how we can best develop and deliver the training outcomes that we seek.<sup>36</sup>

Arguably, these tensions are not unique to Christian leadership development or theological education alone. For example, the issues of competence-based learning, the transference of personal skills into the academic process and relevant assessment of academic work are becoming increasingly important issues in every area of advanced training.<sup>37</sup>

Although the debate on how best to achieve effective Christian leadership training is not new, the scope of that debate has taken on new dimensions in recent years. Wheeler points out that in recent years the debate over theological education has become

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<sup>36</sup> See Wheeler, B.G. in *Shifting Boundaries: Contextual Approaches to the Structure of Theological Education*, Wheeler, B., and Farley, E., (eds.) (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1991). pp. 7 – 10.

<sup>37</sup> See Brown, S., and Knight, P., *Assessing Learners in Higher Education* (London, Routledge Falmer, 2004). pp. 7 and 8.

something of a scholarly pursuit in its own right.<sup>38</sup> Until fairly recently issues relating to curriculum structure and delivery were almost exclusively the responsibility of Principals or Academic Deans. However, since the 1980's there has been a wider-ranging discussion on the issue of formation and the outcomes of a theological education or training.<sup>39</sup> Faculties have become more involved in identifying processes of course development and delivery and, to some extent, church constituencies have become increasingly critical of the content of ministry training courses. This has had the dual effect of creating wider discussion and constructive involvement in the process but, at the same time, placed theological and ministry training under a new and critical spot-light. Donald E. Messer, President of the Iliff School of Theology in Denver, Colorado, describes this criticism as “an orchestrated chorus of critics”.<sup>40</sup> This might appear to be the defensive posturing of a professional educationalist but, as will be seen, he is no alone. He acknowledges that the attack against institutions of theological education varies depending upon denomination or context but he claims, rather dramatically, that seminaries in the U.S. are the victims of “ceaseless sniper fire and guerrilla warfare” which is aimed at destroying the credibility of these institutions.<sup>41</sup> Messer seems over defensive here although he shows good evidence that this perceived attack is from both the wider church constituency and from academics within the ranks of seminary faculties.<sup>42</sup> However the debate is defined, it is taking place. For some it is very threatening and all those involved in preparing people for ministry must confront it.

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<sup>38</sup> Wheeler, *Shifting*, p. 8. Note: The line between theological training, leadership development and ministry preparedness is often a fine one at best. Although each aspect is an interdependent part of a greater whole, I will tend to use them in their widest, most generic sense. Thus at times, they will be used interchangeably.

<sup>39</sup> In identifying some of the major questions within this debate I am indebted to Banks. See Banks, R. *Reenvisioning Theological Education* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1999).

<sup>40</sup> Messer, D. E., *Calling Church and Seminary into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1995), p. 34.

<sup>41</sup> Messer, D. E., *Calling Church*, p. 35.

<sup>42</sup> Messer, D. E., *Calling Church*, pp. 37 – 40.

This debate regarding the validity and sustainability of theological education and training is not always initiated by those outside of the training institutions or programmes. There is a certain degree of self critique involved. Educators and faculties, perhaps because they feel personally vulnerable, have looked inwards. For example, Neil Hudson presented a paper at the European Pentecostal Theological Association (EPTA) conference held in Brussels in 2002. The paper was subsequently published in the EPTA journal.<sup>43</sup> This article makes uncomfortable reading for theological educators. Hudson presents several charges against Colleges. Amongst these is the contention that “we have killed the wonder”.<sup>44</sup> Speaking specifically of Pentecostals he states that they have followed the evangelical route of education methodology whereby “an emphasis upon rationalism and reductionism has led to an unavoidable academic/spiritual divide”.<sup>45</sup> He argues that this has limited the place of mystery in our educational models. I note two things in response to Hudson. The first one is that this issue is being raised by an educator. In a sense it is an indictment upon his trade and upon the role of educators in theology generally in that the educators themselves must take some of the blame for developing this divide and ‘killing the wonder’. The second thing to note is that Hudson’s argument represents an unnecessary generalisation. It is helpful in that it substantiates the fact that this debate is happening but unhelpful in that it almost presumes that this exit of mystery from the educational model is inevitable. My opinion would be that it is possible to approach theology using the tools of reductionism and rationalism and still be led to the wonders of the eternal.

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<sup>43</sup> Subsequently published in the EPTA journal. Hudson, N., ‘It’s not what we do; it’s the way that we do it: Uncomfortable thoughts for a Lecturer in a Residential Bible College at the Turn of the Century’ in *The Journal of the European Theological Association*, Vol. XXIII, 2003, p. 45.

<sup>44</sup> Hudson, N., ‘It’s not what’, p. 48.

<sup>45</sup> Hudson, N., ‘It’s not what’, p. 48.

The widening of the debate through involving faculty, staff and students and an increase in literature has, to some extent, shifted the emphasis of the debate. Whereas most energy was expended at one time on issues relating to resourcing (especially financial resourcing) and governance, now the emphasis is increasingly orientated towards goals, outcomes and ethos. This has necessarily opened the way for greater scrutiny on curriculum structure, delivery methods and assessment. More recently the issue of how to engage contemporary culture and the perceived need for a wider variety of courses (such as contemporary worship, the use of technology in ministry etc.) has been added to the debate. Globalization, pluralism and postmodernism have profoundly impacted on almost every area of Christian leadership development at both the operational as well as the philosophical levels. Even so, Banks describes the debate as having moved primarily from operational issues to theological concerns.<sup>46</sup>

Before proceeding to address the key elements of the current debate it would be worth casting an eye over its historical development. Certainly within evangelical circles there has always been a level of suspicion regarding the enterprise of theological education. Mouw has identified at least two reasons for this. The first, he asserts, is that many of the post-Reformation pietist groups (who exercised considerable influence within Evangelicalism) reacted to what they perceived to be the “dead orthodoxy” of scholastic Protestantism. The second relates to the perceived development in universities of the “live heterodoxy” of Enlightenment modernism.<sup>47</sup> Both of these forces contributed significantly to the painful struggle to develop a meaningful and effective model for Christian leadership development and applied theological education.

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<sup>46</sup> Banks, *Reenvisioning*, p. 10 Although Banks observes this debate essentially within the area of post graduate or seminary education, I am of the opinion that it is equally relevant to many areas of Christian leadership development.

<sup>47</sup> Mouw, R.J, “Challenge of Evangelical Theological Education” in Hart, D. G., and Mohler, A. R., (eds.) *Theological Education in the Evangelical Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996), p. 284.

By the start of the twentieth century many evangelicals<sup>48</sup> were happy to perpetuate this struggle and find new reasons for continuing the tension between the church and the academy regarding the training of leaders. The suspicion that the academy was somehow representative of the “slippery slope” of decay and the acceptance of non-biblical liberalism was maintained by many.<sup>49</sup> Another painful element in the struggle to ensure the continued existence of effective training institutions throughout the twentieth century was the unnecessary but, at times, very aggressive in-fighting that developed between seminaries and universities with divinity faculties on the one hand and Bible Colleges and lay leader training institutions on the other.<sup>50</sup> Mouw quotes A.J. Gordon, the founder of the Boston Missionary Training School, as saying, on more than one occasion how he was perpetually chagrined to see how much better many of the unschooled lay preachers could handle the Scriptures than the many clergymen who had passed through the theological curriculum.<sup>51</sup> This internal bickering between colleges and seminaries (and often between church leaders and training institutions of all kinds) was often evident and continues, to some extent, to this day. It might have been born from some unspoken jealousy or threat but, more than likely, also had a dose of simple commercialism in it. Bible Colleges, like any other institution, need students to help pay the way and if students could be enticed away from other places of higher learning on the basis of fear mongering about these institutions’ liberal approach to theology or

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<sup>48</sup> Evangelicalism has changed over the past 100 years. In the late Victorian period evangelicals were largely identified by their belief in the inerrancy of Scripture (as opposed to the perceived threat of ‘Higher Criticism’). They were also missionary minded and had a strong social conscience. Leading examples in England would include C.H. Spurgeon, William Booth and George Muller amongst many.

<sup>49</sup> This suspicion is still not dealt with. In my own experience it is very real. When assuming the responsibilities of Principal of Mattersey Hall College in April 2003, I was confronted by many of my colleagues in the Assemblies of God who strongly expressed their opinion that their college was an irrelevant academic institution making only a minimal contribution to training emerging leaders.

<sup>50</sup> Generally Bible Colleges would take responsibility for undergraduate level courses (often short term with no accreditation or validation) and seminaries would be responsible for specific ministry training at a postgraduate level.

<sup>51</sup> Mouw, *Challenge*, p. 285.

the inspiration of the Bible, so be it.<sup>52</sup> In the latter part of the twentieth century this conflict rose to another level with the advent of local church based Bible Colleges. These, in turn, competed with institutional or regional Colleges who remained sceptical of seminaries or divinity schools.<sup>53</sup>

Another element of the debate regarding training for ministry and Christian leadership that is worth a brief investigation concerns the missiological content of the curriculum. In fact, this might be a more important aspect of the debate than what might at first appear. The Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910 is considered by most to be one of the key strategic events in the history of mission in the western church.<sup>54</sup> As nations scrambled for the establishment of their empires, Christian leaders met in order to cast a vision of what a truly worldwide church might be like. As a result there was recognition of the need for Christians to work across many established boundaries, including the confessional or denominational and the cultural and linguistic. Amongst other important developments, the inclusion of missiology in the curriculum of those training for Protestant ministry was possibly the most significant.<sup>55</sup> Following the conference the first chair of mission studies anywhere in the Protestant world was established in New College, Edinburgh. Similar disciplines and chairs were soon

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<sup>52</sup> This 'in fighting' takes place across many strata of the Christian ministry and leadership training spectrum. For example, from the mid 1980's until the mid 1990's I was the Principal of a missionary training college called Africa School of Missions, situated in White River South Africa. We regularly had potential students advised not to attend our college in favor of becoming involved in a short term mission organization. The reason given was that Jesus taught his disciples in a practical ministry environment and that any institutionalized training was too academic and thus irrelevant.

<sup>53</sup> I will tend to use the term 'seminary' in its American definition, namely, a ministry training school offering advanced or post-graduate degrees.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Noll, M.A., *Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity* (Grand Rapids, Baker Book House, 1997), pp. 269 – 272.

<sup>55</sup> For a fuller account of these developments see Walls, A. F., "Missiological Education in Historical Perspective" in Woodberry, J.D., Van Engen, C, Elliston, E. J, (eds.) *Missiological Education for the Twenty-First Century* (New York, Orbis Books, 1996), pp. 11 – 22.



established in universities in Europe and shortly thereafter in American universities and seminaries.

As Walls points out, the establishment of the Edinburgh chair had been envisioned nearly forty years before by Alexander Duff, the first missionary formerly commissioned by the Church of Scotland.<sup>56</sup> Duff believed that the study of mission should lie at the centre of the theological curriculum not at its margin, for mission is the reason for the existence of the church. He also argued that missiological studies created a necessary ecumenism because the missionary spirit superseded all denominational and ecclesiastical considerations. Finally, he believed that the study of mission would be interdisciplinary, integrating areas of the curriculum such as the history of religions, anthropology and a whole range of social studies with theology.<sup>57</sup>

If Duff's perspective is shared, then it might be argued that any ministry or leadership development curriculum devoid of missiological content is incomplete. If the curriculum is incomplete, the outcome in terms of the preparedness of the student would be incomplete. Arguably, Duff's contribution is an important historical element in the continued debate on the relevance and effectiveness of Christian leadership training.

The relative absence of missiological content within the core of the curriculum could well be the source of further tension in the debate, namely the issue of relevance. Western theological education might well be accused of being too influenced by cultural, social and economic forces producing an arrogant paternalism in its graduates. Walls points out that ordinary theological education has no way of coping with the fact that the majority of Christians are Africans, Asians or Latin Americans and that the

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<sup>56</sup> Walls, *Missiological*, p.14.

<sup>57</sup> Walls, *Missiological*, p. 15.

proportion of those who are is rising daily.<sup>58</sup> It has been argued that the theological road map has not changed quickly enough to handle this global dynamic and that institutional training has become largely irrelevant both in its curriculum and its application in terms of preparing people for ministry in a complex world. Banks adds that in the Third World some have insisted that the prevailing paradigm of theological education, and even current proposals for its reform, exists within a Western frame of reference that is fundamentally flawed.<sup>59</sup> In other words, there remains a form of Western arrogance within the structure of training models that does not give enough recognition to the global realities relating to the expansion of Christianity.

As the debate over the relevance and effectiveness of leadership and ministry development has continued to develop, some new dynamics have been added. It is worth highlighting two of these.

The first relates to the theological foundation of the process of leadership and ministry development. Whereas historically the debate has often centred on operational issues, theological questions are now being raised about the aims and purposes of the entire training enterprise. Put another way, the process of leadership formation cannot only be evaluated in terms of pragmatics, operations and education alone. Institutional viability has become far less important than the ethos and theology of the institution itself.<sup>60</sup> The theological priorities of the wider constituency served by the institution are just as important as the academic priorities of the institution. An insistence on academic

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<sup>58</sup> Walls, *Missiological*, p. 18.

<sup>59</sup> Banks, *Reenvisioning*, p.10.

<sup>60</sup> In an effort to address this, the Senior Leadership Team of Mattersey Hall College has endeavoured to identify the primary constituency served by the College. It was decided that this was not prospective students but rather the network of churches and leaders from which these students would be drawn. This resulted in the "Vision Flow Chart" attached as Appendix 1.

independence could threaten the very existence of a ministry training institution by alienating the very constituency that it seeks to serve. There is much talk about the widening gap between the academy and the church. Whilst this is not a new debate, it is becoming sharper. Pastors and denominational leaders are asking whether the institutional training process is providing graduates with skills and expertise that will translate into effective ministry. Increasingly, church leaders complain that existing training models take people away from their local settings and thus isolate them from the real world for the duration of their studies.<sup>61</sup> This is a likely reason for the proliferation of alternative training models within churches themselves.<sup>62</sup>

This leads to the second issue to be highlighted. It has to do with the value, perceived or otherwise, of the training that is being offered. Whilst this is a curricula issue it is also an issue of quality. As training options have multiplied the academic rigour within the programs has often been diluted. As Leith describes it, curriculum revision has become endemic since World War 2.<sup>63</sup> There has been a proliferation of courses, many driven by special interest groups. As faculties have grown and curricula expanded there has been less time available for theology, Bible and history in the general curriculum. More and more specialist areas are being added to the curriculum. There is a certain irony here. On the one hand there are stronger calls being made for the formation of Christian leaders equipped for ministry. On the other there is a critical view of the curriculum that is designed to deliver this. The leaders and administrators of Christian

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<sup>61</sup> Anecdotally, I have faced this complaint in almost every setting of theological training that I have been involved in. There seems to be a continuing distrust of the institution by pastors and church leaders. Whether there is an element that these leaders are unwilling to release their better and more involved young people to training is an issue for them to answer.

<sup>62</sup> Ballard points out that in 1999 there were some fifty-eight Masters courses available within the U.K. designed to provide ministry or Christian leadership development. See Ballard, P., 'Reflections on Professional Theological Education Today', *Theology* Vol. 107 (no. 839), pp. 333-342, esp. p. 334.

<sup>63</sup> Leith, J., H., *Crisis in the Church* (Louisville, Westminster/ John Knox 1997), p. 18.

leadership development programs (whether institutional or otherwise) find themselves in a very difficult position.<sup>64</sup>

Partly in response to this the curriculum has become increasingly varied, delivery has become more innovative and yet the value of these initiatives has not made the debate go away.<sup>65</sup> Interestingly, from an American perspective on seminary education, Leith summarises the tensions and struggles in the debate as being three-fold. Firstly, there is a crisis of belief in which he states that deep spiritual convictions have given way to other, fringe causes such as feminism. Secondly, there is confusion about mission which has resulted in the shift of emphasis where the redemptive or soteriological centre of seminary education has been overtaken the academic process itself. Thirdly, there is a new type of professor who has been chosen from outside the seminary constituency. By this Leith means that, increasingly, the teaching faculty within seminaries are appointed on the grounds of academic achievement often gained in secular universities.<sup>66</sup> Although these perspectives reflect strongly on the seminaries representing predominantly reformed groups in the United States, they are not dissimilar to other debates in the Christian leadership development and training enterprise in many regions of the world today.

Having reviewed a small sample of the historical elements that constitute the primary debate regarding educational method in Christian leadership development it will be useful to examine some aspects more closely.

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<sup>64</sup> For a useful case study on the value of practical theological education cf. Lynch, G. and Pattison, S., 'Exploring Positive Learning Experiences in the Context of Practical Theological Education' in *Teaching Theology and Religion*, vol. 8, no. 3, July 2005, pp. 144 – 154. In this study students indicated that they valued training in as much as it related to their own experience and situation enabling them to think critically in their professional situation.

<sup>65</sup> For a more detailed analysis of this in the U.K. context see Ballard, *Reflections*, pp. 333 – 342.

<sup>66</sup> See Leith, *Crisis*, p. 11.

## **Theology and praxis – conflicting or compatible?**

It has been established that there is a debate and tension within most sectors of the Christian training enterprise. A review of the current literature suggests that it is in fact increasing. One recurring theme that needs investigation is the apparent conflict that exists between the teaching of theology and praxis. As we have seen, there has been a shift from the operational to the theological in terms of the true role of trainers and training institutions. In simple terms the shift has been away from the question “How are we doing?” to a more subtle and complex question of “What are we doing?” For Christian educators this question is deeply perplexing.

Anderson struggles with this tension. He compares the academic responsibilities of the Christian educator to that of the “iron collar of scholarship”.<sup>67</sup> The need for academic rigour and process is almost universally felt, forcing Christian educators and their institutions constantly to seek adequate accreditation, publish contemporary research and endeavour to remain on the cutting edge in terms of social and ethical issues. This can result in a tension between pastors, denominational leaders, mission agencies and those preparing people for Christian service. However, in this the academy must not take the blame alone. With increased specialisation in ministry, rapid changes in the style of church services and church life as well as the complexities of ministry in a pluralistic world, the church has often forced a specialisation on its own training mechanisms. This, in turn, has created an artificial competition between theological education with its necessary core of Bible, history and systematics (and an associated

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<sup>67</sup> Anderson. R., S., *The Shape of Practical Theology* (Downers Grove, InterVarsity Press, 2001), p. 318.

spirituality) with more applied aspects of the curriculum such as leadership, organisational management and pastoral skills such as counselling and conflict resolution.

This, it must be noted, is not a new problem. In some ways it has its equivalent in the church of the New Testament. The theological position of the Jerusalem church in which Peter, James and John were considered pillars represents one side of the struggle between theology and praxis. Anderson describes this as the need for the Jerusalem community to perpetuate itself through the historical transmission of authority in the “tradition of the Twelve” (sic) rather than through the missionary and charismatic impetus of Pentecost.<sup>68</sup> He further describes this as an institutional embodiment of Christ in contrast with a Pentecostal and charismatic presence of Christ through the Spirit.<sup>69</sup> It is possible for the church (and, by extension, the training mechanisms of the church) to exist in a confessional or theological state seeking to preserve tradition and orthodoxy. The obvious danger here is that orthodoxy takes precedence over orthopraxis robbing the church of its incarnational mission.

By contrast, Paul’s theology and mission were directed by his understanding of Pentecost by which was unleashed a power for apostolic witness into the whole world. This is most likely a cause behind his somewhat sarcastic remarks in writing to the Galatian church in which he accuses Peter of being duplicitous in drawing back from his mission to the gentiles after certain people came to him from James.<sup>70</sup> For Paul, the nature of the church is only truly revealed through a theology of its mission and its apostolic ministry. He did not perceive theology without praxis.

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<sup>68</sup> Anderson, *The Shape*, p. 319.

<sup>69</sup> Anderson, *The Shape*, p. 319.

<sup>70</sup> See Galatians 2:12

The theological development within the book of Acts reveals an interesting cycle. It began with the experiential dimension produced by Pentecost. Although there must have been an expectation of the coming of the Spirit, apart from Christ's own words, there was no theology by which to describe the actual outpouring. Retrospectively, Peter identified this experience as that which was prophesied by the prophet Joel.<sup>71</sup> Almost immediately a theology was established and the Jerusalem church became the custodians of this new revelation of God's purposes. The preservation of the truth and the integrity of the church become key issues in the coming chapters of Acts. The second cycle begins with widespread persecution following Stephen's martyrdom in chapter 7. Believers are scattered and the resulting expansion of the church introduces a new missiological dimension with people of other cultures becoming Christ-followers. This produces the third part of the cycle. As gentile people receive the Spirit in the same way as the Jewish believers did, theological issues begin to surface. These issues are dealt with at the first great council of the church described in Acts 15. Thus the cycle is one of experience (Pentecost) followed by theological consolidation followed by experience (persecution) followed by theological debate and final agreement.

To some extent church history is a never-ending continuation of these cycles. There is a continuing interaction of orthodoxy and orthopraxis. Theology and experience consistently interface with each other.

The challenge of the educator is to bridle or manage this interface in such a way as to allow theology, with its historical reflection and tradition, a worthy place within the

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<sup>71</sup> Cf. Acts 2:16.

curriculum whilst maintaining a missiological or apostolic activity that challenges and produces a relevant theology. This is the source of continuing conflict in the academy. In simple terms, the balance between theology and praxis seems extremely difficult to find.

The contribution of tradition and history to our present theological task of is of significant importance. All theology is practised within the context of tradition which can be enriching. However, the very tradition that enriches theological study can become distorted and misused if it becomes merely institutionalised and ceases to function within the praxis of the Spirit. Spiritual leadership formation that concentrates on an official ecclesial theology in order to sustain continuity and tradition will inevitably marginalise both the Pentecostal experience (often replacing the spontaneity of this experience with a liturgy) and the ministry of the Holy Spirit resulting in a cold orthodoxy that sees its primary task as an abstract reflection on the nature of God, Christ and the church. Church theology becomes academic theology resulting in the spiritual life of the student being severely restricted and the mission of the church dropping out of focus altogether.<sup>72</sup> Banks cites Farley who argues that theological education is fragmented because the existing academic model extracts the objects of knowledge from their concrete settings.<sup>73</sup> He further argues, using Farley as the basis of his argument, that theology must cease to be abstract and must become more intuitive and practical. Theology must be perceived in terms of theological wisdom or *theologia* (sic).<sup>74</sup> The argument is that theology as wisdom must take precedence over theology as discipline. It is possible that if this concept of theology as wisdom which, by extension,

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<sup>72</sup> Anderson addresses a memo to theological educators that deals with this more thoroughly. See Anderson, *The Shape*, pp. 320 – 321.

<sup>73</sup> Banks, *Reassessing*, p. 20.

<sup>74</sup> Banks, *Reassessing*, pp. 20 – 21.



is formative to both life-skills and spiritual vitality in the life of the student, were better understood the compatibility of theology and praxis would be more easily appreciated. In other words, it is only in mission that this theological wisdom finds a full expression.

It is here that a particular responsibility lies at the feet of the trainers and educators. For an effective confluence of theology and praxis the teacher must not only have an expert knowledge of the texts and practices of the Christian faith but must visibly and obviously be involved in a personal journey of faith. The world view, personal disciplines and disposition of the teacher must reveal a personal faith.<sup>75</sup> This establishes a concrete dimension onto which a transcendent theological framework can be built enabling both the foundation and structure to be evaluated in an effective way. This helps to enable the student to begin a life-long quest and journey, internalising truth and engaging the heart of biblical theology, which is mission. Drane develops this concept by stating that the role of the teacher is to be a mentor and resource person rather than a lecturer.<sup>76</sup>

There is also an institutional challenge involved. Both the sponsoring body of churches and the institution or structures facilitating training must be prepared to make structural and procedural adjustments in order to embrace both theory and practice.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Arguing this from a Pentecostal perspective Kay quotes the work of Lee Wanak. Wanak argues for a holistic approach where there is an intentional interaction between theory and practice. This, he asserts, would ensure that there is no division between the superstructure of Christian doctrine and the infrastructure of Christian practice. See Kay, W. K. "Pentecostal Education", *Journal of Beliefs & Values*, 25, No. 2 (August 2004). p. 234.

<sup>76</sup> Drane, J., *Cultural Change and Biblical Faith*, (Carlisle, Paternoster Press, 2000). p. 146.

<sup>77</sup> I am deliberately endeavouring to be as generic as possible regarding the form of training institution. Whilst it would be more comfortable to examine this subject within the confined structures of a university department or formal Bible School, I am aware that there are numerous models of ministry training and leadership formation. It would be wrong to dismiss any of these models and it is my purpose to discover principles and practices that are transferable into any programme that accomplishes the goal of training individuals for Christian ministry and leadership. It must also be pointed out that whether by design or default, all training programmes must represent a certain constituency of sponsoring churches. Without

Anderson expresses his concern in this regard. He points out that many theological academies are staffed by faculties that tend to isolate biblical studies and theology from the Holy Spirit's ministry in the church and its interface with the world. Whilst conceding that this is a generalisation, his opinion is that many teachers receive their academic qualifications by practising research and scholarship centred primarily on the citation of each other's work in footnotes.<sup>78</sup> This is a form of scholarship that is well suited to the mastery of knowledge in particular disciplines but can dangerously exclude the development of an ability to discern the plans of God in showing His love to a needy world. This danger is all the more evident when the wider institution of church with academy relegates the training process to the academy alone. The interface of church and academy at all levels will undoubtedly assist in the successful combining of theology and praxis and a greater ownership of the process would be forced upon the church and higher levels of answerability forced upon the academy. Whilst this should not lessen the rigour of the academic process nor its necessary independence, it would prevent the "ivory tower" mentality of which the academy is so often accused.

Whilst issues of resourcing and curriculum are for later discussion, two institutional issues are raised by Drane and worthy of note. The first concerns the timetable. He points out that most colleges and seminaries organise things in blocks of fifty to sixty minutes. This might be pedagogically well suited to certain courses within the curriculum but does not facilitate the kind of formation that a greater mentoring style of

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this the programme would simply not exist. It is my opinion that in examining institutional challenges the training programme should never be evaluated in isolation to its supporting constituency. This would be to ignore the systemic issues relating to training which must always be seen as a part of the journey of the student and not an end in itself.

<sup>78</sup> Anderson, *The Shape*, p. 323. Anderson's view could lead to a caricature or stereotype of those committed to the academic task and this would indeed be an over generalisation.

teaching seeks to accomplish.<sup>79</sup> The challenge is to be flexible both in the allocation of time and the inclusion of suitably supervised practicum so as to accommodate both the teaching of the course and the learning needs of the student. The other institutional challenge that Drane raises is that of space and accommodation. He points out that most of the theological teaching process takes place in lecture halls or classrooms that were never designed for this purpose.<sup>80</sup> Space, furnishings and even the location of college campuses tend to send a strong, unspoken message of our unwillingness to find innovative ways to combine the teaching of theology with the spiritual development of the student and the application of that which is taught. Perhaps investigating the ergonomics of teaching spaces and accommodating more community based teaching would enhance the capacity to embrace both theology and praxis in ministry and leadership training.

Before concluding this discussion on the perceived conflict of theology and praxis it is worth discussing the student. Application procedures, pre-assessment of the student's suitability and the student's vocational expectations all have a major bearing on how praxis and theology can be complimentary. In some ways the conflict in training between theology and praxis is systemic in that the problem often arises before the student enters the training programme. Leith makes the point that seminaries as well as denominational leadership can easily forget that the primary form of the church is the congregation that gathers to hear the Word of God and to praise God.<sup>81</sup> It is likely that many local churches are not functioning as well as they ought. By extension, students who have had their formative experiences in poorly functioning churches enter the training programme disadvantaged in their spiritual formation. Anderson shows how

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<sup>79</sup> For Drane's full perspective on this see Drane, *Cultural*, pp. 148 – 149.

<sup>80</sup> Drane, *Cultural*, p. 149.

<sup>81</sup> Leith, *Crisis*, p.11.

this problem is compounded. He states that the theological task, which properly belongs to the church as a means of determining its own origin, nature and mission has been handed over to scholars.<sup>82</sup> If local churches are not providing young Christians with serious Bible teaching and spiritual formation, it is not unreasonable to conclude that students enrol for training with poorly defined theological convictions.<sup>83</sup>

Training institutions therefore have the unenviable task of assisting students in understanding elementary theological and biblical concepts. This does not make the task of integrating theology and praxis any easier. Pre-assessment of a student's spiritual maturity and theological background seems to have become a necessary element in the application and integration procedures within a training programme. Innovative initiatives by the training institution such as sponsoring local church Bible Schools at relatively elementary levels, periodic seminars for those considering ministry and open days where both church leaders and potential students can become more familiar with the role and activities of the academy would all assist in minimising the conflict that has been discussed.

### **Mission-centred theology versus academic theology.**

Another aspect in the debate on method in theological education is the integration of mission-centred theology and academic theology. Previously it has been noted that this

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<sup>82</sup> Anderson, *The Shape*, p. 321.

<sup>83</sup> This problem is further compounded by the ideological and philosophical concepts that have been formative in the students' thinking. In a recent class (November 2004) taught to level three students at Mattersey Hall on the elements of a Christian world view, an estimated seventy percent admitted, after consideration, that they processed thoughts and values from a typical post-modern perspective. They had inbuilt reservations regarding the concept of a meta-narrative. Likewise, they had not seriously considered the implication of absolutes in ethical terms. In a recent conversation with leaders of the Youth Alive ministry of the Assemblies of God in the U.K., I was told that their findings were that 80% of young people interviewed believed that sex before marriage was wrong whilst about 52% regularly practiced sex before marriage.

conflict is central to the historical development of theological education and training and is, therefore worthy of further comment. Anderson argues that if mission theology is relegated to the backbenches it deprives those doing academic theology of a mission context and so diminishes and distorts theology itself.<sup>84</sup> Drane makes an appeal for a more holistic model of theology. The problem, as he sees it, is not that most reputable institutions do not have a good curriculum but that each subject within the curriculum is taught as if none of the others existed.<sup>85</sup> Whilst not mentioning missiology specifically, he does make the point that, in certain circles, anything practical in the curriculum is considered the “Cinderella of theological education.”<sup>86</sup> Whilst mission theology and academic theology ought to be inseparable, they appear to have become divorced in the curriculum robbing students of a framework into which they can integrate all of their training into a comprehensible whole.

Walls adds another important aspect to this struggle between mission theology and academic theology. He argues that not only does Western Christianity need studies which accumulate the experience of the missionary movement into preparing missionaries for overseas work but increasingly it needs those same resources to meet the needs of its own quite indigenous situation.<sup>87</sup> He uses strong language in stating that the separation of missiology from theology produces “distorting and debilitating effects”.<sup>88</sup> Missiology provides an essential cohesion in the theological curriculum as well as a framework for the student. It equally forces the student, who after all is preparing for a life of Christian service, to understand the world into which he or she is to minister. Culture and language studies are central to the missiological curriculum.

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<sup>84</sup> Anderson, *The Shape*, p 325.

<sup>85</sup> Drane, *Cultural*, p. 132.

<sup>86</sup> Drane, *Cultural*, p. 132.

<sup>87</sup> Walls, *Missiological*, p. 19.

<sup>88</sup> Walls, *Missiological*, p. 19.

Whether these are taken at an advanced or just an introductory level, they have the effect of broadening the student's perspective in a way that academic theology cannot.<sup>89</sup>

Drane posits that providing missiological cohesion in the theological curriculum could be seen as “understanding the market”.<sup>90</sup> Whilst it would not be appropriate to claim that missiology is somehow an “understanding of the market”, Drane makes the point that society is rapidly changing and those who have the responsibility of ministry will need to make appropriate adjustments. A key element of this is a holistic approach to theology that will “focus around a unifying of Christian experience with the rest of (secular) life.”<sup>91</sup> In this context Drane is using the term ‘secular’ to distinguish from the ‘sacred’ parts of life. In other words, his suggestions should result in the diminishing of the divide between the sacred and secular. Arguably, this is the natural outcome of the successful convergence of missiology and academic theology within the curriculum.

Possibly this is one cause for the crisis of confidence that exists regarding institutions of theological study. Leith is pointed in describing this. He suggests that there has been a loss of church orientation resulting in secularisation.<sup>92</sup> A loss of a sense of mission somehow divorces both the academy and the student from the purpose of the church. It seems inevitable that this will create an environment where theology becomes merely academic. The means become the end. Theology becomes a study in and of itself rather than a means to achieving mission. He bemoans the secularisation of campus life. To quote him: “Unless the present trends are reversed it is likely that campus life on a seminary campus will be less and less distinguishable from campus life on any

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<sup>89</sup> Walls illustrates this by relating that the story of serious engagement by Christians with Muslims over the last two centuries has depended upon both sanctity and scholarship. See Walls, *Missiological*, p. 20.

<sup>90</sup> Drane, *Cultural*, p. 135.

<sup>91</sup> Drane, *Cultural*, p. 135.

<sup>92</sup> Leith, *Crisis*, p. 17.

secular educational campus”.<sup>93</sup> He goes on to state that seminaries have gone through a loss of sense of mission and direction. The primary task of any ministry training institution must surely be to prepare people for ministry. If this is not philosophically encapsulated in the administration of the College and translated into the curriculum by means of applied missiology then the crisis that Leith describes is inevitable.

A recapturing of a sense of mission and direction by those offering training must include the need to address social transformation as an objective of ministry. Almost any graduate of a ministry training programme will face a ministry environment that is pluralistic to one degree or another. A theological education that presumes homogeneity, either theological or cultural, to be the norm will not prepare a student adequately for life or ministry.<sup>94</sup> A theology that is void of a commitment to work for justice, accountability to minority groups and a compassion for the disadvantaged becomes increasingly abstract and void of any authentic contextualisation. Arguably, it is only the serious inclusion of missiology, with its many applied facets, that will correct this.

This serious commitment to integrate mission theology with academic theology will most likely produce other outcomes. For example, issues of gender, race and class will be forced onto the agenda of the administrators of training programmes and institutions. No careful student of culture and mission will ignore issues of the equality of all human beings. Training institutions that have no gender or race diversity and have only white,

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<sup>93</sup> Leith, *Crisis*, p. 17.

<sup>94</sup> It is worth reading Banks' description of the contribution of the Mud Flower Collective and the Network for the Study of Ministry, both groups of feminist theologians, to this debate. They express their concern about homogeneity within theological education that stems from a failure to face up fully to the inherent pluralism of the Christian faith and to cultural pluralism generally. See Banks, *Reenvisioning*, p. 28.

male and middle class teachers cannot help but become irrelevant. In such cases the loss of confidence expressed by the constituency supporting the training mechanism is fully justified. Again, it can be argued that an unequivocal commitment to integrate mission theology with academic theology will not only produce better adjusted graduates but will enhance the right kind of perception of the institution. Possibly little else could so ensure the vitality and authenticity of a training programme more than a full integration of missiology and academic theology.

On the surface, the issue of the development of the spiritual life of a student or ministry candidate might appear to fall outside the debate regarding the integration of mission theology and academic theology. However, it can be argued that an omission of mission theology will almost certainly lead to an absence of spiritual dynamic in the application of theology. For example, preaching has always been central to the life of the church and is therefore normally a core curriculum subject in ministry training. If preaching is taught within the framework of academic theology with a hermeneutic that is centred on textual criticism it is likely that other virtues such as anointing, inspiration and discerning the purpose of the Spirit of God in a service will be compromised. The issue is not one of diluting knowledge and “rightly dividing the Word of truth”, but of how this excellence in knowledge can be enlivened by the Holy Spirit through an individual who has a compelling sense of mission.<sup>95</sup>

Another important argument in the plea for an effective integration of mission theology and academic theology is in regard to overcoming alienation in theological education. Broadly, ministry training institutions and programmes fall into three categories.

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<sup>95</sup> See Anderson, *The Shape*, p. 323. Anderson’s comments regarding the contrast between Paul’s use of knowledge prior to his conversion and his interpretative method of Scripture after his conversion are particularly valuable.



Firstly, there is the homogeneous, normally denominationally exclusive institution that exists to meet the training needs of a particular group. Secondly, there is the institution that seeks to provide an effective training across both denomination and cultural boundaries. The third group are those that are emerging around the world in response to the demise of Western-led mission and the emergence of the indigenous church. We have already seen that the first group faces crisis mainly because it has not made enough of an effort to understand the shifts in contemporary society. Whilst the other two groups are making efforts to meet real challenges they do face internal challenges. The contextual paradigm of theological education within these institutions can seriously impact upon the structure of the curriculum and the nature of mission. This, in turn, can impact negatively on minorities or foreign students that study at the institution. In the worst case racism or open prejudice can be evidenced within the institution but more often the student from these backgrounds can be left feeling alienated or disillusioned.<sup>96</sup>

In a training institution that is not deliberately established to be exclusive it is inevitable that both students and their constituent churches have certain expectations and agendas. Handling these expectations within an academic theological paradigm can be very difficult. For example, students that come from situations where, in relatively recent history there has been exploitation, racism or oppression will have a very different perspective on Divine providence than those who do not have an experience of these things. To the oppressed Divine providence speaks of God's protection and His grace that enables someone to transcend adversity. It relates far more to survival than to well-being. To the student who does not have a history of oppression in either personal

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<sup>96</sup> Is it possible that this could introduce us to a new form of criticism? Whilst we are familiar with textual criticism, literary criticism, form criticism and narrative criticism, we might need to seriously consider a reader-response criticism within a missional context. Possibly the term 'mission criticism' would be apt and would imply that Christian texts need to be evaluated much more within the context of God's missionary purpose for His people throughout the ages.

experience or in the corporate history of his or her people, providence is an expression of God's kindness producing well-being and security.<sup>97</sup> If the curriculum overemphasises academic theology without mission theology, the framework for dealing with this conflict is limited. Alienation takes place and students feel excluded with a sense that injustice is being perpetuated. The training institution must seek to model the intrinsic values of the Kingdom of God in which there is equality, justice and a commitment to the poor. These things must not just be affirmed but practised and explicitly evidenced at every level of institutional life. Mission, both within the philosophical core and within the curriculum will assist greatly in this process resulting in a greater sense of inclusion within the institution and a better trained Christian leader who is destined to enter a world that is extremely complex and pluralistic.<sup>98</sup>

In summarising the issue of mission theology versus academic theology it would be difficult to state the point more poignantly than Percy who writes:

...today those sitting in the pews are often as highly educated as the pastor; among the general population the clergy may even be looked down upon as narrowly trained functionaries. In this climate, it is imperative for seminaries to broaden the education of pastors to include courses on intellectual history, training future pastors to critique the dominant ideologies of our day....A religion that avoids the intellectual task and retreats to the therapeutic realm of personal relationships and feelings will not survive in today's spiritual battlefield<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> For a fuller description of this and other related issues see Paris, P.J. in *Shifting*, pp. 181 – 200.

<sup>98</sup> Foley adds another dimension to this in his thorough explanation of what he calls the “fragmentation of knowledge”. Although his perspective is not strictly a mission one, he does help identify the root cause of the fragmentation of the curriculum. The fact that certain elements of the curriculum can be taught as though no other exists is a problem that cannot be overemphasised. As Foley puts it: “The other side of the anomaly is that the departments and programs of religious studies are heavily staffed with scholars educated in graduate programs whose legacy and specialties of scholarship are oriented to Western Christianity. The organisation of areas of religious scholarship perpetuates the European theological encyclopaedia of the faculty of Theology. One result of this anomaly is the continuing failure to propose a unifying subject matter of religious studies and a coherent rationale for divisions of labour. Another result is what might be called the conventional way of formulating the relation between theology and religious studies”. See Farley, E. *The Fragility of Knowledge* (Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1988), p. 57. This fragmentation and lack of unity within the theological curriculum is a lament addressed by many. See for example footnote 5 p. 321 in Anderson, *The Shape*. In my opinion, Walls *et al.* argues correctly that true cohesion depends upon the centrality of mission theology within the theological curriculum.

<sup>99</sup> Pearcey, N. R. *Total Truth* (Wheaton, Crossway Books, 2004), p. 127.

## **Spiritual formation in theological education**

Hart and Mohler state that one of the greatest concerns relative to theological education is that of spiritual formation in the student. They go on to explain that most seminaries appear to train students well for the intellectual aspects of ministry such as biblical interpretation and theological understanding, but that many church leaders worry that students graduate with insufficient spiritual awareness or vitality.<sup>100</sup>

The tension between spiritual formation and theological learning has been felt for as long as the church has been training leaders. It recurs throughout history<sup>101</sup> and reinforces the notion that somehow there is little compatibility between scholarly pursuit and spiritual vitality. However, this tension is only notional and is not helpful in the effort to train people for ministry. Interestingly, Muller argues that quite the opposite is most often the truth and that Protestant scholastics have almost always stressed the need for spiritual zeal and Christian character.<sup>102</sup>

So central is this controversy to Christian leadership development that it seems to impact on almost every level of educational method and strategy. Van Engen approaches the issue from a missional perspective stating that educational programmes in the church must be understood and perceived to be the equipping of the people of

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<sup>100</sup> Hart, D. G. and Mohler, R. A. (eds.), *Theological Education in the Evangelical Tradition* (Grand Rapids, Baker Book House, 1996), p. 101. (Note: In my experience, this concern is virtually universal amongst church leaders).

<sup>101</sup> For example see Muller, R. A., 'The Era of Protestant Orthodoxy' in Hart and Mohler, *Theological Education*, p. 107.

<sup>102</sup> Muller, R. A., 'The Era of Protestant Orthodoxy' in Hart and Mohler, *Theological Education*, pp. 103 – 128.

God for a “dynamically missional discipleship in service to the world”.<sup>103</sup> The discipleship component that he refers to has everything to do with spiritual formation. By contrast to the missional requirement of spiritually vibrant students emerging from training, Messer addresses the issue from the perspective that “nobody cares how much you know until they know how much you care”, emphasising that the entire training process ought to take place within the context of a redemptive community.<sup>104</sup> Whatever angle this issue is addressed from, the fact remains: educational method in theological education or Christian leadership training cannot ignore the need for spiritual formation in the life of the student.

Just how this blend of academic rigour and spiritual development can take place is a complex issue. Historically it had not been an easy balance.<sup>105</sup> Cherry refers to Niebuhr’s sense of dissonance that existed between the devotional life and critical scholarship at Yale Divinity School in the early twentieth century. He states that this “attests to the synthesis sought, partially found, and eventually lost by the university divinity schools”.<sup>106</sup> Arguably, what happened in university divinity schools has, to some extent or another, taken place in most ministry training institutions. Anderson states it rather bluntly by saying that the theological academies to which the church sends its members are staffed by faculties that tend to isolate biblical studies and

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<sup>103</sup> Van Engen, C., *Gods Missionary People: Rethinking the Purpose of the Local Church* (Grand Rapids, Baker Book House, 1999), p. 153.

<sup>104</sup> Messer, D. E., *Calling Church*, p. 91.

<sup>105</sup> For a more thorough insight to the trajectory taken by evangelical educators since the Reformation see Muller, R. A., in *Theological Education*. pp. 103 – 128. Of particular interest is his description of Gisbert Voetius’s Paradigm for Theological Education. Voetius wrote this work in 1651. In it he stresses the covenantal theme of Reformed theology but, equally the need for personal character and piety and spiritual exercise amongst his students. He argued that piety should take priority over social standing in the selection of those for ministry training. It was only after stressing the case for character and religiosity that he devotes chapters to educational preparation for theological study such as curriculum and technique in the approach to the discipline of study.

<sup>106</sup> Cherry, C., *Hurrying Toward Zion: Universities, Divinity Schools and American Protestantism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1995), p. 34.

theology from the Holy Spirit's ministry in connecting the church with the world.<sup>107</sup> He goes on to question the omission from the life of the academy of competence in discerning God's Spirit in the revealing of truth. He stresses, however, that this should not be at the expense of striving for excellence in knowledge. It should also be noted that Anderson makes no attempt to suggest a means by which this discerning of God's Spirit could be taught or measured. Perhaps this is the greater question. Banks attempts to explain why spiritual and personal formation has not had its rightful place in the training of Christian leaders. He contends that the problem lies in the separation of disciplines that accompanied the emergence of universities in the twelfth century. Theological study included reflection on the virtues that are integral to Christian faith but, he argues, the "cultivation of intellectual virtues does not necessarily result in their wider application".<sup>108</sup> He goes on to say that while most seminary teachers have recognized that moral and spiritual formation takes place in the home and the local church, there is a growing consensus that it must now become a more intentional part of the training process.<sup>109</sup>

It seems reasonable to ask what this intentionality might involve. A good starting point would be to deal with the concept of 'theologizing'. By this is meant a synthesis of faith and theology. Theologizing creates an atmosphere of dialogue in the learning process allowing the student and the teacher to explore knowledge in a way that produces understanding. An obsession with academic outcomes through standard assessment methods such as essays and exams will almost certainly undermine an effective mentor-student relationship which encourages learning rather than mere study

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<sup>107</sup> Anderson, R., S. *The Shape*, p. 323.

<sup>108</sup> Banks, R., *Reenvisioning*, p. 25.

<sup>109</sup> Banks, R., *Reenvisioning*, p. 25.

that disjoins faith from theology.<sup>110</sup> Theologizing gives rise to a creative tension that exists between mystery and meaning. The process of theological education should not presume to rid the student of mystery. In reality, no proper theology has ever suggested that the element of mystery should be eradicated. The very fact that a student is preparing for Christian ministry should presuppose a commitment to spirituality and faith. Educational method that does not make room for this presupposition will create controversy and conflict rather than faith and purpose.

Another obvious solution to creating an environment that is conducive to spiritual formation lies with the teaching faculty and administrative staff of the training institution. Partially in addressing this issue, Sweet has an interesting perspective. He points out that there have been several paradigm shifts in educational expectations. He states that we must now transcend the constraints of a now defunct nineteenth-century “hierarchy-bureaucracy” style of classroom, lecture and conference learning. He then defines three shifts that we must be aware of. The first is away from the concept that a course of study is preparation for a lifetime of work but rather education is a lifetime of preparation for various work assignments. The second shift is that learning has become decentralized and that the same forces that have driven learning out of the education system in other fields are being brought to bare on theological education. The third shift is that learners have higher expectations than in previous years and expect their training to connect them to global resources and multicultural learners.<sup>111</sup> These dynamics alone create immense challenges for the staff of institutionalised training programmes. Although these concepts will be further developed later, the fact that

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<sup>110</sup> This issue is well dealt with by Calian. See Calian, C., S. *The Ideal Seminary: Pursuing Excellence in Theological Education* (Louisville, Westminster John Knox Press, 2002). pp. 90 – 98.

<sup>111</sup> See Sweet, L., *Eleven Genetic Gateways to Spiritual Awakening* (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1998) pp. 47 – 51.

faculty need to be prepared for innovative, field- based learning models in which they are personally involved will help in ensuring the personal and spiritual formation of the student. This will have the added benefit of ensuring that the teaching faculty are, in fact, practitioners who have a personal, vital faith which, in itself will have the effect of creating an environment within the institution that is conducive to spiritual formation.

One final, brief comment will introduce the next section of this thesis. There is an inextricable link between spiritual formation and a biblical theology of spiritual and ministry gifts. If there is no serious commitment to a theology of issues such as the call of God, the giving of gifts to men by the ascended Christ (Ephesians 4:11) and the work of the Holy Spirit in human lives then even the concept of spiritual formation is left wanting.

## CHAPTER 2

### CONCEIVING CHRISTIAN MINISTRY TRAINING

Thus far the elements of the current debate regarding theological and ministry training have been identified. However, the issue of what lies at the core of Christian ministry training and formation remains somewhat elusive. As with the debate itself, this conceptual component seems to be challenging almost every aspect of higher education, not just the training of Christian ministers.<sup>112</sup>

Within the current debate<sup>113</sup> there is a conflict on just how orthodoxy and orthopraxis might fully intersect and complement each other. This conflict affects virtually every element of a ministry training programme. On the one hand there is a perceived need for more applied areas within the curriculum and on the other a need to ensure adequate critical evaluation to sustain effective scholarship, academic integrity and lifelong learning skills. By extension this leads to the need to develop a process of thought that enables the application of bible and theology to life.

In an attempt to resolve this problem, leaders within the Christian academy are suggesting that the issue really lies firmly within the realm of the underpinning philosophy of education and training. For example, Duane Litfin, from the perspective of a Christian liberal arts educator, (he is the President of Wheaton College, Illinois) endeavours to conceive how educational practice and Christian thought might even be

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<sup>112</sup> See for example Peterson, M. L., *With all Your Mind: A Christian Philosophy of Education* (Indiana, University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), pp. 4 - 7

<sup>113</sup> As described in chapter 1.



reconciled in the first place.<sup>114</sup> He discusses the concept of an education being “Christ-centered”. Does this mean an education that is somehow only centred upon the second person of the Trinity he asks. In other words, what would make our education “*Christocentric*, not merely *theocentric*?”<sup>115</sup> Litfin goes to great length in endeavouring to explain what a “Christ-centered” education involves. He defines a Christocentric education as one that produces a uniquely Christian perspective at all times. He states that it is essential to think “Christianly” about a subject.<sup>116</sup> If the education is from a Christian perspective of course this is correct. However, if we are to insist upon the Christ-centeredness of our educational process as a means somehow to side-step good scholarship this position could go wrong. Of course the two should not be mutually exclusive of each other. In other words, a scientifically proven fact is not either “Christian” or “non-Christian” – it is fact and must be dealt with as such. A Christian perspective should not exclude the need for objective and analytical processes.

Brian Edgar describes this issue as the “Theology of Theological Education”. He seeks to discover whether it is the purpose, method, context or people involved that is most important in defining a good theological education.<sup>117</sup> He asks, for example if the faith of those involved in teaching theology defines in some way some education as being theological even if the content is not overtly so.<sup>118</sup> Edgar is right in asking these foundational questions. Although his descriptive typology of models of theological

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<sup>114</sup> Litfin, D., *Conceiving the Christian College* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004). pp. 85 – 98.

<sup>115</sup> Litfin, D., *Conceiving*, p. 37

<sup>116</sup> Litfin, D., *Conceiving*. p. 69.

<sup>117</sup> Edgar, B., “The Theology of Theological Education” in *Evangelical Review of Theology* (2005) Vol. 29:3, 208-217.

<sup>118</sup> Edgar, B., “The Theology of Theological Education”, *ERT*, p. 209. Using a typological approach Edgar describes four models by which theological education can be conceptualised: The classical model identified as the Athens Academy; the confessional model identified as the Geneva Seminary; the Missional model identified as the Jerusalem Community and the Vocational model identified as the Berlin University. (See *ERT*, p. 213)

education is helpful, the major point to be made is that theological education can hardly exist where there is no theology of the education itself. Again, where there is no serious conceptual exercise in under-girding the enterprise, the enterprise itself become tenuous and long term strategies for the development of the institution or programme will be hampered.

The question might be asked as to what difference this debate makes anyway? The fact that these questions are being asked in the first place highlights the philosophical struggle underlying the very concept of an education that is intrinsically Christian. Conceptually, Christian ministry training is not exempt from this problem. In fact, the more institutions seek to validate their courses and commit to a quality assurance regime that evaluates progress primarily by means of academic mechanisms, the sharper will become the issue of what is really motivating the training of Christian leaders in the first place.

At this point it is useful to point out that educational literature correctly draws a distinction between education and training. The basic distinction is that training involves repetitive actions without any theoretical basis, whereas education is an altogether more flexible process deriving from and dependent upon first principles. Education can also tend to be defined by aims and outcomes rather than the processes that achieve these outcomes.<sup>119</sup> Within this definition it seems impossible to provide a

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<sup>119</sup> A good example of how this distinction is described in educational literature can be found in an article by R. S. Peters. He describes the task-achievement analysis of education and interestingly draws a correlation between education and the process of reform. This broadens the debate on the distinction between education and training. Peters correctly points out that the teacher's success can only be defined in terms of the response from the learner. It is therefore possible for teachers to teach without accomplishing the outcome of learners learning. He concludes that an educated person is not someone who has simply mastered a skill but rather someone who has developed some sort of conceptual scheme, at least in the area in which he is skilled. Peters, R. S., "What is an Educational Process?" in Peters, R. S., (ed.) *The Concept of Education* (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), pp. 1 – 9. (There has been

theological training that does not include an “educational” process in which there is a broad conceptual development which can be evaluated. I would argue that if this distinction is not conceived and understood the entire process of preparing people for meaningful works of Christian service could be jeopardised.

Peterson argues that there is a need to recover the normal link between educational theory and practice. He states further that all education should stem from a coherent theoretical framework.<sup>120</sup> He explains that all goals and objectives within the educational process should arise from a basic philosophical commitment. In turn, this philosophical perspective has a direct impact upon educational theory. As with Litfin, Peterson argues for the importance of a philosophy of education for Christians in particular. Of course he is right but the argument could easily go both ways. For example, many Christian parents choose to send their children to Christian schools in an attempt to isolate them from the perceived harshness of the non-Christian world. This represents a philosophical foundation in which the eternal struggle of good and evil is dealt with in a theologically superficial way.<sup>121</sup> If, on the other hand, the underpinning philosophical structure was biblical and could be theologically defended then Peterson’s argument stands firm. This principle is just as important in regard to Christian ministry training and development.

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a proliferation of short-term training programmes in many Christian groups in the past forty years. Organisations such as Youth With a Mission and Operation Mobilisation would be examples. Some of these training programmes purport to be providing a form of ministry or Christian leadership training. My observation has been that there is a high attrition rate amongst those who are involved in these programmes. Whilst some of this attrition can rightly be attributed to the short-term expectations of the course, I would suggest that a prominent reason would be that training has been offered without the primary educational process of conceptual development being thought through or in place).

<sup>120</sup> Peterson, M. L., *With all*, pp. 4, 5.

<sup>121</sup> I use this example after involvement in two Christian schools, one in South Africa and one in the U.S.A. Both schools were different in terms of location, size and resource but both had obvious similarities in terms of the expectations of parents. In both there was a majority of parents who sought to educate their children in the “friendly” environment of the Christian school because of an anxiety regarding the secular nature of other schools.

Writers who contribute to the subject of Christian ministry training and development agree on finding the conceptual foundation for this training before proceeding to the functional aspects of course development and delivery. Calian, President of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, states that the final intent of seminary education is to “share our faith”. He goes further and states that “the aim of seminary education is not simply to produce an educated clergy, but even more so to build up the people of God. ... The practice of learning is for the purpose of giving hope to others”.<sup>122</sup> This represents an honest (if idealistic) effort to state the theological dimension of the conceptual element of seminary life and function. Likewise, it represents a clear indication of the need in his mind, to link the process of education and training at the most foundational level. If founding documents, management processes and the staff of a ministry training institution grasp these concepts it will obviously have a significant impact on the direction and decision making processes of the institution. Conversely, if these conceptual ideals are not carefully processed and adopted they become either obsolete or, worse still, considered relics of founding leaders from another era.

In a stimulating selection of essays combined under the title of “The Idea of a Christian University” edited by Astley, Francis, Sullivan and Walker this conceptual issue is addressed even by the very division of the book into two parts. The first part asks the question: “A Christian Calling?” in an attempt to air the debate about the desirability, purpose and shape of a Christian university in a pluralistic culture.<sup>123</sup> The essays that follow seek to engage theologically with the issue of the validity of the concept or

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<sup>122</sup> Calian, C. S., *The Ideal Seminary: Pursuing Excellence in Theological Education* (Louisville, Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), p. 5.

<sup>123</sup> Astley, J., Francis, L., Sullivan, J., Walker, A., (eds.), *The Idea of a Christian University* (Milton Keynes, Paternoster, 2004), see p. xi.

reality of a Christian university.<sup>124</sup> Again, the perceived need to uncover a philosophical substructure to education generally and to Christian education specifically is highlighted. In a similar vein, Seifrid addresses this conceptual issue regarding the seminary experience by placing the whole issue into the context of community. After a lengthy discussion on the biblical concept of community he states that this community within a ministry training environment is not to be sought as an end in itself but rather must be understood as “a goal-directed extension of the churches, which represent Christ’s community of love in its earthly form”.<sup>125</sup> This echoes Calian above and could be perceived as somewhat idealistic. However, if this conceptual effort is not exerted in establishing a ministry training institution or programme then both theory and practice within the training will lack cohesion at best or be theologically inconsistent at worst.

In a particular setting this very issue appears to have dominated many aspects of the history and development of London Bible College (now the London School of Theology). In his stimulating book, Randall constantly draws the parallel between the efforts being made by LBC to develop a genuine orthodoxy and the development of a strong evangelical identity within the churches that form their primary constituency. He states: “LBC’s attempts to integrate theology, experience and practice were to make a significant contribution to pan-evangelical advance in Britain and elsewhere.”<sup>126</sup>

Significantly, much of Randall’s book deals with the constant struggle for LBC fully to conceptualise its role within the constituency it felt called to serve and upon whom it

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<sup>124</sup> See for example Thiessen, E. J., ‘Objections to the Idea of a Christian University’ in *The Idea*, pp. 35 – 55.

<sup>125</sup> Seifrid, M. A., ‘The Nature of Christian Community and the Theological Seminary’, in Gushee, D. P., & Jackson, W. C., (eds.) *Preparing for Christian Ministry: An Evangelical Approach* (Grand Rapids, Baker Books, 2004), p. 29.

<sup>126</sup> Randall, I., *Educating Evangelicalism: The Origins, Development and Impact of London Bible College* (Carlisle, Paternoster, 2000), p. 83. Note: The remainder of this chapter which addresses the issue of being both evangelical and intelligent goes on to describe a period of intense theological conflict within LBC – evidence of the strong connection between the conception of ministry training and Christian leadership development and its associated practice.

was dependent. Several other episodes in the life of LBC show the difficulties which this training institute had in reconciling its conceptual or philosophical foundations with practice. These challenges were clearly intensified because the struggle was not only internal but involved an often vocal and even aggressive supporting constituency. For example there is reference to a letter addressed to the then Principal Gilbert Kirby, in December 1979. Kirby is accused of allowing the College to “go to pieces theologically” during the period of his Principalship. The letter went on to state that the College had ceased “to be the handmaid of the churches and had become an innovator”.<sup>127</sup> This was a reference to the growing academic emphasis within the college. Although Kirby vigorously defended his position as theologically conservative and was supported by the faculty of the College this incident illustrates clearly the conflict that arises in trying to conceive the role and responsibilities of Christian ministry training programmes and institutions. The mere fact that some had difficulties in conceiving the college as having the ability, let alone the right, to be an innovator shows the danger of a ministry training programme or institution existing without clearly identified and stated philosophical statements and goals.

Before moving on to identify specific areas that require conceptual and philosophical clarity it is worth mentioning another period of the history of LBC recorded by Randall. The issues raised are particularly pertinent to this thesis. The period in question is that in which Michael Griffiths was the Principal of LBC (1980 – 1989). In October 1980 Griffiths outlined his priorities for the College in a personal policy statement to the board. He wanted to “ensure a clear commitment to the biblical position of LBC; to raise the spiritual level in the college; to maintain high academic standards; to upgrade

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<sup>127</sup> Randall, I., *Educating*, p. 205.

the college's distance learning materials and to bring about a better staff/student ratio."<sup>128</sup> Whilst many of these ambitions appear to be functional and operative in nature they actually were an attempt to re-establish the conceptual foundations of the College itself. This was borne out by the number of difficult issues that Griffiths faced over the next eight or nine years. Through a series of 'position papers'<sup>129</sup> and staff appointments the College strengthened its position with regard to applied theology. This, in turn, enabled Griffiths to continue to build links with mission agencies, something which was clearly an aspect of his personal vision and passion. He also fulfilled his desire for an improvement in staff/student ratios. It was during this period that LBC navigated the very difficult and often contentious issue of how to handle the charismatic issue that was impacting ever larger numbers of evangelical churches. It can be concluded that, because of Griffiths' efforts to build a sustainable conceptual substructure to the College he was able to steer the College through multiple challenges (not the least of which was financial) and on to success in the following decade.<sup>130</sup>

In the important task of conceptualising the ministry training programme of a particular institution and (possibly more importantly) developing sound philosophical grounds for ministry training in this century more broadly, it will be helpful to apply the conceptualising process in several contexts.

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<sup>128</sup> Randall, I., *Educating Evangelicalism* p. 212.

<sup>129</sup> These were papers prepared and presented by faculty for discussion by the faculty.

<sup>130</sup> Randall, I., *Educating Evangelicalism*, pp. 209 – 241. (Perhaps of greater importance is the fact that Griffiths successfully positioned the College within the missionary community as a viable place for missionary training to take place. I would argue that this was possibly the most significant contribution of his time as Principal and contributed, possibly more than any other single strategy or factor, to the long term growth and sustainability of the College).

## **Conceptualising ministry training in the context of constituency**

Although it is theoretically possible for a ministry training programme<sup>131</sup> to exist without a supporting constituency it is a most unlikely scenario. Many programmes claim a degree of independence but a constituency in which students are recruited, find a vocational outlet and where funding can be sourced is inevitable.

The theological, spiritual and even financial aspects of a group or denomination of churches can have a profound effect upon a ministry training initiative. Even the historical journey that a group of churches takes impacts this area severely. For example, the evangelical movement, particularly in the United States but equally in the U.K. and other English speaking nations, was characterised during the first half of the twentieth century as being in a phase of reactionary fundamentalism. The rise of Darwinianism and secularism was seen as a major threat to evangelicals. Modernism and its commitment to evolution was the threatening foe of Christians who took a traditionally conservative view of the Bible and the teaching of creationism. Robert Webber describes the reaction to this as the first cycle of a new kind of fundamentalist saga.<sup>132</sup> He describes this cycle as being characterised by being against an intellectual engagement with new thought, a separation from the “liberal” (*sic*) denominations and a retreat from social engagement with the world. What is evident from Webber’s description of this first cycle is how easily Christian leaders can be reactive towards their environment. This, in turn, can have major implications on the perceived priorities

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<sup>131</sup> In order to prevent unnecessary repetition the term “ministry training programme” is used generically to describe either courses or institutions that have as their primary focus the training of Christian ministers and leaders. Although the issue of curriculum development and delivery, including the virtues or otherwise of undergraduate and post-graduate study options will be dealt with in detail at a later stage, it is probably of most benefit to use this term in its widest possible definition at this point.

<sup>132</sup> Described by Webber as “Cycle One: Fundamentalism from 1925 to 1945”. Webber, R. E., *The Younger Evangelicals: Facing the Challenges of the New World* (Grand Rapids, Baker, 2002), p. 26.



of the training programme designed to produce leaders and ministers for the churches within a particular constituency. With the best intentions possible, it is almost impossible for the administration and faculty of a ministry training programme to be academically independent. Their priorities and courses will of necessity reflect the doctrinal position of their constituency and the priorities of the current leadership of that constituency. Whilst this should not be perceived as detrimental to good training practice it can be an unnecessary impediment to serious scholarship. One effective way around this dilemma is to ensure that foundational documents or recorded decisions allow for such enterprise.<sup>133</sup>

I would argue that it is unhelpful for a given constituency to so dictate the style and content of a course as to prevent effective engagement with a wide range of views on the given subject area. It should be possible for serious debate to occur without compromising the fundamental beliefs of the supporting constituency. However, the ability of a faculty to accommodate such a debate without clearly described boundaries can create unnecessary conflict and tension. Those responsible for the governance of a training programme must ensure that freedom is created and that classrooms become “safe-zones” for both faculty and students.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> It is precisely for this purpose that teaching institutions in the U.S.A. introduced the practice of granting faculty members tenure.

<sup>134</sup> For a detailed case study of this and other issues raised in this section I would recommend reading Duncan Graham’s lament on the closure of the Federal Theological seminary in South Africa in 1993. He argues that the sudden and premature closure of this institution which had stood so admirably both for the theological and racial freedoms throughout the political struggle in South Africa was primarily a lack of will on behalf of the sponsoring constituencies. He makes a telling statement: “Perhaps one of the most important lessons learned to date is that churches cannot be trusted to put denominational interests behind a wider ecumenical vision”. He contends that it was this conceptual vacuum not resources or the unstable political environment that led to the closure of this institution. I strongly recommend reference to this article as it provides a classic case study of exactly the point that I am trying to make not only in regard to the conceptualising of a training institution but importantly, to the constituency supporting the programme. See Graham, D., “A Crisis in Mission and Unity: The Closure of the Federal Theological Seminary of South Africa” in *Missionalia*, Vol. 32, No. 1, April 2004, pp. 39 – 67.

This can equally be applied to the selection of faculty and staff. If there is to be no provision for engaging in wider debates and theological issues beyond the confines of a particular sponsoring constituency, then the profile of faculty members will become confined and limited. If little or no effort has been exerted in conceiving the programme with a clearly defined philosophical substructure then there will inevitably be ongoing conflict surrounding faculty appointments. There must obviously be compatibility between an individual faculty member and the stated priorities of the programme and its supporting constituency. However, this does not necessarily imply a compromise of good scholarship and the need for a faculty member to read widely and teach other viewpoints on a given subject for the sake of meaningful comparisons.<sup>135</sup>

Where then does the balance lie? Can a ministry training programme be faithful to its primary constituency and maintain academic integrity at the same time? Such balance is possible but only insofar as it has been conceived before it is practiced. A constituency seeking to support a ministry training programme must allow for careful thought, clearly defined philosophical concepts and well written documents before embarking on the establishment of such a programme. If these processes and documents are not in place conflict between a supporting constituency and its ministry training programme is inevitable and it will be left to future generations either to reengineer the programme or preside over its demise.

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<sup>135</sup> Leith deals with this issue in some detail. He takes a somewhat conservative line arguing that too much diversity in a teaching faculty creates tension. His concern is primarily the long term result of choosing faculty member from outside the constituency. He draws on his own experience to describe five observations: "(1) Professors from outside the constituency of the seminary seldom support a choice from the constituency; (2) professors who are not alumni-alumnae seldom support appointment of professors who are alumni-alumnae; (3) professors with little or no pastoral experience seldom support the choice of a professor who has had any effective pastorate; (4) professors of modest gifts seldom support the choice of persons of outstanding gifts; (5) professors who are loosely related to classical Christian faith and to the theological tradition of the seminary do not support the choice of professors who confess the evangelical faith of the ancient creeds and the Protestant confessions and who belong to the seminary's theological traditions". See Leith, *Crisis in the Church*, p. 72

## Conceiving ministry training in the context of the call of God

In the conception of Christian ministry training it might seem almost superfluous even to include a discussion on the issue of trainees experiencing the call of God. However, with the financial restraints placed upon institutions and the changing theology of vocation<sup>136</sup> that is occurring, it is distinctly possible for people to enter ministry training programmes without a declaration of experience of any sense of divine vocation. Thus the issue of conceiving ministry training in the context of the call of God relates not only to a theology of divine vocation but also to the nature and demands of the training and the entire admissions criteria for the course.<sup>137</sup>

Calian criticises the fact that, because financial worries preoccupy many theological schools, the admissions bar has been so lowered that many are being enlisted into ministry training who fall below adequate standards for doing so. He goes further to state that, in his opinion, this is “the single most important issue confronting theological schools now and into the foreseeable future.”<sup>138</sup> Whilst alleging that this is possibly the single most important issue facing theological schools might overly generalise and exclude many other key issues faced by the academy, he is not far off the mark. So many factors hinge upon this important theology and concept. How, for example, can a curriculum be adequately structured if it does not presuppose certain convictions held by the prospective student? Likewise, is it possible to provide an adequate extra-

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<sup>136</sup> From my experience as a theological educator this understanding of vocation would include school teaching, social services and increasingly, diverse roles in the wider church life such as debt counselling, rehabilitation programmes and the like. These diverse expressions of vocation should be celebrated but are sometimes difficult to accommodate in a theological curriculum.

<sup>137</sup> This issue is not a new one. It exercised the minds of the reformers who contended that the call of God could be applied vocationally in contrast to the limited application within Roman Catholic theology. This is echoed by Holmes in his discussion on integrating faith and learning. See Holmes, A. F., *The Idea of a Christian College* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1975), p. 48.

<sup>138</sup> Calian, *The Ideal Seminary*, p. 81.

curricula programme designed to enhance a student's ministry capacity if there is not a clear understanding regarding that person's sense of call and destiny prior to starting the course?

The lack of the importance of ministry training in the minds of many in the contemporary and predominantly evangelical tradition is now well documented.<sup>139</sup>

Mouw puts it succinctly in stating that "Evangelicals know what it is like to cry out in despair 'They have taken away my seminary, and I do not know where they have laid it'."<sup>140</sup> By this he suggests that the suspicion of relating to theological education is a reaction by evangelicals to the dead orthodoxy of Protestant scholasticism. This seems to be a sophisticated way of lamenting the exit of living faith from the training process. If this is the case, it seems valid to argue that at the root of this void is a diminished commitment to a theology of the call of God on people's lives. To make the case even more strongly, the very existence of a viable and sustainable ministry training, whether institutional or otherwise, is seriously threatened if there is not an underlying commitment at conceptual and theological levels to students understanding and experiencing the call of God upon their lives.

There are multiple implications to embracing a theology of the call of God as being a necessary prerequisite for those entering ministry training. The most obvious is concerns the type of candidate who undertakes training in the first place. A conceptual

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<sup>139</sup> See, for example, Banks, *Reenvisioning*, pp. 17 – 33. Another good overview of this struggle can be found in the introduction by Wheeler in *Shifting Boundaries*, pp. 7 – 17. A very comprehensive treatment of this painful reality is dealt with by Richard J. Mouw. See Mouw, R. J., 'Challenge of Evangelical Theological Education' in Hart, D. G., and Mohler, R. A., *Theological Education in the Evangelical Tradition* (Grand Rapids, Baker Books, 1996), pp. 284 – 289.

<sup>140</sup> Hart, D. G., and Mohler, R. A., *Theological Education*, p. 285. Note: This problem is not unique to the Evangelical part of the church and is occurring in many parts of Western Christendom. Little is documented regarding this problem in the non-western world possibly because ministry training at a validated degree level is still a relative luxury beyond the means of many emerging into ministry. Thus ministry training prospers but often at a basic and introductory level.

commitment to training those with a clear and distinct sense that God wants to use their lives in ministry establishes clear criteria for candidate selection. By extension, it also places high expectations on the attitude and commitment of the student during the course of his or her studies. Van Engen argues for a model of “servant leadership”.<sup>141</sup> Using Luke 22:25 – 26 as the scriptural basis of his argument he points out that Jesus insists on a distinction in almost every aspect between the “ruler of the Gentiles” and his disciples. As this is a response to a power-struggle between his disciples and not his followers generally, it can be taken as an example of Jesus’ high demands of leaders who seek to serve him in a ministry capacity. Put another way, there is an inversion that takes place amongst those who feel the call of God upon their lives: rather than seeking to rise to the top and exert power over people, they serve from the bottom. It is only reasonable to presume that someone who has internalised this and has a sense of the call of God will have values and priorities that would clearly set them apart from those who are merely seeking an education that happens to be theological in nature.

Another implication is how the selection process for prospective ministry candidates takes place. If an institution is driven by a sense of fulfilling mission through well-trained leaders who are called by God then its selection criteria would reflect this. In turn, conceptual documents, advertising and recruiting materials and the whole application process would clearly indicate this priority. Conversely, it could be argued that if this dimension is not carefully conceived and stated then the seeds of corruption are planted within a ministry training programme and are very hard to root out once the programme is established and has financial and personnel commitments to meet.

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<sup>141</sup> Van Engen, C., *God’s Missionary People: Rethinking the Purpose of the Local Church* (Grand Rapids, Baker Books, 1999), p. 168.

Of course, simply insisting upon a renewed commitment to a high theology of the call of God within a constituency thus enabling the ministry training programme to accept only those with a clear personal testimony of such a call is not a simple matter. Polhill points out that the well-used phrase “call to full-time Christian service” is at odds with biblical passages that refer to the call of God in at least two respects. He argues that this phrase assumes that the call is somehow reserved for a restricted group of people in contrast to the New Testament referring to all Christians being called. Secondly, he points out that it is doubtful that full-time ministry in a professional sense existed in the New Testament.<sup>142</sup> Whilst this view strongly reinforces the Protestant doctrine of the priesthood of all believers it can be confusing.<sup>143</sup> The call to repentance and new life in Christ is a recurring theme of the New Testament.<sup>144</sup> However, to suggest that this calling corresponds to the calling to Christian ministry would mean ignoring many New Testament passages that seem to support a particular experience relating to those with a particular form of ministry. Paul, for instance, describes himself as called to be an apostle (see Rom. 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:1). In the context of mission Paul and Barnabus were “set apart” for the ministry to which the Holy Spirit had called them. (Acts 13:2). To be fair to Polhill he goes on to describe in detail his view of a biblical calling that does take into consideration the many instances in the biblical narrative of people clearly experiencing a call to do God’s work.<sup>145</sup> The point to be made is that the implications of diluting a strong position regarding the distinct call of God on a person’s life to ministry are wide ranging and it is hard to conceive how meaningful ministry training

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<sup>142</sup> Polhill, J., ‘Toward a Biblical View of Call’ in Gushee, D. P., and Jackson, W. C., (eds.) *Preparing for Christian Ministry* (Grand Rapids, Baker Books, 2004), p. 65.

<sup>143</sup> For a more thorough treatise of the issue of Christian vocation cf. Cornelius Platinga. Platinga is the President of Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids and his views regarding seminary education are widely respected. See Platinga, C. *Engaging God’s World: A Christian Vision of Faith, Learning and Living* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2002), pp. 101 - 133.

<sup>144</sup> See for example 1 Cor. 1:9. Two even more forceful passages in this regard would be 1 Cor. 7:17 – 24 and Ephesians 4:1, 4. The first makes obvious reference to the Corinthians time of conversion and the second to the eternal hope which was explained by Paul to be a part of the Ephesians calling.

<sup>145</sup> Polhill, J., *Preparing for*, pp. 72 – 79.

can take place without the assumption (biblical or confessional) of people doing God's work because they feel a vocation to do so.

This issue is well illustrated by John Neufeld in regard to the Canadian and U.S. Mennonite Brethren churches.<sup>146</sup> Neufeld describes a programme designed to encourage Mennonite Brethren churches and other congregations served by Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary to open themselves to God's call on their lives.<sup>147</sup> The emphasis of the endeavour is not so much on individuals and their response to the call of God but on restoring a sense of calling. In Neufeld's experience both parents and church leaders are now considering even the question of whether someone could be called to ministry vocation as novel.<sup>148</sup> He goes on poignantly to admit: "It seems that we feel the weight of ministry is so great that high school students, though they are able to choose from a myriad of professional-track education programs, are unable to count the cost of ministry and pursue it".<sup>149</sup> What seems most distressing about this statement is that the writer is speaking from within a church group that has a long tradition of active mission and mobilisation. He admits that the gathering of opinion is unscientific but it, nevertheless, represents a major shift in thinking over a relatively short period of time. Worse still it could be indicative of a serious decline in the number of potential ministry candidates, placing us back into the heart of the debate that began this thesis. Is the problem a systemic one in which the ministry training programmes have isolated themselves from grass-roots church life and thus eroded the capacity of the church to be, in Neufeld's words, a calling church? More directly, it seems as though the loss of missional commitment in the very conception of a ministry training programme will

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<sup>146</sup> Neufeld, J., 'Rediscovering the Calling and Sending Church' in *Direction, Fall 2003, Vol. 32, No. 2*, (<http://www.directionjournal.org/article/?1309>, accessed 10/11/2005), pp. 193 – 201.

<sup>147</sup> This project is being funded by the Lilly Endowment.

<sup>148</sup> Neufeld, J., 'Rediscovering', p. 195.

<sup>149</sup> Neufeld, J., 'Rediscovering', p. 195.

lead to the isolation of the programme which in turn impoverishes the churches which erodes the ability to call and be called thus undermining the viability of the training programme. A downward cycle is initiated which has its root in the conceptual stages, especially in regard to the dynamic of the call of God.

In a survey conducted amongst first year students at a leading ministry training college in the U.K. the outcome was not discouraging.<sup>150</sup> When asked who had a clearly identifiable and specific call to ministry 33 (66%) responded positively. Another 13 (26%) admitted a growing sense of call to serve in ministry, preferably on a full-time basis. Only 4 (8%) students felt that they had no specific call but were open and willing to receive such a call.<sup>151</sup>

In line with Neufeld's interest in a theology of the call of God being as much to do with the church as the ministry candidate, the question was asked as to how often the concept of the call of God was presented in the local churches represented by the students present. The results were less encouraging than for the first question. Twelve (24%) stated that there was regular mention in their churches of the call of God.<sup>152</sup> A significant 21 (42%) admitted to seldom hearing any reference to the call of God on people's lives in the ministry of their local churches. The remaining 17 students (34%)

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<sup>150</sup> The survey was conducted at Mattersey Hall College, South Yorkshire. It was conducted during a semester course thus representing the vast majority of first year students. There were 50 students present representing six different denominational backgrounds. 36 of the students were male and 14 female. The average age was 28 and the students represented 8 different nationalities. (Of these five were Zimbabweans who are now legal residents of the U.K.). The survey was conducted on the morning of 9<sup>th</sup> November 2005.

<sup>151</sup> This was interesting as the Registrar of the College has made a special point of asking prospective students about their sense of the call of God. Although not a defined prerequisite to entry into the study programme at Mattersey Hall, there is a clear emphasis in the application process including an interview stage with the Registrar.

<sup>152</sup> Note: Some were keen to point out that this was not always overt in nature. In other words, it might be a reference to scriptures such as the call of Samuel in the Old Testament or the calling of Paul and Barnabus in the New Testament.



claimed that neither the concept nor a specific challenge regarding the call of God was ever communicated in their churches. This means that, even amongst those who had already made a decision to attend a ministry training programme 76% (three in four) came from church backgrounds where the call of God to Christian ministry was seldom or never mentioned.

A similar question was asked regarding youth services and events. The results were slightly more encouraging. Those who felt that there was a regular mention of the call of God in youth services totalled 24 (48%). There were 10 (20%) who felt that there was a seldom mention of this subject in youth environments. Only 2 (4%) stated that the call of God was never presented in youth services. The remaining 14 students claimed that the question was not applicable to them. This group represented the older students mainly but also included those from other countries.

In a final analysis of this issue 38 felt some aspect of their call had a missionary dimension to it. 32 stated that they had been encouraged by key leaders to pursue the implications of the call of God. Only 3 claimed to have been discouraged. The remainder were neither encouraged nor discouraged.

These results could be interpreted in different ways. It could be argued that this was not a highly representative group and the results of the survey should not be applied too widely. Alternatively, because the group is so selective but still represents both an ethnic as well as a denominational cross section, the results can be illuminating. My impression is that they are fairly indicative of the situation in the Protestant community generally and the Evangelical, western church specifically. Whatever the analysis, a

church, and even more so a ministry training programme that does not conceptually establish a well-developed theology of the call of God to vocational ministry is most likely to incur a long term series of negative issues relating to the recruitment, training and placing of leaders and ministers.

### **Conceiving ministry training in the context of mission**

David Bosch argues for the centrality of mission not simply because it is what the church should do but is intrinsically what the church is. He differentiates between “dimension” and “intention”. His point is that everything the church is and does must have a missionary dimension although not everything has a missionary intention.<sup>153</sup> If this statement is interpreted to mean that there are certain functions of the Church that do not specifically involve the evangelistically oriented practise of mission (such as pastoral counselling, for example) whilst the essential nature of the church remains consistently missionary Bosch’s point is taken. However, this dichotomy creates an unnecessary and artificial division. To seek to divide the Church’s activity (or that of any individual Christian for that matter) into a ‘being’ and a ‘doing’ dimension is theologically complicated and unnecessary. Acts of kindness to a fellow Christian should be no less missionary both intrinsically and functionally than an evangelistic crusade amongst non-Christians in that both equally demonstrate Christ’s love and compassion for people.

This level of theological conceptualising is vitally important in regard to Christian ministry training. To be theologically consistent, it stands to reason that the practice of

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<sup>153</sup> Bosch, D. J., *Witness to the World: The Christian Mission in Theological Perspective* (London, Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1980), p. 199.

ministry development and training should be no less missionary than a specific outreach undertaken by missionaries operating in a cross-cultural setting. If at any time those responsible for ministry training exclude a missionary dimension from the training a theological dichotomy is established. This can have personal as well as ministry implications. On the personal level students processing a theology that distinguishes between “being” and “doing” will face a dilemma that is almost Gnostic in nature. An ability to be righteous without necessarily doing righteous works seems incongruous when considering New Testament teaching like that of James 2:14 – 26. This can result in unnecessary internal conflict which complicates the learning process and turns it into an introspective journey associated with feelings of guilt and unworthiness.<sup>154</sup>

At an institutional or programme level this dichotomy can have equally damaging outcomes. The concept of contemporary ministry or theological training is seriously damaged by anything, whether doctrinal or strategic, that has the seeds of dichotomy within it. David Tracy develops this in his reflection on theological education. He states that there are three fatal separations: “The separation of feeling and thought; the separation of form and content; the separation of theory and practice”.<sup>155</sup> He also states that of all the disciplines, “theology is that one where action and thought, academy and church, faith and reason, community of inquiry and community of commitment and faith are most explicitly and systematically brought together”.<sup>156</sup> This statement makes the distinction between theological training and training in other disciplines quite clear.

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<sup>154</sup> After nearly thirty years of leadership in Christian ministry training programmes and institutions I have seen these dynamics again and again. It has been my experience that in an atmosphere that encourages introspection, rather than resolving personal issues students actually tend to struggle with guilt, unforgiveness and feelings of inadequacy. By contrast, in an environment that encourages an outward, missionary vision these personal issues are placed in perspective and are quickly dealt with.

<sup>155</sup> Tracy, D., ‘On Theological Education: A Reflection’ in Petersen, R. L., and Rourke, N. M., *Theological Literacy for the Twenty First Century* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2002), p. 15.

<sup>156</sup> Tracy, ‘On Theological Education’, p. 15.

Tracy is right and any attempt to diminish the reality of this distinction will have far reaching and inevitably negative consequences both on the process of the training and the outcomes in terms of the type of graduate produced.

It must be recognised that this (at times artificial) separation of the “reflective” dimension of life and the “lived” dimension is predominantly the result of Western culture. This has resulted in possibly the greatest travesty of all: theological irrelevance in relation to culture. Put another way, these separations have divorced theology (and thus ministry training) from mission thus neutering both effective reflective thought and community impact. These separations must be healed and ministry training seems a good place to start.

Ballard reflects on theological education in the U.K.<sup>157</sup> Partly as a result of a small research project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Board (AHRB) and partly as a result of personal impressions gained from a long involvement with theological education, Ballard examines the proliferation of theological education in the U.K. during the late 1990’s and early 2000’s. Amongst other factors, his research “tried to discover the broad perceptions held concerning the content and nature of practical theology”<sup>158</sup> In analysing the subject matter of modules taught without any form of weighting mechanism pastoral care, missiology and ethics were listed as the top three. Even when applying a weighting mechanism, pastoral care and missiology were prominent. Ballard argues that “the rise of missiology surely reflects a growing need, in

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<sup>157</sup> Ballard, P., ‘Reflections on Professional Theological Education Today’ in *Theology*, CVII, September/October 2004, pp. 333 – 342.

<sup>158</sup> Ballard, ‘Reflections’, p. 339.

a pluralistic culture, to examine and determine the distinctiveness of Christian faith and the implications of that for Christian practice”.<sup>159</sup>

At a pragmatic level Ballard is probably right in his assumption that there is a direct correlation between the challenges of Christian witness in a pluralistic society and the growing interest in missiology as a subject choice within a theological curriculum. However, this conclusion can be challenging for at least two reasons. Firstly, it is possible that this represents a “knee-jerk” and somewhat defensive reaction to the rapid changes in British society. If missiology is included in the subject choice and is popular only as a means to respond to a changing social and cultural climate the conceptual dimension is lacking.<sup>160</sup> Missiology as a strategy without missiology as a theology will always be reactive and time-bound in nature. The second danger of including missiology in the curriculum because of perceived changing needs is that of teaching it in isolation from the rest of the curriculum. This danger cannot be overemphasised. Missiological studies can potentially remain within the realm of the theoretical if divorced from the wider curriculum. Those conceiving a ministry training curriculum must confront the missional dimension of that curriculum honestly in order to avoid a repetition of the debate with which this work began.

Bosch, admittedly from a different angle, deals with this issue at length in his extremely thorough theology of mission.<sup>161</sup> He examines three models for the teaching of missiology: incorporation into an existing discipline, independence and integration. He

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<sup>159</sup> Ballard, ‘Reflections’, p. 339.

<sup>160</sup> This forms the basic argument presented in this part of the thesis. Even a well developed missiological curriculum can be ill-conceived. Put another way, missiology that is not primarily missionary in nature can easily become yet another subject choice in an ever growing curriculum. Those conceiving the curriculum have a large responsibility to motivate missiology not merely as another strategy for Christian witness but as the only motivation for ministry training in the first place!

<sup>161</sup> Referred to as a “truly magisterial book” by the publishers.

recognises, at the level of the curriculum anyway, that none of these models succeeded. (He does concede that the model of integration was the most sound theologically). In analysing this failure he remarks that “the basic problem, of course, was not with what *missiology* was but what *mission* was”.<sup>162</sup> He argues that if the church is not missionary by its very nature, “mission and, by implication, missiology,” remains an expendable extra.<sup>163</sup>

Exactly the same can be said for a ministry training programme that teaches missiology as an appendix to the curriculum. If at a conceptual level this occurs it condemns both the course and the missionary enterprise to become nothing more than either temporary tools of promotion meeting immediately perceived needs or, worse still, an awkward appendage that is better removed altogether. As Bosch correctly asserts, Christian ministry training must move from a Theology of Mission to a Mission Theology.<sup>164</sup>

In summary, a ministry training programme must be at all levels missional. Every process from recruitment, through training and placement must have this dimension fully integrated into it. Provision for both students and faculty to be practically involved in mission (particularly cross-cultural mission) should never be seen as an expensive luxury but rather as a necessity. Regular contact with missionaries, prayer meetings for unreached people groups and opportunities for missionary service must all take a high profile position. If this commitment is not developed at the conceptual level

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<sup>162</sup> Bosch, D. J., *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 2004), p. 492.

<sup>163</sup> Bosch, D. J., *Transforming Mission*, p. 492.

<sup>164</sup> Bosch, D. J., *Transforming Mission*, p. 492.

it will not translate at the functional level – hence the need carefully to conceive ministry training.<sup>165</sup>

### **Conceiving ministry training systemically**

Before turning attention to other aspects of the task of Christian ministry training, the issue of training as a part of a more complex system must be addressed. Any form of training divorced from its potential marketplace is, quite simply, an exercise in futility. Joyce Ann Mercer explores this by placing the contextualisation of theological education across disciplines in a congregational setting. Her observations are insightful in that she suggests a ministry context by which the different disciplines of theological education might be harmonised.<sup>166</sup> Christian ministry training, as has been seen, often seems to be a volatile enterprise. One way to minimise this volatility would be to conceptualise ministry training within a clearly defined system.

This system should have three equal components: recruiting, training and the placement of graduates. Ideally each component should have equal prominence and be equally resourced as far as possible.

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<sup>165</sup> For another comprehensive insight into this issue cf. Walls, A. F., *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 2004), pp. 143 – 159. Walls makes a valuable contribution to dealing with structural problems in mission studies. Worthy of special mention is his approach to dealing with the globalisation of the Christian church. He rightly asserts that the curriculum has been subverted and needs to be rewritten; especially the church history syllabus because so much of it has been written from a set of predetermined geographical, cultural and confessional priorities. (p. 145).

<sup>166</sup> Mercer, J. A., 'A Madness to our Method: Congregational Studies as a Cross-Disciplinary approach to Contextualising Teaching and Learning in Theological Education' in *Teaching Theology and Religion*, vol. 9, no. 3, July 2006, pp. 148 – 155.

C. David Harley shows the importance of this systemic approach in a history of All Nations Christian College and its predecessors.<sup>167</sup> Referring particularly to the period during which David Morris was Principal (1962 – 1981) he shows the correlation between an aggressive recruitment strategy, a rigorous reengineering of the training programme itself and a broadening of relationships with missionary agencies in order to enhance the placement opportunities of graduates.<sup>168</sup> When Morris was asked to serve as Principal he faced a daunting task with only thirteen returning students and three new students accepted for the new academic year. Faced with this challenge, Morris was “convinced that the College must sharpen its focus on missionary training and develop a programme to meet the needs of contemporary missionaries”.<sup>169</sup> He requested that the name of the College be changed to reflect this. He also began negotiations with the Principal of Mount Herman Missionary Training College resulting in a merger of the two colleges by 1971. (A third college, called Ridgeland Bible College, later also merged with these two colleges, beginning the process in 1968). This resulted in a recruitment base that provided the college with a student enrolment that ensured its sustainability.

Harley goes on to document the successful transition of three small colleges into a large, effective College with well developed facilities, a good staff/student ratio, an innovative academic programme and good relationships with a wide Christian constituency. This is surely the result, deliberate or otherwise, of a systemic approach to training.

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<sup>167</sup> Harley, C. D., *Missionary Training: The History of All Nations Christian College and Its Predecessors (1911 – 1981)* (Zoetermeer, Uitgeverij Boekencentrum, 2000).

<sup>168</sup> Harley, C. D., *Missionary Training*, pp. 154 – 163.

<sup>169</sup> Harley, C. D., *Missionary Training*, p. 157.



In commenting on the long-term sustainability of evangelical theological education Gabriel Fackre alludes to this systemic issue. He suggests that those in theological education should emphasise their strengths. Amongst these he suggests their willingness to be faithful, their loyalty to the church and their responsiveness to the people in the pew.<sup>170</sup> In this he has simply identified the essential connectedness of ministry training. The role of a ministry training institution is not just the educating of future ministers but the constant education of the church itself. By reinforcing the doctrinal position taken by the training institution and its compatibility with the primary constituency, the institution gains the confidence of the recruiting base. This is certainly how I think Fackre would wish to be understood regarding the willingness of the institution to be faithful.

Likewise, an unequivocal commitment to the church helps to ensure that training takes its rightful role as just one component of a system that is co-dependent upon each other component. Even a hint of disillusionment regarding the church will undermine the effectiveness of a system that enables recruitment, training and the placement of graduates.<sup>171</sup>

David Tracy takes a slightly different angle but with a similar outcome in mind. In seeking a reunion of theology and formation in the theological education of the twenty-first century he states that it “cannot be focused on a typically Kantian abrupt call to

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<sup>170</sup> Fackre, G., ‘Educating the Church’ in Hart, D. G., and Mohler, R. A., *Theological Education*, pp. 275 – 277.

<sup>171</sup> This, of course, does not mean that the independence of theological thought and academic freedom is undermined. It simply ensures a context in which meaningful debate can take place without destructive consequences either in the lives of the trainees or in the sustainability of the ministry training programme. (For further reading cf. Calian, C. S., *The Ideal Seminary*, pp. 27 – 34).

duty for the will".<sup>172</sup> In other words, theological education is not merely the choice of an individual motivated only by his or her will. It must be perceived as a part of a complex theology of the church itself. He goes on to suggest that theological education has within it the promise of healing many of the separations that have been bequeathed to us by modernity. These separations include a division between feeling and thought, form and content and practice and theory.<sup>173</sup> Is it possible that these separations referred to by Tracy are not just the fruits of modernity but, more subtly, a divorce of the academy and the church? If so, this will result in systemic failure which can have very negative results for all the stakeholders in the ministry training enterprise – students, teachers, the church and, more tragically, those who, as yet, have not heard the Gospel message.

Conceptualising and strategizing towards an integrated system in which recruitment, training and the placement of graduates is not then important for commercial reasons or the sustainability a ministry training programme alone, but have missiological and even eschatological implications for all who love the church and its mission in the world.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter a case has been made for the importance of conceptualising the enterprise of ministry training and development. Whether this activity takes place before a

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<sup>172</sup> Tracy, D., 'On Theological Education: A Reflection' in Petersen, R. L., and Rourke, N. M., *Theological Literacy*, p. 20.

<sup>173</sup> Tracy, D., 'On Theological Education', p. 21.

programme is initiated, in order to reengineer an existing programme or as a means of regular review it is non-negotiable and essential.

The question however is whether this conceptualising process is merely strategic or is it, in fact, primarily theological in nature? I would argue strongly for the latter. Further, this theological conception can be defined as being essentially missional in nature. Bosch describes this process as moving from a “theology of mission to a missionary theology”.<sup>174</sup> He goes further to describe missiology as having the critical function of continuously challenging theology to be “*theologia viatorum*”, meaning that, in reflecting upon the faith within a missiological context, a means is created to take the gospel on its journey through the nations and, indeed, through the times. He states:

In this role, missiology acts as a gadfly in the house of theology, creating unrest and resisting complacency, opposing every ecclesiastical impulse to self-preservation, every desire to stay what we are, every inclination toward provincialism and parochialism, every fragmentation of humanity into regional or ideological blocs, every exploitation of some sectors of humanity by the powerful, religious, ideological, or cultural imperialism, and every exaltation of the self-sufficiency of the individual over other people or over other parts of creation.<sup>175</sup>

Surely the same impact would be felt within the sphere of Christian ministry training if, in its conception, administrators, faculty, staff and indeed students, were to make an unwavering commitment to the missionary core of such an endeavour.

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<sup>174</sup> Bosch, D. J., *Transforming Mission*, p. 492.

<sup>175</sup> Bosch, D. J., *Transforming Mission*, p. 496.

## CHAPTER 3

### CHRISTIAN MINISTRY TRAINING AND SCHOLARSHIP

In a front-page article of *The Wall Street Journal*, Wheaton College, a historically evangelical college in the United States was criticised for terminating the services of one of their more popular teachers. The reason for this termination was the conversion of the lecturer to Roman Catholicism. In defending the action the President of Wheaton College, Duane Litfin, stated that although the lecturer was a “gifted brother in Christ”, his decision to terminate his employment was because of his duty to employ “faculty who embody the institution’s evangelical Protestant convictions”.<sup>176</sup> Whilst the debate behind this incident is of interest in itself, what is even more relevant (for the purposes of this work) is the reason given by the young lecturer for his conversion. The lecturer, Joshua Hochschild, pointedly explained that, in his spiritual journey, he concluded that “Evangelical Protestantism was vaguely defined and had a weak scholarly tradition, which sharpened his admiration for Catholicism’s self-assurance and intellectual history”.<sup>177</sup> This sentiment is strongly echoed by Mark A. Noll, an unashamed evangelical. He asserts, rather boldly, that “the scandal of the evangelical mind is that there is not much of an evangelical mind”.<sup>178</sup> He goes further to state that American evangelicals “are not exemplary in their thinking, and they have not been for several generations”.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Golden, D., ‘A Test of Faith’ in *The Wall Street Journal* (New York, Saturday/Sunday, January 7 – 8, 2006) p. A1.

<sup>177</sup> Golden, D., ‘A Test of Faith’, p. A8.

<sup>178</sup> Noll, M. A., *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1995), p. 3.

<sup>179</sup> Noll, M. A., *The Scandal*, p. 3. (The designation “evangelical” is used to describe those who hold to a conservative interpretation of the Bible and more specifically to Protestants who associate through forums such as the Evangelical Alliance in the UK. If not already apparent, the bias of this work is in regard to the means and methods of training people for a ministry role within this constituency.)

This assertion (which is substantially argued by Noll) is troubling. It raises multiple issues and many questions related to the interface of Christian faith and critical thought. By extension, the role of faith in the wider academy becomes an issue. Most pointedly, in the context of this work, it raises the question whether Christian ministry development and serious scholarship are mutually exclusive and whether ministry training and serious scholarship are compatible at all.<sup>180</sup> If, as Noll asserts, evangelicals suffer from a lack of serious scholarship and critical thought, are there identifiable reasons for this? What are the consequences and, if it is concluded that ministry training should have a sharper critical edge to it, how is this achieved in the market driven and constituent driven institution? This chapter is an endeavour to answer these questions based on the argument that those emerging into Christian ministry in the 21<sup>st</sup> century must face up to the demands of making a valid defence of their faith if they are to sustain any relevance to a rapidly secularising society.<sup>181</sup>

The decline of Christian privilege and influence within the academy in Western nations is obvious even to the most casual observer. This has created the notion that the learning process itself has been progressively secularized making it difficult for there to be any reversal in this decline or any hope for people of faith to harness the academic process effectively for themselves. Holmes critiques the approach of Christian

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<sup>180</sup> This harps back to the issue of training versus education addressed in chapter two. Superficially they appear to be compatible bedfellows but it soon becomes obvious that, at a structural and critical level they exist in an awkward and, at times, mutually exclusive relationship.

<sup>181</sup> In my experience, the Bible College movement (in the context of this work referred to broadly as ministry training institutions) has found the issue of combining rigorous academic exercise and ministry preparation particularly perplexing. Whilst some of this stems from pressures exerted by their supporting constituency, the difficulty, in my view, is much more complex. It is a blend of the under-development and the relatively poor quality of the education of teaching faculty, a poor level of resourcing, small student numbers and little or no systemic thinking in the areas of recruitment and subsequent placement. These factors combined make academia a convenient scapegoat rather than a very helpful friend to those offering ministry training. Sadly, this is also used as a marketing tool by those who perceive the “discipleship” pathway to be more “spiritual” than a more structured and academic pathway into ministry.

educators by stating that “sometimes interaction between faith and learning has been at little more than a defensive level, an apologetic against challenges to the faith from the world of thought, or a Christian critique of its competitors”.<sup>182</sup> This defensive stance within Christian institutions of higher learning seems fairly well entrenched. David Claerbaut laments his undergraduate experience in a Christian liberal arts college. He went on to teach in such an institution and describes often hostile remarks that followed appeals seriously to integrate faith and learning. He remarks on the frequent “derisive references to the apparent absurdity of ‘Christian mathematics’” or how a renowned philosopher was dismissed as being too geometric in his Christian thinking.<sup>183</sup> Whilst the process of decline is clearly complex and does not reveal the whole story<sup>184</sup> this conflict between faith and scholarship seems to be prevalent wherever the educational process takes place within a Christian institution – including institutions devoted to Christian ministry training, and if it is to be effectively resolved its development must be understood. The fact is that the tension between faith and learning is not new and has been evident in almost every generation of Christians, especially where there has been some form of effort to formalise the training of leaders. This development can be traced by examining some pertinent examples.

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<sup>182</sup> Holmes, A. F., *The Idea of a Christian*, p. 46. Note: Much of the literature relevant to this debate (especially in the North American context) has to do with the issues facing Christian liberal arts Colleges. This conflict arises when these Colleges expand their curriculum to include the sciences and concepts that appear inherently non-Christian need to be considered. It is my opinion that many of the arguments and discussions relating to the integration of faith and learning in these institutions (and, by extension, the related attitude towards critical scholarship) have a direct correlation within institutions devoted to Christian ministry training.

<sup>183</sup> Claerbaut, D., *Faith and Learning on the Edge: A Bold New Look at Religion in Higher Education* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2004), p. 20.

<sup>184</sup> See for example Robert Benne’s excellent description of how six leading Christian colleges have successfully kept their faith and connection to their founding principles. Benne, R., *Quality with Soul: How Six Premier Colleges and Universities Keep Faith with Their Religious Traditions* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2001).

The very earliest records of Christian learning show no conflict between scholarship and faith. It could be argued that the desire accurately to represent the faith and prevent heresy produced a strong scholastic tradition. Peterson points out that an effort to discover classical Christianity was in fact the starting place for specifying the cognitive side of Christian faith.<sup>185</sup> He goes on to state that the Apostle's Creed serves as a reminder that, from a very ancient past, the church has always placed a strong emphasis on what each Christian intellectually believes and confidently confesses.<sup>186</sup> The apologists such as Aristides (ca. 140), Justin (ca. 153) and Athenagoras (ca. 175) freely quoted Greco-Roman poets and philosophers and used Greek rhetorical form in their writings.<sup>187</sup> Most uneducated Christians had their first contact with classical and rhetorical writings through contact with their own well-educated writers. This tradition continued through the establishment of catechetical schools of which Alexandria was the most influential and best known.<sup>188</sup>

However, Kwame Bediako, in his comprehensive treatment of the impact of culture upon Christian thought (and vice versa) in the second century, cites the tension that existed even at this point in reconciling the cognitive with the spiritual. For example Tertullian rejected the suggestion that the Christian movement could be described as a school of philosophy. He argued that the Christian faith was divine revelation and that Philosophy was essentially the parent of heresy.<sup>189</sup> Bediako points out that this

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<sup>185</sup> Peterson, M. L., *With all Your Mind*, p. 10.

<sup>186</sup> Peterson, M. L., *With all*. p. 11.

<sup>187</sup> Cf. Reed, J. E., and Prevost R., *A History of Christian Education* (Nashville, Broadman and Holman, 1993), p. 76.

<sup>188</sup> For a more detailed description of the role of the Alexandrian School See Holmes, A. F., *Building the Christian Academy* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2001), pp. 8 – 21.

<sup>189</sup> Bediako, K., *Theology and Identity: The Impact of Culture upon Christian Thought in the Second Century and in Modern Africa* (Oxford, Regnum Books, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1999), p. 43. By contrast Augustine argues that those aspiring to be teachers should be educated through a general education as well as a specialized study of the subject and a study of the skills related to teaching. He felt that philosophy unified the study of the liberal arts and was therefore of great importance to the Christian teacher. See

perspective was not the most widely held view amongst Christian thinkers who generally affirmed Christian affinity with Roman-Greco philosophical tradition.<sup>190</sup> It seems as though there has been a never ending struggle between the life of the mind and the life of the spirit in Christian faith. On the one hand, if any degree of pure doctrine is to be retained it must be carefully and critically thought through and described – the life of the mind. On the other hand this activity seems to contradict the requirement to put down the works of the flesh in order to fulfil the needs of the spirit – the life of the spirit. Those involved in Christian leadership training will need to take cognisance of this historical dilemma and manage it astutely if they are to produce well trained and effectively educated Christian leaders.

Whilst it is not my intention to write a detailed history of Christian education, the case can be made that the current conflict or, in Noll's judgement, absence of scholastic capacity in contemporary evangelicalism does not find its origins in the traditions of the early church but could well be traced to the theological tensions of this era.<sup>191</sup> Throughout succeeding centuries this tension was expressed either in the development of ascetic monasticism which stressed the contemplative life on the one hand and commitments to scholarly pursuit such as the Carolingian renaissance of the ninth and tenth centuries on the other hand.<sup>192</sup>

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Elias, J., *A History of Christian Education: Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox Perspectives* (Malabar, Krieger Publishing, 2002), pp. 42 – 43. Note also footnote 144 below.

<sup>190</sup> Bediako, K., *Theology and Identity*, p.43.

<sup>191</sup> The writings of the Post-Nicene fathers are hopefully enough to adequately support this point of view. The intention of this brief diversion into ancient church history is not to provide a detailed pedagogy of the early church fathers but to show that, if only by the nature and quantity of their work, they had no conflict with the concept of scholarship and faith being mutually acceptable to each other. For further reference in this regard the above work by Reed and Prevost is helpful. I would also recommend Bediako who has done a masterful job in showing both the affinity and the conflict that existed as second century Christians struggled to explain their faith using the intellectual structures of Roman-Greco philosophy.

<sup>192</sup> For a more detailed description of the effort to improve the education of the clergy during the rule of Charlemagne in the ninth century see Elias, J. L., *A History of Christian Education*, pp. 49 – 52. It is also helpful to be aware of the renaissance of the twelfth century as recorded by Elias.



If the intention is to show that there is adequate historical precedent for a fundamentally Christian capacity to create a workable synthesis of scholarship and devotional life then the rise of scholasticism between the ninth and fourteenth centuries is a fitting example. Thomas Aquinas (1225 – 1274) is often considered the architectural master of Scholasticism although its development began at least two hundred years earlier. The concept of combining philosophy and Christian theology led Christian leaders to apply reason to revelation in the belief that this would create a legitimate philosophical construct for faith and spiritual life.<sup>193</sup> The method adopted was for the teacher to state a problem and then for each student to propose a logical and rational solution. This undoubtedly laid the foundations for the concepts of critical analysis underpinning current learning theory.<sup>194</sup> Aquinas understood there to be two forms of learning – that of discovery acquired when natural reason operates and that of instruction which takes place when one person transmits knowledge to another. Elias suggests that it was only with Aquinas that Christian scholars became comfortable with ascribing the title “teacher” to humans.<sup>195</sup> Prior to this scholars, notably Origen and Augustine, believed that the title belonged to God alone. This new understanding represents a massive conceptual shift. Rather than the human agency in learning being that of a mere facilitator, the teacher now took on a causal role both educationally and in the pursuit of a knowledge of God. This shift is significant not only in laying the foundations for the establishment of universities but also in the very concept of scholarship. Didactic and systematic learning for the sake of knowledge now became theologically possible. The involvement of human agency in learning is possibly the most important development in Christian scholarship in this era. The Scholastics developed an educational

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<sup>193</sup> Reed, J. E., and Prevost, R., *A History of Christian Education*, p. 129.

<sup>194</sup> See Passmore, J., ‘On teaching to be Critical’ in Peters, R. S., *The Concept*, pp. 192 - 212.

<sup>195</sup> Elias, J. L., *A History*, p. 61.

methodology that elevated the role of the teacher and established the processes of reason that have influenced Western learning to this day. Two points need to be made however. Firstly, the scholastics and particularly Aquinas showed the compatibility of scholarly disciplines with Christian faith. As Reed and Prevost point out, Aquinas believed “reason supported what people had learned by faith, but reason could not overrule revelation.”<sup>196</sup> Whilst this was not an entirely new concept taken over the entire history of the church (it was in fact, distinctly Augustinian) it was a significant shift for medieval theologians to make.<sup>197</sup> The second, and in my opinion the more significant, fact to take note of is that Scholasticism as we know it did not survive. People such as Jon Duns Scotus (ca. 1266 – 1308) and William of Ockham (ca. 1285 – 1349), both students at Oxford University, were severe critics of Aquinas and they are seen as contributing significantly to the decline of Scholasticism.<sup>198</sup> Their main problem with Aquinas and others who embraced Scholasticism was that they were too theoretical. As Elias points out, the remarkable synthesis of logic and dialectics in the service of faith soon became “arid and full of subtleties”.<sup>199</sup> The very aim of the Scholastics ultimately caused their own undoing. In seeking to know and serve God both through discovery and learning they soon began to exclude from their thinking the prospect of knowing God through experience. Why is this balance so elusive? If I were a natural cynic I would conclude that we might never find the answer to this question. However, because I do not wish to abandon my life to cynicism I would suggest that the answer lies in the core ingredient of Christian faith which is mission. Without mission even the most effective scholarship becomes nothing but dead orthodoxy quickly

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<sup>196</sup> Reed, J. E., and Prevost, R., *A History*, p. 136.

<sup>197</sup> Holmes, A. F., *Building the Christian Academy* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2001), p. 56.

<sup>198</sup> Reed, J. E., and Prevost, R., *A History*, p. 137. (As an interesting aside, the authors point out that Scotus was so ridiculously engrossed in teaching against the priority of reason that his students called him *dunce!*)

<sup>199</sup> Elias, J., *A History*, p. 63.

dispelling both the mystical and the experiential dimension of spiritual life. With mission there is a constant reminder of the need to contextualise our faith (the scholarly dimension) whilst demonstrating our faith (the experiential dimension).<sup>200</sup> When these two dimensions are not equal partners the one will fall upon the other and devour it, robbing Christian life and witness of vitality and long term meaning.<sup>201</sup>

Edward Farley suggests that it was during the rise of the “so-called modern university in Europe” that the early effects of methodology (defined as scholarly disciplines) were felt upon theology. Whilst, he points out, there were gains such as the ability of scholars to study history or texts critically without being subject to institutional or textual authorities, there were certain losses. Theology itself became a victim.<sup>202</sup> As methodology increasingly forced the development of independent disciplines, theology was taught without any sense of obligation to root it reflectively within the specific faith that evoked it in the first place. In other words, faith and learning became divorced because scholarship was able to deal with the external elements such as language and texts but not with the reflective concepts of faith that produced the external element in

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<sup>200</sup> This tension is well illustrated by Tom Steffen who describes the journey that he personally took in an article entitled “My Journey from Propositional to Narrative Evangelism”. His investigation showed that virtually every academic discipline from business to medicine had a strong reliance upon narrative to convey ideas. This personal journey resulted in the development of a course using narrative as an educational methodology. What is interesting is that human learning seems to be dependent upon a symbiosis of propositional and narrative elements which makes the conflict between the scholarly and experiential dimension of Christian faith all the more confusing. See Steffen, T., ‘My Journey from Propositional to Narrative Evangelism’ in *E.M.Q.*, Vol. 41, No. 2, April 2005. pp. 200 – 206.

<sup>201</sup> Cf. Elias, J., *A History*, pp. 57 – 65. See Also Holmes, A. F., *Building the Christian Academy*, pp. 47 – 50 and p. 117.

<sup>202</sup> Farley, E., *The Fragility of Knowledge: Theological Education in the Church and University* (Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1988), pp. 70, 71. This position is described in the modern academy by Nicholas Walterstorff who states that unless theology is thought to be rationally grounded it belongs somewhere in the humanities if not off the ladder entirely! Walterstorff, N, ‘Scholarship Grounded in Religion’ in Sterk, A., (ed.) *Religion, Scholarship, & Higher Education: Perspectives, Models and Future Prospects* (Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame, 2002), p. 7. cf. Farley, E., ‘Four Pedagogical Mistakes: A *Mea Culpa*’ in *Teaching Theology and Religion*, vol. 8, no. 4, Oct. 2005, pp. 200 – 203.

the first place.<sup>203</sup> Although the trajectory of this division can be traced in different ways at different times the danger comes when, as Noll describes it, the “parts of the body, which are to complement each other – in this case, piety and the life of the mind – fall upon each other”.<sup>204</sup>

By way of example Noll uses the Albigenses. Named after the region in southern France where they flourished in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, this group was an influential protest group who, in contrast to official Catholicism took morality, piety and pastoral care very seriously. They were moralists who made it a principle to slight any formal intellectual labour.<sup>205</sup> The result was an ascetic lifestyle and worldview that forced the Albigenses into an allegorical interpretation of Scripture and an isolationist existence. In many ways the Albigenses represent the classic conflict that occurs where there is perceived competition between formal learning and the pursuit of the devotional or ascetic life.<sup>206</sup> A form of dualism develops in which a sharp contrast is established between the life of the spirit and the life of the body. This conflict has been a part of the Christian experience since the earliest of times manifesting itself in various expressions of Gnosticism and particularly in Manichaeism. It creates a worldview that forces an allegorical interpretation of Scripture making any form of careful, critical evaluation of the text an exercise bordering on heresy. In many ways this protest movement

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<sup>203</sup> I would argue that there is a secondary but equally damaging consequence to this methodology, namely that theology itself has become a segmented and splintered body of knowledge in which one aspect can be studied in detail without adequate reference to all other aspects. In my experience this creates considerable tension especially where doctrine and biblical studies are included in the curriculum without a corresponding attention to pastoral and applied studies.

<sup>204</sup> Noll, M. A., *The Scandal*, p. 46.

<sup>205</sup> Noll, M. A., *The Scandal*, p. 47.

<sup>206</sup> As early as the second century Tertullian asked the question, ‘What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?’, meaning that the world of learning has nothing to do with the world of faith. He believed, according to Jacobsen and Jacobsen that “faith and learning were antithetical”. See Jacobsen, D. and Jacobsen, R. H., *Scholarship and Christian Faith: Enlarging the Conversation* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 15. The Albigenses would have shared this conviction although the irony is that Tertullian did not entirely practice what he preached and his writings show him to be an astute Christian thinker.

reproduced the very situation that caused the scholarship of the first four centuries, namely the need for a synthesis of both spiritual life and doctrinal orthodoxy. It seems a logical conclusion that an inherent suspicion of scholarliness amongst Christian people is rooted in a theological dilemma of how the devotional life of a person can find compatibility with its underlying doctrinal position that, in turn, requires careful consideration and critical thought. Are these issues still fundamentally present in the continuing debate over the reconciliation of scholarship and Christian ministry training?<sup>207</sup> Arguably they are, but the historical context requires still further examples.

The syllogistic reasoning of the Scholastics continued to be criticised and about two hundred years after Scholasticism had emerged the Renaissance produced a revival of classical learning. Holmes refers to Peter Luder in his inaugural address at Heidelberg in 1456 spelling out an education programme “based on the classical literature of antiquity, particularly rhetoric, poetry and history”.<sup>208</sup> This revival of humanist thought quickly spread emphasizing the gap between reason and revelation and by so doing diminishing the influence of the Scholastics in European universities. For those in the service of the church this produced a profound change in the way in which the Scripture was studied. There was a requirement to ground all learning in original texts where possible, based upon grammar and rhetoric. The metaphysical commentaries of the Scholastics were widely rejected hastening the onset of the Reformation.<sup>209</sup> In the

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<sup>207</sup> To repeat the recurring theme of this work, it is worth mentioning that the natural meeting point of these apparently conflicting dimensions of Christian life and especially Christian learning is the missionary responsibility of all Christians. It is hopefully a strengthening argument that mission, whilst not a panacea for all shortcomings in Christian faith, is a powerful antidote to isolationism, false asceticism or an arrogant scholasticism.

<sup>208</sup> Holmes, A. F., *Building the Christian*, pp. 57 - 58.

<sup>209</sup> Holmes should be referred to in this regard. His comments on the roles of Peter Rasmus, Ockholm and, later, Erasmus and their influence on the learning process are very valuable. For our purposes the decline of the influence of the Scholastics and the Renaissance period marked by a revival of humanist learning methods highlight both the ongoing struggle that the church has always had in accommodating formal learning and its own innate sense that it cannot exist without it. It is this awkward

1530's Henry VIII personally ordered the text books of the Scholastics to be removed from places of learning and replaced with ancient texts. His dissolution of the monasteries further weakened the influence of Scholasticism and by 1550 the works of Duns Scotus were burned in public in Oxford.

Any investigation of issues central to evangelicalism cannot ignore the Protestant Reformation.<sup>210</sup> Luther's emphasis on justification by faith followed by Calvin's theology in which salvation was separated from justification created an environment not only of sharp contrast between the theology of the Catholicism of the middle ages and the Reformers but also a critical evaluation of praxis. Noll points out that at the start of the Reformation in the sixteenth century there were many who believed that "Protestantism spelled death for the mind, not its renewal". He records that some of the Reformers' first followers questioned the entire enterprise of the intellect because of the historical connection between the Catholic Church and Europe's established institutions of learning.<sup>211</sup>

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interrelationship that provides an intriguing epistemology in regard to Christian scholarship. See Holmes, A. F., *Building the Christian*, pp. 58 – 60.

<sup>210</sup> Erickson, M. J., Helseth, P. K., and Taylor, J. (eds.), *Reclaiming the Center: Confronting Evangelical Accommodation in Postmodern Times* (Wheaton, Crossway Books, 2004). See especially William Travis' critique of Grenz's view of history. pp. 252 – 254. (I continue to limit the scope of these historical examples to their influence, directly or otherwise to the issues facing evangelical education today, especially ministry training within this constituency.)

<sup>211</sup> Noll, M. A., *The Scandal*, p. 36. Commenting on this same situation in contemporary universities Harry Lee Poe states that the problem of higher education relates to "its retaining the forms of the medieval church but without a purpose to give it unity and meaning". This conflict now has a familiar ring to it that will not go away. Pertinently though, it seems as though institutions devoted to Christian ministry training should face less of a conflict in combining scholarly tradition with reflective development if for no other reason but the historical understanding all knowledge being God's knowledge and the call of the Christian to integrate rather fragment personal disciplines with the life of faith. In this sense, the secularisation that has occurred in the wider field of higher education need not have the same effect of robbing an institution of a moral identity in institutions devoted to Christian ministry preparedness. See Poe, H. L., *Christianity in the Academy: Teaching at the Intersection of Faith and Learning* (Grand Rapids, Baker, 2004), p. 56. For another perspective of how the contemporary university has undermined religious life see Hatch, N. O., 'Christian Thinking in a Time of Academic Turmoil' in Henry, D. V., and Agee, B. R., (eds.), *Faithful Learning and the Scholarly Vocation* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2003), pp. 87 – 100. Hatch's comments regarding the divorce of piety and learning are especially insightful.

In general this was not the case with the Reformers who encouraged learning. Partly this was in response to the theological persuasion regarding the priesthood of all believers. This encouraged more education and learning, requiring ordinary people to become literate. The Geneva envisioned by Calvin was a place where there would be instruction of the mind as well as the development of the heart and spiritual life. Calvin's conviction that God created the world so that it could be studied placed a seed within the Protestant worldview that undoubtedly enabled a new approach to learning and ultimately gave rise to the period known as the Enlightenment.<sup>212</sup> It was this persuasion amongst the Reformers that, more than anything, fostered the broader study of the liberal arts enhancing the concept of each person being called whether to the ministry or to another vocation.

The theological root of applied learning amongst the Reformers is very evident. Calvin's high view of the sovereignty of God combined with earnestness in regard to human life and society created a confluence that had as its goal the subjection of every aspect of life to Christian thinking and compatibility with the Protestant understanding of the Bible. This created a view of the natural world that required its exploration. This is illustrated by the fact that in his, "Book of Discipline" John Knox proposed a national education plan for the whole of Scotland.<sup>213</sup> Whilst certain theological issues raged between the reformers (such as Luther's two kingdom theology for example) there was a general consensus on the value of education and the historic tension between piety and learning was bridged more successfully than it had been previously. It could be argued that this began the slippery slope of a slide into humanism and secularisation within the academy but, for our purposes it is helpful to note that the early Reformers embraced

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<sup>212</sup> Noll, M., *The Scandal*, p. 37.

<sup>213</sup> Holmes, A. F., *Building the Christian*, p. 69.

the need for cohesion between spirituality and scholarship. Put another way, they were comfortable making learning the handmaid of spirituality.

These examples provide a picture of the recurring conflict between scholarship and Christian faith, learning and piety. These patterns can be reproduced by a more exhaustive study of the Pietists, Puritans, Methodists or any other Christian group. Likewise, a study of the response of the Christian community to the Enlightenment, the writings of Francis Bacon or, indeed the industrial revolution will all show similar patterns but are outside the scope of this study.

One final example from the contemporary scene will establish a foundation from which to suggest some strategies for harnessing the positive potential of critical learning within the ministry development enterprise.

In 1971 three colleges united to form All Nations Christian College. The details of this event are recorded by Harley and give insight to the evolutionary development of a process that brought the combined experience of about 160 years to bare on the most effective way to train missionaries.<sup>214</sup>

Although the predecessors of All Nations Christian College (ANCC) had developed their own training methods, the academic process was always accepted as a necessary part of the training programme. This was, however, always placed within the context of the primary role of developing the spiritual life of the student. Harley states that “the fostering of a vigorous prayer life and the development of Christian character were

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<sup>214</sup> Harley, D., *Missionary Training*, pp. 173 – 174.



perceived as primary objectives of the training”.<sup>215</sup> He then proceeds to give details of how this was practically outworked.

Whilst this might appear to be a classical imbalance in which the spiritual agenda of a training programme takes precedence over the academic programme a more detailed description of the academic programme which follows suggests that every effort was made to keep a healthy and sustainable balance. It could be argued that this balance is almost impossible to keep but it is clear from the ANCC example that, at the very least, positive effort can be exerted to find this balance. If the compatibility of serious scholarship and a vigorous spiritual experience in the life of a student is to be found it cannot be left to either the student or some vague hope that it will occur. Harley’s detailed description of every aspect of the programme at ANCC is illustrative of the importance of a proactive, policy-lead synthesis of learning (including critical analysis) and spiritual development.

An overview of some historical precedents, theological struggles and a contemporary example lead me to two conclusions. The first is that scholarship and spirituality find it difficult but not impossible to co-exist in a ministry training (or, for that matter, any Christian) environment. The second conclusion is that, for the Christian faith to have lasting relevance and impact within a culture or society, true contextualisation must occur and this cannot take place without the effective synthesis of scholarship and vibrant spirituality. The pressing question therefore, should not be *whether* a training programme should incorporate both of these elements but rather *how* the programme can do so. I would suggest the following:

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<sup>215</sup> Harley, D., *Missionary training*, p. 174.

## 1. Reinvigorate the discussion

A good starting point would be to reinvigorate discussion regarding the relationship between spirituality and scholarship on the one hand and exercise ownership of the debate on the other. By this I mean that the issue of creating a workable symbiosis of faith and learning should not be left either to chance and especially not to the realm of populist debate. As long as there is any form of relegation on behalf of those responsible for Christian ministry training as to where theology falls within the curriculum, it is inevitable that either the theology itself or its associated spiritual dimension or both will be corrupted. Hatch argues that empirical evidence suggests that in twentieth-century America the custodians of the mind such as colleges and universities do more to undermine than support religious life. Whilst this statement might not be surprising his next statement is damning: “What is discouraging is not just the pervasive secularization of higher education in the twentieth century, but also the feeble efforts of church-related institutions to retain a distinctive Christian character”.<sup>216</sup> Admittedly this statement is made within a North American context where there is a greater concentration of church related institutions. However, the point must still be noted. The temptation to sell the initiative of a holistic ministry training programme with spiritual distinctives and high moral objectives for an academically validated programme without these distinctives is always present, often for purely commercial reasons.<sup>217</sup> This situation creates a dilemma for the Christian educationalist who values

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<sup>216</sup> Hatch, N. O., ‘Christian thinking’, p. 90.

<sup>217</sup> By this I mean an arrangement between the ministry training programme or institution and a validating or accrediting agency. In some parts of the world there are government appointed agencies that oversee the granting of academic qualifications. In the U.K. this more often occurs through the association of a ministry training institution and an established university. Most often at undergraduate level the validating process occurs through a validation unit which is a part of a university. At post-graduate level

the academic process and appreciates rigorous and critical thought within theology and is thus dependent upon either validating authorities or a university hierarchy to deliver these. The political complications of either of these relationships can be daunting and force a compliance that potentially conflicts entirely with spiritual and ecclesiastical priorities. Somehow the leaders of ministry training programmes must find ways to seize back the initiative in the debate and participate as equal rather than junior partners.

To this end the following initiatives should be carefully considered:

- 1.1. The faculty of ministry training institutions must be encouraged to publish in journals which are known to engage a wider readership than their own constituency. Equally, positive interaction with professional and academic bodies should be encouraged.
- 1.2. Where a course is accredited or validated negotiations with the authorities delivering the validation must be undertaken from a position of strength not weakness. This assumes that those delivering the training programme have both a theological and an academic confidence in what they are doing. Put another way, the virtue of Christian scholarship must be discovered. In discussing the differences between a Lutheran notion of the paradoxical relation between the ways of man and God and the Reformed notion of

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teaching is often undertaken in cooperation with a university faculty. Whatever the arrangement there are inherent dangers present. The first is to seek this form of academic recognition at the expense of long held doctrinal positions (where, for example, a broader critical method is required in investigating Scripture in areas such as New Testament Christian origins or the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch). The second is the problem of receiving state funding as a result of a validating arrangement with the potential of legal and moral implications being attached. (Such as equal opportunities or a non-discriminatory employment policy for example). In my experience there is often a perceived requirement for the training institution to perform which is not imposed by the validating organisation. I have had experience in gaining accreditation for ministry training institutions in three countries in the past decade namely, South Africa, Australia and the U.K. Whilst each country has distinctives and the process in each is rigorous and, at times frustrating, I have generally found a willingness to cooperate.

taking every thought captive for Christ, Rodney J. Sawatsky notes that Christian scholars are actively debating how Christian commitments should inform their scholarship. He goes on to state: “The declension metaphor, however, tends to slant the conversation toward more defensive and even adversarial perspectives instead of opening the dialogue to include more hopeful and irenic views and voices”.<sup>218</sup> (He is referring here to Marsden’s and others’ experience of feeling excluded from the secular academy.) Any defensive posturing will limit the effectiveness of negotiation and positive interface with validating authorities thus limiting the dialogue and potentially the scope of scholarship. There are echoes of Platinga here who argues that all scholarship takes place within the context of longing and hope.<sup>219</sup> Both these writers reinforce the notion that our scholarship needs to take place within the creative tension of longing and hope. The outcome of the learning process is centred on the hope that Christ shall and does reign. He alone triumphs over all pseudo-Saviours and other gods. The hope is founded in the theological certainty that there is no other name by which we can be saved. (Acts 4:12). The weight of the argument is that, if scholarly hope is discovered it, by extension, informs every level of the training programme including engagement with validating or accrediting authorities. This is not intended to create either an aggressive spiritual smugness or a retreat to the cloisters but an ability to negotiate within the wider academy as valuable and

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<sup>218</sup> Sawatsky, R. J., ‘Prologue: The Virtue of Scholarly Hope’ in Jacobsen, D. and Jacobson, R. H., *Scholarship*, p. 7.

<sup>219</sup> Platinga, C., *Engaging God’s World*, pp. 3 - 16

important partners. This facilitates healthy discussion in which the spiritual dynamic of a training programme is not presented as the Cinderella of the curriculum but rather as an equally valuable element to the academic part of the curriculum.

- 1.3. The third component of reinvigorating the discussion relates to what Crystal L. Downing refers to as the combined cloisters of faith and education which Christian colleges have inherited. Downing pleads that we “fight the temptation to become repositories of rarefied vocabularies that leave the challenges of both faith and scholarship caged safely outside the walls.”<sup>220</sup> Whilst Downing is mainly concerned about the wider curriculum, her concerns are equally valid within the context of ministry training. Discussion regarding the use of vocabulary, cultural shifts and applied theology must be vigorously encouraged and facilitated otherwise the ministry training institution will degenerate into a battle ground fighting the causes of a previous era and not the challenges of the current one. Practically speaking this requires the senior leaders of training institutions forcing all participators in the training process out of the cloisters and into the street. This can be done through interactive conversations with faculty members within other institutions, careful monitoring of library acquisitions and strategic travel to engage with groups, people and institutions where there is both a clearly

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<sup>220</sup> Downing, C. L., ‘Imbricating Faith and Learning’ in Jacobsen and Jacobsen, *Scholarship*, p. 36.

identified compatibility and, importantly, clear areas of incompatibility.<sup>221</sup>

- 1.4. An important element which will necessitate further development but is worth stating here is the quality of the discussion within the classroom. If the training process is viewed merely as the acquisition of knowledge it is more likely to reproduce a culture of both academic and spiritual sterility. This discussion requires a shift in thinking from perceiving the training as being some means to an end but rather the beginning of a life-long learning process and will be developed in much greater detail later.<sup>222</sup> If the only model of learning is a didactic form of instruction rather than the fostering of interactive learning, the mould will be cast and the potential for future productive discussion undermined.

## **2. Affirm the Binary Nature of Theology**

In an article addressing professional theological education today Paul Ballard has identified the classic problem that this chapter is addressing. His angle is, however, rather insightful. Ballard argues that there has been a significant shift in theological training in the U.K. primarily relating to the complexities of the validating process. He argues that since the mid- sixties Religious Studies has emerged as an increasingly dominant player in the

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<sup>221</sup> In this regard it is my opinion that the post of “Academic Registrar” is vitally important within a Christian ministry training programme or institution. Such a person should be given a job description that requires a systematic monitoring of the interface that the institution and its faculty members have beyond the cloisters of their own environment. Publishing, library acquisitions, conferences and seminars should all be monitored by such a person and a system established which would ensure engagement and a proactive commitment to maintaining vigorous and constructive discussion.

<sup>222</sup> See Ward, F., *Lifelong Learning: Theological Education and Supervision* (London, SCM Press, 2005), pp. 65 – 66.

preparation of people for ministry. He states that this “has reinforced a more phenomenological approach, attempting to be more objective and value free, and thus to challenge the appropriateness of theology as an ecclesial discipline in the public sector”.<sup>223</sup> Coupled to this has been the growing emphasis on professional and applied areas of the curriculum drawing increasingly on the social sciences and other professions. Whilst in themselves these teaching strategies are not wrong and probably reflect an appropriate response to the challenges of contemporary ministry, Ballard has flagged an important concern. The concern is that the reflective nature of theology is potentially compromised by the applied nature of theology. The effect is an educational process that is driven by perceived professional needs and outcomes in which theology is taught as a component of the curriculum rather than the primary informant of all life and living.

Stating the case rather more assertively, Brad Green makes this statement: “The puzzling thing is this: if Christians have been redeemed, and if they have come to such a ‘knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ,’ why do so many Christian students and academics see little relation between faith in Christ and academic and intellectual tasks?”<sup>224</sup> Green contends that the simple answer is that students and academics have not grasped the radical nature of the lordship of Christ. This sounds slightly emotive and could potentially leave the door open for yet another pendulum swing in which either the learning process itself is subjected to a narrow and

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<sup>223</sup> Ballard, P., ‘Reflections on Professional Theological Education Today’ in *Theology*, Vol. CVII No 839, p. 338.

<sup>224</sup> Green, B., “Theological and Philosophical Foundations” in Dockery, D. S., and Thornbury, G. A., *Shaping a Christian Worldview: The Foundations of Christian Higher Education* (Nashville, Broadman and Holman, 2002), p. 83.

subjective worldview, or the spiritual dimension takes total precedence over learning. Neither of these are helpful and, to be fair, are probably what Green is arguing against anyway. However, the need for a binary emphasis in theology allowing for both reflective and objective dimensions is critical. Academics, students and, equally, ecclesial leaders must create an expectation that theology will be taught within the context of a vibrant celebration of faith expressed through a coherent and contextualised communication of that faith.

### 3. **Allow for “engaged fallibilistic pluralism” within the learning culture<sup>225</sup>**

Bernstein argues that an ideal democratic society is dependent upon an engaged fallibilistic pluralism in order to develop and survive. He argues that a pluralism that is both engaged and acknowledges its own fallibility will successfully alienate fragmented pluralism or fundamentalist pluralism that insists, ironically, on conformity rather than celebrating diversity. He then proceeds to argue that the same philosophy should be applied to religious education.

On an initial encounter with concept most conservative Christian leaders would step back in horror at the concept of fallibility even being considered as a part of understanding divine revelation. Bernstein defends himself by arguing the positive aspects. He states: “...an engaged fallibilistic pluralism requires the cultivation of a set of virtues and practices: a

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<sup>225</sup> This is a term used by Richard J. Bernstein in his chapter ‘Religious Concerns in Scholarship’ in Sterk, A., (ed.) *Religion, Scholarship and Higher Education*, p. 150.



willingness to listen to others and to resist the temptation to impose one's own favoured categories, standards and prejudgements; an imaginative hermeneutical sensitivity directed toward understanding what confronts us as radically different; a willingness to defend our beliefs and claims when challenged; the courage to give up our most cherished beliefs when they are seriously called into question".<sup>226</sup>

In my opinion, Bernstein is arguing for a capacity to deal with a negative form of conservative fundamentalism imposing itself on the learning process. This has the effect of nullifying the rigour required in the academic process and, sadly, alienating the student from the very people she is called to serve. A polarisation of piety and learning can have no other long term effect than the erosion of both elements.<sup>227</sup>

The implication of creating both a framework and a culture of flexibility is no easy task. It involves every level of activity within the training programme. A commitment to the relative independence of the academic process by ecclesial authorities is an important starting point. Likewise, the careful screening of applicants and their orientation cannot be under-

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<sup>226</sup> Bernstein, R. J., 'Religious concerns', p. 151.

<sup>227</sup> I am cognisant of the fact that this argument would potentially be very threatening to those who offer theological training within a highly confessional context. I fully understand that theological institutions have a responsibility to train people for ministry within a certain constituency and that the doctrine, applied theology and practices of that community must be reflected within the curriculum. My quest is to ask if this, of necessity, undermines the capacity to establish a certain critical distance into the learning process thus enabling the student to develop theological and doctrinal convictions based upon a rigorous and honest evaluation of multiple positions. Hopefully, my argument here has progressed sufficiently to show that, even in a confessional context, the greater need is not to force-feed a student a single or biased doctrinal position but rather to create an environment that so combines learning with personal and spiritual development that it results in the prevention of obsessive emphases being placed upon certain doctrinal or theological positions but rather enables the student to see the training process as a means to a greater end and that is to be a relevant and authentic minister of Christ in the world.

emphasised. Often it is the student-zealot who does more to destroy a capacity for open discussion and learning than any other single factor. Classroom dynamics also play a part and a teacher or lecturer must be encouraged to adopt a “learner-teacher” mentality. The real point to be made is that significant effort must be deliberately exerted at every level in order to create a climate of careful and critical learning which avoids the obvious pitfalls of a dogmatic, sectarian approach. I would argue that this actually achieves the desirable outcome of spiritual reflection and growth rather than the alternative which is a spiritually stagnant yet bigoted student who will have little of value to offer to the wider church (or community) upon completion of his or her training.

#### **4. Ensure a Values-Based Learning Environment**

In this final suggestion on how to ensure the integration of faith and learning it will be helpful to note the concern of Arthur F. Holmes. He makes the point that the integration of faith, learning and life goes beyond a loose conjunction of education and piety or, as he terms it, simply an education “in a Christian environment”. He especially emphasises that this integration should certainly not be characterised as “Christ against culture”.<sup>228</sup> Acknowledging that ultimately the true integration of faith and learning can only be fully achieved by God Himself at work in the life of a student, Holmes insists that, within the context of Christian higher education

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<sup>228</sup> Holmes, A. F., ‘The Closing of the American Mind and the Opening of the Christian Mind’ in Henry, D. V. and Agee, B. R., *Faithful Learning and the Christian Scholarly Vocation* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2003), p. 112.

this will not however occur *per accidens*.<sup>229</sup> Of course he is right. Educators and those involved in training for ministry must adjust their thinking to understand the human dimension as well as the divine dimension to the training process. Although we must never dilute the rightful place of God to work both within the institution and the life of a student, the full development of a student will never happen through some fortuitous accident, but rather through careful and deliberate policies and actions adopted by both administrators and faculty. Amongst these is the establishment of clearly defined values.

Values, by their very nature, are objective and establish boundaries and priorities. They embrace every aspect of life from aesthetics and the appreciation of beauty to the high ideals of morality. They ought to create the context of learning. The challenge, of course, is to establish truly objective values without bigotry or imposition. So, for example, a value of high morality expressed in words such as integrity and honesty must not be confused with a legalistic list of what can and cannot be done. It is in this context that one cannot ignore the arguments of Nicholas Wolterstorff.

Wolterstorff argues (in his notion of rationality) that a belief is to be considered innocent until proven guilty. He contrasts this position with the evidentialist approach in which beliefs are considered wrong (or guilty) until proven innocent. He sees this latter position as being typically anti-

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<sup>229</sup> Holmes, A. F., p. 113.

Christian.<sup>230</sup> Sloane, in describing Wolterstorff, states that the difference here is between the *justifying* (sic) of a belief and its *being justified* (sic).<sup>231</sup> A values-based learning environment will not function efficiently in a situation where the values are simply justified. In other words, students cannot be expected to respond positively to a belief (or value) system that is imposed by an institution purely on the grounds of rationality which, in its crudest form, is stated: “It’s always been that way!”. Values must be placed on the anvil of being justified. They are epistemic by nature – their outworking must be seen to be of worth to the student and her future.<sup>232</sup> There is an obligation upon the ministry training institution to create a climate and culture that allows for an adoption of standards and practices at the emotional and spiritual level and not on the basis of demanding conformity for the sake of the final reward. This may best be done by reinforcing values based upon a transparent epistemology both in the lives of the teachers and of former students.<sup>233</sup> Current students must be exposed

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<sup>230</sup> For a thorough treatment of this and more of Wolterstorff’s writings see Sloane, A., *On Being a Christian in the Academy: Nicholas Wolterstorff and the Practice of Christian Scholarship* (Milton Keynes, Paternoster, 2003). For Wolterstorff’s notion of rationality in particular see pp. 79 – 97.

<sup>231</sup> Sloane, A., *On Being a Christian*, p.80.

<sup>232</sup> I am aware that I am using Wolterstorff’s argument a little liberally here. He argues for belief systems based upon his notion of rationality that are developed from “belief-dispositions” and therefore do not always need to be entirely rational to be accepted and approved. This position can be very threatening within a context that is devoted to Christian ministry training which, by its very nature, seeks to indoctrinate students into a belief system. I am contending, to a major degree in agreement with Wolterstorff, that this will not produce either an environment conducive to critical learning or a student that successfully combines beliefs with practice in the long term. Belief (and doctrine) need not always be rationally justified but rather should create an obligation within the student to show their truth by the adoption of a values system that reflects the belief in the consistency of daily life. This is the true value of a values-based environment.

<sup>233</sup> To this end the “hidden curriculum” is as important as the published curriculum. (See chapter 7). In my opinion and experience the senior administration of a ministry training institution should be responsible for this hidden curriculum delegating the functions of the published curriculum to second tier personnel. Chapel services, practical ministry opportunities, mentoring and vocational training must be delivered consistently within a values-based package. This opens an important discussion regarding the recruitment of the senior leadership of an institution. Clearly, academic achievement should never be the sole criteria upon which these people are appointed. Proven track records, spirituality and the personal life-values of these people should play an equal or greater part in their recruitment than their academic achievements.

to the stories and experiences of graduates. Practical ministry experiences must include a process for reflection and evaluation in order not merely to consider the mechanics of the exercise but the life lessons and skills that should be gleaned from it.

## **Conclusion**

I have argued that, although piety and learning, faith and scholarship should be highly compatible they have seldom co-existed in the Christian academy. Rather, the pendulum has tended to swing from one side to the other allowing for an imbalance of these two critical forces to exist. Correcting this imbalance will not occur through the vague aspirations of institutional; leaders nor through a fortuitous accident (or even a gracious act of God) but rather through the deliberate policies and practices of leaders. A sampling of these has been suggested hopefully enhancing the discussion and providing the groundwork for creative thought and action that will enable critical learning to take place without any compromise to the spiritual life or fervour of the student.

## CHAPTER 4

### CHRISTIAN MINISTRY TRAINING AND COMMUNITY: THE IMPORTANCE OF CONNECTEDNESS

A Christian ministry training programme that seeks to exist in isolation from the church (or, for that matter, the wider community) is a strange anomaly and theological distortion. It seems almost inconceivable that theological enquiry and ministry preparedness can function as anything else but an integral part of the Body of Christ. As such, the training programme and institution exists not only as a servant to the church but, in fact, as a specific expression of church itself.<sup>234</sup> This introduces the issue of social theology as it relates to the task of training Christian leaders. Put another way, offering human relationality within communities is absolutely normative, is consistent with creation's intention and thus becomes the foundation upon which all other human relationships – including those established for the purpose of ministry training - are built. John Drane emphasises an element of this in discussing the redefining of theology as it relates to theological training for the third millennium. He not only argues for a greater integration within the curriculum but for a connectedness of what is

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<sup>234</sup> This concept is itself often contested. The question is posed as to how an institution can in any way become organic as is the nature of the church? In fact this argument has fuelled many attacks upon the ministry training institution. For example, Donald E. Messer identifies the internal attacks that seminaries have suffered from their own constituencies. Most of these have an element that identifies the distance that has developed between church and institution. See Messer D. E., *Calling Church and Seminary into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Nashville, Abingdon, 1995), pp. 34 – 36. Likewise, the same crisis is identified by John H. Leith. A small part of his argument is that the current crisis facing theological education in the US is that faculties are increasingly devoid of practitioners. He laments that so few faculty members have had any significant pastoral experience. Leith J. H., *Crisis in the Church: The Plight of Theological Education* (Louisville, Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), p. 5. Leith further expounds this crisis in the opening chapter of his book. Whilst this echoes back to the first chapter of this thesis it is useful to read in this context. These two examples, amongst many, are illustrative of what I consider to be an underlying theological issue, namely, how to define the organic nature of the ministry training institution. I concede that it does not and cannot exist ecclesiastically in the same sense as a local church, however I argue that it must equally avoid institutional identity that divorces it from church. It is in this sense that I state that the ministry training enterprise is in fact church – a special expression of the Body of Christ.

learnt within the courses to their application within the church. He states that in connection with source-critical understanding of the origin of the synoptic gospels, “too often, no connections at all are made, and the way they [students] go on to use the gospels in church life bears little or no relationship to what students have been taught in New Testament classes”.<sup>235</sup> His comments are reflective, sadly, of a lack of connectedness at many levels of the training enterprise which must be addressed both theologically and practically.<sup>236</sup> Effort must be exerted to rid the theological training programme and institution of any reputation of elitism or disjointedness. A theology must be defined by which the institution comes in from the edges and takes its rightful place at the very centre of the mission of the church.<sup>237</sup>

This chapter seeks to establish a sociological theology by which the ministry training enterprise can grow and flourish and to find the essential qualities that successfully integrate church, institution and community so that they do not exist in isolation of each

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<sup>235</sup> Drane, J., *Cultural Change and Biblical Faith* (Carlisle, Paternoster Press, 2000), p. 132. Note: It is worth noting that Drane does not approach this subject without a self-confessed disillusionment with the academy. “One of the other things that I bring to my understanding of the church is a certain disillusionment with the academy – not so much with the academy per se as with its self-opinionated concept that it alone is likely to be able to solve all the world’s problems”. See Drane, J., *The McDonaldization of the Church: Spirituality, Creativity, and the Future of the Church* (Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd, 2000), pp. 12 – 14. Whilst Drane argues his case well he is clearly not totally objective in his criticism of the academy, especially as it relates to Christian ministry training. Cf. Woodhead, L., ‘Christianity according to its Interpreters’ in *Reviews in Religion and Theology*, 1997, pp. 4, 11 – 12. Here Woodhead argues that we require a “fuller, embodied reality of Christianity”. In other words, we must not superficially disregard or deconstruct our history in place for a contemporary understanding of our faith but rather embrace the heritage given to us by the patristics and others in order to have a Christian world view that is not reactive or, worse still, non-existent but rather cohesive and useful.

<sup>236</sup> This phenomenon is certainly true within my own experience. As the Principal of a denominational theological training college it can be both frustrating and exhausting keeping the many aspects of training connected to church life. My observation is that there is a total lack of understanding regarding the systemic nature of ministry training. In other words, ministry training, in my opinion, must be seen as a part of a chain in which every link has a part to play. My experience is that we often embark on ministry training with little or no thought to recruitment, orientation programmes, in service training and exit strategies. Additionally, this lack of connectedness is illustrated by poor levels of financial commitment, low levels of engagement of the College by denominational leaders and pastors and (until very recently) no cohesion of the training programme with missionary departments or movements.

<sup>237</sup> See Pearcey, N., *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from its Cultural Captivity* (Wheaton, Crossway Books, 2004), p. 127.

other but actually become equally valid and fully integrated expressions of church in mission. Just as importantly, I will argue for this integration of church and institution to be reflected in the redemptive nature of the community that is established. This begins in the personal redemptive experience of the student. I contend that this unity and integration is, once again, fully understood and developed not in strategies or management techniques but in mission. Compassion, care for people, alleviation of poverty and the bringing of the good news creates a perspective that illumines the pettiness of division and hopelessness of disconnected theological training. Leonard Sweet makes the point that “churches in mission to post-moderns must organise around relationships – relationships with God, with each other, with community, and with creation”.<sup>238</sup> Connectedness of theology, curriculum, people, institutions and networks is what this section is all about.<sup>239</sup>

### **Redemptive community: Creational Vocation**

James K. A. Smith explores the concept of the church as “Polis” in his book on radical orthodoxy which is tellingly subtitled “Mapping a post-secular Theology”.<sup>240</sup> Arguing from the perspective that humankind was created for communion he states that with creation came a “natural unity” of the human race which grounds humanity’s participation in both God and one another.<sup>241</sup> The disruption of the Edenic state and the

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<sup>238</sup> Sweet, L., *Soulsunami: Sink or Swim in New Millennium Culture* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1999), p. 196.

<sup>239</sup> See Woodhead, ‘Review’, 1997. “Academic theology has for too long encouraged a view of theology – and of Christianity itself – as a purely disembodied, intellectual pursuit”.

<sup>240</sup> Smith, J. K. A., *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy: Mapping a Post-secular Theology* (Grand Rapids, Baker, 2004), p. 235. Smith endeavours to provide a sympathetic view of a new theological sensibility widely known as “Radical Orthodoxy”. Broadly, this is a conversation seeking to deal with theology in a post-secular world.

<sup>241</sup> Smith, *Introducing Radical*, p. 235.



division and murder recorded in Genesis 3 – 11 illustrate that individualism, distinction between individual and group and indeed division between group and God are directly associated with sin. Simply stated, anything that distorts or breaks connectedness in the human experience is alien to God’s creative purposes. The very root of our ontology is that we exist to have fellowship. Theologically then, the centrepiece of God’s redemptive activity is to restore connectedness. However we argue regarding the nature of this redemptive work, it is difficult to assert any other position but that relational healing is the only counterpoint to the disruption caused when sin entered the world. Christians, of course, believe that this restoration of communion (of man to God and man to man) can only be found through participation in the Body of Christ, for it is in Him that true peace and reconciliation are effected. (See Eph. 2:13 – 18). In the context of learning and ministry preparedness this theological reality must be firmly established.

This theme is further developed by J. Richard Middleton and Brian J Walsh in their work which explores a biblical faith in a postmodern age. They state that the “biblical view of creation order speaks directly to a postmodern context of anxious anomie in which we feel dislocated, worldless and homeless”.<sup>242</sup> They go on to argue that it is precisely because there is a creation order that we can feel at home in what would otherwise be a disjointed environment. Creation order roots us in a moral universe where there is “normative direction for human life”.<sup>243</sup> It is this creation order that must somehow root itself in the self-awareness of theological students and in this the theological training institution must give help. In other words, a primary journey required of the theological students is one of being established within the creative order

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<sup>242</sup> Middleton, J. R. and Walsh, B. J., *Truth is Stranger than it used to be: Biblical Faith in a Postmodern Age* (London, SPCK, 1995), p. 162.

<sup>243</sup> Middleton and Walsh, *Truth is Stranger*, p. 162.

and rooted within the moral universe. If this foundational level of connectedness is not present all theological pursuit becomes conflict both internally within the student's own psyche and externally in argumentative class sessions. I would suggest that both the applications procedure and an orientation programme be established by which to help a student discover this connectedness.<sup>244</sup>

From a sociological perspective, Peter Berger places this theology within in a broader cosmology in what he refers to as the “mythic matrix”.<sup>245</sup> He explains this as a near-universal conception of continuity between “the human individual, the human world (what we today call society, with all its institutions), the biological and physical world (what we now call nature), and the world of spirits and gods (in our parlance, the world of the supernatural)”.<sup>246</sup> If Berger's perspective is right then it means that we must view our existence within a social and natural continuum and it is only within this continuum that our creative purpose can be discovered. Conversely, a divorce from this continuum, whatever the cause, will frustrate both the discovery of our true humanness as well as the discovery of any sense of spiritual reality or destiny.

As it is most often presumed that the pursuit of Christian ministry is vocational or the result of a calling, one can see how seriously this dynamic can be destroyed if it is not placed within an ontological or cosmic dimension that recognises the primary relationship between God and His world. Disjointedness at any point within the

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<sup>244</sup> The remainder of Middleton and Walsh's argument is worth considering. They go on to state that whilst creation order has produced a normative direction for human living, we are also called to give order to life. They speak of the intersection of “order-as-given and order-as-task. This is an important chemistry, especially as it relates to the task of Christian ministry training and formation. It is another way of stating the recurring theme of this work – all theological development must take place within the context of mission or else it simply becomes, as already states, dead orthodoxy. See pp. 161 – 171.

<sup>245</sup> Berger, P. L., *Questions of Faith: A Sceptical Affirmation of Christianity* (Oxford, Blackwell, 2004), p. 43.

<sup>246</sup> Berger, *Questions*, p. 43.

continuum will frustrate the whole, resulting in confusion (at the very least) within the life of the theological student. More often it creates a reactionary disillusionment with students either becoming ineffective in ministry or else narrow crusaders defending minor issues of faith and mission. A theology that reinforces connectedness at every level is not only required functionally allowing curriculum, institution, church and world to be interrelated but is required spiritually allowing the soul of the theological student to find peace in a world with such overwhelming needs that seem never to diminish.<sup>247</sup> Cosmic community with God the Father as head, the redemptive purposes of Christ as mission and the Holy Spirit as the Divine empowering agent is an essential theological foundation for theological training and, by extension, life and ministry.<sup>248</sup>

Larry J. McKinney argues that, in establishing a theology of theological education, we must have a metaphysic that recognises God. Whilst this might appear an almost incongruous statement in the context of teaching theology it is not as simple as it appears. He states that genuine theological education “begins, proceeds, and ends with the concept of a triune God from whom everything else derives its existence”.<sup>249</sup>

Pearcey states that the Christian message does not begin with “accept Christ as your saviour” but rather it begins with “in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”.<sup>250</sup> She goes on to explain that this means that God is the source of all – His laws,

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<sup>247</sup> See Polanyi, M., *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1958). See especially his chapter on “Conviviality” (pp. 203 – 245) in which he argues for articulate systems which foster and satisfy intellectual passions which, in turn, survive within a society that respects the values affirmed by these passions. (p. 203). Polanyi is very helpful in showing the cyclical nature of community and is worth reading in order to gain a philosophical perspective that agrees with the theological principle that I am trying to establish.

<sup>248</sup> Whilst these concepts might be relatively easy to define in theological terms I am fully aware of the difficulty in living them out. For a case study that illustrates this cf. Meeks, M. D., ‘Case Study: A Place for Reconciliation’ in Evans, A. F., Evans, R. A., and Roozen, D. A., *The Globalization of Theological Education* (Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1993), pp. 247 – 277.

<sup>249</sup> McKinney, L. J., ‘A Theology of Theological Education: Pedagogical Implications’, in *EROT* Vol. 29, No. 3, July 2005. p. 219

<sup>250</sup> Pearcey, *Total Truth*, p. 45

ordinances and statements are what give the world its structure. It is this theological hinge that opens the door to every aspect of life.

Issues such as our reason for being, life-goals, the gaining of relevant skills and an internal sense of well-being and destiny all hinge firmly on this theological principle. An absence of a creational purpose or sense of vocation places not only the church (or in this case the theological training institution) in a vacuum, but condemns the individual (in this case the theological student) to a state of spiritual disjointedness. Before a meaningful theological training can occur the student must be encouraged to discover an internal connectedness.<sup>251</sup> Put another way, the theology of theological education must begin by connecting the student to a sense of the purpose and plan of God for her life resulting in an internal spiritual connectedness.<sup>252</sup>

I argue that a Christian worldview needs to be established as a foundation to other theological study.<sup>253</sup> Pearcey puts it this way: “To talk about a Christian worldview is simply another way of saying that when we are redeemed, our entire outlook on life is re-centered on God and rebuilt on His revealed truth”.<sup>254</sup> The redemptive nature of God’s work in the life of the individual student must be reinforced in every possible

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<sup>251</sup> See Pearcey, *Total Truth*, p. 46.

<sup>252</sup> Between 1985 and 1994 I was the Principal of a missionary training college situated in White River, South Africa. The college is called Africa School of Missions. (See [www.asm.co.za](http://www.asm.co.za)). It became evident after about two years that many of our students did not arrive at college to commence their training with a sufficient foundation either theologically or spiritually. Many class periods were devoted to resolving either theological or personal issues that would ordinarily be considered elementary. It was eventually agreed to structure the curriculum to provide for a ten credit (three month) orientation course covering basic areas of doctrine, Christian life, faith, relationships, finance etc. Our faculty were all surprised to discover that many of these issues, considered by us to be foundational, had never been taught to the students in the context of their local churches. In the context of this discussion, they arrived at college with a disjointed theology and disjointedness in their spiritual lives. Many had other forms of disfunctionalism in areas such as relationships and finance as well. It is worrying to think that ministry preparedness can potentially take place without these primary areas being dealt with first.

<sup>253</sup> See for example the seven questions a world view answers in Sire, J. W., *Naming the Elephant: Worldview as a Concept* (Downer’s Grove, InterVarsity Press, 2004), pp. 20 – 21.

<sup>254</sup> Pearcey, *Total Truth*, p. 46.

way. Theological discovery and learning become a dead orthodoxy (at best) within the context of ministry training if undertaken without an internal commitment to experiencing the redemptive work of a loving God. It is only out of this knowledge and commitment that a student is able to bring about a reconciliation of learning and experience, faith and knowledge. David S. Dockery gives some insight into how a world view establishes cohesion within the life of an individual by explaining that it (a worldview, specifically Christian worldview) offers a comprehensive understanding of all areas of life and thought as well as every aspect of creation.<sup>255</sup> An initial reading of Dockery gives the impression of a naïve and somewhat simplistic approach to spiritual life. It is true that Christian living has many challenges and to suggest that they are all resolved by the development of a particular worldview would be an overstatement. However, Dockery does argue well for a position that seeks to create a cohesion and meaning in life by building upon comprehensive perspectives that reinforce Biblical truth. I agree with him in as much as an individual and particularly a student preparing for ministry must have a starting point that is more based upon conviction and internal persuasion of faith than just rational thought.<sup>256</sup> A deep internal faith in the transcendent God who is also Father is the starting point for meaningful theological study.<sup>257</sup> This must be what the apostle Paul is urging in Roman 12:1 – 2 when he calls on us to offer our bodies as “living sacrifices” so that we can be transformed by the renewing of our minds.<sup>258</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> Dockery, D. S., ‘Shaping a Christian Worldview’, in Dockery, D. S. and Thornbury, G. A., (eds.) *Shaping a Christian Worldview: The Foundations of Christian Higher Education* (Nashville, Broadman and Holman, 2002), p. 4.

<sup>256</sup> Cf. Grenz, S. J., *Created for Community: Connecting Christian Belief with Christian Living* (Grand Rapids, Baker, 1996). Grenz makes an effective defence of the importance of theological perspective especially in connecting Christian living with a knowledge of God. See pp. 17 – 19.

<sup>257</sup> See also Naugle, D. K., *Worldview: The History of a Concept* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2002), especially pp. 4 – 32.

<sup>258</sup> Cf. 2 Cor. 5:17; Ezekiel 36:26.

Establishing this worldview and its associated spirituality can be achieved both through the curriculum and in extra-curricula opportunities as well. Reflective prayer, small groups and chapel must all reinforce the work of God through Christ bringing human beings into communion and peace with Him. It is this internal connectedness that becomes a foundation for all further theological discovery and learning. This is true creational vocation.

### **Redemptive community: Institutional Identity**

Having built a case for ensuring connectedness internally within the life of a theological student, the next step of the process is to build institutional identities and cultures that continue the process of building connectedness. The student's journey through the training programme and within the institution must be one in which he/she can learn to emulate this connectedness. Doctrine, ethics and mission must somehow be taught and modelled in such a way as to dispel any thought that they exist as separate parts of a curriculum but rather as integral parts of the whole.

Brian D. McLaren argues for a narrative rather than a systematic approach to theology. He states that timeless truth is better captured by the stories of people and communities involved in the romance of God. He conditions this statement by insisting that these narratives always return to the treasury of stories in Scripture.<sup>259</sup> A departure from a systematic approach to doctrine is perhaps threatening to some but is not as radical as it

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<sup>259</sup> McLaren, B. D., *A Generous Orthodoxy* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2004), p. 289. (Whilst not claiming to be a theologian, McLaren has become a major mouthpiece for a growing movement widely referred to as "The Emerging Church". For an introduction to this conversation see Kimball, D., *The Emerging Church: Vintage Christianity for New Generations* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2003), see especially chapters 1 and 2. pp. 21 – 38. See also McLaren, B. D., *A New Kind of Christian: A Tale of Two Friends on a Spiritual Journey* (San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 2001). This volume explains in narrative form much of the "emergent" conversation. Alternatively see [www.anewkindofchristian.com](http://www.anewkindofchristian.com)

appears. It is, after all, predominantly the way in which God has chosen to reveal Himself through Scripture. McLaren goes on to argue that this narrative theology with its practices of humility, compassion, spirituality, and love develop only in community.<sup>260</sup> He contends that these practices are essential to a good and healthy theology and are, in fact, more primal and important than scholarship, logic or intellect. This concept is a serious challenge to the ministry training institution which can so easily turn into a place of disjointed learning where doctrine and ethics can be taught in a classroom on the same day but with little application to the experience and spirituality of the student.

The very act of creating a learning community must somehow legitimize the community experience as an essential element of learning. Those responsible for leading theological training institutions have a responsibility to identify ways of ensuring that the activities of the community are every bit as important as the lectures delivered within the classroom. Without this deliberate emphasis the institution or programme will inevitably become disjointed, becoming curriculum driven rather than mission driven. In other words, reactionary responses to financing, perceived requirements for the development of professional skills and competition with other institutions become the driving forces behind strategic decision making rather than a proactive commitment to train men and women for mission. The result can be a professional training programme with theological study becoming an end in itself rather than a means to a greater end – namely mission.

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<sup>260</sup> McLaren, *A Generous*, p. 290.

Wheeler describes the need for this kind of intentionality as a shift “from the long-standing focus on narrowly technical questions about how to be effective to theological ones about what goals should orient the practice of theological education and what shape the practice itself should take.”<sup>261</sup> The interesting emphasis that Wheeler raises is that of the practice of theological education. Within the context of the above statement it seems that Wheeler is echoing the frustrations and issues addressed in Chapter 1 of this thesis - namely that institutions of theological training so often struggle to integrate orthodoxy and orthopraxis successfully. Tellingly, David A. Roozen states that “both the scholarly and applied literature on planned changes in seminaries hover somewhere between the scarce and non-existent.”<sup>262</sup> It seems as though the challenge of creating a truly connected learning community is much harder than it appears.<sup>263</sup>

What then, is required in developing this redemptive, connected learning community? Theologically a most helpful contribution to this discussion is offered by Lesslie Newbigin. His position is that the congregation is a hermeneutic of the Gospel. Partially using the Johannine account of the feeding of the crowd (John 6) as a picture of what is involved in the offering of the gospel to the world, he explains that this is not just an example of successful public relations. He argues that it in fact represents the

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<sup>261</sup> Wheeler, B. G., and Farley, E. (eds.), *Shifting Boundaries*, p. 9.

<sup>262</sup> Roozen, D. A., ‘Institutional Change and the Globalization of Theological Education’ in Evans, A. F., Evans, R. A., and Roozen, D. A., *The Globalization*, p. 301.

<sup>263</sup> For a fuller description of what this community could be cf. Osborn, R. E., *The Education of Ministers for the Coming Age* (St. Louis, CBP Press, 1987) p.183. Here Osborn describes the seminary as an educating community. He calls for special events that are conducted with flair and excitement making use of students’ experience, talent and cultural diversity. Importantly, he states that the seminary’s community life should be later recalled by the student as one of the most important elements of his or her seminary education. Osborn writes within the context of the Disciples of Christ but his work is a valuable contribution to all involved in theological education. Another helpful contributor to this discussion is Cetuk, V. S., *What to Expect in Seminary: Theological Education as Spiritual Formation* (Nashville, Abingdon, 1998), especially Chapter 4, ‘Life Together: Variety and Community’, pp. 71 – 92. Although slightly broader in its intention, it is also worth referring here to Banks, R., *Paul’s Idea of Community* (Peabody, Hendrickson, 1994). See Chapter 7, ‘Intellectual Elements in Growth’, pp. 67 – 76. Highlighting the challenges facing theological educators and relevant to this discussion see Volf, M., ‘Dancing For God: Challenges Facing Theological Education Today’ in *EROT*, Vol. 29, No. 3, July 2005. p. 197.



only way by which “the Church can be fully open to the needs of the world and yet have its eyes fixed always on God”.<sup>264</sup> He states that, whilst not denying the importance of other evangelistic methods, the only hermeneutic of the gospel is a congregation of men and women who believe in fulfilling the mission of Christ and live by the message of Christ. This is exemplified by Christ in that he both fed the crowd and fulfilled the Father’s will simultaneously. Simply he states – “Jesus did not write a book but formed a community.”<sup>265</sup> Whilst Newbigin’s concern is for the congregation as community, the same argument is equally valid for the learning community. Put another way, if there is to be a significant connectedness resulting in a meaningful learning journey for the theological student, it must take place within the context of a community committed both to feeding the multitude and keeping its eyes on God at the same time. A strong theological persuasion, modelled on the life and ministry of Jesus must permeate the theological training institution from the application procedure through the graduation ceremony and beyond.<sup>266</sup>

What, practically, could this theological persuasion look like within the training community? A good starting point would be Robert E. Webber’s comments on the three specific problems that he identifies within Christian education. They are “an overemphasis on moralism, a reduction of learning to factualism and a failure to see

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<sup>264</sup> Newbigin, L., *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1989), p. 226. Note: This is another way of describing the connectedness within the training community that seems so illusive. Serving the community whilst retaining all the virtues of spiritual exercise often seem to conflict with each other. For example, how can a community sustain a full and happy social life as suggested by Osborn above whilst fulfilling all the spiritual aspirations of the student?

<sup>265</sup> Newbigin, L., *The Gospel*, p. 227. Newbigin goes on to explain the six characteristics of this community, namely: 1. It will be a community of praise; 2. It will be a community of truth; 3. It will be a community that does not live for itself but is deeply involved in the concerns of its neighbourhood; 4. It is a community where men and women are prepared for and sustained in the exercise of the priesthood in the world; 5. It will be a community of mutual responsibility and 6. It will be a community of hope. (See pp. 227 – 233).

<sup>266</sup> See also Newbigin, L., *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1986), pp. 149; 55 – 58; 99 – 102. See also Noll, M. A., *The Scandal*, p. 245. Here Noll refers to “false disjunctions” where he calls for cohesion between conversionism and lifelong spiritual development using both the Bible and the critical use of wisdom from other sources.

things holistically.”<sup>267</sup> Each one of these three factors on its own is sufficient to undermine the positive impact that a learning community should have upon a student. Reducing morality to a code of behaviour alone introduces a legalistic form of authority that can be highly controlling and manipulative. It hints at a superficial form of behaviour that replaces an authentic expression of faith with a guilt-driven compliance on behalf of the student.

Unpacking Webber’s comments could be a very effective way of developing an institutional ethos that will ensure the kind of connectedness that is desired for effective ministerial formation and training. I presume that Webber’s reference to an overemphasis on moralism suggests a kind of knee-jerk response to perceived societal decay in which Christians are required to commit to doing good whilst neglecting a more Biblical understanding of Christian ethics that are based on the redemptive work of Christ. Institutionally this can have the subtle effect of establishing a legalistic set of rules resulting in a superficial moralism rather than an authentic Christian ethic.<sup>268</sup> This inevitably creates a community ethos dominated by imposed moral expectations rather than an ethos that models grace and acceptance making morality a fruit rather than a root.<sup>269</sup> This is something of the struggle expressed by Leith who suggests that student recruitment will be relegated to a marketing activity with disastrous consequences if the

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<sup>267</sup> Webber, R. E., *Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids, Baker, 1999), pp. 155 – 156.

<sup>268</sup> Webber, R. E., *Ancient-Future*, p. 156.

<sup>269</sup> Sweet emphasises this by stating “the test according to Jesus, is that His disciples are known not by how well they defend orthodox propositions but how well they love one another”. See Sweet, L., *Out of the Questions...Into the Mystery: Getting lost in the God-Life Relationship* (Colorado Springs, WaterBrook, 2004), p.21. Note: Although this work could never be considered a scholarly work it is worth referring to within this context. Sweet is both insightful and practical in dealing with critical method regarding both text and theology – pertinent to this discussion. See also C. B. Johns and V. W. White, ‘The Ethics of Being: Character, Community, Praxis’, in Palmer, M. D., *Elements of a Christian Worldview* (Springfield, Missouri, Logion Press, 1998), pp. 284 – 311. See also Webber, R. E., *Ancient-Future*, p. 163. Pertinently to this discussion Webber points out “furthermore if there is one thing, among others, that the biblical concept of the church teaches us, it is that the church is to be seen as a whole. To be in Christ means to be in the church. If the whole church is present in every local congregation, then education and nurture cannot be divorced from the life of the whole church”.

church does not “recover or repair the communal context of the intentional means of grace out of which persons have been traditionally called to be ministers of the Word of God”.<sup>270</sup> Both Webber and Leith have correctly identified the importance of a living grace message within the church and thus, by extension, within the ministry training institution. An imposed, legalistic set of rules diminishes the vibrancy of the institution and either reflects a spiritually bankrupt constituency or (worse still) models a dead orthodoxy that will have devastating consequences in the life and ministry of the graduates from such an institution. This does not mean that an institution cannot function without any rules any more than we can have a highway system without codes. What it does mean is that an institutional identity is established in which rules are seen to be domestic and functional rather than legalistic and moral. Enforcing rules by means of guilt and manipulation is a controlling mechanism foreign to grace and will rapidly lead an institution into either decline or cultish behaviour or both.

Webber goes on to state that a reduction of learning to factualism will have negative outcomes in the learning process for those involved in theological training. Farley develops this by confronting the Enlightenment tradition (admittedly in its narrowed form) in which a critical method was adopted which did not take a tradition-based hermeneutic into consideration.<sup>271</sup> This factualist approach to learning without the employment of a vibrant and relevant epistemology is certain to rob the theological student of the Christian mythos.<sup>272</sup> Christian theology is not amoral. It is an effort to

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<sup>270</sup> Leith, J. H., *Crisis in the Church*, p. 109.

<sup>271</sup> Farley, E., *The Fragility*, p. 19.

<sup>272</sup> Farley uses a concept adopted by Bernard Melland who defines Christian mythos as “the pattern of meaning which arises from the structured experience of a people and having to do with the ultimate nature and destiny of a human being”. See Farley, E., *The Fragility*, p. 22. This is a useful definition. I would develop it slightly further to suggest that it is the connected story or epistemology in which human experience, Christian theology and the redemptive activity of a loving God combine. Learning within this context cannot therefore be dependant upon a factualistic approach alone. Whilst textual criticism has its

describe the redemptive work of an eternal and loving God. This redemptive work would not be possible or even necessary without an acknowledgement of human evil. Thus the context for doing theology cannot be factualist alone – by contrast it must be placed within the great epistemology of human striving and human suffering. An institutional identity in which there is an obvious connectedness between experience and theology must be established in order to avoid a theology that is merely an exercise in factualism. Noll refers to the Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard (1813 – 1855) who mounted a rigorous challenge to the dominant philosophical trends of his day whilst insisting that “Christianity was ultimately a life to be lived rather than a set of dogmas to affirm”.<sup>273</sup> This is precisely the point of this argument. Care must be taken in establishing an institutional ethos in which human need, human evil, forgiveness and redemption are concepts that are dealt with within the framework of the ongoing activity of a loving God and that these great principles of Christian theology are given full expression in the lifestyles and choices of both faculty and students.<sup>274</sup> In one sense this is the great strength of the institution, discovered since the earliest days of monasticism. The mythos of Christian experience can thrive within this community context and should be encouraged to do so. Opportunities for reflective consideration of life, the development of a theology of suffering through exposure to the needy, and consistent challenges to authentic Christian living and morality can never be relegated

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place both a reader-response and a missional critical method is equally important. Farley’s chapter on the corruption and redemption of knowledge is useful here. See pp. 17 – 28.

<sup>273</sup> Noll, M. A., *Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity* (Grand Rapids, Baker Academics, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2000) p. 258

<sup>274</sup> See also McLaren, B. D., *A Generous Orthodoxy* pp. 27 – 40. McLaren strongly defends the above position stating that orthodoxy must be expressed by a living orthopraxis. Another effective defence of this position worth referencing is to found in Wright, N. T., *The Challenge of Jesus* (London, S.P.C.K., 2000). See especially Chapter 7, pp. 114 – 133. Here Wright deals with the hermeneutic of suspicion, typical amongst post-moderns. A telling quote is: “We must get used, therefore to a mission which includes living the true Christian praxis. Christian praxis consists in the love of God in Christ being poured out in us and through us. If this is truly happening it is not damaged by the post-modern critique”. p. 129. Note: This book would make a helpful manual in discovering an institutional identity and ethos that is neither theologically shallow nor merely factualist.

to a secondary position within the ministry training institution.<sup>275</sup> Rather they must for the very motivation for learning and ministry formation!

Webber's final suggestion is to see things more holistically. By this he refers to the need to teach a grasp of the entire Christian faith. The learner must be made to understand the claims that Christ makes over the whole of life.<sup>276</sup> Rather than teaching scattered theological concepts, a deliberate effort must be made to establish frameworks in which the whole of Christian faith and thought is placed. Whilst this is important at an introductory level it is equally important at more advanced levels. Critical method and a hermeneutic that is honest and consistent cannot be excluded from the curriculum.<sup>277</sup>

Brueggemann brings another angle to bear on this discussion. He argues for a new interpretive situation based on contextualisation, localism and pluralism. Recognising that this could appear to be nothing less than relativism he argues that, in fact the problem with Western objectivity has been that there have been so few people in the room. With the admission of others (in the post-colonial era) into the room the "treasured objectivity (and consequent hegemony)" of the white males of a certain class and perspective has been shown to be fragile and exposed.<sup>278</sup> An admission must be

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<sup>275</sup> It is worth referring to John Milbank in his forward to Smith's book here. See Smith, J. K. A., *Introducing Radical*, pp. 11 – 20. See also p. 120 – 122.

<sup>276</sup> Webber, R. E., *Ancient-Future*, p. 156.

<sup>277</sup> This, to a large extent, forms the basis for N. T. Wright's book *The Challenge of Jesus*. He states that the quest for the historical Jesus is vital. He basis this on four pillars: 1. The most basic reason is that we are made for God. 2. We must engage a serious study of the historical Jesus out of a loyalty to Scripture. (Importantly he states we believe the Bible and must therefore rethink the hard questions of whether our traditions are based on literal or metaphorical interpretations of Scripture). 3. The Christian imperative to truth. 4. The Christian commitment to mission. See Wright, N. T. *The Challenge of Jesus*, pp. 3 – 6.

<sup>278</sup> Brueggemann, W., *Texts Under Negotiation: The Bible and Postmodern Imagination* (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1993), p. 8. (This entire volume supports Webber's view from the perspective of ensuring that an inclusive, holistic and objective critique is used in understanding the biblical text and its application in the present day).

made that at times Christian faith has been so well dressed in western, reductionist thought that an evangelical sub-culture has developed to which we owe more allegiance than we do to the Bible. All too often institutions for the training of Christian leaders perceive their roles to be the custodians of thought and tradition rather than the vanguard for challenging such tradition in the light of an honest biblical hermeneutic. An institutional identity based upon a radical commitment to mission will enable that institution to be equally committed to a radical understanding of orthodoxy. Put another way, mission, when placed at the centre actually develops the capacity for thinking theologically that would otherwise upset the establishment and alienate the institution from its traditional constituency.

In summary, Webber's claims seem to resonate with the expressed evidence and there is a growing genre of thought and literature challenging us to a more holistic approach to both our critical method and our theology.<sup>279</sup>

The governance, management, faculty and curriculum of the institution are therefore obliged to work towards the connectedness described above. There is a fiduciary element here. Faculty can never take the posture of employees: they must be mentors, friends and engaged scholars. From the smallest detail of college life through to the greater issues of faith, the institutional identity must be crafted to present wholeness, a connectedness and an authentic commitment to live as Jesus did.

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<sup>279</sup> See footnote 44 above.

## Redemptive community: Touching the World

In addressing structural problems that occur in the area of mission studies, Andrew F. Walls suggests that mission studies, and what he terms “the rather unfashionable ‘missions’<sup>280</sup> studies”, may now “have a major interpretative role to play in understanding the history of the church in the West”.<sup>281</sup> He argues that, with the globalisation of Christianity, a complete rethinking of the church history syllabus is now required. He goes on to argue that the recent expansion phase of Christianity raises fundamental questions about the very nature of Christian faith.<sup>282</sup> What Walls is proposing is an appropriate critical method of both Christian history and Christian dogma – a missiological critique. Whilst this concept has many interesting trajectories that could be explored beyond the scope of this work, it does raise the importance of establishing a more objective way of training those who aspire to Christian ministry. Put another way, a missiological critique is, in fact, the connecting material by which both the visible and the invisible curriculum of a Christian ministry training programme or institution truly holds together. Touching the world with the love of an eternal God is the only viable lens through which the effectiveness of a ministry training enterprise can be evaluated.

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<sup>280</sup> Interestingly Newbigin, as editor of *International Review of Missions* insisted, despite much pressure, on keeping the ‘s’ on the end of the word ‘Mission’ in the title of this journal in order to preserve the significance of missions as the task of making the gospel known where it is not known – in the midst of the more general and wider concept of mission. (Note: This journal was started in 1912 by Joe Oldham as a follow-up to the Edinburgh conference of 1910). See Weston P., (ed.) *Lesslie Newbigin: Missionary Theologian: a Reader* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2006), p. 10 in footnote. Both Walls (see next footnote) and Newbigin use the term “missions” with a ‘s’ to denote studies or Christian activity relating to reaching the unreached with the Gospel as distinct from the wider concept of the general ministry of the church. Although the argument could be considered semantic it has value and I would concur that drawing this distinction is helpful if only to preserve a sense of responsibility to reach those who have not yet been reached, especially as the church in the West seeks to adapt to the growing challenge of pluralism and multi-culturalism.

<sup>281</sup> Walls, A. F., *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1996), p. 144.

<sup>282</sup> Walls, A. F., *The Missionary*, p. 145.

Stating this in a more devotional but nevertheless forthright way, Wright says that “the task of shaping our world is best understood as the redemptive task of bringing the achievement of the cross to bear on the world; and in the task the methods, as well as the message, must be cross-shaped through and through”.<sup>283</sup>

However, the challenge is not so much the issue of mission studies – or as Walls describes it “missions” studies, but rather how these studies can form a part of an integrated curriculum and ethos resulting in the kind of connectedness that a redemptive, learning community should aspire to having. In terms of the structural and curricula issues Walls is very helpful. He correctly places Christian theology within the context of mission and argues effectively for our theology to be positively impacted by the growing voices from the South.<sup>284</sup> He goes further to explain the knock-on effect that a positive engagement with the South produces namely a renaissance of mission studies. However, possibly the most insightful result of this connectedness with the world community through mission studies is Walls’ proposal that “we recognise the renaissance of mission studies not only as a call from the church throughout the *oecumene*, but as a crying need of the whole world of scholarship, sacred and profane”.<sup>285</sup> I understand this to be another way of saying that our learning activities

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<sup>283</sup> Wright, N. T., *The Challenge of Jesus* (London, SPCK, 2000), p. 69. Note: This volume is an excellent example of the critical method described above both in terms of the mission of the church and the doctrine of the church.

<sup>284</sup> Walls, A. F., *The Missionary Movement*, pp. 146 – 147. Walls asserts that the conditions in Africa, for instance, are taking theology into new areas of life where Western theology has no answers mainly because it has never had to ask the questions! This understanding of North/South dialogue is vital if we are to train Christian leaders in such a way as to rid them of the colonial, empire-based paternalism that has dogged Christian ministry for such a long time. It can only but produce a Christ-like humility that should, after all, be the hallmark of one entering ministry. Cf., Jenkins, P., *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002). Another useful contribution to this discussion can be found in Sanneh, L., *Whose Religion is Christianity?: the Gospel beyond the West* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2003). See pp. 13 – 93. Here Sanneh engages the issue of North/South dialogue. On a related note, for an interesting perspective on the growth of faith in the South see Gifford, P., *Ghana’s New Christianity: Pentecostalism in a Globalising African Economy* (London, Hurst and Co., 2004).

<sup>285</sup> Wall, A. F., *The Missionary Movement*, p. 150.



will all fall far short of the mark if they are not missiologically connected. A foundational commitment to be redemptive must run through every part of the curriculum – visible and invisible, or else disjointedness and fragmentation take place with outcomes such as those already described in chapter 1 of this work.<sup>286</sup>

It is important to identify how this initiative might look in order to prevent the inevitable slide into mission being another (disjointed) subject choice within the curriculum. Here, both Newbigin's and Walls' reference to missions studies is important. A commitment to have a "cross-shaped" ethos and curriculum must run much deeper than the structural and thus somehow become central to the very existence of the ministry training institution. And it must not end there. Missions cannot be understood outside of theological and practical commitments to justice, mercy and relief and development.<sup>287</sup>

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<sup>286</sup> By this I refer to the lament of many who consider that theological education has become little more than an exercise in studying dead orthodoxy. One of the most articulate of these voices is Anderson who concludes his book with a rather impassioned appeal called "A memo to theological educators". See Anderson R. S., *The Shape of Practical Theology*, pp. 317 – 328. Equally it would be helpful to revisit Banks at this stage, especially his reassessing of the debate within theological education. Banks, R., *Reenvisioning Theological Education*, pp. 17 – 69. Banks argues most effectively that the means to rid the academy of dead orthodoxy is to explore a missional alternative to current models – as the title of his book makes clear.

<sup>287</sup> Although beyond the scope of this work, this introduces the importance of theological educators engaging theologies that involve social action. By extension this means an engagement with issues as diverse as feminist theology, liberation theology as well as constructive involvement with other professional bodies such as those involved in inter-faith dialogue, primary health care debt relief. Cf. Freire, P., "Education, liberation and the church" in Astley, J.; Francis, L. J. and Crowder, C., *Theological Perspectives on Christian Formation: A Reader on Theology and Christian Education* (Leominster, Gracewing, 1996), pp. 169 – 186. Likewise see Marangos, F., 'Liberation Theology and Christian Education Theory' in Astley J., et al, *Theological Perspectives*, pp. 187 – 198.

Note: In 1984, as previously mentioned, I was the founding principal of Africa School of Missions. Soon after establishing the College the civil war in neighbouring Mozambique created a large movement of refugees into the area adjacent to the college. Our third year mission students were amongst the first to reach out to these desperate people. This initiative eventually resulted in the establishment of a primary health care training programme which grew into a faculty within the college called "The ASM School of Health". For twenty years this department has trained nurses and health care workers as an integral part of a larger theological and missionary formation course. Some years later this initiative spawned a home based care programme for sufferers of HIV/AIDS. This initiative has expanded to six different nations and is a well respected leader in assisting the victims (including orphans) of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. For further information see [www.hands@work.co.za](http://www.hands@work.co.za)

Practically this takes the courage to envision the whole curriculum in a creative way. For example, preaching or homiletics classes should include elements that deal with cross-cultural preaching. Serious attempts to engage contemporary culture should be included at many levels of the curriculum and a monitoring system should be introduced by which the missional content of courses are evaluated and the balance of applied courses within the curriculum maintained.<sup>288</sup> Additionally, cross-cultural experiences, mission trips and practical ministry that touches the needy must be deliberately structured into the entire training process.<sup>289</sup>

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has endeavoured to stress the importance of theological training taking place within the context of connectedness. An understanding of community both theologically and missiologically is essential to effective formation.

Importantly, the creational vocation of encountering God at a personal level is the foundation of all other forms of connectedness relating to the journey of the theological student.<sup>290</sup> From this springs the redemptive community with all its many facets, revealing God's love to a needy world.<sup>291</sup>

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<sup>288</sup> In my opinion this should be included in the job description of an academic registrar. This person should establish systems that ensure that the faculty are engaging relevant literature and that their publishing somehow reflects the missional ethos of the training institution. Likewise course content should be evaluated at regular intervals to ensure the missions content within it.

<sup>289</sup> Following the introduction of a two week mission trip as a part of a validated BA degree at Mattersey Hall College at first year level, the report back had such impact that this initiative has now been extended to include the entire under-graduate student body of the College.

<sup>290</sup> See Nipkow, K. E., 'Theological and educational concepts: problems of integration and differentiation' in Astley, J., et. al. *Theological Perspectives*, pp. 3 – 13.

<sup>291</sup> A useful contribution to this is found in Lingenfelter, J. E., and Lingenfelter, S. G., *Teaching Cross-Culturally: An Incarnational Model for Learning and Teaching* (Grand Rapids, Baker Academic, 2003).

## CHAPTER 5

### CHRISTIAN MINISTRY TRAINING AND CONTEMPORARY CULTURE

The English Church Attendance Survey titled *The Tide is Running Out* contains the result of research into church attendance in 1998. Whilst the overall trend in church attendance recorded in the book does not make for happy reading by church leaders, the concluding remarks of the executive summary are most telling: “The tide is running out. We need leaders and lay people of energy and vision who can implement strategic cultural change in the church for a vibrant 21<sup>st</sup> century impact.”<sup>292</sup> In the context of the dramatic decline of the church in England, Brierley’s comments are entirely appropriate. It is self evident that something has gone sadly wrong in terms of the influence and profile of the church within English society. The most obvious indicator of this is the low attendance figures that are clearly enunciated within the book. However, the statement, in my opinion, is only partly correct. Clearly a new generation of envisioned leaders must arise. Equally this brave company must work at internal cultural change as Brierley makes plain, but this process can never be complete without a clear picture of the society that this new generation of bold leaders is seeking to reach. Internal cultural change is not enough. Further, cultural change within the church without an accurate assessment of contemporary culture outside the church will either

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<sup>292</sup> Brierley, P., *The Tide is Running Out* (London, Christian Research, 2000), p. 10.

be very short-lived or produce yet another period of introverted assessment and the continued lament of the loss of influence in a world that is ever more pluralistic in its outlook.<sup>293</sup>

This is echoed by Sweet in his book *11 Genetic Gateways to Spiritual Awakening*. Sweet's method is to assess Wesley's methodology and to apply its principles to contemporary ministry. Whilst this book is pertinent to all of this discussion, the following is telling:

Unless leaders keep on their information toes, unless leaders work hard and diligently to stay hot and current, leaders automatically become obsolete by an information base for decision-making that gets more and more flawed, shaky, and eventually fatal. If ministers are not constantly learning and unlearning, they are becoming less and less qualified to serve as effective disciples of Jesus Christ. Postmodern leaders are constantly rebuilding themselves, embracing the young and opening themselves to the strange.<sup>294</sup>

This statement implies much more than an internal reform or even a call to life-long learning amongst ministers. It clearly identifies engagement with contemporary culture as a necessity for those in Christian leadership.<sup>295</sup> This perspective is reinforced by Eddie Gibbs who states it plainly by arguing that today's leaders must be students of cultural movements. He goes further to explain that whilst some aspects of postmodernity are a cause for concern and thus need to be challenged, "not everything must be dismissed in a defensive reaction".<sup>296</sup> This is a balanced view and worthy of consideration. In any debate of this nature there are those who would see any effort in cultural engagement as having the inherent danger of compromise and thus to be

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<sup>293</sup> For further, current data regarding church and state see 'Faith and Nation: Report of a Commission of Inquiry to the U.K. Evangelical Alliance' (London, Evangelical Alliance, 2005). In the context of church declension see p. 18.

<sup>294</sup> Sweet, L., *11 Genetic Gateways to Spiritual Awakening* (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1998), p. 49.

<sup>295</sup> See also Sweet, L., *SoulTsunami: Sink or Swim in New Millennium Culture* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1999), Chapter 9.

<sup>296</sup> Gibbs, E., *Leadership Next: Changing Leaders in a Changing Culture* (Downers Grove, InterVarsity Press, 2005), p. 55. See also Gibbs, E., and Bolger, R. K., *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures* (London, SPCK, 2006). (Especially chapter 1 which is particularly pertinent to the issue of cultural engagement in the light of church declension).

avoided. For example, D. A. Carson can be rather scathing in his critique of Sweet and others in their attempt to engage contemporary culture. He asks: “Is there at least some danger that what is being advocated is not so much a new kind of Christian in a new emerging church, but a church that is so submerging itself in the culture that it risks hopeless compromise?”<sup>297</sup> Carson is not to be ignored and makes a useful contribution to the debate on cultural engagement. However, he often sounds threatened and tends to generalise in his critique of those generally associated with what is referred to as the “emerging church”.<sup>298</sup> This is in contrast to Dan Kimball, founding pastor of the Graceland Worship Services at Santa Cruz Bible Church, California, who passionately states

“I beg all who desire to have an impact in the emerging church to be ‘shrewd as snakes’, thinking strategically, studying the culture, and functioning as missiologists as never before... we need not be afraid to rethink everything we are doing”.<sup>299</sup>

Whilst all within the Christian church have a responsibility to work towards ensuring that the mission of the church is effective within society, achieving this represents a special challenge and opportunity for the academy and those involved in the training enterprise of the church. This is not a simple process. The academy is often caught in a very difficult situation where it needs to retain the confidence of the churches that it represents on one hand, whilst taking the risk to embrace research- based innovation in regard to proposing new ministry models appropriate to the contemporary world on the

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<sup>297</sup> Carson, D. A., *Becoming Conversant with the emerging Church: Understanding a Movement and its Implications* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2005), p. 44.

<sup>298</sup> For further reading on the emerging church cf. [www.emergentvillage.com](http://www.emergentvillage.com) and [www.cree.org](http://www.cree.org) and [www.anewkindofchristian.com](http://www.anewkindofchristian.com) For some of Sweet’s contribution see [www.leonardsweet.com/sweetened/links.asp](http://www.leonardsweet.com/sweetened/links.asp) . See also [www.imagodeicommunity.com](http://www.imagodeicommunity.com) for Don Miller’s contribution. Another very helpful contributor is Dan Kimball. See [www.dankimball.com](http://www.dankimball.com) . See also Kimball, D., *The Emerging Church: Vintage Christianity for New Generations* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2003). Note: This book is a part of Zondervan’s Emergent Youth Series. (EmergentYS).

<sup>299</sup> Kimball, D., *The Emerging*, p. 248. (In answer to Carson he goes on to plead that leaders pay ruthless attention to their souls, to live holy lives and to remain connected to the chief shepherd of the church).

other.<sup>300</sup> Thus this chapter is committed to developing an argument for the importance of teaching future leaders how to assess and engage contemporary culture and, importantly, as the whole of this thesis makes clear, that a missional approach is the best way to deliver this outcome. In order to achieve this some boundaries must be set as to what exactly is meant by contemporary culture and what the defining features of this culture are.

### **Contemporary Culture: A Christian Perspective**

There is no doubt that the forces of globalisation are everywhere. Commercially famous name brands circle the globe in their reach and are marketed in even the most remote of locations. Most notable, however, is the cultural impact of this phenomenon. Christian scholars and commentators, amongst others, have become very conscious of this cultural tidal wave. George Barna approaches the issue by describing the intersection of cultural change and spiritual transformation.<sup>301</sup> He states that this is a single trend that is already redefining faith and the Church in America. Generally his argument is that an explosion of spiritual energy (what he calls The Revolution) is increasingly becoming the expression of an underlying cultural shift. Of course, his scope is limited, rising as it does from decades of research on the American church. Because of this it could be relatively easy to dismiss his findings as yet another contortion of American Christianity. His book, however, makes a strong case for

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<sup>300</sup> This dilemma is highlighted in a paper by Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen presented to the Annual Meeting of the European Pentecostal Theological Association, 18<sup>th</sup> July 2006. Here he highlights some tasks for the future including the problem that there is often no direct correlation between the amount or even the type of theological training a student receives and the results in the student's "field work". This places the entire enterprise under scrutiny making innovation seem unnecessarily risky to many theological educators. Kärkkäinen, V-M., 'Pentecostal Theological Education in a Theological and Missiological Perspective', 2006.

<sup>301</sup> Barna, G., *Revolution: Finding Vibrant Faith Beyond the Walls of the Sanctuary* (Carol Stream, Tyndale House Publishers, 2005), p. viii.

widespread disillusionment with the institution of the church. It is likely that this is indicative of the wider cultural shifts that are taking place on a global scale.<sup>302</sup> Is it possible that the church is not so much a victim of global forces such as secularisation but rather a victim of its own lack of astuteness in understanding the times? For example, Carson suggests that most social scientists do not accept that secularisation has caused the demise of religion but that secularisation has “tended towards the marginalisation of religion”.<sup>303</sup> It seems easy to argue that external forces have undermined the growth of the church but, if Carson is right, this is not really so. Carson is supported by Newbiggin who makes the point that in rapidly industrialising societies there is a significant growth of new religions.<sup>304</sup> The point is that, however we describe these global forces, they do not seem to be having the same impact on human spirituality as they are having on the Christian church. Secularisation has not eradicated spiritual awareness or searching.

This is argued from a sociological perspective by David Martin and Peter Berger. They argue that the assumption that we live in a secularised world is false. Their argument shows that there is virtually no society anywhere that does not still have strongly religious communities within it. The point being that these religious communities are

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<sup>302</sup>I have deliberately avoided using the term “postmodern” throughout this section preferring the more general term “contemporary culture”. It is, however a useful term and should not be ignored. For some it seems limiting and provokes a reactive response. I am generally comfortable in using it as the overarching term describing the contemporary cultural construct most predominant in Western nations. (The term *postmodern* was probably first used in the 1930’s and referred to a major historical transition that was occurring at the time. However, it did not gain much attention until the 1970’s. Initially it marked a new style of architecture and certain trends in the arts. But ultimately it invaded the corridors of universities and has now impacted not only academic circles around the world but entire cultures. As the name suggests, postmodernism is an attempt to move from the era of modernity.)

<sup>303</sup> Carson, D. A., *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1996), p. 37.

<sup>304</sup> Newbiggin, L., *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1989), p. 213. (He further points out that this growth has adherents not only from the low socio-economic end of the scale but also from the affluent).

not always Christian.<sup>305</sup> There seems little doubt that the widespread declension of the church in the West is not therefore the result of rampant secularisation or some other subtle external attack but rather an internal failure of some sort or another. Understandably, identifying this failure can be very complex and might need the benefit of hindsight to be completely understood. This is beyond the scope of the present work but it seems reasonable to conclude, whatever the reasons, that there has been a widespread disengagement between church and society and those within the academy especially bear a responsibility to address this issue.<sup>306</sup> Thus a broad definition of contemporary culture from a Christian perspective relates primarily to the forces of globalisation, creeping secularization (whatever the cause) and rampant pluralism. This basic definition can be better understood by outlining at least some of the related issues.

### **Identifying the issues**

Engaging the thoughts of several scholars, it is important for those seeking to train an emerging generation to become familiar with at least some of the key issues facing the church in its cultural engagement. The following should prove a helpful starting point.

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<sup>305</sup> Berger, P. L., “The Desecularization of the World: A Global Overview”, in P. L. Berger (ed.), *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1999), p. 2. See also Martin D., *On Secularization: Towards a Revised General Theory* (Aldershot, Ashgate Publishing, 2005), pp. 65 – 69.

<sup>306</sup> This discussion must inevitably have some major exclusions. In a globalized world the complexities of describing the cultural milieu can be either naïve and simplistic or extremely complex. As the major concern of this work is written from the point of view of a Western theological educator, the bias will be towards identifying cultural issues primarily faced by those offering training in this context. This is not intended to somehow reinforce a form of Western superiority nor to minimise the challenges faced by theological educators in the developing world (many of which are similar), but rather it represents an effort to be more thorough by dealing with a more confined context.



**1. A construal of the world without reference to God is intellectually credible and socially acceptable.<sup>307</sup>**

Walter Brueggemann uses these words in the context of preaching in the contemporary church. He states that the Christian preacher can no longer appeal to a broadly based consensus within culture. In fact he goes further to state that this changed intellectual and social climate requires Christian communicators to be far more astute in what they communicate because their listeners either have nothing to concede in terms of basic Christian knowledge or (possibly worse still) have existing stereotypical images of superstition or coercion that they understand to be very costly to a self-focussed life.<sup>308</sup> Brueggemann calls this “de-privileged communication”. In the context of preaching this perspective is further developed by Chris Altrick. He states that never have “more people in the Western world known less about Christianity than postmoderns do today. Never before could we so easily and accurately label so many people as ignorant about the central teachings of Christianity as we can today.”<sup>309</sup> Although this is an uncomfortable reality in ministering within the contemporary world it is one that must be faced honestly by those in the academy as well as practitioners in the pulpit.

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<sup>307</sup> Brueggemann, W., *Deep Memory, Exuberant Hope: Contested Truth in a Post-Modern World* (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2000), p. 19.

<sup>308</sup> Brueggemann, W., *Deep Memory*, p. 19.

<sup>309</sup> Altrick, C., *Preaching to Pluralists: How to Proclaim Christ in a Postmodern Age* (St. Louis, Chalice Press, 2004), p. 17. See also Sweet, L., *SoulTsunami*, p. 50. Here Sweet observes 120 million “pre-Christian” people living in the United States who are fourteen years old and above. In other words these people are those who are now living with no Judeo-Christian roots or knowledge at all. (Sweet makes the point that this makes the United States the largest mission field in the world in population terms after China and India). Research by the Barna Research Group further reinforces the fact that increasing numbers of people in the West are ignorant of basic Christian concepts. Recent research shows that 39% of American adults read the Bible in a typical week and 43% attend a religious service. See Barna Research Group, “Americas Faith is Changing – but Beneath the Surface”, *Barna Research Online*, [www.barna.org](http://www.barna.org) (Posted 18/03/03) The point here is that, whilst these statistics would be hugely more positive than in any other Western nation, even in America 60% of the population at best have little or no ongoing influence regarding Christian faith.

Carson grapples with this issue, tending to take a more critical line in terms of what he calls an unwitting domestication of the gospel to the contemporary worldview. He offers a critique of Stanley Grenz's book on evangelical theology in a post-theological era.<sup>310</sup> He argues that an accommodation of the present without an embrace of the best of the heritage from the past can rob the Gospel of its power – a position he feels Grenz is in danger of adopting.<sup>311</sup> It is doubtful that anyone of a broadly evangelical view would argue with this. In fact Carson presents a valid argument that it was, after all, the neo-evangelical scholars and thinkers of the middle part of the twentieth century who tried to lead “evangelicalism out of its introspection and exclusion, and into engagement with the broader culture”.<sup>312</sup> However valid the work of these thinkers, the issue of the ecclesial legacy they have left us is not really dealt with by Carson. Whilst his critique<sup>313</sup> is scholarly and well supported it remains essentially theological and not missiological. He is highly critical, for example, of Grenz's dependence upon a postmodern epistemology in communicating the Gospel. His argument is valid but is not met with a strong counter-proposal. This is precisely the difficulty facing educators who at one and the same time must be the custodians of heritage, tradition and a sense of orthodoxy whilst also being risk takers and innovators. The issue of de-privileged communication in the homiletics class room is not going to be helped by a defensive insistence upon an asymptotic hermeneutic. Brueggemann has at least part of the answer where he suggests that “the genre of *testimony* (as bid for assent), rather than *proclamation* (on an assumption of universal consensus), is how ancient Israel

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<sup>310</sup> Grenz, S. J., *Renewing the Center: Evangelical Theology in a Post-Theological Era* (Grand Rapids, Baker, 2000).

<sup>311</sup> Carson D, A., ‘Domesticating the Gospel: A Review of Grenz’s *Renewing the Center*’ in Erickson, M. J.; Helseth, P. K., and Taylor, J., (eds.) *Reclaiming the Center: Confronting Evangelical Accommodation in Postmodern Times* (Wheaton, Crossway Books, 2004), p. 33.

<sup>312</sup> Carson, D. A., “Domesticating the Gospel”, p. 34.

<sup>313</sup> See Carson, D.A., “Domesticating the Gospel”, pp. 43 – 55.

proceeded to claim truth in a like situation.”<sup>314</sup> Contemporary listeners have a need to get to the truth of the matter.<sup>315</sup> The curriculum must therefore shift from instructing the next generation of communicators on how to insist upon morality based on some form of Christian consensus or theological hegemony within the society to one of testimony in which the life construct of the Christ-follower aligns with the revelation of an eternal God thus creating a sense of credibility and authenticity for the listener.<sup>316</sup>

## **2. Another construct for identifying the contemporary culture into which the ministerial candidate must venture is Stuart Murray’s concept of “Post-Christendom”.**<sup>317</sup>

Murray’s is worthy of consideration not because of its in depth critique of church history but rather the author’s effective differentiation between Christianity and “Christendom”. Arguing that Christendom began with the Edict of Milan in 313 and the acceptance of Christianity as a tolerated religion within the Roman Empire by Constantine, Murray asserts that the contemporary church still lives within the shadow of this legacy.<sup>318</sup> Whilst Christendom as a political and social construct survived the

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<sup>314</sup> Brueggemann, W, *Deep Memory*, p. 19.

<sup>315</sup> For a technical approach to this issue McClure is helpful. Assessing the contribution of poststructuralist theories he states how difficult it is to free the ‘other’ from the binary oppositions within the discourse situation itself. Whilst this argument requires a knowledge of linguistic theory (which I do not possess!) his point is that testimonial preaching (i.e. bringing testimony to the truth) as against mere personal testimony is the most effective way to overcome a reliance upon any perceived hegemony related to the biblical narrative within the hearer. See McClure, J. S., *Other-Wise Preaching: A Postmodern Ethic for Homiletics* (St. Louis, Chalice Press, 2001) p. 64. N. T. Wright also addresses this issue in regard to the hermeneutic of suspicion that is evident amongst postmoderns. Wright, N. T., *The Challenge*, p. 131. See also Roxburgh, A. J., and Romanuck, F., *The Missional Leader: Equipping your Church to Reach a Changing World* (San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 2006), pp. 69 – 71. (This is particularly helpful in understanding why narrative preaching is important in a postmodern context).

<sup>316</sup> Wright, N. T., *The Challenge*, p. 131.

<sup>317</sup> Murray, S., *Post-Christendom: Church and Mission in a Strange New World* (Milton Keynes, Paternoster Press, 2004).

<sup>318</sup> Murray, S., *Post-Christendom*, pp. 178 – 216.

upheavals of the sixteenth century, the seeds for its ultimate collapse were sown.<sup>319</sup> However, even as we face the twenty-first century the total demise of this force is not complete, is not uniformly happening and continues to present huge challenges to the missional communicator of the Christian Gospel. For example, Walls alerts us to the distinct possibility of Christianity without Christendom in the southern continents.<sup>320</sup> It is questionable as to whether this is accurate. The vibrancy of the church in southern continents (which will be dealt with separately in the next chapter) is not without the lingering influence of its early, often paternalistic missionary roots. For all the clamour regarding the emergence of a post-colonial church the influences of Empire remain. Political ambitions, financial mismanagement and the constant schisms within churches in these continents indicate that the influence of the construct of Christendom is not nearly eradicated. This phenomenon is equally evident in the former communist block where, following perestroika, the church has reasserted itself most forcefully, perpetuating the ambitions of Christendom.

Murray identifies these vestiges as being potentially inhibiting to our witness and, if they are indeed so, they need to be critically dealt with at formative stages in the academic career of a future Christian leader. They include:

#### 2.1 Ecclesiastical vestiges<sup>321</sup>

Murray includes a veritable list of such vestiges ranging from the recognition of the monarch as the supreme governor of the Church of England to the inclusion of military paraphernalia in church buildings. His arguments must be carefully weighed. Unwittingly

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<sup>319</sup> Murray effectively describes the demise of Christendom and is worth reading, see pages 178 – 188.

<sup>320</sup> Walls, A., *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission and Appropriation of the Faith* (Edinburgh, T. and T. Clark, 2002), p. 45.

<sup>321</sup> Murray, S., *Post-Christendom*, p. 189. I am following Murray's outline here.

using language that is somehow ecclesial in nature, trying to lever some form of ancient hegemony and the insistence upon certain forms of church services can be very threatening to a generation of people who are largely ignorant of such things.

More subtly, and vastly more dangerous are the ecclesial vestiges that perpetuate colonial mindsets and entrench the concept of “empire”. Missionary language that insists upon a segregation of “sending” and “receiving” nations can appear very paternalistic to those whose cultural milieu has been socially charged to champion the cause of emerging nations that are apparently still terribly exploited by Western greed and arrogance.

Interestingly in Murray’s list, the one mention of theological colleges is in the context of the teaching of church discipline.<sup>322</sup> This is intriguing. My assumption is that he is arguing that the lack of this kind of instruction for emerging Christian leaders is the root of ineffective disciplinary procedures in church life, making the church appear ineffective and authoritarian. Certainly, an authoritarian approach is out of touch with contemporary culture. Just why Murray places this one issue within the context of the theological college is uncertain to me. Does this not point to greater underlying problem, namely the inclination to weigh the curriculum with biblical and theological material and underestimate the importance of the applied material? The point is not really the issue of discipline but the perpetuation of a culture that allows individuals,

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<sup>322</sup> Murray, S., *Post-Christendom*, p. 191.

especially those who hold ecclesial office, somehow to manipulate and control the lives of others. If these character issues are not addressed at a very formative level they can persist, potentially damaging the lives of the very people to whom the church leader is supposed to help and minister.

## 2.2. Social Vestiges

Again Murray offers a substantial list of the vestiges of Christendom that are imposed upon contemporary society. Although his examples are almost exclusively English, these vestiges, such as the saying of oaths, ‘christening’ ceremonies for the launching of ships and others remain entrenched within many aspects of Western society and, indeed, throughout nations that were formally European colonies.

It is true that increasingly these practices are being called into question.<sup>323</sup> The real issue however, is not the virtues or otherwise of these vestiges but how they impact upon the propagation of the Gospel by those whose vision is a culturally relevant and spiritually vibrant church? It is questions of this nature that must seriously occupy the thinking of those responsible for curriculum structure in theological training institutions.

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<sup>323</sup> For example, the right, as Murray points out, to affirmation rather than the swearing of an oath in court. Murray, S., *Post-Christendom*, p. 193.

Murray's work is certainly worthy of further consideration but this falls beyond the scope of this present exercise. The point to be made however is that it would be difficult to argue against the secular trends within global society. Likewise, seemingly running on a parallel pathway are the forces of pluralism.<sup>324</sup> These forces conspire to bring the remnants of Christendom to an end. It is into this "post-Christendom" era that the emerging Christian leader must step. If the training programme is not geared to provide for the student to culturally adapt to this reality it will fail the student completely. This adaptation process is, by definition, missional. There must be a missional rationale for ministry and theological training.

**3. The third means by which to identify the issues of contemporary culture and engagement, is to consider Lesslie Newbigin's concept of public/private faith.**

Before the missiological debate surrounding the decline of the church in the West used such terms as "post-modern" or "post-colonial", etc., Newbigin was articulating and foreseeing many of the issues now facing Western Christianity in particular. Serving as General Secretary of the International Missionary Council and as Associate General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, this former British missionary to South India became a prolific author during the late 1970's and 1980's. In his treatise on the Gospel in Western culture Newbigin gives a sociological overview of the long term effects of the industrial revolution. He cites two significant shifts within society. The first is the removal of work from the home to the factory. In this process named, loved

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<sup>324</sup> Bosch lists religious pluralism as one of six elements of change that have occurred in this "post-Christendom" era. Consistent with Murray the others are: the advance of secularization; the steady de-Christianizing of the West, Western Christianity's guilt concerning their participation in colonial practices; the growing economic gap between rich and poor and the subsequent wealth of Western Christianity and the replacement of Western theology and ecclesiastical norms with indigenous practices and theologies around the world. See Bosch, D. J., *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in the Theology of Mission* (American Society of Missiology Series 16; Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991), pp. 3 – 4.

and indispensable members of the family became unnamed and dispensable members of a work force. This also, he points out, had the effect of forcing a new gender identity in which men became involved in the public world of the factory and work place and women were forced into the private sector dealing with personal values. (He further argues that this is a root cause of some of the modern expressions of feminism). The second consequence of the industrial revolution, according to Newbigin, was the growth of huge cities. This, he argues, has broken up traditional family-based communities and introduced people into a world where there is a multiplicity of human networks and relationships.<sup>325</sup> Newbigin states this in an effort to describe the very complex cultural milieu into which the Christian faith now seeks to provide answers. Nancy Pearcey, in commenting on Newbigin's sociological perspective, states that the reason he was so sensitive to these cultural shifts and changes is that he lived for forty years as a missionary in India which was not plagued at that time with the problem of the secular/sacred and public/private split that he encountered upon his return to England.<sup>326</sup> The ultimate goal in Newbigin's brief sociology is to show that on a global scale the secular/sacred dichotomy is an anomaly and is, in fact, a distinctive of Western culture alone. He states: "The sharp line which modern Western culture has drawn between religious affairs and secular affairs is itself one of the most significant peculiarities of our culture, and would be incomprehensible to the vast majority of people".<sup>327</sup>

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<sup>325</sup> Newbigin, L., *Foolishness to the Greeks*, pp. 31 – 32.

<sup>326</sup> Pearcey, N., *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from its Cultural Captivity* (Wheaton, Crossway Books, 2004), p. 69.

<sup>327</sup> Newbigin, L., *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1989), p. 172. Note: Whilst this statement was clearly true when this book was written it is less true today. The forces of globalisation are increasingly creating these sacred/secular divisions in large urban centres around the world. However, Newbigin is right in recognising that it is most obvious in the former Christian West.



The effect of this sacred/secular split has obvious consequences for Christians quite apart from the possible impact that it might have on Christian mission. A major implication argues Pearcey is that “Christianity no longer functions as a lens to interpret the whole of reality; it is no longer held as total truth”.<sup>328</sup> Newbigin reinforces this position positing that, in the West anyway, Christianity has secured a continuing place but has done so at the price of surrendering the crucial field of its influence.<sup>329</sup> Put another way, Christianity may well survive in the private sphere as a personal faith but has done so at the expense of influencing the public sphere, having widespread credibility and, perhaps more importantly, having lost its ability to challenge reigning ideologies.<sup>330</sup> Where Murray speaks of “post-Christendom” Newbigin describes a culture that is now essentially “post-Christian”. The continued trajectory of his argument is not only the fact that Christian perspective has been excluded from the public domain but is now openly attacked and marginalised. A recent example to illustrate this point was the suspension of a British Airways employee in October 2006 for wearing a small cross on a chain around her neck.<sup>331</sup> British Airways executives have been unapologetic regarding their decision to terminate her services in spite of the

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<sup>328</sup> Pearcey, N., *Total Truth*, p. 69.

<sup>329</sup> Newbigin, L., *Foolishness to the Greeks*, p. 31.

<sup>330</sup> Cf. Newbigin, L., *Truth to Tell: The Gospel as Public Truth* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1991); Barns, I., ‘Re-framing public life’, in *The Gospel and our Culture*, Issue 37, Summer 2003, pp. 1 – 4. See also Berger, P. L., *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (Garden City, Doubleday and Company, 1969), chapter 5. Here Berger speaks of the impact of secularization and the resultant “evacuation by Christian Churches of areas previously under their control”. Whatever theory of secularization is adopted the result is the same: The diminishing influence of the church as a whole, the privatization of faith and the exit of Christian thought and influence from the public sphere. In this area Newbigin cannot be ignored and must be taken seriously. (Note: Berger has, subsequent to the book quoted above, changed his view on secularization. He states the “the world is now as furiously religious as ever” thus reversing his view that secularization contributes to religious decline and now espousing the view that secularization has actually made the world more religious than ever. See Berger, P. L., ‘The Desecularization of the World: A Global Overview’ in Berger, P. L., (ed.) *Desecularization of the World; Resurgent Religion and World Politics* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1999), pp. 72 – 73.)

<sup>331</sup> For a Christian leader’s response to this issue see “Direction” issue 63, December 2006, p. 11. (Here the General Superintendent of the Elim Churches in the U.K. explains a response to a two-page letter he addressed to British Airways in regard to this controversy).

apparent inconsistency<sup>332</sup> of their actions. Again, irrespective of the theory (whether sociological or spiritual), behind this obvious marginalisation of Christian faith it represents a very distinctive element of contemporary culture. This clearly has pastoral implications, for not only is the Christian faith increasingly absent in its influence within society at large but it is also increasingly being decompartmented in the lives of individual Christians. The sacred/secular divide is all too evident in the moral dichotomy that exists within the Christian community.

This dichotomy has also produced an obvious missiological crisis. Jet den Hollander points to some of these difficult questions. As the Christian church in the West grapples with issues related to the end of western expansionism (at least in a geographical sense!), along with continued marginalisation, how should mission be understood? She asks whether the discipling of nations and the spreading of the gospel around the world can legitimately be spoken of as a “project” especially as the myth of the “Christian West” has now been exposed.<sup>333</sup> It is clear from this statement that the accommodation of the sacred/secular divide by the church in the West is creating a growing uncertainty about mission – the very reason why the church exists<sup>334</sup> This theological perspective undermines not only the quality of spiritual life in individual Christians but the very identity and proper confidence of the church as a whole. Whatever stance is taken regarding Newbigin or Pearcey’s views on the public/private faith divide it cannot be disregarded and is certainly very helpful in adding another defining issue in regard to the ministry of the church in contemporary culture.

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<sup>332</sup> Inconsistent in the sense that British Airways allows adherents of other religions to wear religious apparel.

<sup>333</sup> Den Hollander, J., ‘Some European Notes’, in *International Review of Mission* 94:373 (2005): 218

<sup>334</sup> See also Anderson, A., ‘Towards a Pentecostal Theology for the Majority World’ in *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 8:1 (2005): 36 – 46. Here Anderson voices his disquiet in relation to a Pentecostal missiology in which the relationship between evangelism and socio-political action is underdeveloped, mission is still often described in terms that separate Westerners from the rest of the world and there are clear residues of colonialism in the triumphalist attitudes concerning past mission work.

Whilst this divide, as has been seen, has both pastoral and missiological implications, it cannot but have major implications for the theological educator as well. Any theological conversation that is not informed by the need for engagement will potentially result in a perpetuation of a reactive and threatened position, reinforcing rather than resolving the problem of the public demonstration of our Christian faith.<sup>335</sup> An integrated curriculum is essential in which ecclesiology serves missiology, reinforcing the supra-cultural nature of the Christian God and His church resulting in practitioners who are able to show flexibility in cultural engagement without compromising truth is essential.

Before dealing with the specifics of the academy's response to these cultural markers one further defining construct of contemporary cultural issues as seen through the eyes of select scholars will be helpful.

#### **4. The issue of *Sola Fide*: beyond worldviews; or the perceived threat of secular humanism.**

This is an issue dealt with in some detail by Carl Raschke of the University of Denver.<sup>336</sup> It provides a useful fourth marker in helping to define the current cultural milieu in which the Christian leader finds himself or herself.

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<sup>335</sup> Gibbs states "the church of the 21<sup>st</sup> century needs missional and apostolic leadership...whereas theology of mission was once taught as a specialist course we now need to teach our entire repertoire of the Bible, theology and church history courses from a missional perspective. One of the greatest tragedies in theological education has been the separation (to their mutual impoverishment) of ecclesiology from missiology. This separation has resulted, on the one hand, in a missionless church, and on the other, in a churchless mission. Gibbs, E., *Leadership Next*, pp. 24 – 25.

<sup>336</sup> Raschke, C., *The Next Reformation: Why Evangelicals must Embrace Postmodernity* (Grand Rapids, Baker, 2004), p. 99.

Raschke points out that the perceived battle lines between evangelical Christianity and secular humanism were drawn up long before the vocabulary of “post” was used. Actually, as he later correctly concedes, the war has been closer to a two hundred year war with the Enlightenment itself.<sup>337</sup> Although it could be argued that the confrontation between Christianity and secular humanism or enlightenment thought is not really a contemporary cultural issue this is not actually the case. In reality the transition from modernity to post-modernity has presented the Christian church with many more difficult issues than might have been anticipated. David S. Cunningham of Hope College, Holland, Michigan points out that, whilst the modern era was not always particularly kind to Christianity it did, nevertheless assume that Christianity would have some form of ongoing dominant role within society as a whole.<sup>338</sup> As this assumption of hegemony receded those within the Christian community who have most closely associated with the ideals and methods of modernity find themselves faced with a double-edged threat. On the one hand, secular humanism with its overt expression in much of the political machinery of the West is almost overwhelmingly threatening. The open questioning of virtually every moral value held dear by Christians is more challenging to Christian life and norms than could be imagined by those who championed an alignment of Christian faith and enlightenment thought. The battle within the Anglican Communion over the ordination of practising homosexual clergy is just one example of this struggle. On the other hand, the early adoption of methods and concepts by which to endeavour more relevantly to engage society is equally and, at

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<sup>337</sup> Raschke, C., *The Next*, p. 100.

<sup>338</sup> Cunningham, D. S., ‘Re-Visioning Theological Education’ in Cunningham, D. S., (ed.) *To Teach, To Delight, and To Move: Theological Education in a Post-Christian World* (Eugene, Cascade Books, 2004), p. 2.

times, even more threatening.<sup>339</sup> It is this vortex, this battle of transition that is increasingly becoming a cultural marker for Christian leaders in the first part of the twenty first century.<sup>340</sup>

Is it perhaps this transitional struggle that has prompted a growing genre of literature on worldviews and the Christian worldview in particular? Whilst a detailed exploration of the roots of this literature is beyond the scope of this study, some statements from the literature would suggest this to be true. James P. Eckman states that the modern world has failed many Americans who are now reaching beyond themselves to find meaning and purpose in life. In commenting on this he states: The whole Western world is in the midst of a paradigm shift from modernism to postmodernism. It is imperative that the church and its leaders understand this shift, for it how we both relate to the culture in which we live and how we represent the Lord Jesus Christ in that culture”.<sup>341</sup> There are strong overtones here of the double-edged dilemma mentioned above. The Enlightenment has proved to have a sting in the tail far beyond what was anticipated by Christians and the new, postmodern world seems even more threatening.

This conflict is stated even more succinctly by David K. Naugle, of Dallas Baptist University, in his book on worldview. He says: “Since the onset of modernity, secularizing forces in contemporary culture have been virtually irresistible and the

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<sup>339</sup> Raschke is worth reading in this regard as he tracks the development of presuppositionalism, especially as espoused by Francis Schaefer, and to some degree before him by C. S. Lewis. See Raschke, C., *The Next*, pp. 102 – 104.

<sup>340</sup> Sadly this transition has also produced its own new expressions of schism. The, at times almost bitter debate between those identified as a part of the “emerging church” and those who see this expression of Christianity as a gross distortion is just one example. For an example of this bitterness I refer you to correspondence entered into on a website run by Dan Kimball. See [www.dankimball.com](http://www.dankimball.com) See the article ‘Please Don’t Stereotype the Emerging Church’.

<sup>341</sup> Eckman, J. P., *The Truth About Worldviews: A Biblical Understanding of Worldview Alternatives* (Wheaton, Crossway Books, 2004), pp. 7 – 8.

consequences for the church and her conception of faith have been substantial”.<sup>342</sup> He goes on to state that the overwhelming influence of secular humanism has not only produced the need for a conceptual defence of the Christian faith but has, in fact, often reduced faith to matters of personal piety. This strongly echoes Newbigin’s public/private split discussed previously. Whether the church responds offensively by producing detailed descriptions of the Christian worldview or defensively by bunkering down in various expressions of personal piety, the issue is the same: secular humanism is perceived as a great threat to the very existence of Christian faith.

Although it would not be fair to assume that the ever growing attempt by scholars to define a Christian worldview is always directly in reaction to the threat of secular humanism, it is true that much of the literature on the Christian worldview represents an attempt to respond to cultural and societal shifts. For example, James W. Sire makes this plain in the preface to his book on worldview. He states that by 1997 it was obvious that a new twist on naturalism was taking place. In response he added a chapter to his book on what he terms the “amorphous cultural phenomenon called *postmodernism*”.<sup>343</sup> This philosophical attempt to reposition Christian thought in the face of consistent (and predominantly secular) cultural shift is a further indication of the struggle faced by many Christians in this transition between modernity and postmodernity.<sup>344</sup> In response to the question, what challenges do we face as we look to

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<sup>342</sup> Naugle, D. K., *Worldview: The History of a Concept* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2002), p. 4. In fact, most of Naugle’s first chapter reinforces my suspicion that the proliferation of literature (and the introduction of Worldview into the curriculum) is at least reflective of the perceived threat that the Christian faith faces at both the conceptual and practical level.

<sup>343</sup> Sire, J. W., *Naming the Elephant: Worldview as a Concept* (Downers Grove, InterVarsity Press, 2004), p. 12.

<sup>344</sup> For further reading on the dynamics of this transition I recommend Guinness, O., *Steering Through Chaos: Vice and Virtue in an Age of Moral Confusion* (Colorado Springs, Navpress, 2000). For a theological perspective see Conn, H. M., *Eternal Word and Changing Worlds: Theology, Anthropology and Mission in Dialogue* (Phillipsburg, P & R Publishing, 1984). (Note: This book represents one of the earlier attempts to address the transition described above.) For a missionary perspective see Engel, J. F.,

the future? Carla Sanderson responded that the need is for cohesion and campus community when “threats of secularization abound”.<sup>345</sup> From every angle Raschke’s argument must be taken very seriously. His point that secular humanism generally amounted to “everything in the intellectual climate in the late-twentieth century that could not be immediately reconciled with the ‘Christian worldview’, especially its touchstone of doctrine and morality”<sup>346</sup> is clearly a major issue at the very core of Christian identity and its associated conceptual struggle at the start of the twenty first century.

Whether a response of faith to secular humanism is identified by the overt defence of Christian ideals and faith through protest action or academic exercise, or alternatively, the retreat of Christians from the public stage, the Reformation dictum of *sola fide* – nothing pleases God but faith, is central to identifying a key component to the interface between Christian faith and contemporary culture. Relevant faith and authentic Christian living in the face of aggressive secular humanism require nothing less than a God honouring faith that defies all that stands against the love and power of an eternal and loving God who has made Himself known through His son Jesus Christ. Again, the theological trainer and his or her institution or programme cannot ignore this battle ground or do so at the very threat of the medium to long term survival of that institution or programme.

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and Dryness, W. A., *Changing the Mind of Missions: Where Have we Gone Wrong?* (Downers Grove, InterVarsity Press, 2000). Although this book is written in a predominantly narrative style it is very helpful in identifying the tension between the methodology forced on mission structures by modernity and how these structures are failing the needs of missionaries in the postmodern era.

<sup>345</sup> Sanderson, C., ‘Shaping the Academic Enterprise: An Interview with Carla Sanderson, Provost, Union University’ in Dockery, D. S., and Thornbury, G. A., (eds.) *Shaping a Christian Worldview: The Foundations of Christian Higher Education* (Nashville, Broadman and Holman, 2002), p. 378.

<sup>346</sup> Raschke, C., *The Next*, p. 99.

Although the discussion above provides a useful basis for establishing cultural markers identifying contemporary culture, one of the most useful outlines is found in Chris Altrock's book on preaching to pluralists.<sup>347</sup> In summarising the issue of providing a relevant theological training for emerging Christian leaders the characteristics of postmoderns that Altrock identifies are well worth listing.

### **1. They are uninformed**

Altrock asserts that this is the first generation of people in the West for hundreds of years with little or no Christian memory.<sup>348</sup> He makes the point that they are not uneducated, just uninformed about Christianity.<sup>349</sup> The emerging Christian leader must be fully aware that his or her listeners will most likely have little or no knowledge of previously well known Bible stories. Sweet makes the point that for most postmoderns the Bible is not closed – it is unknown.<sup>350</sup>

### **2. They are spiritual**

Altrock asserts that postmoderns are highly interested in spirituality.<sup>351</sup> Despite their ignorance of Christianity this group of society is attracted to spiritual issues and have a growing fascination with Jesus.<sup>352</sup>

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<sup>347</sup> Altrock, C., *Preaching to Pluralists* (St Louis, Chalice, Press, 2004.)

<sup>348</sup> Altrock, C., *Preaching*, p. 17.

<sup>349</sup> Increasingly, in my opinion, the challenge is not just the issue of being uninformed but more a case of being misinformed. Secular humanism with its associated ideologies has successfully blamed Christianity for most of the ills facing current Western society.

<sup>350</sup> Sweet, L., *SoulTsunami*, p. 410.

<sup>351</sup> This is confirmed by an article by P. Robbins. He quotes statistics accumulated by the Princeton Religion Research Center (which is affiliated with Gallup International) claiming that 67% of teens over eighteen express the desire to experience spiritual growth in their lives, representing a growth of about 10% since 1994. Admittedly this is an American statistic but it shows a general inclination that would be true throughout the West.



### **3. They are anti-institutional**

Postmoderns generally are repelled by institutional religion. The underlying concept that the metanarrative leads to violence has made this generation suspicious of most institutions and religious ones in particular.<sup>353</sup>

### **4. They are pluralist**

Most analysts would suggest that this is possibly the most dominant characteristic of postmoderns. A postmodern finds it very difficult to accept that any one religion can have a monopoly on truth.<sup>354</sup>

### **5. They are pragmatic**

Barna makes the point that most teenagers are not interested in life after death – they are interested in life before death! This generation is identified by their need for experience and their response to the moment.<sup>355</sup>

### **6. They are relational**

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<sup>352</sup> See also Sweet, L., *SoulTsunami*, p. 410

<sup>353</sup> Altrock, C., *Preaching*, p. 18.

<sup>354</sup> See Middleton, R. J., & Walsh, B. J., *Truth is Stranger than it used to be: Biblical Faith in a Postmodern age* (Downers Grove, InterVarsity, 1995), p. 43.

<sup>355</sup> Anecdotally I find this to be true even of students enrolled in the College that I am involved with. The pastoral care staff often deals with students who are quite ready to terminate their studies within a few months prior to graduating because “they have learnt all they need to”, to quote a student. This pragmatic, sometimes very short-term mentality creates both stress and conflict not only generationally but also theologically.

This is also a clearly defining characteristic of this generation according to Altrock.<sup>356</sup>

Taking the conversation further, Sweet asserts that relational issues stand at the heart of the postmodern culture.<sup>357</sup> Postmoderns are looking for community. (The sitcom “Friends” illustrates this very postmodern characteristic – a community of people supporting and encouraging one another).

## **7. They are experiential**

The typical postmodern trusts experience above even the rational. They enjoy people’s stories, are unashamedly emotional and tend to be intuitive.

Whilst all of these characteristics could be critically engaged they are listed for illustrative and informative purposes only.<sup>358</sup> However, whether critically engaged or not, they do represent a challenge to the theological educator and the training institution.

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<sup>356</sup> Altrock, C., *Preaching*, p. 19.

<sup>357</sup> Sweet, L., *Postmodern Pilgrims* (Nashville, Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2000), p. 112. Sweet uses an acronym in this book by which he defines the “postmodern pilgrim”. It is: EPIC (standing for Experiential, Participatory, Image-driven and Connected). This provides a useful parallel commentary to Altrock.

<sup>358</sup> Another very helpful summary of key cultural trends, especially in the U.K. is found in the “Faith and Nation Report” submitted to the Evangelical Alliance in the U.K. This report lists eleven such trends, most of which reinforce the analysis found in the work above. They are: 1. Pluralism and globalisation; 2. Relativism; 3. Secularism and secularisation; 4. Individualism; 5. Privatisation of religion; 6. Decline and Marginalisation of religion; 7. Human rights, religious liberties and the law; 8. Rising profile of other faiths; 9. Tolerance and intolerance; 10. Nationalism; 11. Multiculturalism, Citizenship and ‘Britishness’. It can be seen from this list that the defining cultural trends reflect very closely the cultural identity of postmoderns. Issues such as relativism, pluralism and secularisation are not just mega-societal trends; they are the defining characteristics of individuals who are raised in societies that champion these issues. A postmodern is not just a young person who has chosen values different to those of his/her parents, rather he or she is a person thoroughly saturated in the philosophical streams that flow through the society in which they have grown up. My inclination is that this fact is not fully comprehended by many involved in theological education. In my own experience, highly educated faculty who I have spoken with still maintain that postmodernism is a passing fad. The reality is that, even if this were true, the next phase of societal identity will not be a return to the familiar territory of modernism as we know it – it will be a further development of postmodern thought. (See ‘Faith and Nation’ (London, Evangelical Alliance in the U.K., 2006), pp. 29 – 42).

## **Theological education and training – a response**

I have used the lens of four scholars and Altrock's seven point summary to endeavour broadly to outline some key markers of contemporary culture, especially within the former Christian West. Brueggemann identified for us the loss of any hegemony within society at large and that, in fact a construal of a world without God is now both intellectually and socially acceptable. Murray added the marker that identified a post-Christendom era with the loss of privilege enjoyed by Christians within former Christian societies. Newbigin identified the public/private divide as crucial to understanding the cultural and social milieu into which the church seeks to make Christ known. Finally, Raschke helped describe the huge threat of secular humanism to the church and the resultant transition that Christian leaders face in navigating the journey from the Enlightenment age or modernity into postmodernity. Whilst these four markers by no means provide an exhaustive description of the complexities of contemporary culture, they do provide a useful backdrop for the theological educator to take stock and to consider the implications for the ministry training enterprise at this fascinating time, especially in Western culture.

The issue to be noted by the theological educator is to find innovative ways to address the development of culture and describe valid faith responses to that development. Put another way, it is vital that ministry training is sufficiently missionally motivated to ensure that an emerging generation of ministers is not somehow preconditioned to preserve the remnants of faith within the cloisters of the church world but rather commit to meaningful engagement beyond superficial evangelism. The four windows used in this section are illustrative of a much larger cultural challenge facing emerging Christian

leaders and whilst a specific response to each window would have its value it is equally valid to deal with them in a broader way.

I would suggest that the following must at least be the starting point for this consideration.

### **1. A serious attempt to create cohesion within the curriculum**

A commitment to create greater cohesion in the curriculum is not a new idea. I have already referenced Gibbs who states:

“The church of the 21<sup>st</sup> century needs missional and apostolic leadership....whereas theology of mission was once taught as a specialist course we now need to teach our entire repertoire of the Bible, theology and church history courses from a missional perspective. One of the greatest tragedies in theological education has been the separation (to their mutual impoverishment) of ecclesiology from missiology. This separation has resulted, on the one hand, in a missionless church, and on the other, in a churchless mission.<sup>359</sup>

This lament is found throughout the literature and is identified as a serious flaw in the entire academic exercise related to the training of Christian leaders. For example, A. K. M. Adam questions the very notion of placing certain elements of the curriculum into “fields” where we study discrete entities such as “theology” or “biblical studies” etc.<sup>360</sup> He goes on to explain that the ramifications of this compartmentalization creates an enigma exactly as described by Gibbs, namely the appropriate connection of theology to biblical studies. In the context of this thesis it could be argued that this enigma is even more evident in connecting applied theology with systematic theology and, by extension, missiology with the remainder of the curriculum.

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<sup>359</sup> Gibbs, E., *Leadership Next*, pp. 25 – 25.

<sup>360</sup> Adam, A. K. M., ‘Rhetoric, Postmodernism and Theological Education’ in Cunningham, D. S., *To Teach*, p. 65.

Theology without a clearly identified missional component and a discernable cohesion with the applied theological curriculum becomes dead orthodoxy, threatening not only the long term ministry of the student but the credibility of the institution. Adams is worth further engagement here. He states that the modern divisions of academic labour are derived from two features in the scholarly world. The first is the expectation that anyone authorized to contribute to theological discourse be credentialed as an expert and the second that these experts are seen to be productive.<sup>361</sup> In other words, there is an expectation that those who teach theology should be experts in their respective fields and that this expertise is best identified through publication. This, asserts Adam, has the undesired effect of forcing such scholars into disciplinary isolation forcing the scholar into an expertise in ever-finer topics. In my view Adam is right. The ministry training institution does not have the luxury of mimicking the wider academy by appointing a teaching staff that is qualified only in terms of rhetorical expertise or has gained a reputation through some strict adherence to classical logic.<sup>362</sup> Intriguingly, it is precisely at this point that the engagement of postmodernity has some clear benefit for the theological educator. It would have been unthinkable to a modern to question the value of proliferating ever-finer points of knowledge or pursuing publication at virtually any cost. This academic pursuit is not nearly as valued by a generation that feel less attached to mere rationality seeking rather an engagement with a world that needs answers.<sup>363</sup> Is there not therefore, some valid argument, if we are going to create

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<sup>361</sup> Adam, A. K. M., *To Teach*, p. 65.

<sup>362</sup> See Sugirtharajah, R. S., *Postcolonial Reconfigurations: An Alternative Way of Reading the Bible and Doing Theology* (London, SCM Press, 2003), p. 171. Here Sugirtharajah links classical educational method with the colonial enterprise and is worth reading in the context of theological education. Note however, that this statement does not exclude the very valid process of publication for peer review allowing for greater specialism and thus expertise at great depth.

<sup>363</sup> This statement represents the anomaly often faced when trying to define the postmodern student. Whilst appearing to have a lesser commitment to the rational than his/her parents generation this student is nevertheless still impacted by scientific method which is, by nature, intrinsically rational. Over generalisations are always dangerous and none more so than presuming that by defining someone as predominantly postmodern they will somehow fit a convenient stereotypical paradigm – they do not.

cohesion in the curriculum, for a greater participation of practitioners and the involvement of at least some generalists in the planning process? If the growing contribution to this debate is an indication then the clear answer must be yes.<sup>364</sup> The further implication is the need to ensure that faculty are themselves actively involved in active expressions of ministry, whether pastoral or cross-cultural, avoiding any degree of unattached scholarship.

In describing this need for connectedness within the curriculum, Bradford E. Hinze uses the language of “dialogue”. He states that theological reason rhetoric is needed in that it constitutes the dialogue and communication between persons, human and divine, changing hearts and even transforming entire communities and cultures.<sup>365</sup> It is this level of communication that is lacking in a disjointed, “field” orientated curriculum. Not only do the individual fields fail to inform each other but the skills of dialogue, communication and constructive rhetoric are lost to the student. Postmoderns are predisposed towards an incredulity regarding the meta-narrative.<sup>366</sup> Specialised disciplines that have no perceivable purpose will render that curriculum obsolete very

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<sup>364</sup> For further contributions to this debate cf. Sweet, L., *11 Genetic*, pp. 47 – 52. Here Sweet deals with four shifts that he perceives in theological education: 1. The shift from preparation for a life-time of work to a life-time of preparation for various work assignments. 2. The decentralization of learning – the future belongs to those who take learning to the learner. 3. Learners expect high level training that connects to global resources in a multi-cultural context. 4. Learners require highly interactive computer mediated instruction. See also McLaren, B. D., *A New Kind of Christian*, pp. 150 – 151. Here McLaren argues that the ministry training institute should be one part monastery, one part mission agency and one part seminar. In other words, community, formation and leadership development must take place. (McLaren’s comments are in the context of a narrative recording a conversation between two friends). Pearcey adds to the discussion by stating that it is imperative for seminaries to “broaden the education of pastors to include courses on intellectual history, training future pastors to critique the dominant ideologies of our day”. Pearcey, N., *Total Truth*, p. 127. Richard Tiplady also makes a useful contribution by addressing the needs of postmoderns in current mission agencies. In the context of this discussion he points out the difficulty postmoderns have with training because training tends to “promote uniform ways of thinking”. Tiplady, R., (Ed.) *Postmission: World Mission by a Postmodern Generation* (Carlisle, Paternoster Press, 2002) p. xvii.

<sup>365</sup> Hinze, B. E., ‘Theology as Communication: Revelation, Faith, and the Church as Ongoing Dialogues’, in Cunningham, D. S., *To Teach*, p. 85.

<sup>366</sup> Smith, J. K. A., *Who’s Afraid of Postmodernism? Taking Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault to Church* (Grand Rapids, Baker Academic, 2006), pp. 59 – 79.

quickly. Equally of course, this does not mean that each component of the curriculum should not be differentiated from the other. Church history, for example, cannot be simply placed into some larger homogeneous curriculum. It deserves its place as a speciality but not at the expense of it being adequately informed by systematics or mission. Using overt Christian terminology – any teaching must produce a deeper love for God and His world and this can only be done when the narrative of Christ’s love runs through every element of the curriculum. In terms of this thesis, the curriculum must be cohesive in order to be missional.

## **2. An unequivocal commitment to ethics and spirituality**

In my attempt to define the cultural identity of those I have referred to as participators in contemporary culture, especially in the West, I have shown that a defining characteristic is the apparent incongruence between their uncertain morality on the one hand and their highly developed social conscience on the other. In other words, postmoderns have little conflict regarding a lack of personal morality whilst being very conscious of issues such as the environment, tolerance and multiculturalism. This cultural perspective is often carried into the theological classroom by the student even though the student claims faith.

To counter the negative implications of an imposed cultural perspective on both spiritual formation and theological thought, I propose that the reinforcement of rules and regulations creates little by way of transformation in the mindset of the student. Rather, a casting of vision and enthusing students to understand the unique opportunities afforded them in this century provides a more proactive basis from which

to produce internal formation and morality. This is exactly what is being proposed by Mary Elizabeth Mullino Moore, of Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia. Arguing from the perspective of vulnerability in children, she calls for both a theological and practical commitment to justice and reconciliation.<sup>367</sup> Concluding her argument she states: “This discussion suggests that the marginalized – represented by children – dare to be interruptive, receptive, and wondering. In so doing, they uncover God’s work and point the way for communities to follow”.<sup>368</sup> It is exactly the interruptive, receptive and wondering dimension that must come into the centre of the theological training ethos of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In other words, the lens through which the entire academic process of theological training takes place must be its (the training’s) value in interrupting the lives of the marginalised, recognising the receptivity of people to the message and ultimately wondering what could be.

Ethics and spirituality, when placed centrally within the ethos of the theological training enterprise have the effect of creating a concept of wondering or the employment of eschatological imagination.<sup>369</sup> A well structured or even a cohesive curriculum is not

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<sup>367</sup> Moore, M. E. M., ‘Walking with Children Toward Hope: The long Road to Justice and Reconciliation’, in Alexander, H., (ed.) *Spirituality and Ethics in Education: Philosophical and Radical Perspectives* (Brighton, Sussex Academic Press, 2004), pp. 83 – 97. Note: This volume is the second in a series called *Spirituality in Education* and engages with calls for spirituality and ethics in education, relations between the spiritual and the ethical in education and spiritual and ethical traditions and practices in education. Although largely beyond the scope of this present work, this area needs far more attention by theological educators. Although the issue of formation is often addressed, especially in the context of seminary training, the link between the cultural identity of postmoderns and ethics and spirituality is under-represented in the literature that I have surveyed. Denise Lardner Carmody makes some small effort in this regard although not strictly within the context of theological education but higher education as a whole. She examines our concept of sin in the context of implications for higher education. See Carmody, D. L., *Organising a Christian Mind: A Theology of Higher Education* (Valley Forge, Trinity Press, 1996), pp. 52 – 61.

<sup>368</sup> Moore, M. E. M., “Walking with Children”, p. 93

<sup>369</sup> In an epilogue to their book which provides a useful overview of the history and philosophy of Christian education, Michael J. Anthony and Warren S. Benson summarise cumulative lessons from the past for twenty-first century education. Amongst six lessons they emphasise one as being the need to learn how to exegete culture. The point they make is that it is not the lost who are not hearing, it is the church that has ceased to speak their language. They make this statement especially in the context of the characteristics of postmodern society where “values are relative and social morals are almost non-



adequate. Theological educators must find ways to seize the imagination of the theological student with ethics and spirituality that call forth greatness, create hope and build eschatological optimism. Perhaps this, as much as any other definition, defines the missional dimension of the theological training enterprise.

### **3. A high investment in technology**

Although this critical area requires a thorough treatment, which will be done in the final chapter of this thesis, it must be mentioned in the context of engagement with the contemporary culture. Amidst all the social and cultural markers identifying this generation, one that defines them in a different way to most is their reliance upon electronic technology. This is evidenced in several ways. For example, Margaret Miles argues that, in a mass mediated cultural context, many tend to explore pressing public issues through popular film.<sup>370</sup> If this was true over a decade ago when she argued this position it is more so now. Postmoderns are used to finding their positions on public issues through the media, firstly film and increasingly the internet.

Likewise, day to day business is becoming increasingly web-based and e-commerce has entered the lives of most. Mary E. Hess states that theological institutions must now confront “technical” versus “adaptive” challenges.<sup>371</sup> By this she refers to the rush to adapt to the technological environment that is all around us. As theological training institutions engage digital technology, she asserts, there will be a conflict, which

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existent”. Anthony, M. J., and Benson, W. S., *Exploring the History and Philosophy of Christian Education: Principles for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Grand Rapids, Kregel Academic, 2003), p. 426.

<sup>370</sup> Miles, M., *Seeing and Believing: Religion and Values in the Movies* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), p.25

<sup>371</sup> Hess, M. E., *Engaging Technology in Theological Education: All that we Cannot Leave Behind* (Lanham, Rowman and Littlefield, 2005), p. 21.

requires careful management, between the formation of the student through adaptive learning processes and the teaching of the student through technical processes. A very helpful contribution to the discussion on how to maximise the use of technology in a theological education and training context is offered by Delamarter. He offers insights to the future of education in a highly digitized environment including functioning capably in a connected world and information literacy for research and ministry. The second part of his essay explains what will drive technology in this environment in coming years. This includes the expectations of students, the need to enrich the classroom experience, pressure to enhance the traditional course, especially for the visual learner and the need to offer distance programmes.<sup>372</sup>

If this challenge is kept in mind and constantly managed by the faculty of theological training institutions, it must be stated that this generation will not be effectively engaged at any level if there is not a constant and significant investment in relevant technologies.

At the most basic level classrooms must have multi-media equipment, faculty must be trained to effectively use this equipment and adjustments must be made in the academic evaluation of courses for web-based research. Additionally, institutions should be consciously strategising to move away from being paper-based to an electronic environment. Teaching must be supplemented by multi-media and libraries must become facilitators of learning more than the holders of resources and books.

Additionally, advertising and recruitment, applied theology areas of the curriculum and the devotional programme of the institution must all show a commitment to digital

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<sup>372</sup> Delamarter, S., 'Theological Educators, Technology and the Path Ahead' in *Teaching Theology and Religion*, vol. 8, no. 1, January 2005, pp. 51 – 55.

technology and how it is best used in the ultimate objective of the training programme – communicating the love of Christ. This is missional.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter identifies issues concerned with theological training within a cultural context. In some ways, theological institutions made some of these adaptations decades ago when serious efforts were made to train people for cross-cultural ministry. Theology was examined closely to allow for mechanisms such as dynamic equivalence in translation.

This same exercise must now be entered into with new rigour as we manage a massive cultural shift within our society. As suggested above, responses must be carefully thought through and evaluated and then implemented and resourced in such a way as to achieve three clear outcomes: Firstly, the adequate training of the student. Secondly, the ongoing sustainability and good reputation of the institution offering the training. Thirdly, the missionary expansion of the Christian message throughout the world. In a word becoming increasingly familiar, this is the missional rationale of theological education.

## CHAPTER 6

### CHRISTIAN MINISTRY TRAINING IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT

The component parts of Christian ministry training can often be distinctly non-theological. Institutional, financial and even pedagogical issues are all vital to the overall enterprise of ministry training but can most often be dealt with without any particular recourse to theological process.<sup>373</sup> However, when confronted with the global context, it is impossible for the educator not to engage theology in the sense of actually engaging God. Put another way, as the rapid process of globalisation takes place around us, ways of life are being permanently changed, cultures and local customs are being undermined and very little appears constant. It is this ever changing milieu that forces the training institution or programme into offering more than a secondary discourse in the area of religious studies and confront, as a primary discourse, the very nature and plans of a supra-cultural God. The global context has very significant implications for ministry training and thus must be addressed very seriously.

There are two aspects to this issue. The first, and possibly most obvious, is related to the process of globalisation itself. That process by which the whole human community is being forced into living within a global village creates major theological implications for a faith that has not only been essentially European for the majority of its existence but which remains largely described and defined by scholars, theologians and authors who have been educated or live within the cultural world normally referred to as the

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<sup>373</sup> I do not, of course, infer that these processes should not be supported by a theology that is well developed and considered. For example, many training enterprises are under-resourced and require a high level of commitment on behalf of the administrators and teachers to continue offering courses. This requires a certain level of theological persuasion whether it is mildly within the area of spiritual vocation on the one hand or aggressively “faith based” and strongly evangelical on the other.

West. In very simple terms, the Christian Gospel in a pluralist and global world requires different theological processes by which to remain relevant than that same gospel did in a homogeneous, western culture that has had nearly two thousand years of predominantly Christian enculturation.

The second aspect relates not so much to the global and thus pluralistic society in which the church finds itself, but to the interrelationship between churches and Christian leaders from around the whole community of nations. The expansion of Christianity in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was unparalleled and the Christian world is now distinctly darker in complexion than it was, and is no longer just a North Atlantic faith. Any emerging leader must face this reality and develop sensitivities by which to engage global Christianity and not perpetuate a culture bound and (in the case of Western leaders especially) a colonial and paternalistic expression of Christian faith.

It should be pointed out that globalisation is not just a political and economic reality but it is inevitably connected to the role of the theological educator. Brueggemann points out that it is because Christian faith and Christian ministry are inescapably linked to real life that globalization presses upon us.<sup>374</sup> He goes on to show that the defining pressures of “theological education are not initiated by theological schools or generated by the church. They are rather emergents in the life of culture where the church and its theological schools find their rightful habitat”.<sup>375</sup> This implies that the theological educator will face the forces of globalisation within his/her task whether he/she wants to or not. It seems to me that not only is it incumbent upon an astute educator to be

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<sup>374</sup> Brueggemann, W., in the Foreword to Evans, A. F., Evans, R. A., and Roozen, D. A., (eds.) *The Globalization of Theological Education*, p. xi.

<sup>375</sup> Brueggemann, W, in Evans, A. F., Evans, R. A., and Roozen, D. A., (eds.) *The Globalization of Theological*, p. xi.

informed by the forces of globalisation but to engage these forces proactively and without threat.

This chapter seeks to address this double-edged issue and, having identified and described the issues, propose some strategies by which to make Christian ministry training both relevant and effective in a time of rampant globalisation. It is anticipated that this will further reinforce the necessity for a missional rationale for theological education.

### **Theological foundations**

As with any spiritual enterprise, the importance of a theological and conceptual foundation is important to a meaningful understanding of theological training in a global context. A strategic plan for the adjustment of a theological curriculum to allow for globalisation (however this term is defined) is dangerous if it is not preceded by a well conceived theology. Whilst many have made a valuable contribution to the development of theological thought that would enable a contextual and meaningful engagement by the church in a rapidly changing world, the combined works of Lesslie Newbigin<sup>376</sup> and David Bosch<sup>377</sup> probably represent some of the most significant

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<sup>376</sup> For a useful background on the life and influence of Newbigin see Shenk, W. R., 'Lesslie Newbigin's Contribution to Mission Theology', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 24 (2000): 59 – 64. Also Goheen, M. W., 'As the Father sent me, I am sending you': Lesslie Newbigin's Missionary Ecclesiology', *International Review of Mission* 91:362 (2002): 354 – 369. It is especially helpful in the context of this discussion to note the effective blend of theological thought within the missiology espoused by Newbigin. This is a recurring theme amongst those calling for a greater integration of missiology within the larger theological framework. See for example Scherer, J. A., 'Missiology as a Discipline and What it Includes', in Scherer, J. A., and Bevans, S. B., (eds.) *New Directions in Mission and Evangelization 2* (Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1994), pp. 180 – 181.

<sup>377</sup> See for example his seminal work previously referred to: Bosch, D. J., *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in the Theology of Mission* (American Society of Missiology Series 16, Maryknoll, Orbis, 1991). As with Newbigin above, some background reading on Bosch can be found in Livingston, K. J., 'The Legacy of David J. Bosch', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 23 (1999): 26 – 32.

contributions to biblical and theological reflection on the need for holistic and contextualized mission. A brief engagement with some of the thoughts of each of these scholars will be helpful in establishing a theological foundation for theological training in a global context.

Newbigin, for example, insisted on the idea of God being a “missionary God”.<sup>378</sup> He suggests that the Godhead has modelled mission for the church in that the Father sent the Son, the Son sent the Spirit and thus the entire Godhead now sends the church. He is insistent that if this theological perspective is true it follows that mission must stand at the very heart of Christian identity. Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder deal with this concept in considerable detail.<sup>379</sup>

Developing the concept that mission is participation in the mission of the triune God – a concept generally described as *Missio Dei*, they argue that it was this very concept of the Trinity that forced the early church to “bring speech” to its experience of Jesus who revealed the mystery of God and the Spirit thus inspiring faith and guiding a new community.<sup>380</sup> They state that Trinitarian faith both originates and results in practice.<sup>381</sup> These two scholars and Newbigin clearly concur in their effort to establish mission at the centre of theological study. This forces theology out of the realm of academic study alone and drives it forcefully into the realm of practice. Put another way, the careful study of theology, if it begins, as it should, with the character and nature of God should

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<sup>378</sup> See as an example of this recurring theme Newbigin, L., *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1995), pp20 – 65.

<sup>379</sup> Bevans, S. B., and Schroeder, R. P., *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (Maryknoll, Orbis, 2004)

<sup>380</sup> Bevans, S. B., and Schroeder, R. P., *Constants in Context*, p. 297.

<sup>381</sup> Bevans and Schroeder go on to expound this relationship between the nature of God and the mission of the church in the context of six theological constants namely Christology, ecclesiology, eschatology, salvation, anthropology and culture. They are very helpful in creating a missional cohesion within the field of systematics, an area, in my view, that has often been lacking in theological education.

have no other legitimate outcome than the followers of God doing His will in His earth in His way.

It is at this point that Bosch makes a valuable contribution. Commenting on his perspective as an African missiologist he noticed that missiology and theology could not be separated in the context of his ministry.<sup>382</sup> He is scathing in his comment on Western theological reflection. Bosch argues that Westerners have lived for many centuries in the climate of Christendom which, by definition created a symbiosis between church and society and thus, officially anyway, there were no nonbelievers. Theologians of this period reflected this mentality and, Bosch points out, the result was a “reformed” or standardized theology such as that described by F.D.E. Schleiermacher who established the “fourfold pattern” in theological education, namely, the disciplines of biblical studies, church history, systematic theology, and practical (or pastoral) theology.<sup>383</sup> He laments that it is clear from this paradigm that theology has no interest in the world outside the church. In the context of Christendom, the only “outsiders” are those unfortunate to live beyond the control and influence of the Pope and the church and that they need to be subjected and governed more than won and converted. This sentiment is exactly expressed by Bosch who states:

As a matter of fact, when the modern Western foreign missionary enterprise was initiated, this is how mission was understood, to a significant extent: chunks of the ‘pagan’ world outside Europe had to be conquered and incorporated into Christendom, or, at the very least, into the Christian church.<sup>384</sup>

The sheer arrogance of this concept is difficult for the contemporary observer but it is questionable as to whether the remnants of this thought have been purged from our method of theological education. The four-fold standardization of theological education

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<sup>382</sup> Bosch, D. J., *Believing in the Future: Toward a Missiology of Western Culture* (Harrisburg, Trinity Press, 1995), pp. 27 – 28.

<sup>383</sup> Bosch, D. J., *Believing in the Future*, pp. 28 – 29.

<sup>384</sup> Bosch D. J., *Believing in the Future*, p. 29.



proposed by Schleiermacher is not significantly different to that contained in the catalogues of many contemporary institutions of theological and ministry training.<sup>385</sup> Whilst it is possibly legitimate (to an extent) for a theological faculty within a university to teach systematic theology from a primarily philosophical perspective, it is inconceivable to teach it without a thoroughly missiological perspective in a ministry training context. The result would be as Bosch goes on to describe:

When it became clear that the church also had to do something about the growing numbers of Westerners who had, practically, turned their backs on the Christian faith, this enterprise was referred to as ‘home missions’. Gradually, however, a change in terminology was introduced: ‘mission’ was now used only in respect of work in traditional ‘non-Christian’ countries. Reconversion work in the West was referred to as ‘evangelism’ (or ‘evangelization’). The latter was judged to be *theologically* different from the former.<sup>386</sup>

Bosch is correct to emphasise the term “theologically” in terms of the distinction between mission and evangelism. This theological dichotomy is seriously flawed. As soon as our theology is non-reflective of the nature and compassion of God it will inevitably lead to these strange contortions. The human race becomes strangely divided, not on the basis of whether they have encountered the love of God or not, but on how “uncultured” or “pagan” they are. It is no wonder that such animosity remains in much of the former colonised world against the arrogance and paternalism displayed not only by the colonial powers themselves but by the missionaries who were in attitude and mentality hardly different to their political peers.<sup>387</sup>

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<sup>385</sup> From my own experience this would be true of the institution that I currently lead. An analysis of the Prospectus for the year 2003 shows almost exactly this pattern. Even practical theology was restricted almost entirely to pastoral method and any practical training experience was limited largely to a support role by the student within the context of a local church. Evangelism was taught as a single intensive and missiology was not even taught as a full course let alone integrated into the training as a whole. (See Prospectus, Mattersey Hall, 2003).

<sup>386</sup> Bosch, D. J., *Believing in the Future*, p. 29.

<sup>387</sup> Although this discussion will be dealt with in greater detail later it is worth mentioning the work of two African scholars who are open and frank in dealing with their feelings of the close alliance between missionaries and the colonial past in Africa. I refer to Kwame Bediako, a Ghanaian scholar and John S. Mbiti a Kenyan. For examples of their work see Bediako, K., *Theology and Identity: The Impact of*

Some of these theological “contortions” are exaggerated by historical divisions within the church. Bosch’s frustrations are even more understandable when mission activity simply entrenches the theological dichotomy that divides people according to their association with certain expressions of church rather than their understanding of the grace of a redeeming God. This is perhaps why Newbigin has been so insistent in his view that mission must represent the act of the triune God and that any human agency in mission must be grounded in a strong Trinitarian theology.<sup>388</sup> The theological foundation of Christian ministry training in the global context must be careful to avoid any form of sectarianism and work back carefully to the bedrock of God’s love for the entire world. Without this the church in mission becomes simply another colonial force or human agency in which power and politics rather than love and grace play a predominant role.<sup>389</sup>

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*Culture on Christian Thought in the Second Century and in Modern Africa* (previously referred to in this work) and Mbiti, J. S., *Introduction to African Religion* (Oxford, Heinemann Educational Publishers, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1975). For additional commentary see Thomson, A., ‘Learning from the African Experience: Bediako and Critical Contextualisation’, *Evangelical Review of Theology*, vol. 30, no. 1, January 2006, pp. 31 – 48. This article is helpful in developing an appreciation of Bediako and other African scholars and their growing contribution to contextual theology. Although the context for reference to these scholars is the continuing reaction to colonialism in Africa, in my opinion the theological educator must become aware of the contribution of these scholars to Christian theology not only because it provides an obviously valid and helpful perspective but, more importantly, to prevent any continuing paternalism on behalf of those educators who continue to enjoy the relative affluence and influence of teaching and researching in Western nations.

<sup>388</sup> Newbigin, L., *Trinitarian Faith and Today’s Mission* (Richmond, John Knox Press, 1964), p. 78.

<sup>389</sup> Bevans and Schroeder show the influence of Protestant mission theology on the documents of the Orthodox church which has relevance to this discussion. They argue that this influence has its origins in the Trinitarian theology of Karl Barth, especially as it relates to a paper he gave at the 1932 Brandenburg Mission Conference. In this paper Barth rejected the idea of mission as a human activity of witness and service insisting that it was rather primarily God who engages in mission by sending God’s self in the mission of the Son and the Spirit. (See Bevans, S. B., and Schroeder, R. P., *Constants in Context*, p. 290) In my view, Barth’s Reformed Theology is probably more dominant in this statement than at first appears. His point is valid in as much as he grounds mission in the redeeming work of God and not the mere activity and service of God’s people. However, if not balanced by an ecclesiology that requires some human agency in the work of mission this view could be used to absolve individuals of any responsibility in the mission of God.

Thus it could be argued that globalisation is having an important conditioning effect upon our theological reflection. Whilst both Bosch and Newbigin approach this issue primarily from the perspective that the Church has not adapted well to globalisation, if it produces more missiological astuteness, especially within the institutions of learning and training, it can be seen as a useful ally to mission and not an enemy to the Gospel.

As Newbigin states so succinctly:

The Church is an entity which has outlasted many states, nations, and empires, and it will outlast those that exist today. The Church is nothing other than that movement launched into the public life of the world by its sovereign Lord to continue which he came to do until it is finished in his return in glory.<sup>390</sup>

It is to this theological foundation that the missionally motivated theological educator will inevitably be forced to return. However, theological foundation laying is only a part of the role of the theological educator in engaging the global context. We return to the first of the two components addressed in the opening paragraphs of this chapter.

### **Christian ministry training and contextualisation**

In reality, both Newbigin and Bosch spent many of their final years struggling with the issue of contextualisation and seeking to provoke the church to understand the importance of a contextualised message. Newbigin rightly asserts that “there is not and cannot be a gospel which is not culturally embodied”.<sup>391</sup> Few would argue this point today. Working from the theological foundations discussed previously, both of these scholars felt that the incarnation stood in contrast to the objectivism that was produced by the Enlightenment. Further, their contention was that it was this very objectivism

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<sup>390</sup> Newbigin, L., *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1989), p. 221.

<sup>391</sup> Newbigin, L., *The Gospel*, p. 189.

that was at the core of much of the theology and missiology espoused by both academics and practitioners within the church during the twentieth century. This has produced a reconceptualisation of missiology resulting in a stress being placed upon cultural engagement and contextualisation. Within a global context, often described as postmodern, this emphasis on contextualisation cannot be ignored by those involved in Christian ministry training. Put another way, the missional rationale for theological education is no more evident than in the role of the church in a global context.

Of course, the globalisation debate and the need for contextualising the gospel does not enter the academy (or church life in general) without its associated controversy. In a case study conducted in 1993 and recorded in an essay by Justo L. Gonzales and Catherine G. Gonzalez, the issue of whether Biblical studies or globalisation issues should be at the heart of curriculum development is raised. The question asked in relation to the serious introduction of a globalisation programme to a seminary is whether it will not result in the “tail wagging the dog”.<sup>392</sup> The case study goes on to describe the more than ten year journey undertaken by the faculty of this theological seminary to develop a globalisation programme. It could be that the faculty at this seminary are asking the wrong questions. The issue of providing a relevant theological education within a global context does not have to do with the curriculum per se. (In fact it could be argued that the theological curriculum is more important than ever). Neither is the issue related to the internationalisation of an institution, as important as that might be.<sup>393</sup> The key issue is how the curriculum, faculty and students engage

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<sup>392</sup> Gonzales, J. L., and Gonzalez, C. G., ‘Case Study – Winning over the Faculty’ in Evans, A. F., Evans, R. A., and Roozen, D. A., *The Globalization*, p. 23. Note: The authors point out that names of persons and places have been disguised in this study in order to protect the privacy of their situations.

<sup>393</sup> The issue of “internationalisation” is a subject of its own. Superficially it normally refers to a process by which the student body is recruited in such a way as to reflect cultural diversity. At a more subtle level it is a response to the continued emphasis within Western societies to reflect the ethnic make up of

contemporary culture, and the issues related to globalisation in particular. The ultimate relevance of the curriculum is not primarily in its orthodoxy but in its application within a complex cultural milieu. Educators must take care not to unwittingly become reactive to cultural and social shifts but to establish an environment in which each trend or issue becomes yet another point for relevant engagement. In regard to the case study mentioned above I would point out that globalisation should not be confused with internationalisation. Having a culturally diverse student body or even a study abroad programme does not necessarily produce a student who is able to effectively contextualise her theology or sensitively communicate within contemporary society. This takes a much more serious effort in understanding the demands of contextualisation.

This interface of theology and the redemptive work of God in the earth is well dealt with by Max L. Stackhouse. Drawing on what appears to be a thorough and extensive dialogue within the faculty of the theological school, he makes a particular appeal to one of his colleagues, Nantawan Boonprasat-Lewis.<sup>394</sup> He refers to Boonprasat-Lewis as “the most persistent and articulate advocate of a more radical contextual approach” to theological education.<sup>395</sup> Drawing on her research and teaching in Thailand and her work on Asian theology and ethics as well as her involvement with feminist perspectives in contemporary church and society, Boonprasat-Lewis, according to Stackhouse, has pressed vigorously for the recognition of the contextuality of all theological education. Through a series of papers and small group discussions

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society at large. This inevitably leads to a race or ethnic based process which often extends beyond the recruitment of students to include staffing issues as well. I would suggest that caution is exercised in any area that diminishes a process to the level of political correctness, the use of quotas, affirmative action or race-based selection.

<sup>394</sup> Stackhouse, M. L., *Apologia – Contextualization, Globalization and Mission in Theological Education* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1988), pp. 29 – 38.

<sup>395</sup> Stackhouse, M. L., *Apologia*, p. 33.

Boonprasat-Lewis argued that contextual thinking is not new in Christianity although, pointedly, she states that time and time again this has been obscured by those who have sought to establish a fixed dogma prematurely and impose it on new contexts.<sup>396</sup> Amongst her conclusions was that the contextual character of Christian thought, after centuries of neglect, was rediscovered by biblical scholars of the nineteenth century who “adopted historical-critical research methods and recognized that texts could be fully understood only when they were seen in terms of their *Sitz um Leben*”.<sup>397</sup> What Boonprasat-Lewis describes is not only true for biblical texts but, by extension, must be true for doctrine and dogma to.

The key point to note in this context is that contextualisation is not a reactive response to societal or moral change on behalf of those proclaiming the Christian message. Neither can it be an imposition of a dogma seeking to condition society. It is rather a holistic and high view of the incarnate purposes of God for all people everywhere and in every generation. This theological persuasion enables adaptability within the application of biblical truth that does not accommodate compromise but rather enhances the transcendent and eternal nature of the message and the God it proclaims.

In this the theological educator has a particular responsibility. It is a missional responsibility. Perhaps it is best summarised by Stackhouse in his reflection on the influence of Boonprasat-Lewis and those on the faculty at Andover Newton Theological School who were impacted by the process described above:

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<sup>396</sup> Stackhouse, M. L., *Apologia*, p. 33.

<sup>397</sup> Stackhouse, M. L., *Apologia*, p. 34.

Theology is descriptive, empirical, and indicative, and not prescriptive, speculative, or imperative. The subject matter of theological education, therefore, is everything that is really going on in the world that saves humanity, for what is going on in such contexts is, at some level, fundamentally shaped by God's active incarnate presence in history, however conditioned, "un-sacred," "non-eternal," and "unspiritual" that activity may appear to be.<sup>398</sup>

This view can understandably be threatening to those who shelter within their conservative and culturally bound traditions. However, to the Christian communicator, scholar or leader who seeks to impact his or her world with the eternal message of God's love it is extremely liberating. Perhaps no one is better able to facilitate this process of contextualisation – from texts to practice, than the theological educator. In fact, to grasp the importance of contextualization significantly enhances the whole training process. It has the effect of placing texts in context, enabling critical process without cultivating criticism and prevents the student from become a reactive hot head decrying every form of social evil without offering any constructive or Christ-like alternative. A theological training enterprise at any level that has not seriously processed how what is learnt engages hurting humanity will quickly descend into dead orthodoxy and lose any relevance at all.

Hopefully the case for contextualisation has been made. Whilst this might appear an appropriate point to move to further considerations one more aspect of this vital subject must be considered. Again, Newbiggin makes the case.

In his view, no consideration of the mass of missiological writing on cultural engagement can be complete without a consideration of what he terms "the most widespread, powerful, and persuasive among all contemporary cultures – namely

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<sup>398</sup> Stackhouse, M. L., *Apologia*, p. 35.

modern Western culture”.<sup>399</sup> Newbigin argues that there is a consistent weakness in the missiological literature. A willingness to contextualise the gospel message when it is conveyed across cultural and linguistic barriers does not seem to be evident when it comes to engaging modern Western culture. This is all the worse, he states, for it is this culture “more than almost any other” that is proving most resistant to the gospel. He laments the decline of the church in almost every area dominated by this cultural form and expression. He then states that it would seem as though there is no higher priority for the research work of missiologists than to ask what would be involved in creating a genuine missionary encounter between the gospel and this modern Western culture.<sup>400</sup> In my opinion Newbigin’s assessment is persuasive, and the extension of his thinking is that this issue of relevant engagement with modern Western culture must equally be the highest priority of theological educators.<sup>401</sup> Increasingly this does not only involve those training Christian leaders in Western nations but, due to globalisation, educators everywhere; because this cultural form is ubiquitous in its nature.

Newbigin would undoubtedly be encouraged to discover the growing influence of his work. His writings have had an impact that is not limited to those involved in missionary activity. In fact his work, along with others such as N. T. Wright, is becoming increasingly influential in ecclesiological studies in precisely the cultural

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<sup>399</sup> Newbigin, L., *Foolishness to the Greeks*, pp. 2 – 3.

<sup>400</sup> Newbigin, L., *Foolishness*, p. 3.

<sup>401</sup> As the remainder of the above paragraph states, this, in my opinion, is true for educators anywhere. The impact of globalisation is often most felt through the adoption of many of the trappings of Western culture by those living in the developing world. Even if the culture of the West is not adopted by the host culture its trappings and thus many of its values are. This is making the task of contextualisation an increasingly difficult one for those offering theological training in developing nations. They face a dual challenge – that of contextualising the Gospel into their own culture and then providing a contextual understanding of that same Gospel to those within their own culture who are adopting elements of Western culture. An extension of this debate that seems to be entirely absent in existing literature is the contextualisation of the gospel within Christian congregations made up of ethnic minorities in Western countries. The “ghettoisation” of an expression of the Christian faith can have severe implications for the proclamation of the gospel. This is a potential subject for another PhD thesis!



context that he feared was under represented – the modern Western culture.<sup>402</sup> In both the U.S.A and the U.K. there is increasing engagement in the debate about the relationship of gospel and culture. The Gospel and our Culture Network plays a leading role in this discussion.<sup>403</sup>

### **Global engagement in theological education**

As pointed out in the introductory paragraphs, the second dimension to understanding theological and ministry training in a global context has to do with meaningful engagement between theologians, teachers and students across the ever widening spectrum that is the Christian church of the twenty-first century. As sensitivities to the voices of previously marginalised groups grow, the theological educator must develop a willingness and a method by which to engage the thoughts and writings of those previously excluded either due to sheer academic arrogance or because of the imbalance in the availability of resources between those in the West and those in the developing world.<sup>404</sup> This engagement still seems to be lacking.

For example, D. A. Carson in his monumental work on the gospel in a pluralistic world, aptly named *The Gagging of God*, commits only one chapter out of a total of 569 pages to the subject of contextualisation and globalisation. Whilst his primary concern is clearly a defence of the Gospel in what he perceives to be a gathering storm against the

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<sup>402</sup> See for example Wright, N. T., *The Challenge of Jesus*. Here Wright in a scholarly fashion examines Jesus in first century context but then asks the poignant question, how can this affect Christian discipleship today?

<sup>403</sup> See [www.gospel-culture.org.uk](http://www.gospel-culture.org.uk) For example, the Summer 2003 (issue 37) edition of this network's newsletter had a lead article entitled 'Re-framing Public Life – towards a gospel framework for engaging public issues'.

<sup>404</sup> There are several terms used to describe those nations that are not grouped collectively into those normally referred to as 'the West'. I have chosen developing world or emerging nations but terms such as two-thirds world, majority world etc are all useful in their own right.

Christian faith in the West, it cannot go unnoticed how one sided the arguments of this scholar appear to be. He does make mention of a number of scholars from the developing world but immediately goes on to chide them for not engaging the process of theological engagement earlier and for being constantly side-tracked by their apparent obsession with anti-colonialism.<sup>405</sup> To be fair, Carson is primarily concerned with pluralism in the West but it remains that he engages the issue of globalisation at a late stage of his argument. Surely a major source of pluralistic thought in the West is a direct result of globalisation. Thus, to develop an argument that does not take the global context seriously will potentially create an unbalanced outcome. Carson's work is undoubtedly the result of good scholarship and in this is to be commended; however, if it becomes a model for ongoing debate on the effects of pluralism it would seriously flaw the outcomes of that debate.

What might be some of the causes for this under-representation of scholars from the developing world and the resulting lack of serious engagement with them by those in the Western academy? One obvious reason would be the lack of resources in these developing countries that so obviously disadvantage those who might otherwise have many more opportunities of being heard.<sup>406</sup> More subtle than the obvious issues relating to resources however, are questions related to the academic process itself. For

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<sup>405</sup> Carson, D. A., *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1996), pp. 537 – 553.

<sup>406</sup> See, for example, Njoroge, N. J., 'A New Way of Facilitating Leadership: Lessons from African Women Theologians' in *Missiology: An International Review*, vol. 33, no. 1, January 2005, pp 29 – 42. This article is helpful in this context as it reveals clearly the fact that many remain ignorant of the role of African theologians and particularly African women theologians. Njoroge states in this article that there is much potential in this group especially if they were empowered and endowed with the right tools. She particularly emphasises the lack of scholarship grants as the largest hindrance to empowering women through theological education. For further reading cf. Oborji, F. A., 'Missiology in an African Context: Toward a New Language' in *Missiology*, vol. xxxi, no 3, July 2003, pp. 321 – 336. (It is interesting that in almost all of the instances in which the disadvantages of emerging theologians are discussed financial issues rank at the top. This might lead some to think that financial partnerships are all that are required to correct this imbalance. My opinion is that this is a naïve notion and that the issue is more complex than money can resolve on its own).

example, Kwame Bediako, a prominent African scholar, argues that oral theology (i.e. the living experiences of African Christians which include traditions and Christian thought contained in song, poetry and stories) should be positively considered as a basic expression from which faith might arise within a community.<sup>407</sup> This position would be very threatening to a scholar involved in the critical process. For many theologians the thought of oral tradition might belong within the field of cultural anthropology or, more disparagingly, tribal studies, but should never be included in serious theological writings. Whatever position is taken on this, the fact is that those cultures that are dependent upon oral transferral of thought will always find it difficult to compete in a context that has strong written traditions and critical processes by which to evaluate those writings.

In the context of theological training this presents its own set of challenges. Robert J Schreiter, of the Catholic Theological Union, explores some of the themes that the issue of globalisation as cross-cultural dialogue presents.<sup>408</sup> Amongst these themes (missions and evangelism, ecumenical/interfaith dialogue and the struggle for justice being three of them) is the special way in which cross-cultural dialogue deconstructs the powerful dominant culture. Schreiter argues that this form of dialogue challenges a dominant culture to “give over its sense of control, commit its trust, and suffer a disorienting cognitive and emotional dissonance that can lead to transformations moving beyond invitations to participate (the offer of the Gospel), containment of conflict (dialogue), and more justice structures (justice).<sup>409</sup> In other words, possibly

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<sup>407</sup> Bediako, K., ‘Understanding African Theology in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century’ in *Themelios: An International Bulletin for Theological and Religious Studies Students*, vol. 20, no. 1, October 1994, p. 7. <http://www.hs.unp.ac.za/theology/bct/bediak.htm> (Accessed 12/08/2005).

<sup>408</sup> Schreiter, R. J., ‘Globalization as Cross-Cultural Dialogue’ in Evans, F. E., Evans, R. A., and Roozen, D. A., (eds.), *The Globalization*, p. 125

<sup>409</sup> Evans, A. F., Evans, R. A., and Roozen, D. A., (eds.), *The Globalization*, pp. 124 – 125.

more than any other attempt at contextualising the gospel, actual cross-cultural dialogue challenges cultural supremacy (or ethnocentrism), defensive attitudes to diversity (or the perceived threat of universality) and the need to make our engagement with the global Christian community a mutually beneficial one. The challenge for the theological educator or the ministry training leader is so to facilitate cross-cultural dialogue as to allow for the deconstructing of existing paradigms such as the supremacy of Western educational and pedagogical methods, and thus allow for methods that have cultural identity and credibility in developing nations. This might well entail the use of oral tradition. This ought not need to lead to syncretism any more than the growing use of story telling in contemporary (postmodern) congregations in the West does.

In a case study following Schreiter's essay mentioned above, a dialogue occurs between members of a theological institution on the role of oral versus written reports in an extension training context which took place in Manila, Philippines. Although the debate leaves some unanswered questions it does help to ask the right ones.<sup>410</sup> Amongst these is the question as to who should be involved in decision-making regarding standards in evaluation: candidates, community, faculty or others? Another question asks whether it is now necessary to adapt theological education so that it could be accredited by the teaching community and be culturally appropriate to the learning community?<sup>411</sup> These and other questions do not have simple answers but must be included in the thinking of a contemporary theological educator.<sup>412</sup>

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<sup>410</sup> See 'Case Study: Text and Context' in Evans, A. F., Evans, R. A., and Roozen, D. A., (eds.), *The Globalization*, pp. 134 – 139.

<sup>411</sup> For a contextual example of this see Mercer, J. A., 'Red light means stop! Teaching theology through exposure: learning in Manila's red light district' in *Teaching Theology and Religion*, April 2002, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 90 – 100. Here Mercer describes how she exposes her theology students to a short term experiential learning event through participation and emerging into a specific context preceded and followed by a process of study and reflection. In the article Mercer states that 'exposure learning has the potential to minimise certain forms of student resistance around emotionally- charged subjects, such as the integration of race, class, and gender into theological education, because it is the experience together

I suggest that the clash of worlds is no less evident in theological education in a global context as it is in the commercial or political arena. However, the universality of the Gospel message must form a foundation for believing that flexibility both in accrediting courses and in teaching and evaluating them should not necessarily lead to a lowering of standards or a compromise of morality or doctrine.<sup>413</sup>

Another enduring problem for scholars and theologians in developing nations is the legacy of colonialism. In Christian circles there is a prevailing tension concerning the role of missionaries. Again, using Africa as an example, we find this dichotomy in attitude emerging again and again. Whilst valuing the role that missionaries played in areas such as Bible translation and education, contemporary African Christian leaders are still quick to point out the many failures of the early missionaries. The most common of these failures appears to be the close association that these missionaries had

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with shared critical reflection on it and not the teachers view point per se that unsettles prior interpretive frameworks’.

<sup>412</sup> A useful case study worth reading is West, G. O., ‘Beyond the “Critical” Curtain: Community-based Service Learning in an African Context’ in *Teaching Theology and Religion*, vol. 7, no. 2, April 2004, pp. 71 – 82. Here West explores the partnership between the academy and local communities of the poor working class and marginalised through community-based service learning.

<sup>413</sup> Although way beyond the scope of this work is the issue of accreditation or validation in the context of theological education. In my experience innovation in providing theological education across cultures, reflective assessment in certain areas of the curriculum and the use of a greater variety of examining methods is often resisted by validating authorities who are (rightly so) concerned with quality assurance more than ministry and personal formation. In a recent interview (conducted on the 24<sup>th</sup> April 2007) with David Smith, former Principal of Northumbria Bible College and currently on the teaching faculty at International Christian College, Glasgow, he reported on extensive efforts made by Northumbria Bible College (now merged with ICC) to introduce a vocationally based missions training course. These efforts were eventually abandoned not because of a lack of interest or the commitment of the faculty of the College but because of the refusal to make any innovative adjustments by their validating university. See Farley, E., ‘Four Pedagogical Mistakes: A *Mea Culpa*’ in *Teaching Theology and Religion*, vol. 8, no. 4, October 2005, pp 200 – 203. Here Farley states that the theological pedagogies which dominate degree-granting schools originated in the courses of study and the programs of the teachers. He goes on to state that these pedagogies foster a deep rift between theology as an academic or scholarly discipline (science?) and the situations and interests of students. Students are taught to imitate what scholars do: interpreting texts, making formal arguments, and writing essays. The result is that theology recedes from the present and future of students having little to do with their religious life. See also Boys, M. C., ‘Engaged Pedagogy, Dialogue and Critical Reflection’ in *Teaching Theology and Religion*, vol. 2, no. 3, October 1999, pp. 129 – 136.

with the colonial powers. A. Hastings, for example, states that the Kikuyu people of Kenya had a saying that there was no difference between a missionary and a settler.<sup>414</sup> Bediako likewise describes the many failures of European missionaries.<sup>415</sup> Bosch is very clear in his perspective describing missionaries as “bearers and advocates of Western imperialism”.<sup>416</sup> In the same vein Alan Anderson notes that many missionaries “moved in the shadow of the colonizers”.<sup>417</sup> All of these scholars are very clear in their observation that the line between missionary activity and the role of the colonizers was sometimes hard to define. A closer examination will show that all missionaries were not always colonial collaborators but were genuinely sacrificial in their work and often withstood colonial abuse on behalf of their converts.<sup>418</sup> However, this post-colonial legacy continues to plague the role of theologians and Christian leaders in emerging nations.

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<sup>414</sup> Hastings, A., *The Church in Africa 1450 – 1950* (Clarendon, Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 485.

<sup>415</sup> See for example Bediako, K., *Jesus in Africa: The Christian Gospel in African History and Experience* (Ghana, Regnum Africa, 2000), pp. 15 – 17.

<sup>416</sup> Bosch, D. *Transforming Mission*, pp. 310 – 312.

<sup>417</sup> Anderson, A., *Introduction to Pentecostalism* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 168. (Note: This issue was certainly not unique to Africa. Wherever colonial forces were in operation there was an associated level of missionary activity. Some of this was sanctioned by the colonial powers whilst some was only tolerated. For a completely different perspective to the generally evangelical instances referred to see Milanich, J. T., ‘Archaeological Evidence of Colonialism: Franciscan Spanish missions in La Florida’, in *Missionalia, The Southern Africa Missiological Society*, vol. 32, no. 3. November 2004, pp. 332 – 356.

<sup>418</sup> Bible translation is one example amongst many. L. Sanneh observes that by 1989 a total of 289 separate language groups now had a completely translation of the Bible in their own tongue, largely thanks to the work of missionary Bible translators. See Sanneh, L., *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (Mary-Knoll, Orbis, 1989), pp. 246 – 249. The remarkable work of an army of medical missionaries, church planters etc. must not go unnoticed or be devalued by the post-colonial debate. In this regard the theological educator seeking to understand her role in a global context, must take care not to reflect the post-colonial assumption that somehow most missionaries were colonial collaborators without contrasting this view with the valuable role played by so many. In my view, a mission history should parallel church history (or be significantly incorporated into the church history course) within the curriculum.

In general terms two trends have emerged in African Christian thought in the post-colonial era.<sup>419</sup> The one is a theological sympathy for those involved in the struggle for social justice and political reform. This form of theological thought was most often referred to in the 1970's as 'Black Theology'.<sup>420</sup> This expression of a theology of liberation is evident in many parts of the world. Since the collapse of totalitarian regimes such as the White Apartheid government in South Africa in the early 1990's this theology is not as in vogue as it was previously.<sup>421</sup>

The other trend has been the new assertiveness of African theologians exhibited in an exploration into Christianity and its relationship to the indigenous cultures of African people. The stress in this exploration is often associated with an emphasis on pre-Christian social and cultural traditions. For example, Mbiti contends that Christianity came to Africa long before it reached Europe. He then adds, rather defensively, that "Africa has as much right to Christianity as Europe and America, if not more".<sup>422</sup> On the surface, in a world that is increasingly sensitive to deconstructive processes in understanding history this statement appears legitimate. However, it is the final three words that, to me, are theologically flawed and illustrate the problem so often encountered in efforts made for meaningful dialogue between theologians in Western nations and those from emerging nations. Mbiti's statement could be interpreted to suggest some privileged or special position in the soteriological plan of God for those

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<sup>419</sup> As previously stated, I am using Africa illustratively here. With obvious culturally and politically specific differences, the major points would, in my opinion, be true in most of the emerging world, especially where there has been a colonial presence.

<sup>420</sup> For a review on books that deal with this issue see Carter, J. K., 'Contemporary Black Theology: A Review essay' in *Modern Theology*, vol. 19, no. 1, January 2003, pp. 117 – 138. See also Pinn, A. B., '1969 – 1999: Reflections on the Maturation of Black Theology' in *Reviews in Religion and Theology*, vol. 6, no. 1, February 1999, pp. 19 – 23.

<sup>421</sup> The exclusivity and racial bias of this theological expression has been challenged. See for example Haacker, K., 'One Gospel, Different People, Manifold Preaching: Paul's Missionary Strategy', *Missionalia*, vol. 33, no. 2, August 2005, pp. 249 – 261.

<sup>422</sup> Mbiti, J. S., *Introduction*, p. 182.

who are African. Whilst this might not be his intention and the emphasis of his argument is that Africa actually has a more historical connection to Christianity, for anyone to argue or suggest that any group has a greater right to the Gospel flies in the face of the widely accepted evangelical conviction that the Gospel is for all people everywhere. It is this kind of statement that causes Western scholars to be suspicious of a post-colonial defensiveness in their counterparts from emerging nations. It is exactly this defensiveness that often proves a hindrance to meaningful dialogue and diminishes the influence of scholars from emerging nations.

In summary, I have argued that there are several impediments to meaningful dialogue between theologians, scholars and theological educators in the West and their counterparts in emerging nations. Although probably more complex than the overview I have provided, I have argued that the problem is one that must be dealt with by both Western and African theologians and leaders. Western theologians must confront the cultural supremacy that so often characterizes their work whilst their counterparts in emerging nations must deal with the defensiveness that so often is associated with post-colonial thinkers.

In the context of theological education and ministry training how can there be heightened collaboration and a dialogue that is reciprocal and mutually beneficial? It is to this task that I now turn in the remainder of this chapter.



## **Dialogue in theological education: achieving mutual reciprocity**

There is an increasing realisation within the global Christian community that we need each other. Diversity is to be celebrated rather than being perceived as a threat.<sup>423</sup>

Mbiti states it succinctly by saying that African leaders should “be or remain authentically African while at the same time being ecclesiastically universal”.<sup>424</sup> This sentiment must be echoed from every part of the culturally diverse body of Christ.

In particular the realm of theological education and ministry training must take the issue of international dialogue seriously. This is not an easy challenge especially as it interfaces with the complex issues of pedagogy, validation (or accreditation) and the evaluation of academic work. It is equally as difficult in the bridging of academic theology and applied theology.

Perhaps no-one is quite as thorough in identifying unresolved issues related to globalisation and theological education as Max L. Stackhouse. He identifies the following as unresolved issues: Firstly, what is the proper relationship of Christianity to other religions?<sup>425</sup> Stackhouse, rather discouragingly reports that in his research many Christians are ignorant of other traditions, doubt their own faith, are not sure what they would convert anyone to and suspect that missions and evangelism are mostly a matter of cultural imperialism. It is easily argued that Stackhouse is writing out of a Christian

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<sup>423</sup> See for example O'Brien, W. R., 'The Power of Collaboration' in *Missiology: An International Review*, vol. 33, no. 1, January 2005, pp. 5 – 14. Additionally, Bush, L., 'The Power of Listening' in *Missiology*, vol. 33, no. 1, January 2005, pp. 17 – 27. It can be noted that this issue of *Missiology* carries the issue of international dialogue as a theme. In both these articles and others like them there is a call for more inclusive networks of trust and co-operation. Bush observes that it is time to listen to voices from emerging nations.

<sup>424</sup> Quoted by Bediako in *Theology*, p. 306.

<sup>425</sup> Stackhouse, M. L., *Apologia: Contextualization, Globalization, and Mission in Theological Education* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1988), p. 79.

tradition that includes many who would not consider themselves evangelical. However, the point to be made is that dialogue becomes obsolete if there is no understanding of the cultural and spiritual milieu in which Christians around the world have to live out their faith. If Christianity has no obvious distinctive it loses its mission and the reason for theological dialogue or mutual support in theological education falls away. Put positively, dialogue must assume the missionary nature of the Gospel and can only develop from this most basic of positions.

Secondly, Stackhouse points out the disagreement that exists between the relationship between the individual and the collective in theological education.<sup>426</sup> There must be agreement on our ecclesiology – how God wants human beings to live, work and pray together in community. If the theological training enterprise is going to have any legitimacy in the global context an ecclesiology must be identified that can remain biblically based and culturally relevant at the same time. Dialogue and mutual learning cannot be based upon the imposition of cultural forms but rather the recognition of the work of a supra cultural God in any society. In other words, the starting point for mutual learning must not be a specific cultural position but the greatness of God who is above culture.

Thirdly, the question of “inclusivity” is raised by Stackhouse. This relates to how the message of the Gospel relates to contexts. Of interest is the distinction that Stackhouse makes between contextualism and contextualisation.<sup>427</sup> In a global context, if there is going to be genuine dialogue and mutual learning the issue of how theology is applied to cultural contexts rather than existing above them must be a basis for the dialogue.

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<sup>426</sup> Stackhouse, M. L., *Apologia*, p. 80.

<sup>427</sup> Stackhouse, M. L., *Apologia*, p. 81.

Each participant is a valuable and equal partner irrespective of cultural practices. The cross-cultural dialogue will necessarily force the theological educator to review concepts of inclusivity, conversion and the role of the wider community and find ways of reconciling these new views to the biblical text.

The fourth unresolved issue raised by Stackhouse is the complex one of how religion and civilization are inter-related. If conversion creates a new community, how will this new community impact upon society at large? Although in some ways religion has grappled with this issue over the centuries it will inevitably invade the theological classroom again and again and must be managed sensitively by the educator.<sup>428</sup>

The final issue raised by Stackhouse has to do with the utility, validity, and reliability of theology as an intellectual activity in itself.<sup>429</sup> This raises the issue of whether theology can be understood outside of social theory, hermeneutics and applied spirituality.<sup>430</sup> Rather than being threatened by this, the educator should be encouraged to create cohesion within the curriculum.

I have engaged with Stackhouse not just to list the unresolved issues facing theological dialogue in the context of education and the global context but also to suggest that, consistent with much of the argument throughout this thesis, it is, in fact a missional

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<sup>428</sup> A helpful chapter in this regard is found in Lingenfelter, J. E., and Lingenfelter, S. G., *Teaching Cross-Culturally*, pp. 45 – 58. This chapter deals with formal schooling and traditional learning. Some practical advice is given on how to learn by questioning, frame culturally appropriate questions and bridge build from traditional learning methods to a formal schooling model. See also Choan-Seng Song ‘Christian Education in a World of Religious Pluralism’ in *Theological Approaches to Christian Education* (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1990), pp. 165 – 178. Although the context is Christian education rather than theological education the principles are transferable and useful.

<sup>429</sup> Stackhouse, M. L., *Apologia*, p. 82.

<sup>430</sup> A fuller engagement of these subjects is beyond this current work. However, I would refer to Bevans and Schroeder and their chapter on ‘Mission as Prophetic Dialogue’ in Bevans, S. B., and Schroeder, R. P., *Constants in Context*, pp. 348 – 395.

engagement which, more than anything else that assists the theological educator and ministry trainer to create cohesion in the curriculum and application to academic theology.<sup>431</sup> This forces the educator to ask again “What do we trust?” The thrilling potential of global engagement in theological education is the revelation of a supra-cultural God who capably builds his church wherever the truth is proclaimed and who is worthy of our trust. Irrespective of the unresolved issues that preoccupy Stackhouse and the faculty at Andover Newton, global co-operation in theological education must be encouraged in order to enrich and enhance the living theology of both the student and the teacher.

The final analysis is that global connectedness in theological education will produce a missional dynamic that must enhance the entire enterprise. In concluding this chapter I ask the question, what is the missional contribution to theological education?

Firstly, the missional focus on the Trinity deals forcefully with any theological predisposition to isolationism. When theological educators and those involved in ministry formation engage their task in a global context, the Trinitarian view of the Father sending the Son, the Son the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit and the Son sending the church becomes a theological imperative ensuring gracious engagement with those beyond our own cultural and linguistic world.<sup>432</sup> Conversely, if there is no missional dimension it is possible and even probable that theological education will become little

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<sup>431</sup> For further reading on cohesion in the curriculum see Ballard, P., ‘Reflections on Professional Theological Education today’ in *Theology*, vol. CVII, no. 839, September/October 2004, pp. 333 – 341. Especially consider the paragraph dealing with content and ethos on p. 339.

<sup>432</sup> See Hoffmeyer, J. F., ‘The Missional Trinity’, *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* vol. 40, no. 2, pp. 108 – 111.

more than the defence of a dogma or an effort to indoctrinate students in such a way as to maintain ecclesial tradition or sectarian bias.<sup>433</sup>

Secondly, a missional approach to theological education in a global context will inevitably lead to a greater focus on contextualization in the Western world. A capacity to contextualize the message in a cross-cultural context will certainly help theological educators become more cognisant of the challenges being faced in a postmodern, post-Enlightenment context. This will undoubtedly force a reassessment of our Enlightenment based pedagogical methods.

Thirdly, a global engagement, as we have seen, forces an applied theology especially in the area of ecclesiology. A missional approach to theological education in a global context should facilitate a meaningful connection between the educational process and the local church. This, in turn, should broaden the base of training to include those who might not be suited for formal or academic study but who, nevertheless have much to contribute to the life and ministry of the church.

## **Conclusion**

Having made a case for the importance of global engagement, the necessity of dialogue and the resultant missional dimension of the training and educational process I finish with some practical suggestions.

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<sup>433</sup> See Hiebert, P. G., 'Missiological Education for a Global Era' in Woodberry, J. D.; Van Engen, C. and Elliston, E. J., (eds.) *Missiological Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Mary-Knoll, Orbis, 1996), pp. 34 – 42.

Firstly, all theological educators should consider cross-cultural teaching opportunities. For those in Western nations this could include sabbatical periods, semesters abroad or even short term teaching assignments. For those in countries where financial resources are limited relationships should be built on trust, dealing with the issues of defensiveness previously discussed and opportunities sought for opportunities to teach in Western institutions.

Secondly, a constant review process should be in place in all institutions of theological education or ministry training to ensure that there is cohesion in the curriculum. A careful process must always be in place enabling students to see the importance of the curriculum in its entirety. Educators must remember that there are other role models for ministry apart from the theologian/teacher. These practitioners must be introduced to the student through ministry placements, non-validated intensive courses and chapel services.

Finally, a missional rationale must include cross-cultural ministry and dialogue. Issues of justice, social concern and human suffering must be confronted by the training community. Whether this is done by travel, inviting special representatives or specific educational programmes it must be done.

Theological education in a global context is both challenging and enriching. The educator and trainer should be positioned to maximise the benefits of globalisation through a missional commitment.

## CHAPTER 7

### THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM – A KEY INDICATOR

Although this thesis has not directly dealt with pedagogical issues such as curriculum structure and delivery, it has nevertheless, made an attempt to identify the key philosophical and conceptual areas that underpin the explicit curriculum. In the light of the previous two chapters it stands to reason that a deliberate disengagement from contemporary issues within society will result in an absence of related sociological and theological material from the taught curriculum. Likewise, an insular, non-global viewpoint on education and training will have its own effect (presumably negative) upon the structure of the teaching programme.

Theological educational and training institutions seem condemned to exist in an environment of persistent and normally negative critique.<sup>434</sup> Whilst many reasons could be posited for this, Perry W. H. Shaw suggests “that one of the primary factors is our ignorance of the profound impact of the hidden curriculum, and our consequent failure to address its potential negative impact”.<sup>435</sup> This is a strong statement and requires a response. Shaw is clearly suggesting that a significant component (what he calls the hidden curriculum) of the theological education and training programme is largely unobserved within many institutions of theological education and ministry training. He goes on to suggest that this “hidden curriculum” is pervasive within any institution and

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<sup>434</sup> Refer to Chapter 1. The seminal works highlighting this issue can be attributed to Edward Farley. See Farley, E., *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1983) and Farley, E., *The Fragmentation of Knowledge: Theological Education in the Church and the University* (Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1988)

<sup>435</sup> Shaw, P. H. W., ‘Training to Failure, Training to Success: The Hidden Curriculum of Seminary Education’, in *The Theological Educator*, Vol. 1.2. – September 2006, p. 3. Shaw is Professor of Christian Education at the Near East School of Theology, in Beirut, Lebanon.

therefore must be addressed. This chapter seeks to respond to statements made by those such as Shaw and, as has become the obvious pattern, to enquire as to whether a missional rationale must equally impact the hidden or silent curriculum as it does the explicit and published curriculum.

### **Defining the Hidden Curriculum**

The subject of the hidden curriculum is largely underrepresented in books written by theological educators.<sup>436</sup> However, this concept not entirely absent in literature relating to theological education and training. Writing within the context of cross-cultural teaching, Lingenfelter and Lingenfelter define the hidden curriculum as “the cultural learning that surrounds the much smaller stated curriculum of schooling”.<sup>437</sup> In other words the cultural agenda that supports and sustains the visible learning process is what constitutes, in part, the hidden curriculum. The Lingenfelters use examples such as equity, especially gender equity, in the classroom. They cite their own experience and research suggesting that boys are more often called upon to make a response to a question than girls. They go on to state that identifying the hidden curriculum is essential in order to teach the stated curriculum.<sup>438</sup> I argue that identifying the hidden curriculum is not enough. If this culture or ethos has not been established deliberately

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<sup>436</sup> For example, in conducting an online search using Google Scholar I found only one article that seriously addressed this issue. (Google Scholar search using the search line: ‘The hidden curriculum in theological education and training’. The search was conducted on 2nd June 2007). Those that do make reference to the hidden curriculum generally cite Philip Jackson’s seminal work. See Jackson, P., *Life in Classrooms* (New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968). Jackson is usually acknowledged as the first to coin the phrase ‘hidden curriculum’. Generally it is my impression that theological educators have, to a large extent, not addressed this issue. To be fair, the subject is addressed using other terminology. Generally it would be consistent to find most of this material broadly within the subject area referred to as ‘formation’. For the sake of this current research however I believe it will be more useful to use the term ‘hidden curriculum’ in its narrower sense as defined above.

<sup>437</sup> Lingenfelter, J. E., and Lingenfelter, S. G., *Teaching Cross-Culturally*, p. 28.

<sup>438</sup> Lingenfelter, J. E., and Lingenfelter, S. G., *Teaching Cross-Culturally*, p. 29.



or methodically it might need more than mere identification. It might need alteration or, in extreme situations, even eradication and rediscovery in some cases.

Shaw continues in a similar way in providing his definition. He defines this invisible yet prevalent dimension of the educational process as the potent sociological and psychological dimensions of education that are “usually caught rather than intentionally taught”.<sup>439</sup> Common to all institutions of learning are unwritten rules, traditions, encouraged or discouraged behaviours, values and leadership models. Some of these have been established over long periods of time. Almost every school child is deeply aware of invisible lines which must not be transgressed at risk of gaining the disfavour of peers or teachers. In the case of theological education and training I would argue that the same invisible agendas exist. Teaching styles, the use of humour, the use of titles for the teaching faculty and even the weighting of subjects within the explicit curriculum all contribute to defining the hidden curriculum.

A definition of the hidden curriculum would not be complete without some theological reflection. I would argue that within communities of faith there are not only the psychological and sociological dimensions to life and learning but equally a theological one. For example, Melanie A. May, in an article on tradition and education argues rather forthrightly against the Protestant predisposition that assumes a separation of Scripture and tradition. She makes her position clear by stating that this separation is “neither tenable nor desirable”.<sup>440</sup> The point that she makes is that the transmission of faith from one generation to another always involves tradition – cultural as well as ecclesial. It is simply naïve to presume that a learning community can exist without

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<sup>439</sup> Shaw, P. W. H., ‘Training to Failure’, p. 3.

<sup>440</sup> May, M. A., ‘Tradition and Education’ in Seymour, J. L. and Miller D. E., (eds.) *Theological Approaches*, p. 28.

some dimension of theological tradition. Any understanding of the text is reliant upon an expositor or interpreter who, in turn, will carry the influences of social or ecclesial traditions into the task of interpreting. Whilst a good teacher might well explore a variety of viewpoints on a doctrinal or biblical subject it is normally not possible to be completely objective.

Communicating faith is often subtly stated in the structure of the curriculum – unwittingly reflecting the hidden curriculum. Ellen Charry refers to “sapiential theology”. She defines this as an engaged knowing that “connects the whole person with God, forming and reforming our character”.<sup>441</sup> Her argument is that the neat divisions of the modern theological curriculum do not facilitate such a knowing. How can spirituality be taught separately from ethics or pastoral theology? This frustration is widely expressed. For example, S. Mark Heim, in appealing for a new literacy in theological education, calls firstly for a nurture of spiritual formation (Charry’s sapiential theology) as well as a reconfiguration of the elements taken to constitute the primary critical component of theological knowledge.<sup>442</sup> Put another way, Heim is arguing for a greater cohesion in the curriculum as a whole. As Walter E. Wyman, Jr. points out is exactly the source of growing criticism. He states that “among other defects, it obscures the unity of theological study”<sup>443</sup> He goes on to state that this fragmentation results in guilds or disciplines that not only bear little relation to each other but even threaten to lose their identity as theological disciplines altogether. Both Heim and Wyman represent an obvious frustration within the teaching community of

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<sup>441</sup> Charry, E. T., *By the Renewing of Your Minds: The Pastoral Function of Christian Doctrine* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1997), p. viii.

<sup>442</sup> Heim, S. M., ‘Renewing Ways of Life: The Shape of Theological Education’ in Petersen L. R. and Rourke, N. M., (eds.) *Theological Literacy*, p. 61

<sup>443</sup> Wyman, W. E., ‘The Historical Consciousness and the Study of Theology’ in Wheeler, B. G., and Farley, E., (eds.) *Shifting Boundaries*, p. 91

theological educators that suggest that there is an element missing within the overall conceptualisation of the task. It could be that a significant component of this missing element is the deliberate identification and conscientious management of the hidden curriculum.

In the context of defining the hidden curriculum this means that traditional structures and divisions within the theological curriculum must be re-evaluated in order to create cohesion within the curriculum at large. The issue of spiritual formation must be integrated within the greater whole or else it will certainly betray an ill considered approach to the task of educating and training people theologically. The classroom should be no less a sacred place than the chapel in the sense that spiritual discovery and formation should occur in both contexts.

My perspective would be that places of theological learning are often more dependent upon tradition than other communities of faith. More often than not it is a theological tradition traced back to the priorities of the founders. It is this very theological tradition that becomes, sometimes unwittingly, incorporated into the hidden curriculum and can, at times be more forceful in the learning experience than the taught and explicit curriculum.<sup>444</sup> Thus I would define the hidden curriculum as the combination of factors psychological, sociological and theological that constitute the ethos or culture of a learning community. In this sense it is not really hidden at all. The words “hidden

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<sup>444</sup> My own experience as a young theological student confirms this. The college I attended was led by a Principal who had strong convictions in regard to divine healing. The use of any medications was frowned upon and considered a sign of a lack of faith. In my first year I became very ill with a condition called trench mouth (the result of malnutrition and the use of dirty eating utensils according to the doctor) and in spite of a raging temperature and several days of feeling extremely ill, neither I nor any of my peers would report my sickness or call a doctor. The hidden curriculum was very forceful! Eventually a fellow student, who was a trained nurse, insisted on a doctor being called who, understandably, was angry at not being consulted earlier. Medication was prescribed and worked rapidly but no mention was ever made of the incident by the Principal or faculty.

curriculum” should be interpreted only in the sense in which they are juxtaposed with the explicit curriculum. Significantly, this force is either recognised, defined and managed (normally with positive outcomes) or is ignored and operates covertly (normally with negative outcomes).

### **The Hidden Curriculum – Training or Education?**

In almost any consideration of the task of the theological educator the issue of the primacy of formation or education is raised. I argue that the choice is not a luxury that we can afford and that, in fact, they are mutually complementary and not exclusive of each other. The cognitive mastery of the Bible should never be seen as any less a spiritually transforming force in the life of a student than times of concentrated personal prayer or corporate worship services. Sadly, this is not always true. Is it possible that the hidden curriculum can actually be a powerful tool in the hands of the educator and trainer to create cohesion between these two dimensions of training and education? My conviction is that it is, but only in so far as it is missional.

It is precisely at this point that the management of the hidden curriculum must begin. As long as an institution offering theological education insists on offering knowledge as some form of commodity to be consumed, digested and then often regurgitated in conformity to the teacher’s expressed opinion the whole exercise will fall sadly short of its goal. Arguing this point at some length James E. Loder refers to the “grammar of transformation”. He states that “transposing the transformational theme into a theologically educational context means that the theme becomes, not an ideology or

archetype, but a model”.<sup>445</sup> This is exactly what is meant by the hidden curriculum. Loder argues for an integration of the theological curriculum in such a way as to allow for continual transformation to occur. He expounds the sentence above by explaining that the model of transformation must be used as a guiding principle, that is both theologically and behaviourally sound, by which all the various “subdivisions and aspects of Christian education are to be defined, directed and evaluated”.<sup>446</sup> In other words, formation and theological learning, teaching and spiritual growth must all take place within a managed context allowing for more than education. An environment of mutual learning must be created and an expectation of life transformation inculcated into the ethos of the training or educational institution.<sup>447</sup> Shaw is more forthright in addressing this. He is rather scathing in his view on traditional teaching methods, in which the instructor sets the agenda, determines the syllabus and is the centre of attention. In this model the “unspoken assumption is that the students are ignorant, ‘open receptacles’ eagerly awaiting the answers to life’s questions”.<sup>448</sup> Although he acknowledges that this might appear to be an overly negative appraisal of existing teaching methods in seminaries and ministry training institutions he makes a valid point. Becoming a co-learner and fellow-journeyer is far more demanding of a teacher than simply delivering a lecture. Equally it ascribes a status to the student that would otherwise be absent in a “teacher centred” approach. A missional approach would resolve this conflict in that both instructor and student take the posture of preparing for a greater mission – the mission of God in the world.

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<sup>445</sup> Loder, J. E., ‘Transformation in Christian Education’ in Astley, J.; Francis, L. J., and Crowder, C., *Theological Perspectives on Christian Formation*, p. 279.

<sup>446</sup> Loder, J. E., ‘Transforming’, p. 279.

<sup>447</sup> I have opted throughout this work to use composite phrases such as ‘training and education’ deliberately. Although it might appear cumbersome, the weight of evidence is clearly to try to rid the theological college or programme of the artificial gap between the two. For further reading there are valuable essays in such books as Neuhaus, R. J., *Theological Education and Moral Formation* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1992) or Thistlethwaite, S. B. and Cairns, G. F., (eds.) *Beyond Theological Tourism: Mentoring as a Grassroots Approach to Theological Education* (Maryknoll, Orbis, 1994).

<sup>448</sup> Shaw, P. W. H., ‘Training to Failure’, p. 4.

It is my contention that addressing the artificial divisions between education and formation, schooling and learning, theology and mission will create a proactive hidden curriculum which can only enhance the classroom experience for the student. There are two prominent aspects to this. The first is to empower the teaching faculty to create ‘safe spaces’ in the classroom. If we are to create a reasonable level of objectivity in our classrooms and teach both the Bible and theology without an insistence upon tradition as mentioned above, then the classroom must be designated an area of learning, discussion and exploration.<sup>449</sup> Secondly, a conscious and deliberate effort must be made to create a missiological (missional) paradigm for learning. The purpose for this is to ensure that those who engage in theological analysis and ministry skills must always perceive themselves as those engaged in and enabling others to engage the mission of God.<sup>450</sup> In so doing perspective is gained forcing the ministry candidate away from minor points of contention into a ‘whole-life’ commitment to fulfilling the purposes of God for humankind.

### **The hidden curriculum – a means to silence the critics?**

Although it is impossible for a ministry training or theological institution to satisfy all the requirements of a constituency, the hidden curriculum might be an effective way to gain at least some measure of support from those who might otherwise be critically disposed. In a scathing critique of seminary-based training for missionaries, veteran missiologist Ralph Winter questions whether the training principles and premises of our

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<sup>449</sup> Cf. Lindbeck, G., ‘Spiritual Formation and Theological Education’ in Astley, J.; Francis, L. J., and Crowder, C., *Theological Perspectives*, pp. 285 – 302.

<sup>450</sup> A useful article supporting this position and worth referring to is Randall, I. M., ‘A Mode of Training: A Baptist Seminary’s Missional Vision’ in *Transformation: An International Dialogue on Mission and Ethics*, Vol. 24, No. 1, Jan. 2007, pp. 2 – 13.

schools line up with our goals.<sup>451</sup> Arguing for an apprenticeship model and stating that perhaps one of the serious problems in ministry training is the need institutions seem to have to merely survive, he then chastises theological training institutions for not having goals in key areas.<sup>452</sup> He suggests that seminaries are quick to enrol young people, many with their own collection of problems. His call is for people to enter seminary or ministry training with some experience of life first. This, he argues, often does not occur because institutions enrol students for reasons such as financial survival not just ministry preparedness. His main point is that the selection system and therefore the whole training programme fails because a training institution is not only made up of what is taught but, equally, who attends. It is difficult to gainsay Winter. It is true that financial considerations are high in the recruitment process. Critical mass is an almost illusive goal for those charged with running theological training programmes.<sup>453</sup> However, there is also something very idealistic about his view. Institutions of learning are not perfect places filled with perfect people. The task of the educator and the institution is to maximise the learning potential of a student enabling her to grow through the challenging issues of life and not succumb to them.

As noted, Winter's criticism is not without some merit and is certainly a prominent one.<sup>454</sup> The question is whether the hidden curriculum could go some way to dispel this

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<sup>451</sup> Winter, R. D., 'Evaluating Goals for Mission Training', in *International Journal of Frontier Missions*, Vol. 11:1, January 1994.

<sup>452</sup> Winter, R. D., 'Evaluating', p. 6.

<sup>453</sup> For a useful essay relative to this see Miller, G., 'Why the Seminary? A Historical Inquiry' in Barker, L. R., and Martin, B. E., (eds.) *Multiple Paths to Ministry: New Models for Theological Education* (Cleveland, The Pilgrim Press, 2004), pp. 117 - 137. Here Miller reasserts the theme of how seminaries respond to the general decline in church attendance and, in spite of a call for alternative models of training, the seminary remains the yardstick for all ministerial training. This essay provides helpful background and historical material for understanding the tensions within the theological education community and why educators might often appear defensive about their roles.

<sup>454</sup> I can draw from my own experience here. A constant criticism faced by Mattersey Hall relates to the calibre of students that we accept. I have had pastors chastise me for accepting students who did not have adequate pastoral references. Others have withdrawn financial support in protest of the College accepting

criticism. I think it can. If an institution or programme purports to offer theological training as a component part of ministry training then the hidden curriculum must be deliberately configured in such a way as to support this. This is achieved through a careful selection procedure, constant reinforcing of stated goals and a spiritual life programme that supports students in their journey to ministry. In this sense the hidden curriculum is not “hidden” at all but plays a prominent part in establishing priorities within the culture of the institution or training programme.

Another key area would be the provision of a recognised and well resourced exit programme. Winter argues strongly for extension type studies which offer the student an apprenticeship that might well last numbers of years.<sup>455</sup> Whilst this might be feasible in some situations it is not in every situation. Some students are certainly mature enough to take on ministry responsibilities immediately upon graduation. Others would benefit from an internship or apprentice style ministry situation in order to gain experience. Although most of this debate is beyond the scope of this work the point to be made is that the best place to address this within the ministry training institution is the hidden curriculum. Practical ministry opportunities, career counselling and networking within a group of churches in order to provide placements are not a part of the explicit curriculum but should figure prominently in the hidden curriculum. I am certain that effort exerted at this level will do much to allay the anxieties of the critics. Additionally it will create opportunity for more creative learning because the goal – the

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a certain student. Some of the fault is undoubtedly with the College supporting Winter’s assertion that Colleges at times take decisions for mainly financial reasons. As a precaution Mattersey Hall now has a clear policy that no student will be accepted without an adequate pastor’s reference.

<sup>455</sup> He cites the example of the Chilean Assemblies of God where it is possible to take up to 14 years to gain recognition as a pastor. Whilst this might sound like a good idea to those who have had a bad experience with a young and inexperienced pastor it is also open to older pastors abusing the services of younger people and keeping them in a subservient position in order to meet the needs of the older pastor. See Winter, R. D., ‘Evaluating’, p. 7.



mission of God, is more important than the process. This leads to the next advantage of a clearly defined and well managed hidden curriculum.

### **The hidden curriculum – accommodating creative learning and critical thinking?**

The struggle to maintain a healthy balance between spiritual formation and critical engagement is often difficult within the theological training institution. Writing from a Pentecostal perspective (where the balance has possibly been more difficult than other contexts) Wonsuk Ma traces Biblical Studies in the Pentecostal tradition through three eras.<sup>456</sup> He points out that the first era of Pentecostal biblical studies which spans the time period from the early beginnings of the Pentecostal movement to the early 1970's, was characterised by a literalistic approach to Scripture (often as a counter-movement to the rising influence of biblical criticism), non-critical devotional reading, a stress on Luke-Acts narratives, an apologetic use of Scripture and an eschatological/mission orientation.<sup>457</sup> To a large extent this cast a mould for the teaching of Biblical studies within this tradition. This is supported by William Kay in his book on *Pentecostals in Britain*. He discusses the hermeneutical issues that Pentecostal scholars are facing in bridging a non-critical, predominantly devotional approach to Scripture with a more critical methodology. He compares the approach of David Petts, former Principal of Mattersey Hall College, who discusses how doctrine might be derived from the narrative portions of the New Testament and Gordon Fee, another well known Pentecostal scholar who attempts to lay down rules about "the transformation of

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<sup>456</sup> Wonsuk Ma, 'Biblical Studies in the Pentecostal Tradition' in Dempster, M. W.; Klaus, B. D., and Petersen, D. (eds.) *The Globalization of Pentecostalism: A Religion Made to Travel* (Oxford, Regnum Books, 1999), pp. 52 – 69. Note: This is one essay amongst five under the section heading 'Changing Times in Pentecostal Scholarly Reflection' all of which, to some extent, address the issue of finding compatibility between scholarly reflection or critical engagement and spirituality.

<sup>457</sup> Wonsuk Ma, 'Biblical Studies', pp. 54 – 55.

historical precedents into experiential norms”.<sup>458</sup> The relationship between these two positions clearly creates some tension. It is this tension that is often represented as the possible incompatibility between ministry formation and critical engagement.

What is true within the Pentecostal tradition is largely present in virtually any institution preparing people for ministry, especially those that are more evangelical in persuasion. However, Claire Matthews McGinnis, Associate Professor of Hebrew Bible at Loyola College, Maryland, explores this tension from within a Roman Catholic context. She argues that the Benedictine rule, a sixth-century document that emphasizes that a monastery is a school for the Lord’s service whose pupils “run on the path of God’s commandments”, their “hearts overflowing with the inexpressible delight of love”, is responsible not only for an enduring positive influence within monasteries but also establishes a goal for the laity for it describes a lifestyle that should be shared by all Christians.<sup>459</sup> Note the dual emphasis in the Benedictine rule to both run on the path of God’s commandments as well as have hearts overflowing with the inexpressible delight of love. It is this duality of function expressed in the rule that has the ability to engage the laity with the role of monks in a monastery as well as have an enduring impact on the successful function of the Benedictine monastery. This has relevance to my argument that the hidden curriculum can, in fact help accommodate creative learning and critical scholarship. In other words, the Benedictine rule was and remains to monasteries what the hidden curriculum should be to contemporary institutions or programmes of theological training and learning.

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<sup>458</sup> Kay, W. K., *Pentecostals in Britain* (Carlisle, Paternoster, 2000), p. 116.

<sup>459</sup> McGinnis, C. M., ‘Yea, the Work of our Hands, Establish Thou it: On Stability in the Academic Life’ in Jones, G. L., and Paulsell, S., *The Scope of our Art: The Vocation of the Theological Teacher* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2002), p. 173. The article argues for stability and longevity in the task of teaching theology – perhaps another expression of the hidden curriculum?

I argue that, if the hidden curriculum strongly emphasises the missional goals of the theological training institution, it purchases a certain freedom for critical engagement within the institution. Put another way, the fact that an institution exists for the fulfilment of the mission of God in the earth seriously conditions both the approach to learning and the external perception of that approach. A clearly identified missional rationale within the hidden curriculum allows both faculty and students to explore objectively the writings of scholars from a variety of persuasions without threat. Theology ceases to be merely a reflection of an interpretation of the narrative but takes on a consideration of historical precedents without the fear that this will lead to a distortion of faith. Academic pursuit remains the means to an end and a mechanism for mission.

The case has been made for the fact that, whether identified or not, the hidden curriculum exists in any institution of theological learning and that it can have a positive role if it is obviously missional and, by contrast, a detrimental role if it is either not missional in nature or not well managed. The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to identifying some of the tools by which a missional hidden curriculum can be introduced and sustained within a theological training institution or programme.

### **1. The establishment and sustenance of mentoring and spiritual formation**

This ideal must obviously form the priority in an integrative approach to theological education and should be the starting point from which other strategies for implementing a proactive and missional hidden curriculum can spring.<sup>460</sup> Dennis M. Campbell from

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<sup>460</sup> See Shaw, P. W. H., 'Training to Failure', p. 6.

Duke University, suggests that one of the major problems associated with developing strong moral formation within American seminaries is their setting and culture. Whilst most evangelical seminaries in the United States began with strong Christian affirmations, by the end of the twentieth century many had grown into universities. Divinity schools thus became a part of the wider institution as is evidenced at places such as Harvard, Yale, Boston, Chicago, Duke, Vanderbilt and others. Campbell then goes on to state that “the position of divinity schools in modern secular universities characterized by relativism and materialism is ambiguous”.<sup>461</sup> He argues that this setting for institutions of theological training creates a crisis in teaching authority related to moral formation because “it renders the seminary vulnerable if it seeks to exert leadership with regard to the way faculty and students should live”.<sup>462</sup> This is a conflict indeed. If purpose and practice cannot coexist the entire enterprise is undermined. Arguably the same dynamics occur anywhere that an accredited or validated course is offered – to a greater or lesser degree of course. The involvement of authorities representing higher education or the financial involvement of the State at any level is inevitably going to create tension in the delivery of a mentoring programme that has a high moral and overtly Christian standard associated with it. Is this one possible cause for the apparent lack of such mentoring programmes within many institutions of theological training?

Without appearing superficial or naïve, I believe there is simply no other alternative but to find creative ways around this predicament. Without compromising the requirements of the higher education system, whether it is a theological department within a

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<sup>461</sup> Campbell, D. M., ‘Theological Education and Moral Formation: What’s Going on in Seminaries Today?’ in Neuhaus, J. R., (ed.) *Theological Education and Moral Formation* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1992), p. 13.

<sup>462</sup> Campbell, D. M., ‘Theological Education’, p. 15.

university or an institution that offers validated courses in association with a university, there are creative ways to ensure that those preparing for ministry can have a mentoring programme that produces both spiritual formation and moral direction. The applications procedure is a good place to start. Application forms, student handbooks and other similar documents should have a carefully described moral expectation.

Thereafter, as Shaw suggests students might well be appointed to a mentor who would hold the student accountable for “the development and integration of all the dimensions of the personality in the process of learning”.<sup>463</sup> This concept is developed to a much more significant degree in a book edited by William T. Pyle and Mary Alice Seals. Various contributors suggest a means to provide field-based ministry supervision. Whilst some of the contributions relate to supervision after graduation from the ministry training programme the process is worth careful consideration – though beyond the scope of this present work.<sup>464</sup>

It is important to point out the distinction between mentoring and pasturing. Whilst mentoring should certainly include a component of pastoral care, it is very distinct from a pastoral care programme. To some extent it must force the student out of comfort zones, confront introversion and selfishness and be a constant reminder that those preparing for ministry do not exist for themselves. Perhaps the reason why people are sceptical of mentoring initiatives is because of a lack of this distinction. After describing as a case study a mentoring programme amongst the underprivileged in a Chicago neighbourhood, George F. Cairns of the Chicago Theological Seminary addresses this very issue with this statement:

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<sup>463</sup> Shaw, P. W. H., ‘Training to Failure’, p. 6.

<sup>464</sup> See Pyle, W. T. and Seals, M. A., (eds.) *Experiencing Ministry Supervision: A Field-Based Approach* (Nashville, Broadman and Holman, 1995).

Mentoring is not simply the transformation of individuals' ideas about the other. It involves systematic shifts in our full-bodied understanding of what it is to be a human being. In our tradition, the normative mentor for becoming fully human is Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>465</sup>

This casts a very clear light on what mentoring in the context of theological education should really be. It must be designed to lead students into life transforming situations in which they are forced to confront the selfishness of the societal norms increasingly prevalent in a globalized world, deal with materialism, confront hedonism and apply the morality that a true reflection of Christian theology should produce. I contend that it is this kind of mentoring that should be at the core of the hidden curriculum. Of course, it is very likely that, if adopted, it will also become a part of the explicit curriculum too.

Although methods and mechanisms for mentoring will differ from institution to institution, the principles must remain the same. Applications procedures, the active involvement of the faculty in providing the mentoring process, life transformation as a constant goal and answerability processes are the essential ingredients. Although from a slightly different context the metaphor of the circulatory system used by R. Paul Stevens is helpful in concluding these thoughts on a sustainable mentoring commitment to theological and ministry training students. Relating the church to the gathering a dispersion of blood in the human body he points out how important it is not to see these as two distinct functions. The church gathered (in our context, the classroom) cannot be different from the church dispersed (the life-transformation oriented mentoring process) any more than the heart and lungs can be separated in their function. The metaphor goes on to show that the blood gathered is cleansed and oxygenated and dispersed or

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<sup>465</sup> Cairns, G. F., 'Mentoring for Transformation' in Thistlethwaite, S. B., and Cairns, G. F., (eds.) *Beyond Theological Tourism*, p. 148. This book is very helpful in describing a number of mentoring contexts and thus stands in stark contrast to standard mentoring models that are more skills oriented than life-transformation oriented.

sent out it fights diseases and energizes.<sup>466</sup> The theological training institution or programme that can institute a mentoring programme that achieves these goals would be successful indeed.

## **2. Remembering rightly – the place of forgiveness and grace<sup>467</sup>**

Whilst atonement, grace and forgiveness should be recurring themes both in the biblical studies as well as the theological areas of the explicit curriculum, I propose that they should figure equally prominently within the hidden curriculum. An ethos established on a constant commitment to live out the great Christ-like virtues of forgiveness and acceptance is one of the only ways to authenticate the theological learning experience.

For this ethos to be established however, takes much more than reinforcing Christian teaching on forgiveness and leading the student through processes of personal forgiveness. It must include what Volf calls “remembering rightly in a violent world”.<sup>468</sup> Volf makes his position clear. He states that when we remember the past, “it is not only past; it breaks into the present and gains a new lease on life”.<sup>469</sup> He says this in the context of learning to forgive in such a way as to still love the wrongdoer but do so rightly.<sup>470</sup> This has strong echoes in the work undertaken in South Africa by

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<sup>466</sup> Stevens, R. P., *The Abolition of the Laity: Vocation, Work and Ministry in a Biblical Perspective* (Milton Keynes, Paternoster, 1999), p. 211.

<sup>467</sup> I have used this phrase from the sub-title of a book by Miroslav Volf. See Volf, M., *The End of Memory: Remembering Rightly in a Violent World* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2006).

<sup>468</sup> Volf, M., *The End*.

<sup>469</sup> Volf, M., *The End*, p. 21.

<sup>470</sup> Some of this book is written out of Volf’s own experiences of persecution under a communist regime. His quest is to allow his own experience to lead to theological resources that make memories a wellspring for healing rather than a source for deepening pain and animosity. Although way beyond the scope of this work I believe this is a conversation that needs to be brought into the theological training institute. I am not referring to a superficial theology of ‘healing of the memories’ but rather a serious theological reflection on what it means to forgive whilst not negating justice. Our theology teaches us that God combines in his character both justice and mercy, forgiveness and judgement. The future minister must

Archbishop Desmond Tutu. He was called upon to lead the gruelling work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. In his book on this process he devotes an entire chapter to asking the question, “What about justice?”<sup>471</sup> In the opening sentence to this chapter he states the dilemma of forgiving whilst ensuring it is done rightly. He says “many have often felt that the TRC (Truth and Reconciliation Commission) process was immoral in that it could be said to encourage impunity”<sup>472</sup> It is this conflict that must be confronted within the hidden curriculum. Those responsible for establishing the culture of the training institute must present the issues of past wrongdoing, corporate and individual, to ministry candidates. Then processes must be found to help the student to live with true forgiveness. Again Volf is helpful. He draws the distinction between revenge and justice. He states that revenge does not say “An eye for and eye”, but rather “If you take my eye, I will blow your brains out”.<sup>473</sup> He then uses Romans 12 to exhort that we should not seek to avenge ourselves and, even more, not curse those who mistreat us. He concludes his exposition on vengeance and justice, forgiveness and justice by asking why we, as Christians forgive instead of giving in to vengeance or pursuing retributive justice. The answer he provides is:

Because in Christ, God overcame our sin and re-established communion with us by forgiving sin. We do as God did. We forgive because “recalling” the offenders from sin matters more to us than “avenging” wrongs we have suffered.

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engage this beyond the classroom – thus my reason for raising it as a part of the discussion regarding the hidden curriculum.

<sup>471</sup> Tutu D., *No Future Without Forgiveness* (New York, First Image, 2000), p. 49.

<sup>472</sup> Tutu D., *No Future*, p. 49.

<sup>473</sup> Volf, M., *Free of Charge: Giving and Forgiving in a Culture Stripped of Grace* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2005), p. 159. (I indulge myself at this point, using a footnote, to appeal to all theological educators to take Volf seriously and initiate processes by which to take theological students beyond the deeply entrenched mentalities of revenge and recompense into the liberty of genuine forgiveness and Christ-like love for all people. For example, a student championing the invasion of Iraq and the ongoing suffering there as some magnanimous deed of the West, extending democracy to the poor people of the Middle East, must surely distort the message of Christ regarding Empire and the fact that His Kingdom is not of this world).



We forgive because “saving” our enemies and making friends out of them matters more to us than punishing them.<sup>474</sup>

It can only be imagined how effective the study of theology would be if approached with an unequivocal commitment to love as God loves. A theology devoid of an understanding of forgiveness in the face of exploitation, the potential friendship of former enemies and the freedom to love those that persecute us can never be truly Christian. The hidden curriculum can and must accommodate a commitment to walk in this kind of love. The question is how?

I suggest several possible strategies. Firstly, chapel or devotional times should include the opportunity to engage people with radically different viewpoints to our own. Refugees, aid workers, and leaders of other religious groups should be exposed to Christian students preparing for the ministry. Students must be exposed to those from the margins. The antiseptic world of middle class theological students must be invaded from time to time with the harsh realities of human suffering.

Secondly, a careful analysis must be made of nationalistic influences within a training institution. We are called to build the kingdom of God not our nation. In a post-colonial world the hidden curriculum must deliberately deal with any vestiges of empire. In summarising their book Brian J. Walsh and Sylvia C. Keesmaat make it plain that their agenda is not to call for a Christian state because this would inevitably lead to yet another violent and abusive regime.<sup>475</sup> The calling of Christians is, in fact to

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<sup>474</sup> Volf, M., *Free of Charge*, p. 162.

<sup>475</sup> Walsh B. J., and Keesmaat, S. C., *Colossians Remixed: Subverting the Empire* (Downers Grove, InterVarsity Press, 2004), p. 187. This book is very helpful in addressing the issue of cultural elitism and Paul’s use of his letter to the Colossian believers to identify rather than justify the dominating political

resist cultural and economic domination, to overcome the spirit of empire and to establish the rule of God in the earth. This is missional.

Thirdly, and with some caution, time must be taken to deconstruct history and view the development of our doctrine through the eyes of the oppressed. A good example of this is found in Don Miller's book. He speaks of his experience as a student at Reed University where he and a group of students constituted a very small Christian minority. In times of fellowship together they felt strongly challenged that the "correct place to share our faith was from a place of humility and love, not from a desire for power".<sup>476</sup>

During a festival at Reed University this small group of Christian students decided that they would establish a confessional where they, rather than others would do the confessing. This was their commitment:

We are going to confess to them. We are going to confess that, as followers of Jesus, we have not been very loving; we have been bitter, and for that we are sorry. We will apologize for the Crusades, we will apologize for televangelists, we will apologize for neglecting the poor and the lonely, we will ask them to forgive us, and we will tell them that in our selfishness, we have misrepresented Jesus on this campus.<sup>477</sup>

The impact was significant. However, I wonder if the greater impact was within the lives of the students who had discovered the power of confronting evil and seeking and giving forgiveness. There is a growing genre of literature that can help both leaders and

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and economic power of Rome. It thus has a clear message to contemporary Christians who might be tempted to justify nationalistic or cultural power.

<sup>476</sup> Miller, D., *Blue Like Jazz: Nonreligious Thoughts on Christian Spirituality* (Nashville, Nelson, 2003), p. 116. (This is a popular book but would be helpful to theological educators needing to bridge generational gaps).

<sup>477</sup> Miller, D., *Blue*, p. 118.

students in taking this journey into forgiveness.<sup>478</sup> The point remains, a missional dimension within the hidden curriculum will force an embrace of forgiveness and grace at both an individual and a corporate level. This must have the effect of authenticating the whole enterprise of theological education and training.

### **3. Having a clear commitment to issues of equity and justice**

Again, as in so much of this discussion on the hidden curriculum, there are obvious points at which the explicit curriculum and the hidden curriculum overlap. It would be hoped that an institution offering theological education and ministry training would include some material in an applied theology part of the curriculum to deal with equity issues especially racism and sexism. However, it is also true that key issues such as this are often better espoused in the hidden curriculum than relegated to a formal part of the learning process. Thus my proposal is that the hidden curriculum, expressed through attitudes, practices and values, primarily of the faculty and leaders, is an ideal way to address the complex issues related to equity and justice. A commitment at this level will certainly help ensure a missional content to the hidden curriculum.

The hidden curriculum reinforces the conviction that Christianity must become a way of life and not just a doctrinal belief. Miguel A. De La Torre, Professor of ethics at Hope College, Michigan makes this point by stating “if simple belief is all that is required for salvation, then complicity with structures that perpetuate oppression is inconsequential

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<sup>478</sup> See for example Wright, N. T., *Evil and the Justice of God* (Downers Grove, InterVarsity Press, 2006); Volf, M., *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1996) and Baker-Fletcher, G. K., *Dirty Hands: Christian Ethics in a Morally Ambiguous World* (Minneapolis, Fortress Press 200). Note: The last of these has a chapter on the three way synthesis of Love-Power-Justice espoused by Martin Luther King and relevant to the discussion above. See pp. 88 – 94. See also Brueggemann, W., *Deep Memory, Exuberant Hope: Contested Truth in a Post-Christian World* (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2000).

to the Christian life”.<sup>479</sup> This statement reinforces exactly the role of the hidden curriculum – it is to take the discussion of theology from a framework of belief into an applied area where belief and lifestyle become compatible and, more importantly ever more the same. De La Torre is right in suggesting that if this does not occur then the Christian, and in this case the theology student, can live in a duplicitous way believing in private and ignoring gross injustice in public. In my opinion this will create an intolerable tension that will result in the student either becoming radicalised on the one hand or loosing their faith entirely on the other.

Perhaps one of the most obvious areas for checking whether our belief system is translating into lifestyle is when it comes to equity and fairness. De La Torre classifies societal forces that tend to dehumanize as racism, classism and sexism.<sup>480</sup> As a Christian ethicist he promotes the theology that the hope of those marginalised by these dehumanizing forces is the re-creation of relationships through the love of God. It is only through these re-created relationships that healing, wholeness and liberation can be found. Traci C. West concurs with De La Torre and argues for a methodology of Christian social ethics in which discussions begin, not in a broad, philosophical concept but rather in actual engagement with the concrete realities of those who are socially and economically marginalised. She points out that these are subjects and areas that cause discomfort and so are often retained within the confines of the classroom, if at all.<sup>481</sup>

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<sup>479</sup> De La Torre, M. A., *Doing Christian Ethics From the Margins* (Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 2004), p. xiii.

<sup>480</sup> De La Torre, M. A., *Doing Christian*, p. 6.

<sup>481</sup> West, T. C., *Disruptive Christian Ethics: When Racism and Women's Lives Matter* (Louisville, Westminster John Knox, 2006), p. xi. For further reading in this area cf. Baker-Fletcher, G. K., *Dirty Hands*, p. 99.

Whilst all of these areas are way beyond the scope of this thesis they must, at least be noted. As already pointed out, an institution dedicated to theological study and ministerial formation becomes a community of faith. The question must be asked by those responsible for these communities as to how the philosophical discussions in the classroom can be translated into concrete principles within life. There are some specific community statements that would at least, to some degree, assist in presenting a hidden curriculum that helps students in their journey towards justice and equity.

Firstly, there is the need for good gender representation within the institution. In a series of interviews with Bible College Principals in the U.K. the issue of gender equality in the governance structure of their colleges was important to the vast majority.<sup>482</sup> Gender equality will appear to be an empty wish if it does not begin within the governing body. Of course, the same is true for racial representation.

Secondly, this same commitment to racial and gender equality should be seen within the faculty and teaching staff. Whilst this is not always an easy thing to achieve it should be reflected at the very least within policy and implemented wherever possible.

Thirdly, all other policies and practices should be carefully scrutinised to ensure that there are no remnants of gender or racial bias from an earlier era in the life of the institution.

In many instances this process might require theological reflection and, in the case of denominational institutions, meaningful engagement with denominational leaders.

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<sup>482</sup> The full results of this survey and interview process are presented in detail in the following chapter. In seven out of nine interviews the issue of female representation on the governing body was considered very important. In two instances the gender mix on the governing body was always as close to being equal as possible. The same issue was important in regard to a racial mix on the governing body. Although considered very important all principals interviewed felt that they had not succeeded as much as they would have liked in finding this racial mix.

However, a missional component within the hidden curriculum must and will confront inequity, injustice and the marginalisation of people whether because of their gender or race. Hopefully, the outcome will be the establishment of equitable systems and equal opportunities for all who are a part of this great mission of God in the earth.<sup>483</sup>

#### **4. Establish compatibility between the hidden and the explicit curricula**

The final strategy that I wish to recommend for implementing a successful hidden curriculum is to ensure that there are no obvious areas of conflict between it and the explicit curriculum. This means starting with the hidden curriculum. The values, goals and priorities of any ministry training or theological institution have to precede the development of the curriculum. Without this important exercise it is almost inevitable that conflict will occur between the two expressions of the curriculum. This will be confusing to both faculty and students alike. A helpful contribution to this proposal is offered by Craig R. Dykstra. He states quite plainly that there is no possibility of Christian education where there is no church. This follows a lengthy description of the church being a redemptive community.<sup>484</sup> Stated in the context of integrating the hidden and the explicit curricula this means that there can be no successful theological education, no matter how rigorous the academic process, if it is not supported by a compatible hidden curriculum.

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<sup>483</sup> I have not broached the more complex issue of sexual orientation. This is a moral issue not only beyond the scope of this thesis but also beyond the scope of this immediate discussion. Suffice it to say that my position is that an ethic of equality and justice will not supersede essential morality as understood by Christians who seek to understand the Bible and apply its message to today's complex social milieu.

<sup>484</sup> Dykstra, C. R., 'No Longer Strangers: The Church and Its Educational Ministry' in Astley, J., Francis, L. J., and Crowder, C., *Theological Perspectives*, p. 117. This discussion takes place under the heading 'Christian education for participation in redemptive activity' which, although it does not address the issue of curriculum structure per se is pertinent to the discussion above. I would also refer the reader to Nipkow, K. E., 'Theological and Educational Concepts: Problems of Integration and Differentiation' in Astley, J., Francis, L. J., and Crowder, C., *Theological Perspectives*, pp. 14 – 30. This article is very helpful in supporting the position that all aspects of the theological training programme must be carefully integrated.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has opened many areas for further discussion. As a practitioner I am fully aware of the danger of having a subtle, poorly identified hidden curriculum undermining the impact of an otherwise good training programme. At times the background reading for this chapter has taken me into areas that have not only been personally challenging but have made it even more evident to me how under-represented this discussion is. In the final analysis it is clear that theological educators would do well carefully to assess the unspoken and unwritten elements of the programme they offer and then be committed to investing both resources and time to ensuring that this, often hidden dimension of the theological training enterprise is well addressed, adjusted accordingly and used to enhance the important work of training future Christian leaders and ministers.

**PART 2**

**PRAXIS – AN ANALYSIS OF A “BRITISH WINDOW” OF  
THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING**



## CHAPTER 8

### A MISSIONALE RATIONALE FOR THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION – A WINDOW ON THE UNITED KINGDOM

#### **Part 1: Methodology and background**

In many ways the previous chapters of this thesis could each describe an essential component in ensuring a missional motivation and drive within the enterprise of providing an effective theological education and ministry training. For example, a missional motivation within the theological training programme requires educators to become familiar with the debate thus far. An ignorance of the struggles, challenges and opportunities of those involved in similar pursuits must surely disadvantage an institution or training programme in formulating a relevant and effective delivery for its learning outcomes.<sup>485</sup>

The same could be said in regard to the whole process of conceiving theological training in the first place. Throughout this thesis I have argued for a renewed commitment amongst theological educators to the discipline and process of conceptualisation. Pedagogical methodology must follow conceptualisation and not the other way around. I have shown the frustration felt by those teaching theology when the curriculum is developed along classical lines of classifying the curriculum into four or five main components and teaching these without a clearly defined cohesion. Thus chapter two

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<sup>485</sup> See Chapter 1 above.

provides another layer in defining exactly what is meant by a missional rationale, namely a conceptual underpinning of the entire process of training and education.

The constant battle to reconcile formation and scholarship is another central component in the endeavour to build a missional rationale into theological education and training. There is an almost universal agreement that training must include an educational process of some kind which, most would agree, cannot exist without some academic rigour and assessable learning method. However, as has been shown, there is little agreement on how these two interdependent yet seemingly disparate parts of the training process can coexist. An effort was made in chapter 3 to show that a missional commitment on behalf of both educators and students would go a long way to bringing these two elements together.

The same pattern continues in regard to the importance of connectedness in the training process. Connectedness at every level – internally, locally and globally is a certain sign of a missional rationale at work. In contrast, isolationism of any kind, theological or relational appears exclusive and thus a non-missional rationale in support of the training programme. This is what chapter 4 set out to achieve. A college that is connected or a training programme that has obvious interface with its community and the world is a sure sign of a missional rationale running through the conceptual layers of such an institution or training initiative.

Chapter 5 took some necessary steps into the issues related to contemporary and increasingly global culture. My argument is clear. A conscious or unconscious disengagement of the issues that run obviously through contemporary culture will

disenfranchise the theological student and force introversion on the training process. This, in turn, will rob the process and its projected outcomes of any serious ministry objective, resulting in a non-missional minister who has engaged himself or herself in little more than an investigation of dead orthodoxy.

The global context for theological education and training was the next area of engagement. Although the connection between the global context and a missional commitment should be more obvious than other areas discussed, evidence was presented that this is, in fact, not always the case. Western theologians and academics have enjoyed benefits not always enjoyed by their counterparts in emerging nations. By contrast, church growth and expansion in these emerging nations is often at a tempo far exceeding that in Western nations. Reconciling practice and theory as described in both the West and the emerging world is a missional function. The voices of those who have been largely marginalised must be brought to the table of theological education and training. This does not, of course, mean some form of affirmative action on behalf of Western theological educators. It means the recognition of peers, the opportunities of global engagement and the joy of seeing the power of Christ's gospel at work in every culture and amongst a multiplicity of ethnic and linguistic groups. This indeed is missional.<sup>486</sup>

The hidden curriculum was the next area to be investigated and shown to have a major function in accommodating a missional rationale within theological training and education. An effort was made to propose some meaningful strategies in implementing a deliberate and conscious commitment to establishing a culture and climate that

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<sup>486</sup> See Chapter 6 above.

ensured that those being trained were very aware of the ultimate objective which, in the language of chapter 7, is a transformed individual who emerges from the training process spiritually, emotionally and socially developed so as to have a long-term and successful ministry.

I have provided this summary to introduce the purpose and projected outcomes for this chapter. Even a cursory overview of the sources quoted in the previous chapters will show that most of the literature on this subject, certainly in the form of major works, is North American in its origin. There are reasons for this, not least being the commercial viability of seminaries in the United States. This problem has not been as evident in the U.K. because of the closer association between institutions providing theological education and large, mainly secular universities. The question however is whether there are, in fact, similar issues in parts of the world not well represented in the literature? This chapter is intended to endeavour to find this out within the British context. This is not to say that the British context is essentially typical but it is one window that is worth investigating. Thus the goal of this chapter is to discover whether or not the identification of issues discussed in the previous chapters of this thesis and the proposals made in terms of addressing these issues are applicable in the life and practice of theological training institutions within a set geographical and cultural context. In this instance the context is the United Kingdom (excluding Northern Ireland).

## **Methodology**

As this thesis has concentrated primarily on the role and responsibility of the educator in developing a missional component within theological training, it is evident that this is

where any research should be centred. Equally it has been important to me to be prepared to interpret my research rather than use a method that would presuppose a predicted outcome. As Francis C. Dane points out, researchers' biases affect the direction of their research.<sup>487</sup> I wanted a research method that would not allow for a trajectory that would simply affirm or confirm my previous writing and findings. According to Hillary Radnor, an educational researcher, there must be "an explicit recognition of the researcher being engaged in the act of interpretation from the beginning of the research process to the end".<sup>488</sup> This dual need to concentrate my research on the educator (and principally, those involved in the senior leadership of theological training institutions and programmes), as well as to interpret my findings accurately, led me to decide upon an interview process rather than another empirical method such as questionnaires. Additionally, this afforded two other benefits. The first was the opportunity to visit several institutions, meet with leaders and, in some cases faculty, become familiar with facilities available at different institutions and become involved in conversations beyond the scope of the questionnaire.<sup>489</sup> The second benefit was that of immediate feedback.<sup>490</sup>

Interviews were arranged, generally at the institution represented by the interviewee, and I asked for an unbroken hour of their time. Although each respondent understood

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<sup>487</sup> Dane, F. D., *Research Methods* (Pacific Grove, Brooks/Cole, 1990), p. 10.

<sup>488</sup> Radnor, H., *Researching your Professional Practice: Doing Interpretive Research* (Buckingham, Open University Press, 2002), p. vii.

<sup>489</sup> This was, by far, the most positive secondary outcome of the exercise. In most instances mutual learning opportunities arose, invitations for further consultations were offered and many practical insights gained which would otherwise not normally be afforded someone like me.

<sup>490</sup> See Frey J. H., and Oishi, S. M., *How to Conduct Interviews by Telephone and in Person* (Thousand Oaks, Sage, 1995), p. 3. Here the authors point out that although surveys done by interview are usually more expensive, 'surveyors will choose them over self-administered questionnaires because of the role the interviewer can play in enhancing respondent participation, guiding the questioning, answering the respondent's questions, and clarifying the meaning of responses'. By comparison to a self-administered questionnaire the interview survey results in an almost 100% participation rate with immediate feedback. It was these factors that also made me decide that an interview survey would best serve the needs of my intended research.

the reason for my visit I did not divulge the questions I would be asking until the interview. Each interview lasted on average thirty five minutes. Three interviews were conducted over the phone. Although, I will address ethical issues relative to the interviews later in this chapter, each interview was recorded with the permission of the interviewee. An executive summary of the interview was written out within a maximum of two days following the interview and recorded copies kept for further clarity. In addition to the interview I requested a pack of all current literature produced by the various institutions. This generally included a prospectus (although I have chosen to use websites for the most current information), additional course information and, in some instances, a newsletter. These pieces of literature have informed my research but only to a limited degree. My analytical method will be discussed in the next chapter.

### **The participants**

The first challenge was to identify a population that could be surveyed and then to establish a valid sample or subset of that population. This meant establishing a sampling frame from which to draw a sample of potential interview respondents.<sup>491</sup> In the U.K. the starting point in terms of a population that could be surveyed was the Association of Bible College Principals (A.B.C.P.). This association draws together the Principals of twenty six U.K. Bible Colleges. It sponsors a website which may be accessed at [www.UKBibleColleges.com](http://www.UKBibleColleges.com) This website shows that all the colleges represented by this group would consider themselves evangelical in persuasion. The website is not strictly the website of the association but rather represents all of the

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<sup>491</sup> See Frey, J. H., and Oishi, S. M., *How to Conduct*, p. 14.

colleges, highlights the importance of the study of Scripture, the Bible in evangelism and other information on Christian ministry and mission. It also provides advice to prospective students in choosing a course of study and links to all the colleges. The website (and to my knowledge no other website) does not provide information on membership criteria, a statement of faith or other functions of the association. From attending meetings of the association (of which I am a member) I know that membership is available to Principals of Bible Colleges considered “bona fide”.<sup>492</sup> The definition of this is fairly broad and the safeguard is that each new member must be personally recommended by an existing member. Normally it would be required that the college represented by a member would offer full time courses specifically designed for ministry preparation, have a full time faculty, preferably have some form of residential facility and be evangelical. It is stressed that this is not an association of Bible Colleges but an association of Principals. There is an annual meeting normally hosted by a college and, in recent years, involving an overnight stay for the purpose of encouraging fellowship between the Principals. The Chairman is Dr. S. Brady of Moorlands Bible College and the Secretary is Dr. S. Steer of Redcliffe College.<sup>493</sup>

In establishing a sampling frame in order to select potential interview respondents I used the following criteria:

- Firstly, I chose colleges that had a residential facility.
- It was important that the Principals selected represented colleges that had other full-time faculty and offered validated courses in association with reputable U.K. universities.

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<sup>492</sup> A constitution, which is currently being reviewed, is available upon request from the Secretary, Dr. Simon Steer, Redcliffe College.

<sup>493</sup> [www.moorlands.ac.uk](http://www.moorlands.ac.uk) and [www.redcliffe.org](http://www.redcliffe.org) respectively.

- The Colleges represented by these leaders had to have been in existence for at least twenty years or longer.
- Finally, I selected Principals representing colleges that were clearly committed (either by reputation or, preferably, by their vision and mission statements) to preparing people for Christian ministry and mission.

In my estimation there are nineteen colleges represented by principals who are members of the A.B.C.P. which fulfil these criteria, although one is in Ireland. Thus I had to select a subset from a group of eighteen. I used criteria such as which colleges were interdenominational, which were denominational and those that had a missionary training emphasis in selecting this subset. The result was ten principals representing colleges that fulfilled all of the established criteria and thereafter a good cross section of colleges represented these other criteria.<sup>494</sup>

In the order that I conducted the interviews the participants, along with a brief background to the institutions that they lead, are listed below:

1. Derek Tidball, Principal London School of Theology (formerly London Bible College).

Date of interview: 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2007.

My interview with Tidball took place at London School of Theology.

London School of Theology was formed during the Second World War as a result of committed group of ministers, missionaries and business men coming together with a vision for an interdenominational and evangelical college that would counter the rising tide of liberal scholarship that was increasingly found in Western universities.

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<sup>494</sup> I did give some consideration to using geographical spread to include different regions around the U.K. as a criteria. This did not prove helpful in my opinion.



Additionally their vision was to prepare Christians to interact with their post-war world.<sup>495</sup> London School of Theology is described on its website as an interdenominational, evangelical college offering Cert HE, Dip HE, undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in Theology, Theology & Counselling, and Theology Music & Worship, as well as a variety of open learning courses. The college is passionately committed to training a new generation of God's people in the practical application of the Bible for today's world.<sup>496</sup> Its courses are validated by the University of Middlesex. Tidball has been Principal of London School of Theology since 1995. His academic background is in sociology, theology and history. Both the website and the College prospectus make Tidball's twin commitments very clear. Firstly he "longs to see the Bible released in a relevant way for ordinary men and women today and secondly, he believes that good Bible College education is about the formation of Christian character and to that end takes time in mentoring the students as well as administering the school".<sup>497</sup> Our interview took place in Tidball's office and was preceded by a conversation dominated by our mutual interest of leading Bible Colleges.

2. Tony Sargent, Principal, International Christian College (ICC), Glasgow.

Date of interview: 29<sup>th</sup> April 2007.

My interview with Sargent took place at ICC. He was accompanied by David Smith, former principal of Northumbria Bible College which amalgamated with Glasgow Bible College in 1998 to form ICC. Smith is now lecturer in World Christianity and Urban Mission and participated fully in the discussion.

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<sup>495</sup> <http://www.lst.ac.uk/whoware/history.php>

<sup>496</sup> London School of Theology website: [www.lst.ac.uk](http://www.lst.ac.uk) (accessed: 16<sup>th</sup> June 2007).

<sup>497</sup> <http://www.lst.ac.uk/whoware/staff.php?person=DerekTidball>

ICC describes itself as a new college with a long history. Since 1999 the College has occupied excellent facilities close to Glasgow Cathedral. It currently has about 180 full-time and part-time students and its courses are validated by the University of Aberdeen.<sup>498</sup> According to ICC's website, it describes its academic programme as follows:

As well as the BA in Theology, our BA in Youth Work with Applied Theology has seen a dramatic growth in the numbers. The launch of our specialisms in Children's Ministry, Urban Ministry and Cross-Cultural Ministry has provided a focus to our preparation for workers in these key areas of ministry. There have been developments on the postgraduate side as well, with the college now offering supervision for the degrees of MPhil and PhD, as well as launching its taught MTh programmes in Biblical Interpretation in 2002.<sup>499</sup>

Sargent served as the senior minister of Worthing Tabernacle on the English south coast for nearly thirty years before assuming his position as Principal at ICC. His academic work includes a Doctor of Ministry degree from Westminster Theological Seminary in the USA where he published his thesis under the title of *The Sacred Anointing*.<sup>500</sup> Smith's contribution to the interview was helpful, especially as he has endeavoured to introduce innovative missionary training programmes at Northumbria Bible College whilst he was Principal there and prior to the merger with Glasgow Bible College. Our interview took place in Sargent's office and the meeting included a brief tour of the facilities.

3. Nigel Tween, Principal, Regents College, Nantwich.

Date of interview: 6<sup>th</sup> May 2007.

My interview with Tween took place at Regents College. Tween is also the Director of Training for the Elim churches. Prior to taking on the responsibilities of Principal he spent thirty years in local church leadership. He has national leadership responsibilities

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<sup>498</sup> <http://www.icc.ac.uk/vision.php?page=6>

<sup>499</sup> <http://www.icc.ac.uk/vision.php?page=6>

<sup>500</sup> <http://www.icc.ac.uk/staff.php>

within the Elim churches. His leadership passion is evident in the emphasis found within the college.<sup>501</sup> His national leadership profile, as well as his obvious skills as a ministry practitioner and communicator, have helped reposition the college for positive growth in the past three years.

The college website states that it has been preparing people for Christian service for over eighty years. It is a denominational college serving its primary constituency which is the Elim Churches. However, students are drawn from a much wider background than this. The college has occupied its present site in Nantwich since 1987. The conviction that the Bible is the inspired word of God and that the Holy Spirit is active in helping people grasp the full breadth of God's truth is a recurring theme throughout the college website.<sup>502</sup> Regents Theological College offers a variety of undergraduate and post-graduate courses. It was previously validated by Manchester University and, more recently, has validated its courses with the University of Wales.

Our interview took place in Tween's office at Regents Theological College. It included a brief tour of the excellent facilities, interaction with other members of faculty and staff and a time of mutually beneficial conversation. Tween informed me of a pending move for the College away from its present campus to a recently acquired property near Malvern in Worcestershire.

4. Glenn Balfour, Vice-Principal (Academic) at Mattersey Hall College, South Yorkshire.<sup>503</sup>

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<sup>501</sup> <http://www.regents-tc.ac.uk/library/default.asp?categorycode=ART00838>

<sup>502</sup> <http://www.regents-tc.ac.uk/library/default.asp?categorycode=underintro>

<sup>503</sup> My interview took place at Mattersey Hall. Balfour was interviewed because I am the Principal of Mattersey Hall. I did however believe that his contribution would be a valid one and thus he is the only

Date of interview: 8<sup>th</sup> May 2007.

My interview took place at Mattersey Hall.

The College has been in existence since 1921. It began as a College serving the Pentecostal Missionary Union and soon acquired premises in Hampstead, North London. After several years in that location the College moved to a larger facility in Kenley, Surrey. At about this time it also became the official Bible College of the Assemblies of God in the U.K. and Ireland.<sup>504</sup> In 1971 the College moved again, this time to Mattersey in Northern Nottinghamshire. The campus now includes several custom built, modern buildings including a large hall of residence, a teaching block and a spacious chapel. The original Victorian mansion serves as the College library and faculty offices.<sup>505</sup>

The priority statement of Mattersey Hall is useful in gaining insight to those things that help guide policy, staff selection and maintain the ethos of the college. The four statements include a commitment to “extravagant worship”, an unequivocal attachment to the local church and its work, spiritual life issues and mission.<sup>506</sup> It is evident that a missionary commitment runs throughout the life of the College. For example, there is an annual mobilisation of the entire under-graduate student body into a two week cross cultural short term mission somewhere around the world.

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Vice-Principal interviewed. I believe his responses were objective and, as will be seen in my analysis of the responses, his perspective was useful in that he responded in the light of having served under both my predecessor and me.

<sup>504</sup> The Irish churches within the Assemblies of God became an independent denomination in 2004.

<sup>505</sup> See [www.matterseyhall.co.uk](http://www.matterseyhall.co.uk) Alternatively there is a Prospectus dated 2006.

<sup>506</sup> <http://www.matterseyhall.com/priorities.htm>

Mattersey Hall offers courses ranging from a one year certificate through to doctoral supervision. Its structure is slightly different to other colleges I visited in that the post-graduate courses which include three Master's programmes and doctoral supervision are offered by the Graduate School which has its own administrative infrastructure and full time staff.<sup>507</sup> The validated undergraduate programme includes two B.A.'s. The one is in Biblical Studies and the other in Christian leadership. The College has a good staff to student ratio and all of its courses are validated by the University of Wales. In the case of its under-graduate courses, these are validated through the Validation Unit of the University of Wales in Cardiff. The post-graduate courses are offered in co-operation with the University of Wales, Bangor.

Glenn Balfour is a graduate of the College. He completed PhD. Studies at the University of Nottingham specializing in aspects of John's gospel. He has recently published a New Testament Greek book with several supporting learning aids.<sup>508</sup> He teaches Greek along with a number of other subjects. He serves as the Vice-Principal (Academic) of Mattersey Hall.

5. Raymond Pfister, Principal, Birmingham Christian College (BCC).

Date of interview: 1<sup>st</sup> June 2007.

My interview took place at BCC.

From the first glimpse of the BCC website the priorities of the College become obvious. They are to be seen as offering a training that is European and flexible, available to all. This training will take place, according to the website within an ethos that is

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<sup>507</sup> See <http://www.matterseyhall.com/gradschool.htm>

<sup>508</sup> Details available at <http://www.matterseyhall.com/resources.htm>

evangelical, ecumenical and charismatic. In terms of the ecumenical aspect of this three-fold ethos the commitment is to “learn from the riches of classical Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox traditions and the Jewish roots of the Christian faith”.<sup>509</sup>

The College was founded in 1953 and was known as Birmingham Bible Institute. It was renamed in 2000 which also marked its move from Edgbaston to a facility within the Selly Oaks Colleges. The college is interdenominational and welcomes students from all ethnic, religious and socio-economic backgrounds. More recently there has developed an emphasis within the College to provide training for “all the people of God”.<sup>510</sup> This involves multiple learning opportunities including, but not exclusively, those preparing for full time Christian ministry. This, according to Pfister, includes the distinct possibility that even non-Christian could be attending courses offered at BCC.

Raymond Pfister grew up in the Alsace region of France. He has pastored churches in France and Germany and has also served as the director for a centre for recovering alcoholics and drug addicts run by the Salvation Army. Most recently he has been the Director of the Hamburg Institute of Christian Education and Counselling. He has completed a PhD (equivalent) at the University of Strasbourg with an emphasis on Contemporary Church History and the Sociology of Religion. He has been the Principal of BCC since September 2006.<sup>511</sup>

6. Simon Steer, Principal, Redcliffe College, Gloucester.

Date of interview: 5<sup>th</sup> June 2007.

My interview took place at Redcliffe College.

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<sup>509</sup> <http://bhxc.preview.sovereign.uk.com/>

<sup>510</sup> Interview with R. Pfister, 01/06/07.

<sup>511</sup> [http://bhxc.preview.sovereign.uk.com/Friends\\_Pages/Friends%20Newsletter%20Sept%202006.html](http://bhxc.preview.sovereign.uk.com/Friends_Pages/Friends%20Newsletter%20Sept%202006.html)

Redcliffe College is one of the oldest evangelical colleges in the United Kingdom. Starting in 1892 as a missionary training college for women, aptly named the “YWCA Testing and Training College for Women”, its primary goal of preparing people for cross-cultural missionary work has remained essentially unchanged for over one hundred and ten years.<sup>512</sup> Currently the college has a student body of approximately one hundred students and is a “vibrant cross-cultural community representing all ages and many nationalities”.<sup>513</sup> The college occupies excellent facilities within sight of Gloucester cathedral, has a well qualified faculty and offers residential options to both single and married students.

Redcliffe stands out amongst the colleges I visited (apart from All Nations Christian College) in that it identifies itself as a missionary training college with a special emphasis on cross-cultural mission. The faculty and staff are unapologetic about their passion for mission and this is borne out in their literature and website.<sup>514</sup> Although the website does include outreach to the homeless in the U.K. alongside missionary service in Peru, the clear commitment of the College is to prepare people theologically, personally and practically for missionary service. The clarity with which this mission is communicated is to be commended. The college offers a variety of courses, most with an obvious missionary emphasis. Their B.A. and Master’s courses are validated by the University of Gloucester.

Simon Steer was appointed as the Principal of Redcliffe College in 1998. “Married to Julia, they have two sons and a daughter. Prior to Redcliffe, Simon was the Education

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<sup>512</sup><http://www.redcliffe.org/standard.asp?id=572>

<sup>513</sup> <http://www.redcliffe.org/section.asp?id=2>

<sup>514</sup><http://www.redcliffe.org/standard.asp?id=571>

Director at the London Institute for Contemporary Mission and previously had worked in India, Indonesia and as a minister in the USA.”<sup>515</sup> He gained a PhD. from Westminster Seminary, U.S.A. in which his primary interest was the role of meals in the life of Christ. He extended a warm welcome, asked me to meet briefly and address the staff and faculty and we exchanged conversation on a number of areas of mutual interest before formally conducting the interview.

7. Martyn Atkinson, Principal, Cliff College, Derbyshire.

Date of interview: 19<sup>th</sup> June 2007.

My interview took place over the telephone.

Cliff College is an institution of lay ministry training sponsored by the Methodist church. Its existence dates back to 1883 and it is open to people from all denominational backgrounds. Unusually, Cliff is described on its website as being different to a university and “sometimes similar to living in a monastery”.<sup>516</sup> This statement emphasises the sense of community at the College. The website goes on to describe the college as a community of Christians living together, building each other up in Christ and learning together to help carry the church forward. The website continues that Cliff College is not just about getting a degree but about learning together. It does however, offer validated degrees from B.A. to Master’s and has a well qualified faculty and good facilities in rural Derbyshire. Its courses are validated by the University of Sheffield.<sup>517</sup>

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<sup>515</sup> <http://www.redcliffe.org/standard.asp?id=1507>

<sup>516</sup> <http://www.cliffcollege.org/college/index.php>

<sup>517</sup> <http://www.cliffcollege.org/index.php>



Martyn Atkins is the Principal and has a special interest in evangelism, missiology and apologetics. He is presently researching future shapes of the church. He has a PhD. From the University of Manchester and is currently also the President of the Methodist Conference.

Although there is an obvious link between Cliff College and the Methodist church this does not mean that it is a denominational college. Strictly speaking, and in terms of the criteria established for this research, it is a non-denominational college. Due to time constraints this interview was conducted by phone but allowed for warm conversation in addition to the formal interview.<sup>518</sup>

9. Michael Wall, Principal, All Nations College, Ware, Hertfordshire.

Date of interview: 28<sup>th</sup> June 2007.

My interview took place over the telephone.

All Nations Christian College is described by its website as being an “independent, evangelical, interdenominational mission Bible college.”<sup>519</sup> It is very clear from the outset that its primary purpose is to train people for cross-cultural ministry and further describes itself as the largest of its kind in Europe.

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<sup>518</sup> I had the opportunity to visit Cliff College in April 2007 for the annual conference of the ABCP. This allowed me to become familiar with the excellent facilities set in the picturesque Peak District.

<sup>519</sup> <http://www.allnations.ac.uk/index.php?section=About%20Us>

The website gives a limited overview of All Nations College's history simply stating that it was formed out of the merger of three colleges in 1971.<sup>520</sup> At that time the College relocated to its present site at Easneye, about twenty miles from London, near Ware in Hertfordshire. The main administrative building is a beautiful mansion owned by the Buxton family who played a significant role in the abolition of the slave trade.

The student body is diverse, representing at least thirty different nationalities. All Nations Christian College operates a tutorial system which includes all students, staff and faculty. Tutorial groups meet twice per week before lectures and provide a strong social setting for the community.<sup>521</sup>

At the undergraduate level, which involves the majority of students, the College offers certificate, diploma and bachelor's courses. The B.A. option allows students to get to the heart of intercultural mission. In this sense All Nations Christian College is most like Redcliffe College in terms of the survey group being considered in this research assignment. It thus forms the second in the category of missionary training colleges selected from the larger group identified by their principal's participation in the A.B.C.P.

The College also offers postgraduate study opportunities in various aspects of contemporary mission studies. The MA was the first to be taught in the U.K. and,

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<sup>520</sup> A detailed history is contained in a book by a former Principal of All Nations College, C. David Harley and has been referred to previously. See Harley, C. D. *Missionary Training: The History of All Nations Christian College and its Predecessors*.

<sup>521</sup> <http://www.allnations.ac.uk/index.php?pageid=99&section=About%20Us>

according to the website, “pioneered new levels of missiological study and research”.<sup>522</sup>

It continues to attract students from around the world.

The Principal, Mike Wall joined the College in 2006. Prior to this he had nineteen years of missionary experience, ten in Africa as Director of a mission agency called “Across” and nine as a worker with Tearfund leading disaster relief. Prior to this he was in legal practice. Wall has a M.B.A. and is currently researching for a PhD in missiology.

After several failed attempts to find a time suitable for a visit to All Nations Christian College in order to conduct an interview a telephone interview was arranged.

8. Christina Baxter, Principal, St. John’s College, Nottingham.

Date of interview: 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2007.

The interview took place at St. John’s College.

St. John College, Nottingham declares itself to be a College in mission for a church in mission. It goes on, via its website, to describe the core purpose of St. John’s is to “enable people to grow in relationship to God, through training and education in spirituality, intellectual enquiry and practice of mission and ministry, so that they are inspired and equipped to help other encounter God in Jesus Christ and make Christian disciples.”<sup>523</sup>

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<sup>522</sup> <http://www.allnations.ac.uk/index.php?pageid=59&section=Studying>

<sup>523</sup> <http://www.stjohns-nottm.ac.uk/html/home/index.shtml>

St. John's College belongs to the Evangelical tradition of the Anglican Church. It has been influenced by the charismatic renewal. It is open to members of other denominations and most often attracts people who have life and professional experience. The courses offered combine biblical and theological study with practical ministry experience. The college offers a large number of full and part time courses. Most of the degree courses are validated by the University of Nottingham and there are several courses offered that are not validated by a university. Advanced degrees are offered including doctoral supervision. St. John's has excellent facilities and has a library with holdings in excess of fifty thousand books and audio-visual items. Over one hundred journals are subscribed to making this library one of the most substantial of any of the colleges I visited.

The principal is Canon Dr. Christina Baxter CBE. She has served at the college since 1979 and as principal since 1997. The website states that she is passionate about theology, prayer and mission and for all Christian service to be framed by faith hope and love.<sup>524</sup> Dr. Baxter holds a PhD. from the University of Durham where her area of research was under the title "The Movement of Exegesis to Dogmatics in the Theology of Karl Barth with Special Reference to Romans, Philippians and the Church Dogmatics".

10. David McCulloch, Principal, The Nazarene Theological College, Manchester.

Date of Interview: 4th July 2007.

My interview took place over the telephone.

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<sup>524</sup> [http://www.stjohns-nottm.ac.uk/html/teaching\\_staff/christina\\_baxter/index.shtml](http://www.stjohns-nottm.ac.uk/html/teaching_staff/christina_baxter/index.shtml)

The opening page of the Nazarene Theological College website makes very plain the reason for its existence. The college integrates academic excellence and ministry-skills-training within a context of broadly Wesleyan-Holiness spirituality. The website continues to describe a three-fold education available at the college: “a general higher education in the humanities, the study of the theological disciplines, and vocational courses in the practical aspects of ministry”.<sup>525</sup>

The campus is situated on a good campus about four and a half miles from Manchester city centre. The campus includes several well renovated buildings as well as custom built facilities. The library is in the Emmanuel Centre and has holdings in excess of twenty five thousand volumes and subscriptions to over one hundred scholarly journals. It is an excellent facility for a college. A library catalogue is available online.

As the name suggests, The Nazarene Theological College is a denominational college and is administered by a Board of Governors elected by the district assemblies of the Church of the Nazarene in the British Isles. Since 1992 the College has been a Partner institution of the Victoria University of Manchester. It offers certificate, diploma and validated undergraduate courses. Additionally the college offers a range of post-graduate degrees and doctoral supervision. The college also provides training and opportunities for lay people. Innovatively the college uses a modular approach to its undergraduate course offering allowing many courses to be completed in one or two week intensives. This allows students a variety of paths towards an integrated course in theology.

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<sup>525</sup> <http://www.nazarene.ac.uk/>

The Principal, David McCulloch served as a missionary in Latin America for several years. He teaches pastoral theology and has an academic background in education, especially theological education which was the focus of his PhD. research. His special interest area was Theological Education by Extension. He holds the PhD. degree from the University of Glasgow.

Our interview has been preceded over the past two years by conversations of mutual interest, notably theological education.

## **2. The questions and ethical considerations**

As mentioned previously, an attempt was made to avoid phrasing questions in such a way as to create a predisposition to support the findings of the earlier chapters of this thesis. However, it was equally important to ensure that an opportunity was given to the interviewees to respond in an unthreatened way to the issues raised in these chapters.

Frey and Oishi state how important it is to provide an introductory statement. It must, according to them, “present information regarding the survey in conversational, nonthreatening language that convinces the respondent to participate”.<sup>526</sup> In the context of my research this principle was important not in order to gain the positive participation of those being interviewed but rather to establish a context. To this end I explained the overall direction of my research and then made it clear that my objective was to establish the importance of a missional rationale for theological education and training. I realized that this could have an influence on the responses offered. As

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<sup>526</sup> Frey, J. H., and Oishi, S. M., *How to Conduct*, p. 44.

Radnor explains, “The researcher, therefore, is bringing to the research and is influenced by informal, personal and tacit theory about education”.<sup>527</sup> I took care, therefore, to use the introductory time of conversation not to suggest any of the outcomes. I did, however, explain my understanding of the term “missional” as in the introduction of this work.

I applied the five points explained by Louis Cohen, Lawrence Manion and Keith Morrison in their book on research methods in education.<sup>528</sup> They alerted me to the fact that issues such as mutual trust, social difference and the interviewer’s control can be the first factor to cause a difference between interviews. I certainly knew all those interviewed but the social difference (in the sense of friendship anyway) was different between the respondents.

The second point they make is to be aware that the respondent may feel uneasy and adopt avoidance tactics. I did inform each person interviewed that I was recording the interview and that my research was for this thesis. I phrased the questions in such a way as to allow for a generalised response although, in retrospect I did not feel as though any respondents adopted avoidance tactics and were quite happy to answer frankly. My position as a peer possibly assisted this.

Cohen *et al* thirdly point out that in interviews both the interviewer and the respondent are bound to hold back part of what is in their power to state. I did this proactively in that I did not mention the outcome of any previous interviews nor (and in this I was

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<sup>527</sup> Radnor, H., *Researching*, p.30.

<sup>528</sup> Cohen, L., Manion, L., and Morrison, K., *Research Methods in Education, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition* (London, Routledge Falmer, 2000), pp. 267 – 268.

particular) did I mention what I had discovered in the literature prior to the respondent completing the formal interview.

The fourth point has to do with meanings. The authors point out that what might be clear to one might be relatively opaque to another. I found that what was immediately obvious to one respondent required some explanation to others. Again, my rule was to explain without suggesting a response or anticipated outcome.

Finally, Cohen *et al* make it clear that it “is impossible, just in everyday life, to bring every aspect of the encounter within rational control”.<sup>529</sup> I was intrigued to discover how this might influence my interviews. I considered the impact of professional pride for example. Would some of my peers withhold some information because of the risk of comparisons being made? My impression is that this did not occur at all. Without exception, every interview took place at the time and place agreed upon and so there was no influence in terms of feeling rushed or imposed upon. Thus I am happy that the outcomes of the interviews were not skewed by influences beyond my control.

I did not have the issue of thematizing the interview as it followed the natural outline of the first seven chapters of this thesis. The questions did allow for the majority of the responses to be factual. Some responses could be general but they were mostly specific and required examples of the practice or concept described. However, I deliberately allowed for a transition in the interview between questions seven and eight to give the respondents the opportunity of both expressing opinions and personal vision. I did not believe this would lead to inaccuracies or overly opinionated responses because of the

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<sup>529</sup> Cohen, L., Manion, L., and Morrison, K., *Research Methods*, p. 268.



phraseology used and the introductory statement. I did not detect any emotive responses at all.

The list of questions used in the interviews is attached as Appendix 2. I am satisfied that due to the diligence applied in setting up the interviews, the fact that I am a part of the ABCP and was thus interacting with my peers, the ethical considerations communicated to the interviewees about recording the interview and the careful structuring of the questions has resulted in a collection of responses and opinions seldom collated before and extremely valuable in terms of the subject of this thesis.

## **Conclusion**

In an exercise of this nature the process is often as important as the outcome. In the light of my earlier research this was particularly true. There are several reasons for this. The first, as has been shown, is that most of what has been written on the subject of theological education and training is North American in origin. This does not mean that there are not sizable contributions from other parts of the world but the sheer size of theological training institutions in the U.S.A. makes their story and the perspective of their leaders a predominant narrative. I wanted to see if there were similar experiences in the U.K. This meant the selection of a population that would be as representative as possible. From the group above it should be noted that there are no informal or short term training programmes included.<sup>530</sup> This is a study deserving further attention but beyond the scope of this work. The group I selected includes denominational, non-denominational and missionary training colleges. I am satisfied that this selection

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<sup>530</sup> Neither are theology faculties of universities as, most often, these do not have as stated aims the training of people for Christian ministry.

process has provided a sub set that will give a substantial insight into U.K. institutions of theological learning and the following will seek to demonstrate this.

Another reason for careful preparation was to prevent skewing the outcome. I am certain that a missional rationale for theological education and training is essential for the enterprise to continue with vigour into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. However, I did not want to have the participants in this research feel the need to agree with me. Thus the process needed to ensure that the questions were stated in a way that was as unambiguous as possible in order to allow the freedom to the interviewee to answer them frankly and objectively.

Finally, a part of the process was to investigate the state of theological education within the identified population and see if, in fact, there is a missional rationale at work whether this is conspicuous or not. One of the means of establishing this was to become more familiar with the Bible College movement in the U.K., interact with the principals and have the opportunity to visit a number of college campuses. This proved to be an invaluable experience. The overwhelming impression is that the U.K. is well served by a good number of excellent colleges who, in turn are well staffed with excellent and devoted staff and faculty. Although the issue of resourcing is always present, as a rule the colleges visited have adequate facilities and in some instances, excellent facilities. I am optimistic about the future of theological education and training in the U.K. and, as will be seen, believe that it is largely missional in its conceptual basis and practice.

## CHAPTER 9

### A MISSIONAL RATIONALE FOR THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION – A WINDOW ON THE UNITED KINGDOM

#### Part 2 – Synthesis and analysis

Although the interviews conducted for the purpose of this research could have informed every part of this thesis, I have deliberately reserved an analysis and use of the interview responses for this stage. There are a number of reasons for this choice of method:

- There was no evidence at the outset of this research project that the U.K. could be seen as a normative context for theological education. It is one amongst many and so it was important to reserve an analysis of theological educational training options in the U.K. to the end so as not to threaten the objectivity of the research process.
- The north/south divide or western/developing world contexts are sensitive areas in research of this nature. It was important not to be locked into a Western perspective from the beginning even though it was inevitable that the thesis would have a predominantly Western flavour. Indeed, it is likely that some of the research work would not have taken the direction it has without this commitment.
- The value of comparing a number of responses with each other seemed to offer more potential for drawing conclusions than using interviews only to add to a critical analysis of the existing literature.

- Finally, withholding an analysis and synthesis of the interviews until this stage provided an opportunity to scrutinise conclusions already reached by means of critically interacting with existing literature. Crucially, the question could be asked: “Do these conclusions carry weight?” Put another way, the interview process described in the previous chapter was a valuable means of testing the validity or otherwise of opinions, analysis and conclusions reached throughout the thesis.

As already mentioned, each interviewee was well informed of my goals in this research. Additionally each agreed for the material to be recorded and gave full approval for me to use it for the objectives stated. In analysing the interviews I have concluded that the following guidelines would govern my writing, synthesis and analysis of the interviews:

- The order in which the questions were asked would provide the natural outline for the synthesis and analysis. I will therefore record the question and write up the responses giving analytical comment.
- Although each participant was open and frank I have decided largely to guard anonymity in areas I consider sensitive. This will not detract from the outcome. Quite the opposite, it will enable me to write more freely and comment more critically.
- As there is a list of the interviews, their dates and locations in the bibliography I have found it unnecessary to make consistent references in footnotes to each mention of an interview. Footnotes will be used for added detail but not as a constant reference to the interviews themselves.

**1. Are you aware of questions within your constituency regarding the validity of your ministry training college and, if so, what areas do these questions most closely relate to?**

The purpose in asking this question was to gain a response to the issues raised in the first chapter. Theological educators referred to in that chapter suggest that theological training institutions are under some form of attack from their own constituencies. If this is the case in the U.K., I further wanted to investigate what these questions of legitimacy most closely related to.

The answers given covered a wide range of opinions. Immediately upon asking the question, Tidball, of London School of Theology, was able to state that he knew his primary constituency, believed that he perceived their expectations and felt very comfortable serving this community. Any reserve of early years regarding a formal, academic training had now past. The one fringe grouping within his constituency was the newer churches and he felt that there was still a resistance within this group.<sup>531</sup> By contrast, Sargent felt that there was a more basic question to ask and that was related to just who his constituency was. According to him, although there are groups that clearly related to International Christian College, he was not secure in perceiving just how supportive they really were. Both Tidball and Sargent serve non-denominational colleges.

This dual perspective was true of the denominational Colleges. Tween, of Regents College, had no difficulty in identifying the college's primary constituency because of

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<sup>531</sup> Although not specific, he was referring to charismatic churches, sometimes referred to as 'Apostolic Networks'. See Kay, W. K., *Apostolic Networks in Britain: New Ways of Being Church* (Milton Keynes, Paternoster, 2007).

its denominational affiliation with the Elim Church. However, he had identified those within the constituency who chose to have a caricature of the college that was no longer reality and shifting this perception was proving difficult. The caricature that he was referring to was one that generally perceived the college to be disconnected and overly academic. Balfour of Mattersey Hall, also a denominational college, concurred with this opinion. He was even more forthright by stating that the college leadership was “acutely aware of negative questions being raised within the Assemblies of God regarding the validity of formal, academic training”. He went on to say that it was his impression that this criticism was decreasing, possibly as a result of the denomination becoming less working class in its membership. Baxter referred to the considerable debate that has recently taken place within the House of Bishops of the Church of England. This has resulted in three reports, the most prominent being the Hinde Report.<sup>532</sup> Her observation is that there is a difficulty in creating cohesion in the two major streams of theological training available within the Church of England, namely courses and colleges. This can lead to regional versus national conflict. The point to note in Baxter’s response is that the constituency involved in the debate is not only at grassroots level but, significantly, has entered the highest levels within the Church of England.

McCulloch made a unique contribution referring to the fact that a part of the constituency he serves seems very reticent to acknowledge that the demands of ministry in the twenty first century are different to those of previous years. Thus there is an expectation that the college should not be seen to be innovative. He has a two-fold response. The first and possibly most significant is to stress that the College is an arm

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<sup>532</sup> This report investigated the place of colleges and courses in respect to the training of Anglican Clergy.

of the church not just a servant of the church. This has the effect of repositioning the College in terms of its perceived responsibilities to its constituency. The second is to reinforce at every opportunity the conviction that “we must be research led at all levels and must therefore insist that the church must always be in a state of reform”.

This introduces the overwhelming response to the questions that are being asked of the colleges and which challenge their validity. Steer, of Redcliffe, phrased his response to say that there was an ongoing tension within their constituency about theological education versus ministry training.

To describe questions about the legitimacy of a ministry training college’s role in simple terms of a supportive or non-supportive community is however, far from understanding the complex constituency issues faced by college principals. Three responses are worthy of careful scrutiny. The first is that given by Atkinson from Cliff College. He carefully described how he has identified three groupings within the Cliff College constituency. The first is a small but vocal group of mainly aging people. According to Atkinson this group “looks askance at Cliff College going Evangelical”. He understands this to mean that they wish to maintain the high commitment the college has had to lay vocational training for those of a Methodist background and as a result this group is largely anti-clerical and anti- intellectual. Atkinson does not perceive them to be major players. The second group he identifies is the emerging constituency which is made up of people who are highly motivated towards academic achievement. These are younger people mainly in their teens and twenties. They feel called to study for a degree but want to do so within an atmosphere of prayer and spiritual zeal. This group can be added to by including past graduates of the college who now want to undertake

in-service training, often at a postgraduate level. The final group Atkinson identifies within his constituency is those he refers to as “Methodist well-wishers” who regard Cliff College as the saviour of Methodism. His task is to diplomatically serve each element of the constituency as best as he can.

The second response that helps give insight to the complex issue of serving a constituency was that given by Pfister of Birmingham Christian College. In what appears to be a contrast to most of the other respondents he stated: “There is an obvious need to develop more of a sense of education rather than training”. He makes this statement after one year in the position of Principal. During this year he has worked at transitioning the college to be seen as evangelical, charismatic and ecumenical. As such, according to Pfister, there is a new ethos that has been redefined and broadened. In the past the ethos was based very much upon an emphasis of calling and it is now one of providing learning opportunities for all who have an interest in the Christian faith. Pfister feels that this new emphasis has been welcomed by a new constituency that is being identified and has also been welcomed in a recent meeting of alumni. He was not able to state how this was perceived in the older, traditional constituency that had supported Birmingham Christian College since its founding in 1953.

The third response worthy of special mention was that from Wall of All Nations Christian College. His response was quite different to every other respondent. Although he mentioned the typical tension that existed in managing an academic programme that delivers a ministry or missionary training, his relationship with his constituency is extremely complex. All Nations Christian College has traditionally viewed its primary constituency as mission agencies, predominantly those of an



evangelical persuasion. According to Wall, these agencies are seriously considering their role in mission in the light of changing paradigms regarding western missionary activity. In simple terms, there is a perception that mission has moved southward and that well established mission agencies should now be playing a greater role in the training and resourcing of missionaries from developing nations than the mobilisation of western missionaries. This places Wall's institution in a difficult position. Firstly, the priorities of the constituency have changed and thus the service offered this constituency for many years is no longer needed in the same way as before. Additionally the college is facing questions about the length of its training programmes in the light of a growing trend towards short term missionary activity. Walls only took up the position of Principal in 2006 and his evaluation of his college's relationship with its historic constituency appears to be. It also represents a challenge not identified by other Principals but possibly more subtly apparent than it appears.

Steer made a statement that can generally sum up an overwhelming perception amongst all the respondents: "There is a residual suspicion in the conservative evangelical part of the church towards that which is perceived to be academic". The only exception to this was Sargent who believed that the strong commitment to academic training in Scotland since the Reformation meant that there was not the same resistance. However, in summary I would conclude from my interviews that there is a strange and, at times, uncomfortable relationship between the Colleges and their constituencies. On the one hand the constituencies are complex groupings with different priorities making it difficult to serve them all to their satisfaction. On the other hand it was evident that there is not enough support offered by the constituencies to their colleges making the task of delivering anticipated ministry training outcomes even more difficult. In this

regard, the “British window” supports the findings of chapter one of this thesis. There is indeed a debate going on and it is taking place in the U.K. as well. Whilst none of those interviewed felt particularly threatened and certainly none felt that they were facing questions serious enough to lead to the demise of their institutions, the overwhelming outcome of my interviews was a sense of tension as to how best to position the colleges to deliver the expectations of the constituency whilst offering the best options for the student.

**2. Are you aware of, or committed to, a process of continual review in which the philosophical or conceptual basis of the college is considered and, if so, how prominently would a missionary (missional) emphasis be in this process?**

The purpose in asking this question was to get a response regarding the conceptual foundations of the college’s existence and operation. In chapter two I argued that conceptual processes must always precede operational decisions and, further, that these must have a missional content for the programme to be more than an exercise in dead orthodoxy. By addressing the issue of review it was hoped that it would be discovered if this was indeed the case.

Steer made a most telling statement: “In the British background there is no great tradition to conceptualising education”.<sup>533</sup> By this he meant that there has not been a tradition of well defined processes of review. In spite of this however, every respondent, without exception stated that there was a process of review within their

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<sup>533</sup> Steer received both his Master’s education and PhD. from American institutions. This comment might have been influenced by his ability to make comparisons. I presume that he is making reference to innovation within educational and pedagogical methods. Facilitative learning, reflective assessment and other forms of learning have generally been developed in the U.S.A.

institutions. This does not appear to conflict with Steer's. I think he right in stating that there is no tradition of review. However, it is apparent that a variety of factors, including validation with institutions like universities, the issues of funding and the changing cultural climate are making the process of ongoing review a vitally important one.

McCulloch offered possibly the most definitive response in the context of this thesis. He reported that there are fifty six institutions affiliated with the Church of the Nazarene worldwide. The Commission of Education of the denomination required a thorough review process and called it "A Missional Review". The key question underpinning this process was: "Are we (the colleges) the church in education?" Five people from different continental backgrounds have led the review which has had, in McCulloch's view a very positive outcome and resulted in a strategic review towards 2015. McCulloch was not sure if this review had worked backwards to conceptual foundations or was, in fact, a reconceptualisation of the role of training colleges within his denomination.

The method of review provides some insight. Atkinson reported that the process of review at Cliff College was constant and took place at the level of an internal management group in the first instance and by the governing body in the second instance. A statement known as the "Cliff Charisms" helps in the review process enabling concepts to be prioritised according to the higher spiritual ideals of the College. All Nations Christian College have likewise had a multiple level of review. Initially there was a strategic review and this has been followed by a training review. The training review has identified three emerging paradigms within western mission

thinking namely the growth of short term mission, the growth of mission in new church movements and the move of the growth of Christianity to the developing world with an apparent lesser need for training in Europe. The College is taking definitive action to address the outcome of this review process.

Steer was clear in his College's commitment to review which allowed for continual reconsideration of the conceptual foundations of Redcliffe. The governing body required a process of annual review supported envisioning days and consultations. Like All Nations Christian College, Redcliffe is a missionary training college. A part of the review process is similar to that of All Nations Christian College in that an assessment has been made of developing paradigms of mission. Contemporary issues in mission thinking prominently inform the review process according to Steer.

The denominational colleges were equally committed to processes of review. Balfour reported how there had been a change of Principal at Mattersey Hall in 2004. Prior to this the "centre of the College was that of teacher". By this he was referring to the primary ministry characteristic of the previous Principal. Under the new Principal there were now "no sacred cows" and the conceptual foundations of the college were openly revisited. This had resulted in a pro-active change process which was thoroughly missional because the primary ministry characteristic of the new Principal was, in biblical terms, apostolic. Tween, whose college is also denominational and Pentecostal, expressed his concern that the primary model of ministry in his College had been that of teacher. He had concluded that students often reflect the aspirations of their teachers and so the college had produced an inordinately high number of graduates wishing to go into careers of Bible teaching. This had caused a review process, part of which had

concluded that he would be a good candidate for Principal even though he had no formal academic background. St John's, according to Baxter was totally committed to a review process and she was certain that this had directed the college to have mission more and more in the centre of all that the College did.

Pfister saw the review process as essentially missional. This has resulted in the original foundations of the College being revisited and also, more importantly, reviewing how relationships can be built around the College. In other words, he considers one important aspect of review the means by which to establish the College's constituency. Pfister sees Birmingham Christian College as a training centre for all the people of God, not only church leaders. He went further to suggest that this might make it possible for even non-Christians to attend certain courses. Whilst this might appear radical to some, I did conclude that Pfister conceived even the training process to be missional. He went on to state: "We see mission not as a department but as a whole. The whole curriculum must reflect mission". These words are echoed by Atkinson who commented that the outcome of any review process was to ensure that "the missional component is paramount".

Of all the respondents Tidball, had the most specific answer in terms of the actual process of review. At London School of Theology there is a complete course revision every five years. He was insistent that this was not "merely tinkering at the edges" but required a complete rewriting of course material in which questions are asked that always go back to the fundamental questions related to vision and mission. Additionally the governing body has established rigorous and continual processes of review which are not just academic but seriously revisit the core values of the College.

In all of these processes he felt there was a strong missional component and, because a number of members of the Board of Governors are representatives of mission agencies, the issue of how the college serves the missionary community is also prominent.

The Directors of International Christian College have undertaken a review, a central feature of which is to get to the core reasons for the existence of the College. There is a legacy from the merger with Northumbria Bible College which has brought a mission emphasis into the College but not to the extent that it should be. Sargent expressed the strong desire that this missionary emphasis should be more prominent in the future.

In all the review processes discussed in the interviews the conceptual foundations for the training process were present to a greater or lesser degree. In some instances there was a felt need to dig back to bedrock and to rediscover the reason for the college's existence. In other instances (such as Birmingham Christian College and All Nations Christian College for example) there was a need to reposition and, if need be, reconceive the college. I gained the impression that Birmingham Christian College was the furthest down the pathway of complete reconceptualisation with Pfister's commitment to ecumenism being central to that process. Issues such as the use of appropriate technologies, especially electronic technology, field-based training, the felt need for innovation and a greater commitment to spiritual formation were prominent in the discussions that related to the conceptual underpinnings of a theological training programme.

The conclusions drawn in chapter 2 were largely supported by the interview process. In the first instance, there was recognition that perhaps this conceptualisation process was

not as prominent historically as it should have been. In the second instance, and more importantly, every college without exception was involved in a review process and in each case there was a perceived need for this to achieve the dual goals of establishing priority structures for vision and leadership as well as enable the college to become effective in being missional. It was clear to me that the respondents were not merely playing lip service to a vocabulary that was trendy or appeared to be contemporary. Quite the opposite, the U.K. colleges that I visited were led by earnest people who seem determined to reconceptualise their various institutions and position those institutions for mission in God's world in the early part of the twenty first century and beyond.

### **3. How would you describe the relationship between the ideals of ministry training and critical scholarship within your institution?**

Immediately upon asking this question all the respondents seemed to understand exactly what was being asked. As discussed in chapter 3, there has been a historic divide between serious scholarship and the perceived spiritual needs of Christian leaders. The academy has often been the central arena of this tension. The question was asked to seek to discover whether this tension has been alleviated at all within British institutions of Christian ministry training. If there were places where this had been achieved I was especially interested to find out how.

The responses were wide and varied. Pfister was emphatic that the relationship between ministry training and critical scholarship were "very compatible" and that there was no sense of conflict. He defended this by stating that "at the heart of Christian education is the concept of a renewed mind. This cannot take place without critical thinking and

engagement”. Another reason for Pfister seeing no conflict was his statement that “using all the tools available in critical scholarship is, in fact, a spiritual discipline”. Whilst my impression would be that few of the other respondents would argue against this statement and most would possibly even envy his position, delivering this level of compatibility between formation and critical scholarship is a difficult ideal to achieve. Although McCulloch did not feel that there was a significant tension between the academic process of the College and its goals of formation, he did emphasise that there is a constant awareness of the need to develop a training programme that was skills based and had a major component devoted to applied theology. He placed this in context by saying that he is constantly motivating for a full and balanced, research-led training simply because “ministry is so worthwhile and important”.

Wall, for example and by contrast, had no hesitation in describing the interrelationship between ministry formation and critical scholarship as a tense one. His assessment was that All Nations Christian College was being pulled into a more academic model mainly by the faculty of the College. He observes the trend that the longer a faculty member serves at the College the less is that person’s mission connection. His observations are that mission agencies and increasingly potential students want more practically oriented training.

Steer and Atkinson shared similar sentiments in this regard. Steer described the need to engage critical scholarship in a “critical” way. By this he explained that there was a need to inform students of intellectual trends but he was concerned that these should be communicated in a way that would not hinder them spiritually. He did however concede that a rigorous engagement with critical scholarship was an excellent way to



equip people for cross-cultural missionary service. Atkinson reflected on the view that the context of church ministry today requires a different pedagogical approach to that of previous generations. He had concluded that within a framework of affirming faith the college must train people to think and gain resources for real life ministry. To achieve this we cannot have one dimension without the other. We need both ministry training and engagement with critical scholarship.

The two Pentecostal denominational Colleges represented by Tween and Balfour apparently had similar issues in this regard. Neither denomination (namely the Elim Church and the Assemblies of God) required their ministers to have formal qualifications for ordination. This meant that there was a legacy of suspicion of formal education and the potential of a “two-tier” ministry population within their respective denominations. Balfour commented that for over sixty years in the history of Mattersey Hall this was not an issue simply because there was not even an awareness of critical scholarship. Nearly all training was devotional and orientated towards a very applied theology. Currently, he stated, there is a clear intent to open up the discussion in order to have one of these aspects of training inform the other. Tween’s response concurs with this and was reinforced by his report that the national leadership of the Elim Church was seeking a far more rigorous approach to training its future leaders, including academic training.

Tidball’s response was not unexpected as London School of Theology has a strong reputation for academic rigour and excellence. He stated:

This has always been a very strong aspect of the college and the relationship between ministry training and critical scholarship is actually getting closer. However, this is very unlike that of a university faculty in that it is not motivated as just an academic exercise. All classes are taught within a strong spiritual and

devotional context. It is also true that not all faculty apply critical thought equally. There is an effort to accommodate variety in teaching style, course content and thus critical engagement.

Tidball's statement is particularly interesting in that his College has seemed to have achieved compatibility between what is often seen as two disparate components of training. If this is the case, and I have every reason from our interview and further discussions to believe that it is, then London School of Theology provides a model that is worth investigating and emulating.

This question provoked a variety of responses but there is a clear consensus in these responses. As stated in chapter 3 the academic programme can be the servant of the ministry training programme and the two should be mutually beneficial to each other. This is clearly the position that each of the respondents would like to achieve within their respective colleges. Whilst some are more cautious in the implementation of an academic programme that allows for rigorous critical engagement and scholarship there is, nevertheless, broad recognition that this process cannot be excluded. The conditioning requirement expressed by all the respondents was the need to use critical scholarship as a means to an end. Although the terms "missional" or "missionary" were not used by any of those interviewed the implication was that rigorous academic work was a necessary part of the goal to help students engage God's world. This confirms the conclusions drawn in chapter 3. Although finding compatibility between critical scholarship and effective ministry formation seems difficult it is, nevertheless desirable. The consensus from the interviews is that a clearly defined ministry outcome – Atkinson's church ministry context or Steer's cross-cultural equipping as examples, is the only way to achieve an effective harmony between the two. As proposed in chapter 3 this is an important component of the missional rationale for theological education.

**4. Can you briefly describe the College’s “connectedness” in the three areas of its constituency (including the governing body), its community and the global community?**

This question referred to the fourth chapter in which it was argued that connectedness was an essential descriptor for a missional training programme. Put another way, isolationism was a clear indicator of a non-missional commitment. The intention in asking this question was two-fold. The first was to discover how intentional colleges were in engaging their constituency, their local community and the global community. The second was to see if there was, in fact, a direct correlation between the missional commitment of a college and its level of connectedness.

This question did require explanation to some of those interviewed. I tended to describe my understanding of “connectedness” in as broad a way as possible so as not to direct the interviewee in a pathway that would merely support my earlier argument as found in the fourth chapter.

For some the answer tended to be fairly technical. For example, Pfister described the process by which a new Board of Trustees was being appointed. It is true that he sees this as a way to be more connected and those being appointed to the new Board will be done so partly because they represent a certain part of a broadening constituency.

In the cases of Redcliffe and London School of Theology the composition of the Board of Governors was one of great importance. In both cases the Board is selected on the

basis of representing a part of the constituency. In the case of Redcliffe, Steer was more explicit. The Board had to be representative in the first place of the missionary community, thereafter the local church community (in the sense of representing a good cross section of churches). The third level was those who could participate as members of the academy and then there was space made for those who could contribute to the governance of the College by means of professional skills such as financial management. There is a 50/50 gender mix on the board and this is maintained very deliberately. Steer admitted to struggling in the area of finding enough suitable candidates to create an ethnic diversity. By contrast, Wall recognised the need for the governing body to be more representative. Historically All Nations Christian College has had a Board of Governors made up mainly of representatives of mission agencies. As these agencies go through paradigm shifts Wall feels there is some level of disconnectedness that he would like to see reversed. Similarly, but for completely different reasons, Balfour felt that there had been a poor level of connectedness between the governing body of Mattersey Hall and those who served within the college, both staff and students. He felt that this was currently being reversed. Possibly the most poignant response regarding the role of the governing body and its relationship to the college came from Tween. He stated that his denomination had decided to disband the Board of Governors altogether and place Regents College directly under the direction of the National Leadership Team of Elim. This had the almost immediate effect of moving the College from the margins of denominational life much closer to the centre. Of course, this is probably not an option available to non-denominational colleges. Baxter appeared comfortable about connectedness and reported on several processes by which this is maintained. Uniquely amongst the colleges, St. John's has an association comprising those who choose to seek membership. This association is largely made up

of former students and active church members and meets annually to hold the college accountable to its stated goals and objectives.

Thus, across the ten Principals interviewed there was no clear pattern in terms of how well their colleges and their respective governing bodies interacted. This suggested to me that a missional rationale for training was not universally applied. A disconnected governing body or, worse still, one that resists missional initiative, can be very damaging to the overall enterprise.

A more consistent pattern emerged in regard to colleges and their levels of connectedness to their local communities. Generally the local community was defined either as those living within the immediate area of the college or local churches within a reasonable radius of the college. Most spoke of ministry placements that were generally successful. However, though this appears to be the case on the surface it is not necessarily so. Atkinson is worth quoting: “It is becoming increasingly difficult to reconcile sending students to a church for practical ministry experience with the more incarnational, long-term concept of mission in a post-Christian context as found in the books”. His frustration is that churches can be so out of touch with the realities of the contemporary world that what the student studies and what the same student then encounters in local church ministry are totally different. Atkinson goes on to say that reflection must take place on identifying the distance between what is taught and what is practically experienced.

The students at International Christian College, Redcliffe, London School of Theology and others are all involved in local churches and community projects. In the case of

London School of Theology good relationships with the community have been built by making facilities such as playing fields available to the local school. Additionally ministry within local churches by both staff and students is encouraged. However, there is now a policy statement in place defining how much outside involvement is desirable. Wall felt that the students of All Nations Christian College were well connected within the local community with nearly all involved in either churches or community projects through the College's placement programme. He estimates that there are about forty such projects. An encouraging initiative is a deliberate dialogue undertaken by Redcliffe College with the local Muslim community. Baxter reported active involvement by staff and students in a night shelter outreach in Nottingham, placements of students in prisons and with chaplains in hospitals and those associated with other social services. Additionally, they have an active involvement with a rape crisis centre. The faculty are, in her opinion, well networked through relationships with many church leaders.

A similar level of optimism was expressed by all those interviewed regarding a connectedness with the global community. Pfister had no doubt that this primarily meant that Birmingham Christian College had to position itself to be Eurocentric. To him, global connectedness meant a primary commitment to the lost continent of Europe and especially the twenty seven nations of the European Union. Wall was probably the least optimistic. Historically All Nations Christian College felt strongly connected globally mainly through a very diverse international student body. With visa issues being the main source of the problem, the numbers of international students had declined creating a sense of less connectedness with the global community. In addition to visas becoming harder to obtain for international students there is a growing

availability of study options for students in their own countries making it less desirable than before to study in the U.K.

Global connectedness was expressed by a number as being good as a result of members of faculty and members of the governing body serving on the leadership teams of various mission agencies. This was particularly true of London School of Theology and Redcliffe. Many of those interviewed also mentioned the benefit of staff and students travelling internationally. International Christian College has several faculty members who are undertaking ongoing research programmes in places such as Thailand. They are also enriched in Sargent's opinion, by the fact that so many of their faculty have had missionary experience. Mattersey Hall, according to Balfour, has been very proactive in this area. Each year the College mobilises its entire undergraduate student body into cross-cultural ministry situations. In recent years the College has served communities in twelve different nations and Balfour is enthusiastic about the impact that this has had on both students and faculty alike.

Perhaps the most obvious means of gauging global connectedness is through ongoing relationships with graduates, the creation of opportunities for visiting scholars and long term partnerships with institutions in different parts of the world. Every College has been a part of the training of international students all reported to me how valuable the ongoing connection is with these. In fact all, with the exception of two, listed this as possibly the first and most obvious expression of global connectedness. Redcliffe has past students serving in ninety five different nations around the world. Tween also pointed out the large component of international students coming to Regents – about fifty percent of them from other denominational backgrounds. Baxter pointed out that

as the number of international students had declined – mainly through the provision of training options in their countries of origin, so had the level of global connectedness.

International Christian College has engaged in the practice of having an international visiting scholar join their faculty for a period of time in the past. This proved a very fruitful exercise but current funding has not allowed it to continue. London School of Theology has had several such exchanges and is determined to continue them. Cliff College likewise has enjoyed the benefit of visiting international scholars.

Those who responded most enthusiastically spoke of international partnerships. Atkinson told of Cliff College becoming involved in the training of leaders in Sierra Leone following the civil war there. For what it would have cost to provide two scholarships to allow students to attend Cliff College, they were able to train one hundred and seven pastors over a three year period. The outcomes were excellent and Atkinson feels certain that Cliff College will repeat this kind of partnership in the future. Redcliffe has a sister college in Zimbabwe and the relationship with this College has been mutually enriching according to Steer. International Christian College has a long term association with Carlile College in Nairobi, Kenya and is involved in ongoing projects with this College. Mattersey Hall has established a relationship with a college in Kuala Lumpur and offers a Master's course in association with this college. Faculty thus travel to Malaysia twice a year and Balfour commented on the positive impact that this was having. St. John's have a long and well established relationship with the Bible College of Sri Lanka that has proved to be a mutually enriching one.



Apart from specific relationships there are well established relationships around the world for some. The Nazarene Theological College is well positioned in providing doctoral supervision to many within the Nazarene denomination around the world. It is noteworthy that nearly all the respondents were clearly more enthusiastic about their connectedness with the global community than with their own immediate constituency!

One glaring omission from all the interviews was a voice regarding a response to global social issues such as poverty intervention, HIV/AIDS and other pandemics, the plight of refugees and the exploitation of children. This might be because of the way in which the question was phrased. Almost certainly the inference in the conversation had to do with the primary function of the colleges, namely theological education. Thus it would be incorrect to surmise that the colleges are not dealing with these critical issues but it should be noted that they were not raised in this context.

My clear impression in surveying all of the responses was that all those interviewed are concerned about being connected. Some are doing better than others but all recognise the importance. It would be accurate to state that there was no strong evidence suggesting that colleges seek connectedness as a direct result of deliberate missional strategy. Although all would concede, in my assessment, that connectedness is an integral part of a missional expression in most instances connectedness was either as a result a purely pragmatic decision making (as providing ministry placements for students for example) or seizing an opportunity to serve and adapt in innovative ways (as in partnering with international colleges).

Generally I am satisfied that the interview process supported the research undertaken and described in chapter 4. Whilst different terminology is sometimes used the ten

Colleges involved all had a commitment to be engaged in real life situations and to have their students do so as well. However this is described, the act of engagement is in itself missional and supports the proposed thesis that theological education must have a missional rationale.

**5. How seriously has your academic team treated the issues related to contemporary culture and how is this reflected in the curriculum and other academic processes?**

This question relates to the issues raised in chapter five of this thesis. That chapter builds an argument for ministry training institutions and programmes to have a commitment to engaging contemporary culture. This expression of culture was broadly defined as being characterised by the combined forces of globalisation and pluralism. Although its primary expression is in Western nations it is nevertheless increasingly a global culture. I wanted to know how much this phenomenon was impacting on the strategies and programmes of theological training institutions in the U.K.

The responses were stronger than I anticipated. Atkinson made it plain that engagement with contemporary culture completely drives all the processes related to Cliff College. In fact, he was entirely missional in describing why this factor is so important. He stated, “We believe in the work of the Spirit in the world before we even start. We thus join God in His mission”. This is very reminiscent of Bosch and Newbigin. He went on to state the commitment of Cliff College to avoid being ghettoised at all costs. Pfister’s response was similar. He made it clear that it was not just a general commitment to engaging contemporary culture but postmodernity in particular. In the

case of Birmingham Christian College much of this engagement was facilitated by a partnership with the organisation called “Together in Mission” who have specialised in this area.<sup>534</sup>

The least specific answer was provided by Tween but his response was not dismissive. He stated that Regents College had made decisions to provide degrees in applied theology. Although this was understood by the faculty Tween hinted at it taking some time to implement by stating that “the journey continues”. In a similar vein, Sargent, whilst acknowledging the need to engage contemporary culture felt that humanness remains the same in all generations and that, in his opinion, “we are always on a cynical cultural journey”. He went on to state that he felt that the problem in every generation will always be that expressed in Romans 7. Baxter stated that she did not think that this subject was spoken about enough by the team at St. John’s although she was sure that the issue was being addressed by individual faculty members.

Tidball was emphatic by stating that this issue is taken “massively” by London School of Theology. To the best of his knowledge the College was the first to introduce a theology and culture course in the early seventies. This innovation has continued. Tidball believes that hermeneutics is a key in equipping people to engage culture and this course is taught with cultural engagement in mind. Likewise there is a compulsory first year course entitled “Today’s World” and there is also a science and faith course available within the curriculum. These explicit commitments are supported by visits to the Tate Modern Art Gallery. Redcliffe take this issue seriously as well as there is a clear recognition of how important it is in creating context for cross-cultural ministry.

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<sup>534</sup> For more information on Together in Mission see:

There were several concerns raised as well as some valuable strategies suggested. The concerns were expressed mainly by Steer and Atkinson. Steer was concerned that courses on postmodernity or those closely associated with this subject area can be engaged in a “rather amateurish way” by Christian teachers. He emphasised that any attempt to engage postmodernity should be done in a rigorous and unthreatened way. Atkinson was concerned that “we make sure that we do not lose ourselves in culture whilst we constantly seek to engage it”. Pfister was concerned that ways must be found to connect the political, economic and social dimensions in the conversation regarding contemporary culture. The Nazarene Theological College addresses the issues related to contemporary Western culture by deliberately inviting informed people to complement the lecturing schedule. They also dedicate at least one chapel period a year to a question and answer session relative to these issues.

In terms of strategies, All Nations Christian College has adopted a strategy of teaching a course on contemporary western culture alongside their course offerings of African and Chinese studies. Mattersey Hall has introduced a B.A. in Christian leadership in which areas such as a Christian world view and cultural engagement are foundational. Pfister ensures that there are always books visible in his office providing an unspoken message on the importance of engaging with secular, post-Christian Europe. Tween also emphasises Western Europe and suggests that optimistic envisioning for outreach will produce graduates who can “be a part of the answer and not a part of the problem”.

All of the responses showed an understanding of what is meant by contemporary culture and how to engage with those who are essentially postmodern. In terms of this thesis the responses given were encouraging and helped to reinforce the conclusions reached in chapter 5. More importantly, the interviewees contributed to the argument that a missional rationale for theological education and training must include and be informed by an understanding of contemporary Western thought and culture. Whilst further research would need to be undertaken to discover whether theological training in the developing world requires an understanding of what is increasingly a global culture, it is evident that those who are practitioners within the British context are largely persuaded. I would thus conclude that this particular window substantiates the argument for engagement of contemporary Western culture at both the curricula and applied levels of Christian ministry training.

**6. What role, if any, has the writings or the ministry of theologians and practitioners in the developing world had on your academic or practical programme?**

As has become the pattern, this question related to the discussions conducted in chapter six of the thesis. I sought in that chapter to argue that the voices of scholars in developing nations should be heard and that increasingly theological educators should allow the theological and missiological content of the training they facilitate to be informed by these scholars. My intention in the interview process was to discover if this was happening and to what degree.

Pfister proved the most emphatic answer by stating that, although he was unsure of his colleagues, the writings of scholars from emerging or developing nations had had absolutely no impact on him. By extension, there was no known impact upon the theological curriculum within Birmingham Christian College. He did concede that he was trying currently to do some theological reflection on what he termed “European Theology” in the light of the trend to classify theological thought into areas such as African or Latin American theology.

To some extent this was echoed by Balfour who stated that Mattersey Hall had felt minimal impact from the writings of scholars from developing nations. He did state however that in recent years “post-colonial studies have come into play”. He did not expand on what he meant by this. Atkinson felt that Cliff College was influenced by scholars from developing nations far less than he would have liked but this is changing. He mentioned that in recent years, especially since the College has gone through academic accreditation the need to engage the world church more has become increasingly evident. He was concerned that this should not have any element of political correctness about it but that Cliff College needed to try to work out what was transferable from scholars in other nations. He believed that one way to work this out was through partnerships and faculty exchanges and mentioned projects undertaken by Cliff College in recent years in Cuba, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. Tidball also conceded that the influence of these international scholars on London School of Theology was not as great as it should be. He did however state that there is a definite policy to ensure ethnic diversity within the faculty and that his College actively promotes opportunities for international scholars to teach there.

Tween felt unqualified to answer the question but mentioned that the Vice Principal of Regents College, Keith Warrington was currently writing a book on engagement with the majority world. The College was also a part of a task group that was seeking ways to engage Pentecostal spirituality globally.

Sargent and International Christian College stood out from the remainder of the group in regard to engagement with scholars from the developing or majority world. Sargent stated:

Regarding the writings or ministry of those in the developing world and their influence on ICC, my impression is that their influence is considerable. This is largely reflected by the fact that so many of the faculty have lived and worked internationally and so their bibliographies often reflect the work of theologians and scholars from within those cultures. Study specialties represented on the faculty would include Thai Buddhism, Japanese studies etc. One faculty member, David Miller, is actively involved in the planning towards the 2010 Edinburgh conference. Part of this process has been the organising of symposiums which take seriously the role of those in developing nations and their involvement in the conference. Further, ICC would like to have an ongoing programme of involving resident tutors from the two thirds world in their teaching programme.

This commitment was echoed by Steer who believed that the writings of scholars from developing nations have a “huge and developing role” at Redcliffe. The College has introduced a number of courses especially developed to expose students to the Global South. Steer did comment on the challenge of accessing literature from these nations but would like the Redcliffe library to reflect a serious engagement with scholars from these nations. Steer used the term “decentred connectedness” meaning that there must be a clear recognition that the West cannot continue to claim to be the centre of academic expertise. McCulloch echoed views regarding the value of having faculty that have served in a cross-cultural environment. In the case of The Nazarene Theological College many faculty member have had this experience and their reading lists reflect this and their experience certainly informs the teaching. He also reported on the

deliberate strategy to ask international students to reflect indigenous writers in their work. The problem with this is that often there is simply no material available.

Baxter's comment was that "there ought to be a staff seminar on this question". I took this to mean that it was challenging to deliver this component within the curriculum but that there was recognition of its growing importance. Currently the major way that St. John's has to address this issue is through encouraging their faculty to travel, minister and teach overseas.

## **Conclusion**

Thus the responses to this question were wide and varied. It would be unfair to conclude that those with a major commitment to engaging scholars from developing nations are any more missional than those that do not. However, I could not escape the impression throughout the interviews conducted that those who did take this issue seriously were better positioned, at least conceptually, to make adaptations and transitions within their institutions as global conditions changed.

I have to concede that it would be difficult to find a single institution that excelled in every component of a well developed missional training programme as outlined in the first six chapters of my thesis. What the British window has done however, is to show the growing interrelationship between all of these components. Practitioners have confirmed, in some cases quite emphatically, that these components are vital if a theological training programme is to be viable. I feel satisfied that the arguments that



have been developed in the first part of this thesis, mainly through an analysis and synthesis of current literature on the subject have been substantiated by those who have participated in the interview process. The exercise remains but a window on a relatively small training enterprise in a nation that is rapidly becoming post-Christian. However, if the responses received are, even in a small way, indicative of the shape of theological education in the U.K. and elsewhere there is every reason for optimism. My conclusion is that the U.K. is served by a group of largely excellent colleges lead by fine men and women who have grasped to a greater or lesser degree what is meant by a missional rationale for theological education and training.

## CHAPTER 10

### A MISSIONAL RATIONALE FOR THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION – A

#### WINDOW ON THE UNITED KINGDOM

##### **Part 3 – Hopes and aspirations**

In the previous chapter each question, with its responses related to a particular chapter of the thesis. As the interview progressed there was a deliberate shift in the style of the questions. One further question related to a specific chapter (chapter 7) and two further questions allowed the respondents the opportunity to express themselves regarding their aspirations whether well defined or not.

This was more than just an exercise in discovering the visionary capacity of each Principal. In the first instance it was a specific way of identifying how prominent the awareness of a hidden curriculum was amongst these leaders. Then there was the all important issue of finance and the long term resourcing of the various colleges and only then was the opportunity given to express a desire, hope or aspiration in visionary terms.

This chapter thus moves from responses to the identified structural and practical components of a missional foundation within theological training and education to identify hopes, aspirations and visions within the population selected. Do these less tangible areas of leadership in institutions providing theological education have a missional dimension? Put another way, whereas the explicit and strategic areas of delivering a theological training could easily be influenced by a constituency or even sheer pragmatism, is it possible that those who lead these institutions have a deeper

motivation for what they do? More importantly, in the context of this thesis, is that deeper motivation essentially a missional one? These questions were behind the final phase of the interview. As in the previous chapter, the questions themselves provide the structure.

### **7. If you were to describe one salient feature of the “hidden curriculum” what would it be?**

In chapter 7 of the thesis I argued that the hidden curriculum can sometimes be as influential in an institution or programme as the explicit curriculum. I continued to recommend that the hidden curriculum must be managed carefully and consciously. I now wanted to discover if this was the case within the British window created by the interview process.

Although most of those interviewed were somewhat familiar with the concept of a hidden curriculum it was evident that it was not a prominent part of the conscious leadership of their respective institutions. The very obvious exception to this rule was Baxter of St. Johns College. Her background as a school teacher made her very aware of the concept of a hidden curriculum and she was clearly impressed at the question. Her answer is telling: “Affecting the hidden curriculum is possibly the single greatest contribution I have made to St. John’s.” On at least two occasions I was asked to explain what was meant by the term. I chose to use terms such as “ethos” or “institutional culture” in explaining what was being referred to. As in other parts of the interview process, I was careful not to describe what components might be included in this ethos or culture.

The first point to note was that several of the respondents immediately prefaced their remarks by stating that what they had to say was personal (not confidential). Atkinson, Steer and Sargent were all in this group. Atkinson desired that the hidden curriculum in Cliff College would be to bring about maturity in the students in such a way as to maintain their passion. Steer allowed a long pause and careful thought before answering. His response will be dealt with later. Sargent was very clear in his response stating that “theophany and theology should be the same thing”. He explained that there should be no artificial gap between our experiential knowing of God and our learning about Him.<sup>535</sup> He further commented on the hidden curriculum by stating that he felt that we often measure the wrong things. For example, success in a course is often measured by the inspiration and other skills of the lecturer, it should however, also include some measurement upon the engagement of the student. His point was clear; the hidden curriculum should include some form of measure, or at least serious recognition of those things that are not easily quantifiable. Tidball’s response is in a slightly similar vein. He believes that the hidden curriculum within London School of Theology is currently a largely undesirable one and that is that the place of academic achievement and excellence is possibly overemphasised. It was his feeling that this needed to be reversed and replaced with a more obvious understanding of formation and spiritual growth. The new programmes being introduced at London School of Theology deliberately include formation groups. Wall answered succinctly and directly by stating that spiritual transformation must be the objective and thus the hidden curriculum must support this in every way.

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<sup>535</sup> This is echoed in the literature. For example, Gerald D. Borchert, T. Rupert and Lucille Coleman state that the process of reflecting on biblical spirituality and the spiritual gifts will not be productive unless it involves the student’s whole life. They go on to insist that spirituality involves the totality of the student’s personal being. See Borchert, G. L., ‘Identifying and Cultivating Spiritual Giftedness’ in Gushee, D. P., and Jackson, W. C., *Preparing*, pp. 95 – 96.

The aspirations addressed by these Principals are dealt with in some detail by S. Mark Heim who speaks of two forms of theological ‘literacy’. The first is the mastery of certain tools which are necessary to access written information. The second is to use these tools to grasp certain content that should be known by the person being educated.<sup>536</sup> In other words, the aspirations of Tidball and Wall are supported by Heim’s assertion that theological literacy involves both dimensions of the training programme, namely, the essential academic skills and the means to interpret theology into spiritual formation.

Understandably in the light of her previous statement recorded above, Baxter had more to contribute to this question than others. She noted that when she joined the staff of St. John’s in 1979 she was, because of her teaching background, almost immediately aware of the hidden curriculum. It was her observation that it was almost entirely set and run by students, at times to the detriment of the College as a whole. The strategy adopted by St. John’s is the most deliberate of all out of the group of ten interviewed. The College established a board as a mirror to the governing board. This board was named “The Community Board” and is made up of representatives of every level of college life – faculty, students, support staff, students’ spouses etc. Their stated responsibility is to take care that St. John’s achieves in all of its goals and objectives and further, fulfils the spirit of the various statements that define the College. Most importantly, Baxter was able to state that this process covers everything from social life to the process of leaving. Note her final statement in this regard: “No events take place at St. John’s that are not thought through”. This is a noteworthy statement. It supports the conclusions

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<sup>536</sup> Heim, S. M., ‘Renewing Ways of Life: The Shape of Theological Education’ in Petersen, R. L., and Rourke, N. M., (eds.), *Theological Literacy*, p. 56.

described in chapter 7 that the hidden curriculum must be managed with intentionality by the leadership of the College.

The theme of community came up in many of the interviews. After careful thought Steer expressed the hope that Redcliffe College had a strong ethos of hospitality. He enlarged on this stating that he was passionate about hospitality being a mode and means of the Kingdom. He would like the hidden curriculum at Redcliffe to be one that unquestionably welcomes strangers, embraces people in need and creates a community that enjoys life together. Pfister echoed the theme of community. For him the hidden curriculum in Birmingham Christian College should be one that allows for an authentic Christian community. He believes that this kind of community should model genuine integration. It is his wish to make Birmingham Christian College a “European laboratory”. I took this to mean that it could be a model of community in the midst of the rapid social change within Europe. McCulloch’s comments added a dimension to this in that he believed that an aspect of the hidden curriculum being “discovered” at The Nazarene Theological College was its place within the community of nations and that it could no longer afford to be a British institution only. As an expression of this realization, is the fact, according to McCulloch, that the College is in fact a way of the church being missionary.

Tween responded to this question by stating that he was very aware of the influence of the non-formal dimension of college life. In the case of Regents he hoped that the hidden curriculum could be identified by an ethos in which “there is a massive sense of encouragement and a culture to ‘live long’ and have a great sense of expectancy”. Possibly the vaguest of the responses came from Balfour. He felt that the student

response to this question would be to be known as a worshipping community. (Of all the respondents he was the only one to verbalise a possible student perspective). He also felt there was a good understanding of community learning at Mattersey Hall. It was his impression that a high priority for the hidden curriculum aspired to by faculty was a greater level and availability of practical ministry and field-based learning opportunities for the students.

In analysing these responses I came to the conclusion that, as a rule, the hidden curriculum in the colleges represented was not well identified. Of all the component parts of the missional rationale represented by the first seven chapters of this thesis this was the one area where answers were not immediately forthcoming, were somewhat subjective or personal and were often expressed as aspirations rather than descriptions of deliberate, proactive strategies. This is troubling, especially if my analysis of the literature as found in chapter seven is valid. I discovered that the hidden curriculum can be very influential and thus needs to be well defined and managed. This was not obviously the case in the test group of ten, even though it was not absent entirely and Baxter represented an obvious exception. This lack of clear and obvious conviction sends out confusing signals to the wider community regarding theological education. In 1983 the International Council for Accrediting Agencies produced a manifesto on Evangelical theological education. This prompted several responses. Amongst them was the work that Robert Ferris conducted in a number of institutions worldwide. His book calls for a differentiation between theological schooling and theological education.<sup>537</sup> He explains that the schooling model is good for developing research scholars and for dealing with abstract concepts but he believes that the education model

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<sup>537</sup> Ferris, R. W., *Renewal in Theological Education: Strategies for Change* (Wheaton, Wheaton College, 1990), p. 5.

with its mentoring and formation capacity is vital to developing people for Christian ministry. This tension emerges in these interviews and underlies many of the responses regarding the hidden curriculum.<sup>538</sup>

A further analysis of the responses identifies some noble aspirations but seems to ignore other issues. Spiritual maturity can cover a wide area of Christian life and ministry formation but risks becoming a vague hope if not clearly identified. I argued in chapter seven that this process must begin by “remembering rightly”. Superficial spiritual experiences and unresolved internal issues such as lingering unforgiveness in prospective or studying students will diminish the effectiveness of the course causing subjective interludes to become the norm. Worse still is the hope that a college career will resolve internal spiritual struggles in the life of a student and, in my opinion, if this is not dealt with through the mechanisms of the hidden curriculum (even at the time of application), will result in reactive pastoral care that will negatively influence both the community and the learning process.

The other notable absence from the responses defining the hidden curriculum was anything about morality. Again, this might be presumed but it certainly was not stated. No statement was made about gender issues, and apart from Steer’s general comment about making all people welcome, nothing was stated about racial or ethnic issues, except a brief passing comment from Baxter in reference to the role of the Community Board at St. John’s. Environmental issues, the careful management of natural resources and imparting life skills were also absent from the responses.

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<sup>538</sup> For further reading of Ferris and others in regard to the manifesto on the renewal of theological education cf. Collinson, S. W., *Making Disciples: The Significance of Jesus’ Educational Methods for Today’s Church* (Milton Keynes, Paternoster, 2004), pp. 226 – 229. (Collinson’s work is primarily related to educational method in wider church life but deals briefly with theological education).



As already noted, there is not a great deal written by theological educators on the hidden curriculum. Perhaps this is reflected in the scope of the responses received in this interview process. Wolterstorff attempts to cast a vision regarding the mission of the Christian College. He suggests there will be three characteristics present. The first is greater international concern and consciousness than there is at present. The second is that colleges will need to explore new ways of packaging the learning they present to students, especially the need to equip students to reform society. The third is to have greater concern in building bridges from theory to practice.<sup>539</sup> Whilst his writing references the North American liberal arts college context he, nevertheless, is identifying the building blocks of what chapter 7 calls the ‘hidden curriculum’. I was never aware, with the exception of Baxter, that this kind of obvious structure or construct was part of the thinking or strategy of the interviewees. Wolterstorff’s three-point outline is therefore helpful and insightful. An international consciousness will heighten the awareness of global concerns, international conflict and the need of the poor. A new commitment to packaging training in the framework of justice, poverty, crime and punishment, ecology, peace, war or nationalism will help in establishing a hidden curriculum that is not self serving but designed to produce mature world citizens capable of making good choices. Likewise, a commitment to move from theory to practice will ensure a constant appropriation of the explicit curriculum securing life change. As Wolterstorff points out, there is “not a shred of evidence that simply putting abstract theory in front of them (students) will alter their actions”.<sup>540</sup>

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<sup>539</sup> Wolterstorff, N., *Educating for Shalom: Essays on Christian Higher Education* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2004), p. 34. In my reading it appears as though those who are involved in the administration of Christian Colleges (liberal arts) rather than ministry training institutions have a greater awareness of the need for these underlying values. This is probably because of the greater scope of the curriculum but does not lessen the need for theological educators to develop the hidden curriculum.

<sup>540</sup> Wolterstorff, N., *Educating*, p. 34. This book contains some other useful essays. Two in particular are worth special mention. ‘A Case for Disinterested Learning’, pp. 100 – 108 and ‘Teaching for Justice: On Shaping How Students are Disposed to Act’, pp. 135 – 154. The latter is particularly pertinent as it deals

To be fair, the interviewees were only given the opportunity to state the salient feature of the hidden curriculum. Perhaps the analysis above is too harsh but the question theological educators must ask themselves is just where are these issues dealt with? I suggest that the hidden curriculum is an obvious tool when employed effectively, for addressing them.

#### **8. Describe briefly your ideal in terms of sustainable resourcing for your institution**

The operable word in this question is the word sustainable. The intention was to investigate whether the Principals being interviewed were thinking systemically about the long term financial needs of the institutions they served. It might well be that this is not a specific part of the expectation that their respective boards have of them, but I certainly wanted to discover if there was a commitment to long term sustainability and further, if there were any effective strategies in place allowing for this.

Every respondent was quick to point out that their institution did not enjoy any special endowment funding and was overly dependent upon student fees for financial survival. The only Principal to divulge any information about reserve funds was Tidball who referred to a scholarship fund held by London School of Theology. The other College that is anticipating a long term solution to an over dependence upon student fees is Regents College. Tween made reference to an impending sale of the existing campus in Nantwich and a move to a location near Malvern. It is anticipated that this move will

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with the concept of moral education. A hidden curriculum should have at its core the motivation to ensure a moral education.

enable the college to realise some of the substantial equity in their existing property and for there to be some reserves available for investment once the move is complete. In spite of this however, Tween feels that the College really needs a bigger donor base in order to allow for an operation substantially better resourced than the present one. He innovatively suggested that some thought should go into providing a degree combining theology and business in order to have more Christian business people in the market place who understand the value of investment into training and could become substantial donors.

Most of those interviewed would like to see the development of a more substantial donor base for their respective institutions.<sup>541</sup> Wall was the most optimistic stating that he felt that a base of about ten thousand donors, with about ninety percent of student fees underwritten would be ideal. Atkinson did not have the same opinion entirely. He believes that it is right that there should be an element of faith at work in the area of financing a college's operations. He felt that an increase of funding of about one hundred thousand pounds per year was required for Cliff College. He would like some of this to be available through legacies but at least half through an enlarged donor base. His sentiments were shared almost entirely by Steer. Although he saw the value of some endowment funding the faith dimension was important to him. He stated: "Sustainability is all about God's provision and the need to be reminded of that provision". By this he meant that the College needed to operate with a level of

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<sup>541</sup> In analysing the responses given by the interviewees it is evident that a larger and more committed donor base is the preferred method of sustaining the financial base of the college – Sargent being the only exception. The almost complete lack of any written material regarding the long-term financial viability of ministry training institutions is interesting. Beyond the scope of this research but worthy of careful attention would be a study on why so little is written. Is it because colleges and training institutions are led by theologians or educators and not entrepreneurs? Is there a theological predisposition that prevents this issue from being properly addressed? Is it a reflection on the governing body of the institution? These and other questions deserve a greater hearing and, perhaps just as importantly, need to be reflected more in the literature on theological education and training.

dependence upon God to create a model for students who would probably graduate and be faced with exactly the same issues. In the context of long term sustainability Steer was quick to state that he felt that a financial base that would allow for more competitive salaries for staff and faculty was vital. It was not just sustaining the existing programme that was important to him, it was making allowance for recruitment of well qualified personnel that would ensure long term sustainability. Baxter also mentioned that considerable thought had been expended in resolving long term sustainability issues. The consensus on the Council of St. John's was to deliberately "live by faith" and to use money as it comes available rather than develop and endowment fund.

Pfister chose to have a larger number of partnerships with churches and organisations as a means to ensuring the long term sustainability of Birmingham Christian College. His approach was one of relationship building, not fund raising. Most expressed the opinion that their colleges were not enjoying critical mass in terms of the number of students. In most cases a larger student body was desirable. This was certainly expressed by Balfour who stated that the size and availability of course offerings at Mattersey Hall required a larger student body to provide for long term sustainability. Tidball echoed these sentiments. Sargent's perspective in this regard would be to move the college "downmarket". By this he means that for several years the trend, followed by International Christian College has been "upmarket", meaning the provision of more and more validated, long term courses. He feels that thought should be given to offering more short term courses, thus enlarging the student body because these courses would be more accessible. Whilst most of the Principals aspire to have increased

external funding Sargent's preference would be to have no dependence upon outside funding at all.

It was of interest that none of those interviewed mentioned the various post-graduate courses offered. It is unclear if this is perceived as a growth area and if it is a potential source of additional income. It was also noteworthy that none of the respondents made special mention of alumni – a factor so prevalent in the North American scene. There is an obvious hesitancy when it comes to finance and it was apparent from the interviews that this was not an area where any of the Principals felt completely comfortable.

The overall impression gained from the interview process was that most of the Colleges are doing an excellent job from a poor resource base. None of the colleges seemed threatened in terms of their existence due to this but it was an area that clearly concerned all of those interviewed. Though the strategies to correct the under resourcing of the Colleges were numerous, the underlying problem was the same, namely that there was not an adequate financial base to achieve the goals and objectives of the college. In my opinion it would be irresponsible for those in governance to ignore this. Governors or directors of British Colleges, based on my research, do not seem to be proactive enough, except in rare instances, leaving the Principals and staff of the colleges the unenviable task of raising enough external funding to provide for the ever growing need of training theological students.

**9. If you were given the freedom to dream a dream for the short to medium term future of your institution what would the main feature of it be?**

I explained to those being interviewed that this was an opportunity to be visionary and imaginative. I was interested in a number of factors, especially as this question did not have a foundation in any of the research on part 1 of this thesis. On a very personal level, I was interested to see how visionary the individual principals were. Was there an obvious passion in what they were doing? Had the strains of the job robbed them of this vital aspect of leadership? Of course, the more important aspect was to discover if the visionary expression made by the principals was in any way missional. Would I discover an almost undeclared level of desire in these people that was thoroughly committed to joining God's mission in the earth?

Atkinson and Wall immediately responded to this question by making reference to the locations of their respective colleges. Wall, if he had his way, would want to relocate All Nations Christian College from rural Hertfordshire to an inner city environment which was obviously multi cultural. He felt that the model of missionary training at All Nations Christian College was very much based on a paradigm more compatible with a previous generation. Atkinson felt the same way. Conceding that the current Cliff College campus was in a beautiful setting, he did not believe that it best suited the training aspirations that he had for the College. His preference was to relocate to the outskirts of London. As this was a most unlikely option during his tenure, he stated that he would be satisfied with operating a branch near London a central feature of its operation being ethnic engagement.

Other responses did not require relocation as suggested by Atkinson and Wall but did relate to facilities. Tidball, whilst stressing that people are always more important than buildings, did hope to see a major campus redevelopment project at London School of Theology completed soon. Steer was in the same position. Stressing that there are always greater visionary priorities than facilities he did hope to see plans for expansion at Redcliffe College come to fruition. This includes new buildings that are at planning stage.

Several of the respondents raised the issue of adequate staffing and the desire to have financial resources in place to provide for more teaching faculty in particular. Pfister was forthright: “My vision would be to have more manpower to achieve the vision, especially academic faculty. This would break a vicious cycle. If there is an inadequate skill level within faculty students are difficult to recruit.” Baxter responded that they do dream dreams at St. John’s! In the same way as Pfister explained his situation, Baxter would like to have the resources to fund at least three new faculty positions, especially the ability to develop specialty abilities within the faculty. In a slightly similar way Tween would like the resources to offer a greater diversity of teaching programmes, including ministry tracks that are developed in a bespoke way for individual students. He conceded that this would be demanding both in terms of time and personnel. Coupled with this his desire would be for a more vocational approach to training which, again, would require a greater resource base than is currently enjoyed.

All of those interviewed were insistent however, that the greater component of their dream and vision was in terms of the type and calibre of student graduating from their colleges. Sargent stated it succinctly:

A dream for the college would be that people would leave the college with a great knowledge of the Word of God and an equal knowledge of the God of the Word. A dream is for each student to have a significant God experience and a passionate commitment to Him.

Balfour unhesitatingly stated the same thing by saying that his dream would be for Mattersey Hall to really make disciples who, in turn would make disciples. He believed that this could be achieved through higher levels of spiritual rapport between faculty and students.

Steer's dream has a wider element. His desire would be to see a revival of mission mobilisation, primarily in the U.K. and thus to have a larger number of people who take training seriously. His comment suggests an insight to a more foundational issue in theological and mission training. Baxter seemed to sum up the general feeling of all those interviewed by saying, "It is hard work but that is as it should be!"

## **Conclusion**

The great challenge facing theological educators is that there are many elements of the training programme that are not easily quantifiable. To add to this frustration, those things that are quantifiable, to use Sargent's words, are often the wrong things to measure. George Schner sums this tension up effectively. Referring to Farley's first work on theological education, namely *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education*, makes this observation:



The resulting shape of theological education is dependent upon its division into the fourfold scheme (generally bible, history, systematics, and pastoralia, though with variations), with preparation for clerical leadership as its unifying purpose, and the severance of the theoretical from the practical as evidenced in the antagonism of the “academic” and the “pastoral,” the former being considered elitist and irrelevant, the latter collapsing into various forms of functionalist competency.<sup>542</sup>

This describes the tension that seems to exist at almost every level of this enterprise referred to as theological training and education. The findings of the seventh chapter were generally found to be accurate through the interview process. Although there was no specific research with which to compare the last two questions, the findings remained consistent, namely, that much was expected from very little investment. This recurring theme, found throughout the literature and identified in the first part of this thesis has been supported in the “British window” following a thorough interview process.

The interview process has been enlightening and encouraging. The results are offer a composite picture representing a significant group of educators in the U.K. It is not possible to tell whether this paints an accurate picture for theological educators in other nations. However, it seems reasonable to suggest that there will be parallels that can be drawn and lessons that can be learnt.

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Schner, G., *Education for Ministry: Reform and Renewal in Theological Education* (Kansas City, Sheed and Ward, 1993), p. 169.

## CONCLUSION

It was the intention from the outset of this project to propose a missional rationale for theological education. I stated that I intended to investigate the various component parts of this rationale and then put them to the test within a specific context which I called the “British Window”. In conclusion I intend to address three areas that result from the journey of discovery that this project has allowed. Firstly, it is my intention to restate the incredibly complex task facing theological educators. The opportunities afforded me during the writing of this thesis have given me the overwhelming impression that the task of training the next generation of leaders is more complex and difficult than ever. My intention is to show this and, in so doing alert both educators and their constituency to the need to consciously and deliberately develop a missional rationale for their training programme in order to ensure a positive future for it.

The second goal of this conclusion will be in the form of a retrospective critique of the project. I am deeply aware of what has not been achieved by my research and what could well be the subject of further reflection and thought.

Thirdly, if there is any lasting value in the research I have conducted it should be in the enhanced ability to cast a vision for theological education and training that is missional in its method and goals. My research and the fine people that I have met on the journey have left me feeling optimistic about the future of the noble task of training future leaders for Christian ministry.

## 1. The complexity of theological education and training

The task facing those who have chosen the high calling of training the next generation of Christian leaders is an enormously complex one. Engaging a Christian educator in conversation will almost certainly lead to a discussion centred on one challenge or another. Richard Valantasis from addresses this issue by making the point that theological educational communities are distinct from virtually any other community by virtue of their emphasis not only on training but on formation that will equip their graduates to be leaders of local religious communities and missions.<sup>543</sup> He adds that a business school or law school focuses its attention on the mastery of a skill or particular knowledge but within the theological training community there is the added dimension of “personal vocation, a call to live in community, a mandate to create and recreate society, and a deconstruction and reconstruction of a vital faith in the midst of a changing world”.<sup>544</sup> Add to this the components dealt with in this thesis including contemporary social issues, the complexities of a global world and the huge challenge of an appropriate pedagogy and the task is revealed as the extraordinary one that it is. A. Harkness adds to this complex picture by stating that the laity, whilst on the one hand thinking that theological graduates should be placed upon some sort of “ecclesiastical pedestal” also wondered whether they really understood the realities of life “as if they graduate with the right answers, but to the wrong questions”.<sup>545</sup> Harkness points out that the task of training Christian leaders often seems to fall in “no-man’s land”. On the one hand there are expectations held by the constituency supporting the training programme and the measurement of skills and abilities in the life

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<sup>543</sup> Valantasis, R., ‘Creating Visionary and Enhanced Theological Institutions’ in *Teaching Theology and Religion*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2005, pp. 11 – 14.

<sup>544</sup> Valantasis, Y., ‘Creating’, p. 11.

<sup>545</sup> Harkness, A., ‘De-schooling the Theological Seminary: An appropriate paradigm for effective ministerial formation’ in *Teaching Theology and Religion*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 2001, p. 143.

of the student on the other. This can result in an almost intolerable tension felt most often by those who undertake the training.

As the interviews reported in this thesis show, none of these complex issues are helped by the almost universal lack of resources in the delivery of theological education and training. This all paints a rather bleak picture except for the fact that most theological educators have, notionally at least, a commitment to a missional rationale for the education and training that they offer. It is for this reason that I feel that the majority of the answers in regard to envisioning a bright future for theological education and training lie with the educators themselves. I have drawn attention to the fact that training must be perceived as systemic but, in the final analysis the enterprise will largely rise or fall by the way in which it is managed by those who provide it. Valantasis suggests the need to create a common corporate identity. There are in this, he suggests, five touchstones.<sup>546</sup> The first is that this corporate identity transcends the faculty's own disciplines and guilds. This echoes Farley's concept of unity within the curriculum. In the vocabulary of a missional rationale this means that the individual faculty members of an institution must serve with a greater vision than what they might have been trained to have. As training schools attract people with specialties within the greater curriculum they must ensure that they share passionately the values of the hidden curriculum.<sup>547</sup>

The second responsibility for faculty according to Valantasis is to engage in a discourse that unifies the content of knowledge taught at schools. Whilst this recommendation is noble, it is not enough. Discourse that allows different parts of the curriculum to inform

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<sup>546</sup> Valantasis, R., 'Creating Visionary', p. 12.

<sup>547</sup> See chapter 7, p. 192.

others without at its core being missional will soon become skewed in one direction or another. Graham Cheesman<sup>548</sup> asserts that the evangelical Bible Colleges in the UK have largely fallen short in producing a context for ministry formation. He goes on to state that we much time is spent in colleges reading books, articles and conference papers on particular subject areas rather than works that address the issue of spiritual formation.<sup>549</sup> This is the common ground that faculty need to identify and it is primarily a missional one. The third area that Valantasis suggests is that the faculty engage with the mission of the school to envision a particular way of predicting and achieving outcomes.<sup>550</sup> This is a responsibility that faculty should take seriously to avoid the unnecessary exertion of energy by senior administrators on trying to satisfy the personal academic aspirations of individual members of the faculty. Valantasis then speaks of the need for energetic collaborative work among faculty members and finally, the benefit of gaining the positive influence in each specialty that comes from this collaboration. These five touchstones are helpful in identifying the responsibility faculty have for creating a missional identity within their respective institutions.

In retrospect, my analysis at this point of the journey that I have taken, is that the implementation of the component parts of missional training must be a corporate and clearly identified task undertaken by all in the training community but especially by the teaching faculty. Without the complete involvement of all faculty members the whole enterprise will inevitably spiral into the situation that has caused so much of the current

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<sup>548</sup> Cheesman is the former Principal of Belfast Bible College recently completed a PhD. entitled 'Training for Service: An Examination of Change and Development in the Bible College Movement in the UK, 1873 – 2002' (Queens University, Belfast, 2004). This is possibly the most comprehensive historical overview of the Bible College movement in the UK.

<sup>549</sup> Cheesman, G., 'The S Cheesman, G., 'The Spiritual Formation of Students – a personal selection from the literature' in *The Theological Educator*, vol. 2.1, March 2007

<sup>550</sup> Valantasis, R., 'Creating Visionary', p. 12.

debate.<sup>551</sup> A missional commitment with its “whole-life” emphasis is the only way to overcome the immense challenges that a complex task such as theological education and training present us.

## **2. A retrospective critique**

As with any project such as this one, there are many areas that must remain outside of consideration. In retrospect it is my sense that there are some aspects of this thesis that could do with further development. The first would be to do with the aspect of governance. Although this is dealt with in chapter 3 I do believe that a critical analysis could be undertaken with regard to the governance of colleges. In my interviews with Principals two things became clear. The first is the varied expectations of those in governance. There was a wide variance in the way in which the various boards were composed and, further, the expectations of those boards. This is to be expected but is not necessarily desirable. My sense, as I look back at my research written and unwritten is that this will become a bigger issue in years to come. This thesis contains virtually nothing relating to the great burden that is placed on colleges due to compliance issues. The legal pressures placed on any training programme or institution, quite apart from validation issues, are immense. Work place health and safety legislation, building codes, health and hygiene along with a host of employment law will threaten colleges in the future. This is true for the UK and almost certainly in other parts of the world as well.

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<sup>551</sup> See chapter 1.

I started this thesis by saying that I was not able to seriously address the issue of pedagogical method. This is being increasingly addressed and remains outside of the scope of what I have been able to achieve. However, with the benefit of this study behind me, I project that the issues of active learning, the use of technology in the classroom and the challenges of stimulating students who have grown up in a digital world will loom larger and larger. Educators will do well to attend to this area and encourage greater engagement by their faculty members of active learning models, reflective study, a better understanding of leadership and teams and the use of electronic technology for teaching and communicating.

The other area that is insufficiently dealt with in this thesis is that of a commitment to justice. There are places where this is hinted at.<sup>552</sup> It is however, an area that is totally underrepresented within the entire enterprise of training people for ministry. It is more than a mission trip or the completing of a petition calling for more to be done for those suffering in Darfur, Somalia. It is creating an awareness of the suffering of humanity and that, at the very core of Christian ministry is a call to care for the “widow, the stranger and the orphan”.

Thus, as I have a retrospective critique of my own research I project, in summary, some growing threats to theological training. These are governance, pedagogical models including the use of technology, the issues of authority and morality in teaching theology, and the immense subject of justice and mercy. It is wise that a missional rationale be applied to these key areas.

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<sup>552</sup> Chapter 7 for example.

### **3. Casting a vision**

The most rewarding part of the research represented in this thesis was my interaction with ten Principals who kindly allowed me to test my findings using their experience and institutions as the basis. My interviews with these fine people left me feeling optimistic about the future of theological training in the UK. If this is the case in a context that is challenging mainly because of the continued decline of the church, then there is every reason to believe that I would find equally good examples of leaders and institutions would be found around the world. Drawing on my experience with these individuals, I wish, in conclusion to cast a vision that, in many ways is a composite of their visions and aspirations.

I summarise my vision in five areas:

#### **3.1. Community**

I do believe that theological education that is missional cannot take place except in community. This is what ensures connectedness. My ideal for ministry training and preparedness would start with a high level of cohesion between the institution providing the training and the constituency it seeks to serve. As long as unnecessary tension exists between the institution or training programme and its supporting constituency both will be impoverished. Hasten the day when the church champions training and training truly serves the church. Should this occur there would be every reason to believe that all other areas where connectedness is required would find it.



### **3.2. Hospitality**

In casting a vision for a preferred future for theological education it would be for it to take place in a kind environment. Ultimately Christian theology is centred upon the person of Christ himself. My vision would be for the same servant spirit that is evident in the life of Christ through the narrative of the gospels to be evident within the ministry training programme too. The giving and receiving of hospitality – locally, regionally and internationally seems a good way to describe this.

### **3.3. Systemic success**

By this I mean the vision that theological training takes place within a much bigger, relational system allowing for young people to discern the call of God, be encouraged to undertake rigorous studies and then be accommodated into church and mission allowing them to fulfil their calling and vocation.

### **3.4. Justice and mercy**

As already mentioned, this is an area that is neglected in theological training. My vision would be for the great prophetic themes of the Bible to seriously inform the curriculum and for strategies to be found to sensitise students and faculty alike to the needs of the poor.

### **3.5. Humility**

My final dream and aspiration for theological education is that a missional rationale would so take root as to ensure a new humility within the enterprise as a whole. A theological humility that is void of all superficial triumphalism, a relational humility that allows us to celebrate each other's success without threat and a faith humility that enables us to enjoy the rewards of trusting God to supply the resources needed to achieve what is, ultimately, a vital expression of His mission in the earth.

I humbly salute all those involved in the high calling of training the Christian leaders of the future – the world is a much better place because of them.

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## **Interviews**

1. Derek Tidball, Principal London School of Theology (formerly London Bible College).

Date of interview: 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2007.

The interview with Tidball took place at London School of Theology.

2. Tony Sargent, Principal, International Christian College (ICC), Glasgow.

Date of interview: 29<sup>th</sup> April 2007.

The interview with Sargent took place at ICC.

3. Nigel Tween, Principal, Regents College, Nantwich.

Date of interview: 6<sup>th</sup> May 2007.

The interview with Tween took place at Regents College.

4. Glenn Balfour, Vice-Principal (Academic), Mattersey Hall College, South Yorkshire.

Date of interview: 8<sup>th</sup> May 2007.

The interview took place at Mattersey Hall.

5. Raymond Pfister, Principal, Birmingham Christian College (BCC).

Date of interview: 1<sup>st</sup> June 2007.

The interview took place at BCC.

6. Simon Steer, Principal, Redcliffe College, Gloucester.

Date of interview: 5<sup>th</sup> June 2007.

The interview took place at Redcliffe College.

7. Martyn Atkinson, Principal, Cliff College, Derbyshire.

Date of interview: 19<sup>th</sup> June 2007.

The interview took place over the telephone.

8. Michael Wall, Principal, All Nations College, Ware, Hertfordshire.

Date of interview: 28<sup>th</sup> June 2007.

The interview took place over the telephone.

9. Christina Baxter, Principal, St. John's College, Nottingham.

Date of interview: 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2007.

The interview took place at St. John's College.

10. David McCulloch, Principal, The Nazarene Theological College, Manchester.

Date of Interview: 4th July 2007.

The interview took place over the telephone.