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obedience of faith*

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## Guest Editorial

Last year the World Evangelical Fellowship accepted a new Statement of Mission for the organization. It reads:

*WEF member organizations exist to establish and help regional and national Evangelical Alliances empower and mobilize local churches and Christian organization to disciple the nations for Christ.*

The International Council of Accrediting Agencies for Evangelical Theological Education (ICAA), being part of WEF, examined the statement. It became obvious that excellence in theological education was a very significant factor in achieving the outcomes envisaged by it. For ICAA 'excellence' means using appropriate methods for training church leaders to the best of their ability. There is a lot of theological education practised today - not all of it 'excellent'. Much of it could only be described as mediocre. More often than not such less than satisfactory achievement is not the fault of the theological educators but rather a lack of knowledge of opportunity. ICAA has been addressing those difficulties since its inception, seeking a renewal on the part of those involved in evangelical theological education world wide.

The theme of this edition was chosen to reflect ICAA's commitment to the pursuit of excellence and renewal in theological education. The source of the articles is to be found in a number of consultations which ICAA has organized since 1980. These articles give an example of papers which were presented on the particular themes chosen for the consultations. Taken collectively they provide a historical overview of the progress of ICAA towards the goal of 'excellence' in theological education.

The concepts espoused in the articles are wide-ranging from the need for cooperation (Bong Ro)—a hallmark of ICAA's activities—to contextualization (Griffiths). In between, other issues are taken up, including the need for a range of theological education methods and assessment (Ferris, Chow) as well as a balanced curriculum (Nicholls) and a theology of theological education (Noelliste).

Several articles deal with accreditation (Nunez, Bowers, Gnanakan and Tienou). This is significant because ICAA *is* about accreditation, but *not only so*. The member agencies which constitute ICAA are all involved in *provision of services* [p. 212](#) only one of which is accreditation, and only for those programmes that request it. The majority of services are not specifically related to accreditation (library development, networking and provision of resources). Nunez's article of course directly addresses the issue of excellence.

The range of authors is indicative of ICAA's international emphasis: Asia, Africa, Europe, South Pacific, North America, Latin America all being represented.

The *Manifesto on the Renewal of Evangelical Theological Education* is a catalytic document which has been used by many schools and programmes around the world.

The benefit of the document is in the unpacking of it as it is applied to particular contexts. It is included with the hope that others who have not seen it before will take it and use it.

The papers from the various consultations have generally been published by ICCA. It is the intention of ICAA to print future papers—and reprint past papers—in a series of numbered monographs. At present four monographs are in print with the expectation that others will be published in due course. Those in print are:

1. *Evangelical Theological Education: An International Agenda*, Paul Bowers, editor
2. *TEE Come of Age*, Robert Youngblood, editor
3. *Excellence and Renewal in Theological Education*, Robert Youngblood, editor
5. *Text and Context in Theological Education*, Roger Kemp, editor

All of the papers published in this edition will be included in the monograph series—each one then being found in the context of a specific theme. Future consultations will also have papers published in monograph form, making reference quicker and easier.

One sentence from the *Manifesto* introductions sums up well what is being attempted in this edition:

*We who serve within evangelical theological education throughout the world today, and who find ourselves now linked together in growing international cooperation, wish to give united voice to our longing and prayer for the renewal of evangelical theological education today—for a renewal in form and in substance, a renewal in vision and in power, a renewal in commitment and in direction.*

Paul Bowers

*'The WEF Theological Commission, the founding body of ICAA welcomes this specific edition of ERT on Excellence in Theological Education and edited by Dr Roger Kemp, General Secretary of ICAA and Dr Paul Bowers of Zimbabwe. We believe it deserves careful reading and wide circulation. The Theological Commission and ICAA maintain a close working relationship at executive, institutional and project levels. For further information on ICAA write to Dr Roger Kemp 4A Paterson Road, Springwood, NSW 2777, Australia.'*

The Editors p. 213

# Opportunities for International Cooperation in Evangelical Theological Education

Bong Rin Ro

## INTRODUCTION

A traditional Korean story tells of a dying father who had seven children. On his death bed he called all seven children and gave them final instructions. He asked each to bring a chopstick. As they knelt in front of their ailing father, he took one chopstick and very easily

broke it. Then he tied the seven chopsticks together and asked each son and daughter to break them in half. Each tried but could not break them. The father said, 'My dear children, if you stand alone, the people will break you down like a single chopstick; but if you stand together, nobody will be able to break you. Love each other and work together among yourselves and you will succeed in all your endeavours.'

This simple story illustrates what I wish to consider in this paper. The measure of success which we may experience in evangelical theological programmes, particularly in the Third World, will largely depend on the measure of effective cooperation which can be achieved among evangelical theological leaders at national, regional, and international levels. I wish to put forward some detailed proposals for such cooperation at the international level.

Before I outline these proposals, it would be very helpful to review very briefly the present situation of evangelical theological education. Let me remind you of some of the leading factors affecting such education, especially in the Third World.

Evangelical theological education has been largely characterized by fragmentation. The majority of the schools seem to have a relatively small student body, a limited teaching staff, a minimal library and in administration and finances are still often directly dependent on overseas sources. One consequence of this is a generally low level of academic quality. Given the rapid rise in educational standards in many Third World countries in recent years, this poor quality poses one of the more serious challenges facing the younger churches of the Third World.

Another characteristic has been that in the majority of these areas the top ecclesiastical and theological leadership of evangelical churches is [p. 214](#) still being trained in the West. There is an urgent need to see that the advanced levels of leadership training for evangelical groups in the Third World take place in the Third World itself. As I have mentioned elsewhere earlier, this would allow such training to be more culturally relevant, it would cut down on the brain drain to the West, it would limit the influx of western liberalism, and it would make much better sense financially.

As the direct result of a general awakening among evangelicals in many places to the need for upgrading and adjusting their theological training programmes, accreditation movements have recently developed among evangelicals in Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, and Europe. Like a young child learning to walk and talk, these newly born bodies have been learning how to develop their individual accreditation schemes. Contact between us has come naturally, as we have tried to benefit from one another's ideas and experience. The experience of our longer established sister body in North America has been especially helpful. One critical factor as yet not entirely resolved is the cultivation of credibility for our new accreditation schemes. In this area, and in many others, we have begun to recognize that contact and cooperation at an international level could prove mutually beneficial, for our individual agencies, for the accrediting schemes, for our constituent schools, and most of all for evangelical theological education as a whole.

The time indeed is now ripe for such a step, for providing for regular international contact and cooperation to deal with common problems, address common issues, and take advantage of common opportunities. Therefore I wish to commend the suggestion, already circulated among us, to form a global alliance among our various evangelical accrediting bodies.

*Proposal 1:* That an International Council of Accrediting Agencies for evangelical theological education (ICAA) be formed, to provide a medium for international cooperation in evangelical theological education.

## **I. COOPERATION IN DEVELOPING ACCREDITATION**

International cooperation would be beneficial, first of all, in the area of accreditation. The key emphasis of any such cooperation should be upon the existing regional accreditation efforts. Any action at the international level should be focused on strengthening the hand of the regional accrediting bodies. There are a number of ways in which this could be done.

### **A. ICAA recognition of regional agencies**

Just as individual theological schools are examined by the regional agencies and then recognized, so the regional agencies should also be examined by ICAA and then recognized. ICAA would in this regard function like the Council on Post-secondary Accreditation (COPA), which accredits over fifty educational accrediting bodies in North America. ICAA would provide international expertise in helping the individual agencies evaluate and upgrade the quality of their services, [p. 215](#) and then would publically recognize the achievement. Such international recognition of the individual accrediting schemes would certainly strengthen evangelical accrediting endeavours in the various regions, and help win confidence and cooperation for them both from evangelical schools and from other secular and religious agencies.

*Proposal 2:* That ICAA strengthen the regional accrediting agencies, by developing criteria, procedure, and facilities for evaluating their accreditation schemes and recognizing them.

### **B. ICAA Standardization of degree programmes**

The great variety of educational patterns existing in the world today brings difficulty in achieving mutual intelligibility in theological education between various areas of the world. Owing to long colonial control over the Third World by western nations, we have different educational models: English, American, Dutch, French. For example, British primary, secondary, and tertiary education is different from that of the Americans. The British system is basically an examination-oriented programme, while in the American system one must have a certain number of credit hours before graduating. As a result apparently parallel degrees do not always mean equivalent programmes. Examples could be multiplied. A theological college in Singapore has an accredited four year B.D. programme for the student who holds a higher school certificate (equivalent to the first year of college in America). In effect this B.D. programme takes two years less than an M.Div programme in the American system. Some standardization of patterns in degree programmes would certainly help schools both in the West and in the Third World to find a basis for understanding and recognizing one another's degree programmes, and would also facilitate the exchange of students.

*Proposal 3:* That ICAA develop commonly agreed academic standards for the accredited degrees of member agencies, and the facilities for monitoring practice in order to assure everyone that the standards are being maintained in each participating area.

### **C. ICAA periodical**

Mutual communication on accreditation between regions would be very helpful. ICAA should disseminate information, research, news, and new ideas on accreditation through a regular publication.

*Proposal 4:* That ICAA publish a quarterly bulletin on accreditation for the accredited theological schools of its member agencies and for other interested schools and individuals throughout the world.

## **D. ICAA consultations**

ICAA should plan to organize top-level international consultations in order to study and discuss in depth various issues of major concern in evangelical theological education, such as equivalency of academic standards, post-graduate theological training in the Third World, TEE, and relationships with other secular and religious accrediting agencies.

*Proposal 5:* That ICAA sponsor periodic international consultations to deal with various issues of importance in evangelical theological education. [p. 216](#)

## **E. ICAA financial assistance to regional bodies**

It takes money to put accreditation and other services into operation on a continental basis. Travel, for example, is essential in the administration of such services, and yet travel costs alone are becoming almost prohibitive. It has been our experience in Asia that the schools which are visited by accreditation evaluation teams are able to pay for only a third of the total expenses of the visitation. Since some church organizations and Christian foundations prefer to deal with international bodies, the distribution of finances will be facilitated if ICAA could serve as a recipient and conduit in place of regional or national agencies. Each regional agency would then make its financial requests to ICAA, and ICAA would allocate funds for different projects and agencies.

*Proposal 6:* That ICAA in its budget include financial assistance to its member agencies, particularly in the Third World.

# **II. COOPERATION IN ADVANCED THEOLOGICAL PROGRAMMES**

In accordance with the rapidly rising educational standard in the Third World, theological education in those areas must raise its academic standards to meet the advancing intellectual demands of the Christian communities there. It is sad to observe in countries like Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh, that evangelical theological students cannot enrol in an evangelical seminary on the B.D. level, because no such graduate seminary exists in those countries. Therefore, it is imperative for each major country or sub-region to have at least one or two evangelical graduate seminaries for training national leadership. ICAA would be able to assist the regional bodies in promoting the development of post-graduate study programmes.

## **A. Areas for post-graduate studies**

In each region we must seek to develop cooperative post-graduate programmes in several different major areas. I have received scores of letters from all over Asia inquiring about specialized graduate training in areas such as: Old and New Testament, theology, church history, Christian education, communications (mass media, TV/radio, films, journalism), counselling, evangelism, church growth, missions, sacred music, TEE, and living religions. Because we do not have graduate studies in these areas in Asia, except the general B.D. or M.Div. and Th.M. programmes in biblical studies, I have had to recommend overseas training in the West for these students.

Owing to the lack of evangelical resources in personnel and finance in the Third World, we need to cooperate in each region in order to produce a few quality educational centres with top faculty and research libraries. In Asia there are four evangelical institutions where Asian students can get their Th.M. level training in Biblical studies: Asian Centre for Theological Studies and Missions (ACTS) in Seoul, Korea; [p. 217](#) China Graduate School of Theology (CGST) in Hong Kong; Asia Theological Seminary (ATS) in Manila, Philippines;

and Union Biblical Seminary (UBS) in Pune, India. We are trying to establish similar graduate level training in Asia for the other disciplines mentioned above.



## **B. Strategy for advanced study centres**

It is very difficult for the national church in Asia to achieve an effective graduate training programme without close cooperation from evangelical churches and theological schools in the West. We must establish communication between theological educators and schools in the Third World and those in the West. Evangelical post-graduate seminaries in the West need to understand the situation of theological education in the Third World and apply specific policies in connection with the Third World leadership training taking place on their campuses. For example, many Asian students have come over to western theological schools for training, when they can get the same level of training in their country or region. Western schools should not accept these students unless it is absolutely certain that the type of education the international student is seeking cannot be offered in Asia.

The exchange of professors for sabbatical periods should be promoted between western and Third World schools. Western theologians should be encouraged to spend their time in teaching in the Third World. There is special value for a graduate school in the West to establish a working relationship with a graduate school in the Third World. The western school can help build up an evangelical counterpart in the Third World. Nevertheless, the degree offered by the Third World school must be a Third World degree, accredited in the Third World.

ICAA must also emphatically call the evangelical missions societies and missiological institutions in the West to recognize that the training of national leadership for the Third World church must be treated as one of the top priorities in modern missions. Missionary personnel and funds for theological education, lay training, and other areas of leadership training should be expanded. Grass roots evangelism should be left to the national church.

*Proposal 7:* That ICAA, in collaboration with the WEF Theological Commission, call an international consultation to develop guidelines, policies, and suggestions for professional contact and cooperation between evangelical theological educators and schools in the West and in the Third World, and to address the matter of training Third World nationals in the West.

*Proposal 8:* That ICAA, in collaboration with the WEF Theological Commission, plan with western missions leaders three separate consultations, in North America, the United Kingdom, and West Germany, to consider how western mission societies might more effectively relate to the needs of Third World evangelical churches in theological education. [p. 218](#)

## **III. COOPERATION IN DEVELOPING EXTENSION THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION**

In many parts of the world, owing to the lack of trained leadership in the local church, responsibilities of the local church fall upon the shoulders of lay leaders. Therefore, there is a crying need in the local church to train lay leaders for spiritual leadership. Continuing education for local pastors is another area of need. In Asia, fifteen nations have developed TEE to train lay leaders. ATA sponsored the first Pan-Asia TEE consultation in Hong Kong, January 1974. The ATA TEE Coordinator has been working with the different TEE national groups throughout Asia.

Some extension institutions, such as the International Correspondence Institute of the Assemblies of God, based in Belgium, are seeking regional accreditation on the degree level. Non-residential and extension theological education must be given its proper recognition in the accreditation movement.

I see a need for more world-wide contact and communication among TEE programmes, in order to create further stimulation and information on TEE in the various continents. The lack of information and communication among TEE workers within a country, within a continent, and world-wide has hampered the progress of the extension movement.

*Proposal 9:* That ICAA establish an extension education taskforce to seek means of cooperation with TEE programmes world-wide, towards providing needed international contact and coordination, including the possibility of a world-wide TEE bulletin, and the question of accreditation of TEE programmes.

#### **IV. COOPERATION IN DEVELOPING TEXTBOOK AND LIBRARY RESOURCES**

In the West it would be inconceivable for a theological student to have no theological books in his personal library. Yet this situation is true for many theological students in the Third World. Often all they have is the Bible and their notebooks. How can we remedy the situation? We need to find ways to provide both students and schools not only with books in English or other European languages, but also with ones that have been translated into major local languages, and, even better, with original materials produced indigenously. Without substantial improvement in textbook production and in theological library holdings, evangelical theological education in the Third World will face continuous obstacles. We must encourage the translation of the more relevant titles in western evangelical theological literature and the accelerated production of indigenous textbooks. And we must seek means of aiding Third World schools in building up their theological libraries.

*Proposal 10:* That ICAA, in close collaboration with the regional bodies, seek assistance from major evangelical publishers and foundations in a concerted theological textbook and library development effort.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Here then are ten practical proposals for international cooperation in evangelical theological education. There is an urgent need to strengthen **p. 219** such education in many parts of the world. The recently established accrediting bodies, by working cooperatively at the international level, not only will be able to see their own efforts reinforced through global collaboration, but will more importantly be able significantly to advance evangelical theological education as a whole world-wide—and thus play a strategic role in the vital task of equipping men and women of God for building up his church in every nation.

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**Dr. Bong Ro, of Seoul, Korea is the executive secretary of the WEF Theological Commission. He is an ex-officio member of the ICAA executive committee. p. 220**

# An Integrated Approach to Theological Education

Wilson W. Chow

## INTRODUCTION

When the proposal was first made in 1974 for the development of an accreditation scheme for evangelical theological schools in Asia, Bruce Nicholls outlined as one of the general objectives for such accreditation:

To develop new patterns of theological training that will effectively prepare students for Christian ministries or church vocations. These will involve new insights in the integration of the academic, spiritual, and practical in theological training, new and relevant curricula, new pedagogical methods, and experimentation in decentralized and in continuing education.<sup>1</sup>

The movement towards accreditation in Asia has arisen therefore from a concern with quality in theological education, a quality focused in part in terms of a holistic integrated approach to ministerial training, in terms of a concern not only with the academic but also with the spiritual and practical aspects of leadership formation. In that same year the Asia Theological Association (ATA) held its third theological consultation, during which two papers were read which dealt with the same issue, namely integration in theological training. To be sure, this question had already gained wide attention and had been discussed at length by those involved in theological education, both in the East and in the West, within both evangelical and ecumenical circles. There had been much talk about 'renewal in theological education' or 'excellence in theological education'. All these seem to reflect a dissatisfaction with the *status quo* of theological education, and a quest for improvement. Therefore, as the newly formed global alliance of evangelical accrediting services takes its bearings for its future direction, it is important and appropriate that we should focus our attention on the matter of excellence in theological education, and specifically on the excellence born of an integrated approach to theological education. p. 221 Such goals of theological education, and their implementation, should form important criteria for accreditation.

## INTEGRATION IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

### Preliminary remarks

Theological education should aim at training students to become servants of the Lord in his church and equipping them to serve effectively in the church. As it involves both 'being' and 'doing' aspects, theological training should be people-centered and task-oriented. Excellence in theological training should be measured in terms of the servanthood quality which the student possesses and the effectiveness of the ministry which he performs.

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<sup>1</sup> Bruce Nicholls, 'Proposals for the Accreditation of Theological Schools' *Voice of the Church in Asia* (Asia Theological Association, 1975), 101.

Theological education needs also to be biblical and contextualized. The 'givenness' in Scripture is normative, affecting decisively both the content and the guiding principles of theological training. But the methods, choice of priorities, and emphases should be contextualized in order to meet the needs and be relevant to a particular situation. The latter calls for innovation in theological education. In order to be culturally relevant, a theological seminary should design its own programmes of training that aim at achieving the goal of integration. In this manner the seminary asserts independence from existing or even dominating patterns of training, while at the same time maintaining a dependence on the Bible and recognizing an interdependence with other programmes internationally.

Seminaries should be different from schools of religious studies patterned after the university model, or even from professional training schools. There must be a functional integration between learning by precepts and learning by experience, between being and doing. The students are trained to be like Christ, to know the Word of God, and to do the work of the ministry. Thus an integrated approach to theological education involves an attempt to achieve these objectives—the 'be' goals, the 'know' goals, and the 'do' goals.

### **Essential concepts in integration**

Such an integrated approach to theological education has its basis in the biblical doctrine of the 'whole man'. The whole person needs to be trained and developed. As man is body and soul, we should avoid unnecessary compartmentalization. Integration, furthermore, is not an attempt to maintain a balance between the academic, the spiritual, and the practical, as though things were done one at a time. Integration means bringing these aspects together into a whole, and doing them at the same time. Integration also involves totality. In integration no one aspect negates the other, as though the presence of one would imply the absence of the other. It should be mutually permeating. We affirm that theological education *is* academic, *is* spiritual, and *is* practical. Each aspect necessarily presupposes, implies, or contains the others.

### **The importance of character formation**

Theological education must aim at spiritual maturity, which cannot be [p. 222](#) in the abstract but must find expression in concrete forms that are observable and communicable. This is the *being* aspect in theological education. A survey by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) in North America provides a very interesting and significant indicator for excellence in theological training.<sup>2</sup> The most significant characteristics or criteria that people across denominational lines were looking for in their ministers were in the following order of preference:

- (1) Service without regard for acclaim. This means the congregation expected their minister, a seminary graduate, to be an individual who is able to accept personal limitations and is able to serve without concern for public recognition.
- (2) Personal integrity. The minister should be able to honour commitments by carrying out promises despite all pressures to compromise.
- (3) Christian example. The minister should be one whose personal belief in the gospel manifests itself in generosity, and in general in a Christian example that people in the community can respect.
- (4) Pastoral skills. People want a minister who shows competence and responsibility by completing tasks and by being able to handle differences of opinion, and who senses the need to continue to grow in pastoral skills.

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<sup>2</sup> D. S. Schuller, et al., eds., *Readiness for Ministry. Vol. I—Criteria* (Vandalia, OH: ATS, 1975), 6–8.

- (5) Leadership. The minister must be able to build a strong sense of community within a congregation, taking time to know the people in his church and developing a sense of trust and confidence between the congregation and himself.

It is obvious that the majority of the criteria deal with the minister's personal commitment and faith. They centre in the minister as *person*. To the Christian public what sort of person their minister is seems to be the most important issue and the deciding factor. Ministerial roles, such as the minister being a perspective counsellor, a theologian, and a thinker, come after the character qualities. On the other hand, the criteria that drew the most severe judgment from both the clergy and the laity did not deal with a lack of any particular skill but rather focused on certain negative aspects of the minister as a person. These included a self-serving ministry, a sense of superiority, immaturity, insecurity, and insensitivity.

Although public opinion may not always be true and accurate, nevertheless here it represents an expectation from the people whom the minister is called to serve. Such an expectation is actually paralleled by the demands of Scripture. These are the biblical qualifications for church officers. So character formation must be a vital and concrete objective in theological education.

## NEW MODELS FOR INTEGRATED THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

### Proposal for a 'New Seminary'

Positive suggestions as well as attempts have been made to achieve [p. 223](#) the goal of integration. The most noteworthy effort comes in the form of questioning the present dominating model of theological training—residential seminaries and theological schools. These establishments are taken to represent formal theological education that has been institutionalized and academicised, and it is widely felt that this academic setting brings a deadening effect on that spiritual maturity which is vital to ministerial training and vital to the ministry. So, unless there is a radical change, an abandonment of the residential seminary as a model of theological learning, there is little hope of providing sufficient spiritual training to students to equip them to be ready upon graduation to meet the challenges and requirements of the ministry.

John Frame has written a very thought-provoking paper entitled 'Proposal for a New Seminary'. He first mentions several models of theological education, including the 'street seminaries' of Chile, Schaeffer's 'Farel House' in Switzerland, the 'Coral Ridge' system of training in evangelism, the Jesus People communes, even the oldest traditional approach of all—live-in theological education in the pastor's home. Then he makes these bold assertions, 'I propose first that we dump the academic model once and for all—degrees, accreditation, tenure, the works ... The academic machinery is simply incapable of measuring the things that really matter—a man's obedience to God's word, his perseverance in prayer, his self control, his ability to rule without pride, the spiritual power of his preaching in the conversion of men and the edification of the church.'<sup>3</sup> In short, Frame thinks that the 'crucial things' to be measured in a man's preparation for the ministry are the traits of a godly character, and these qualities find little room for development in a seminary setup, where emphasis for the student is on writing good papers and passing exams, and for the administration is on recruiting PhDs for the faculty and maintaining respectable degree programmes.

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<sup>3</sup> John Frame, *Proposals for a New Seminary*.

Frame proposes to establish a kind of 'Christian community' as a place of training, where teachers, students (ministerial candidates), and their families live together. The students begin with menial work around the buildings and grounds, then study formal theological subjects, and participate actively in the work of the local churches. They are under close supervision by the teachers and older students who meet from time to time to evaluate the student's progress in life, skills and knowledge. The student will 'graduate' only when the teachers are fully convinced that he has the character, skills, and knowledge which the Scriptures require of church officers.

John Frame's proposal represents the thinking of many who question the effectiveness of the seminary and the traditional pattern for theological training. The model becomes a focus for concern and a starting point in the pursuit of renewal. p. 224

### **Proposal for a 'Spiritual Community'**

Jonathan Chao is thinking along similar lines when he writes that 'no authentic integration can be brought about by mere programme design, however perfect that might be. It can only be done, I venture to say, by conscientious identification with the life and ministry of Christ and by experiencing the efficacy of that identification spiritually within a community of believers (functioning as the body of Christ) who are committed to the practice of radical discipleship in the manner prescribed by Jesus Himself and the Apostles.'<sup>4</sup> To Chao, the goal of ministerial training is shepherd formation, whereby one is trained to be like Christ, to think like Christ, and to serve like Christ. He concludes that 'this is a work which no institutional school of higher theological learning can do.'<sup>5</sup> Rather, he feels that such a spiritual personality formation must take place within a living environment. This means that only when the seminary transforms itself into a living spiritual community, and practises true discipleship, can it bring about the desired spiritual formation, which is a 'work of the Holy Spirit'.

The admirable works of John Frame and Jonathan Chao already provide much meat for thought. No one can carry on discussions of the issues of theological education without first giving serious consideration to their analysis and suggestions. They see something basically wrong with the present system, the seminary establishment, and they are convinced that unless the present model is replaced by a community set-up, it is difficult to bring about any breakthrough.

## **IMPLEMENTING INTEGRATED THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION WITHIN THE TRADITIONAL SEMINARY MODEL**

The discussion so far points to a new and rather radical approach to integration in theological education. It involves a new model of training in places of the traditional seminary model. The degree of its success is difficult to determine now. However, I do not think that models alone hold the key to the issue. Neither am I convinced that a particular model can claim to provide the needed environment or framework for integration to take place.

Given any model of theological training, we are aware of its shortcomings and weaknesses (which we try to reduce or avoid), as well as its strengths and advantages (of which we try to make full use). The following are a few suggestions for implementing

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<sup>4</sup> Jonathan Chao, 'Crucial Issues in Leadership Training: A Chinese Perspective' *Mission Focus* (May, 1977), G.

<sup>5</sup> *Idem.*, M.

integrated theological education within the context of existing residential theological schools.

### **Structure**

1. Administration. As the concern is for integration of academic, spiritual, and practical aspects of training, there should be a corresponding integrated administrative structure that implements and supervises the training programmes of the school. There is a tendency for different p. 225 departments or offices within a school to develop and plan their own programmes without overall coordination. Or the academic dean is usually the one who heads up the training programmes, thus making the academic aspect appear to be the most important thing, while the Dean of Students stands on the sideline playing a secondary role. If we are determined to provide a holistic training, we must put equal administrative emphasis on the three aspects.

2. Teaching staff. Wholeness and integration ought to be demonstrated by the faculty. This relates to the example of the faculty members *individually*, as well as the witness of the faculty as a *team*. Very often the presence of faculty members each with his own specialized field of study only results in polarization. But the students want to learn from their teachers by way of hearing and seeing.

### **Communal Life**

A residential school with a live-in situation provides a framework for communal life, and an integrated programme should include communal activities. These are not 'extracurricular' and optional but form a part of the training process. Spiritual formation is more than personal cultivation of piety; it involves participation in the body life of the seminary as a community. All such activities should be planned and coordinated by a director of student life.

1. Advisory system. Both faculty and students need to grow in Christ, and are responsible for the development of spirituality in the school. A group of five to eight students should be assigned to each faculty member, who will supervise their spiritual, academic, and practical progress. The group should meet regularly as scheduled, and the faculty member should also meet the students individually. They should seek 'transparency' with one another.

2. Chapel. The chapel time should not be limited to worship or preaching. It can be a very useful meeting to build a bridge between faculty and students, or to link the seminary to the outside world and the church at large. Mutual sharing of experiences, feelings, viewpoints, and areas of concern during chapel times proves a great blessing both to faculty and to students in my school. The otherwise routine daily gatherings, if thoughtfully arranged ahead of time, can become refreshing and edifying moments. They promote fellowship among members in the school.

3. Activities. Communal activities outside the classroom should be a deliberate part of the programme. These include outings, retreats, days of prayer, spiritual exercises week, and communal meals. Such occasions are necessary to create a solidarity among faculty and students.

4. Evaluation. At the end of each quarter or school year the student should complete a self-evaluation questionnaire with regard to his total integrated development, and the faculty/advisor should also make a similar evaluation of the students under his care.

### **Academic study**

Godly character is necessary, but for a minister it is not sufficient. He needs to be trained in the Word of [p. 226](#) God. The academic curriculum is part of the programme, not the whole. But the 'knowing' aspect should not be minimized or treated as secondary. The students must be trained to know the 'what', the 'how', and the 'why'. Instruction and teaching should be carried out in such a way that the students will (a) be able to know the content of the subject, (b) be able to do independent study or research that leads to further knowledge, and (c) be able to communicate to others what he knows. In other words, it must not be a content-oriented teaching/learning experience, but the development of a spirit of investigation that becomes part of the student's life. Here Christian education does not merely form courses in the curriculum, but provides principles that run through the whole fabric of theological education.

1. Curriculum. In the integration of the curriculum, contextualization takes on a significant role. The curriculum must be biblically centred, and at the same time interrelated and relevant to the needs of the situation. While we maintain a basic core of biblical and theological courses, we should exercise choice of priorities in various areas to make our theological training culturally or contextually relevant. We cannot simply adopt the traditional curriculum of the West, or merely add more courses to it, making the curriculum an almost unbelievable burden. We must rather come up with a new design that is based on research and experimentation. We have to admit that we still have a long way to go. But it is worth the effort.

2. Courses. The individual courses in the curriculum must also be internally integrated, by way of content organization and teaching method. *How* a course is taught is as important as *what* is taught. Not only practical courses but courses in biblical studies can be conducted in a more relevant manner. For example, a course on apologetics taught in Asia should speak to the issues raised by eastern religions such as Buddhism, Confucianism, or (in some areas) by Islam and communism, instead of dealing with traditional problems in the area of philosophy as encountered in the West. Study in church history should be related to contemporary issues, e.g. how should the Christian community treat those believers who in the days of persecution have denied Christ and now seek to be included in fellowship. Efforts on the part of the faculty to improve the quality of a course in terms of content, teaching method, and assignments will help student realize that they are not pursuing mere 'head knowledge'.

### **Field Work**

Field work or practical work should also form part of the student's learning experience, and not merely provide cheap labour to local churches during the weekend.

The director of field education should have a programme for the student's practical work, progressing from the easy to the difficult, under close supervision. Practical work should be made a part of the curriculum, and even be given academic credits, so that a student cannot graduate from the seminary without having satisfactorily complete the requirements in field work. [p. 227](#)

One of the problems that the seminary faces is being out of touch with the churches. Field education is a good means whereby pastors in churches participate in the training of students through their supervision on the field. This needs understanding and support on the part of the pastors, and the director of field education shoulders this important responsibility of standing between the seminary and churches, for the practical work of the students as well as for their placement after graduation.

## **CONCLUSION**



Integrated theological education can be applied to the traditional model of theological training—the residential seminary. But it requires a faculty committed to this task, with an integrated structure to carry it out. It needs an integrated programmatic approach that covers the academic, spiritual, and practical formation of leadership in one whole. The development of such integrated wholeness in theological education is a major step on the road to excellence. And accreditation, properly designed and applied, is one of the best practical means for promoting such integrated theological education. Here then is a worthy task for the new global alliance of accreditation services: to see that the developing accreditation services are indeed pragmatically structured by such a vision of excellence in theological education.

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# **The Role of Spiritual Development in Theological Education**

Bruce J. Nicholls

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

In any discussion on the place of spiritual development in theological education we are in danger of narrowing the term ‘spiritual’ to refer to a private pietistic direct relationship between ourselves and God. Evangelicalism has drawn deep from the wells of pietism and rightly so, but we must be careful to understand spirituality in a way that does justice to the totality of scriptural teaching. On the other hand, we may so broaden the term ‘spiritual’ that nothing is excluded, and so dilute its meaning. In order to understand the role of spiritual development in theological education we need to begin by first restating the goals of theological education, and by secondly defining the meaning of spiritual development.

### **A. The Goals of Theological Education**

The goals of theological education must focus on the kind of people we expect the students to become. Theological education is to train men and women in Christian discipleship so that they become truly men and women of God. In his statement on the gifts of the Spirit, Paul aptly described their purpose as ‘To prepare God’s people for works of service so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ’ ([Eph. 4:13](#)). In the same passage he goes on to speak of the need for stability to withstand false teaching and to speak God’s truth in love, so that as members of one body we may grow up into Christ who is the head.

The marks of discipleship development are many. They include a strong sense of the call of God to ministry, as was the case with both our Lord and Paul, and a call to godliness and holiness of living, so that the disciple in humility may be able to say with Paul, 'Follow me, follow my example'. We all know from our own student days that the quality of life of the teacher is remembered when the content of what he taught is long forgotten: alas much of it is forgotten within a day after the examination! In his pastoral epistles Paul reminds us of the qualification for being a bishop or [p. 229](#) elder. He must be blameless, the husband of one wife, one whose children are not wild or disobedient. He must not be overbearing, quick-tempered, given to much wine nor violent, nor pursuing dishonest ways. He must be given to hospitality, be self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. He must be able to encourage others in sound doctrine and refuse those who oppose it ([Tit. 1:5-9](#); [1 Tim. 3:1-7](#)).

These qualities of lifestyle outlined by Paul are themselves grounded in our Lord's interpretation of discipleship as servanthood, as exemplified in his own life and teaching. We remember that on the evening of the final meal together with his disciples, he took a towel and washed their feet, when apparently they were unwilling to wash each other's feet. His question to the disciples as to who is greater, he who sits at the table or he who serves, he himself answered with the convicting words, 'But I am among you as one who serves' ([Lk. 22:27](#)). Some days before this event Jesus had said, 'Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave to all. For even the Son of man did not come to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many' ([Mk. 10:43-45](#)).

Another mark of discipleship is growth in the knowledge and wisdom of God. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Such knowledge is acquired from an intimate relationship with the living Word of God and an understanding of the written Word of God. The disciple is to be equipped as a workman who correctly handles the Word of God ([2 Tim. 2:15](#)) and as one who does not distort it nor use it deceitfully ([2 Cor. 4:2](#)). From this reverent fear and knowledge of God the disciple learns to discern the difference between truth and error and between good and evil. He learns to be able rightly to interpret God's message to people in the context of their daily lives.

Further, the goal of training the man of God is to bring to maturity his missiological commitment to the proclamation of the gospel, to the nurture of his believers, and to teaching in truth and righteousness; the goal is as well to inspire compassionate service for the poor and despised and sick of this world, and also for the rich and those with whom we have cultural affinity. This totality of missiological concern is beautifully modelled for us in the life of our Lord ([Mt. 9:35-38](#)). God gives to his people the gifts of the Spirit to be exercised in ministry within the church and without in the world.

These gifts are neither to be equated with natural hereditary gifts, nor to be isolated from each other, but to be exercised in relation to each other. The goal of training a man of God is to help him discern the gifts that the Spirit has given him and to provide the context in which they can be fully developed and exercised. Training for ministry is thus a multifaceted process involving the student, the teacher, and the accumulated knowledge and skills of the church, all under the discipling ministry of the Holy Spirit.

The disciple is to be equipped not only as a spokesman for God and one who exercises the priestly and [p. 230](#) pastoral care of God's people, but as one with discerning wisdom to lead people in their daily involvement in society, work and leisure, and in responsible citizenship in the nation. He speaks with a prophetic voice for justice and society.

## **B. The Meaning of Spiritual Development**

We will develop our understanding from three theological perspectives. First, mankind was created in the image of God in order to worship and serve him forever. In creation we share, in a derived and dependent sense, the attributes of God. Man is eternally personal, with a selfhood which is both one and individual, and yet a shared relational self inseparable from others. As George David notes, 'The individual and relational selves are two mutually interdependent dimensions of one selfhood or personhood. There can be no relational self without individuality neither can the individual self have a meaningful existence without any reciprocal relationships whatsoever. For, to become a person one has to share in the being of another' (*The Eclipse and Rediscovery of Person*, New Delhi, p. 44f). The harmony of the individual self and the relational self between man and his creator God makes possible man's reflection on his own selfhood and a rational and coherent understanding of all of life.

Further, man was created moral, with a capacity to discern good from evil and to obey or disobey his creator. The Law of God which reflects the character of God is written on his heart, and to this Law his conscience bears witness ([Rom. 2:15](#)). Man in the image of God has the gift of creativity in the secondary sense of being able to form from the created world objects of beauty and manifest truth through art, music and words. He has been given stewardship over nature and called to subdue it to the glory of God. Thus our spirituality extends to the circumference of man created in God's image when he acts in conformity with the purposes of God.

Secondly, we know from Scripture and our own experience that this image is marred, defaced and all but destroyed. We are sinners in rebellion against God, using our creative gifts for idolatrous purposes and then becoming slaves of our own creations. We are under the judgement and the wrath of God. We live in the realm of evil and the demonic, knowing that Satan is the ruler of this world. Therefore true spirituality means a true response in heart, mind and body to this fallen world. It includes both attitudes and acts of repentance to God and turning from sin, and of faith in God and turning towards him and his Law. Spiritual formation must involve the development of a critical knowledge of the world, discerning the cultural accretions to the gospel whether Western, Asian or African. It includes training in steadfastness, humility and courage to stand as persons, families and communities, against the devil and his ways, in situations of hunger, sickness and death, in persecution and suffering and in cases of demonic possession.

Thirdly, spirituality is experiencing the redeeming work of Christ and the recreating power of the Holy Spirit. As new men and women in [p.231](#) Christ we experience the divine shalom, the health and wholeness that God purposes for his people ([Rom. 5](#), [2 Cor. 5](#)). Spirituality is harmony in relationship to our Saviour God in worship, love and submission, in relationship to God's people, in witness and servanthood in the world, and stewardship in relationship to nature. The spiritual self is a point in a triangle of body and mind and psyche functioning through these elements of personhood. The psychiatrist Paul Tournier has so well illustrated this in his work, *The Meaning of Persons*.

In conclusion, we recognize that man created in the image of God must not be confused with man made of the dust of the earth, but neither can these two components of his being be isolated from each other. Spirituality then is the relational centre in all our relations with God, mankind and creation.

In light of such an understanding, it is evident that spiritual development cannot be merely a subject within theological education, separate from other subjects. Rather it must be a perspective affecting the whole educative process. We may distinguish at least four contexts in which such a perspective should be manifest.

## II. CONTEXTS FOR SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

## A. Spiritual Development in the Context of the Theological Curriculum

We naturally turn first to the curriculum of theological education and begin by recognizing that spiritual knowledge is received through the divine propositional Word of God, through experiencing relational knowledge in the human context, and through inner reflection and interpretation of the knowledge of one's selfhood. We may divide the content of theological education into four general but related areas.

1. *Biblical knowledge.* Spiritual growth takes place in the acquisition of a cognitive knowledge of Scripture, and in the application and interpretation of Scripture to ourselves and to our world. It begins with our basic attitudes to Scripture itself. There is often a sharp difference between an evangelical understanding of Scripture as the Word of God and a liberal and radical understanding of Scripture as a human document. This becomes a watershed for our understanding of spiritual development in theological education. If we approach biblical knowledge with the confidence that this is the authentic Word of God and with the desire to love and obey the law of God, we are conditioned to grow in spiritual maturity through this knowledge. But we are all aware from our own experience, and from that of others, that acquiring knowledge of the content of Scripture is no guarantee of spiritual growth. In fact, it can lead to spiritual deadness and to agnosticism.

To understand the Word of God in its own cultural context and to understand its relevance for the cultural context in which we live is also fundamental to spiritual development. In this case, study of the biblical languages, critical reflection on the problems of biblical introduction and culture, and analysis and synthesis of biblical theology, are tools necessary to this exercise in spirituality. I suggest that more [p. 232](#) emphasis be placed on learning by heart the Scriptures, not only for spiritual nourishment but also for evangelism. This is especially helpful in situations where memory knowledge is highly valued, such as in ministry to the Muslims. The Union Biblical Seminary in Yavatmal, India, requires students to learn by heart 25 verses a term. However, the staff have discerned sharp differences among students in the motivation for memorizing for graduation. Integrity in the use of Scripture is a barometer of spiritual maturity.

2. *Culture and society.* Our curriculum usually includes courses on cultural anthropology, general knowledge of literature, history and the arts, the study of philosophy, ideologies, religions and sociology. I suspect some evangelical schools are weak in this area because they do not see its significance for spiritual development in discipleship making. Their definition of spirituality is too narrow. We would insist that a knowledge of these component areas of culture and society are fundamental to the process of contextualisation and to developing the critical moral faculty of evaluating man's response in society.

3. *Applied theology.* We might expect in the area of applied theology to have courses on dogmatic theology, personal and social ethics, apologetics, church history, missions and ecumenics. Again spiritual development will depend on the way the subjects are taught and studied and on the kind of contextualized reflections. In each subject there must be an attempt to relate the subject to personal life style and daily behaviour.

4. *Church ministries.* We normally include courses on preaching and homiletics, pastoral care and church administration, Christian education and the use of the traditional and modern communications media. Here too spiritual formation will take place in the orientation of the subject matter and in relating theory to practice.

The seminar approach to learning and the use of case studies are pedagogical methods that increase the potential for a spiritual orientation in every subject in the curriculum. They open up the possibility for a teacher-student relationship, in which both acknowledge that they are learners in God's school of discipleship. The concept of working with small groups is essential to this approach. Detmar Schunemann

summarized educational goals in the prayer of Samuel Chadwick, 'Lord, make us truly spiritual, perfectly natural, thoroughly practical' ('How can we sharpen campus spiritual life?' *Asia Theological News*, July/ September 1981, p. 8).

### **B. Spiritual Development in the Context of the Residential Community**

The extent to which a residential theological school is a community for discipleship training determines the potential for spiritual development to take place. Seen as a community of faith, such a school is able to bring the whole of its corporate life to a disciplined lifestyle that reflects the nature of the church itself. The focal point of a residential community ought to be worship. This will be expressed through the personal devotional life of the [p. 233](#) members of the community, through worship together in chapel services at least once a day, and through informal and planned student meetings for prayer. Days of prayer and meditation, preferably once a term, and special retreats at the beginning of the academic year or with the graduating class prior to graduation, are also important elements in this spiritual development of the community. Such a community of faith should include regular counselling programmes involving staff with students and students with students. Many schools have a weekly fellowship period when a staff member meets with a small group of students throughout a whole year. Counselling also takes place in the homes of staff and of students, formally and informally. In this area staff wives may take a major role in spiritual formation. The activities of the community also involve their social life, including student conduct in the dining room, in the hostels, on the sports field, in meetings of the student association, and in other extracurricular activities. These provide training grounds in spirituality. The principle of the whole community functioning through small study and reflection groups opens up possibilities for in-depth relatedness in mutual spirituality.

### **C. Spiritual Development in the Context of the Local Church**

If the local church is seen as the baseline for theological training, then any programme of theological education must ensure that a balance is maintained between classroom activity and involvement in the life of one or more local churches. There are many advantages for a student who serves as a student pastor in a local church during his years of training. This ensures that he develops inner discipline in maintaining at the same time both academic study and evangelistic and pastoral ministries, a discipline he will need very much after graduation. Where this is not practical, students should be assigned to a local church for Sunday, and preferably one other day a week, for practical ministry under the guidance of the local pastor and elders. A staff member of the school may also be involved as a resource person. I suggest the ideal is to have classes on four days a week, with two days given to a local church and one for rest, renewal and private study. In some schools it is possible to have a full-time supervisor of practical training, who may also serve as chaplain or counsellor for the whole school.

Many schools focus on concentrated periods of ministry with local churches, often one or two weeks at a time, and during the longer vacations when students are assigned to pastoral ministries. The concept of a year of internship upon the completion of academic training is to be encouraged. We are all aware that the pastoral and teaching care given to a new graduate in his first year or two in the ministry may be as important as the spiritual training in the school itself. A high percentage of failure in the Christian ministry, takes place in the first two years of ministry. Further, the continuing education of ministers, especially during the first five years of ministry, through short courses and retreats, is of great importance. If a student's term of training extends to four years [p. 234](#) or more, then it is highly desirable that he be assigned to a local church or house group or para-church

agency for ministry for one year within his total period of training. Group participation in church ministries is also to be encouraged. The Madras Bible Seminary in India expects its student body as a whole to plant two new churches every year and to provide the pastoral care for them.

#### **D. Spiritual Development in the Context of Society**

Evangelicals have pioneered and developed Theological Education by Extension (TEE) as an effective means for training discipleship-makers, who study while at the same time maintaining their secular employment and their ministry in their local church or para-church organization. The value of TEE is that it can be adapted to training for voluntary ministries of many kinds in a local church. It enables a local church to become a bible school. Cooperation between a residential school and a TEE programme is to be encouraged, so that extension students can benefit periodically from the corporate life of an institution, and those in residential programmes can spend periods of study while living in the secular world. TEE must be seen as an extension of both the school and the church.

Some schools, particularly in India, have assigned students to live off campus either in a dense housing estate or in slum hutments for an academic term. Food is sometimes taken from low class eating houses. This identity with the poor in their living leads to new styles of spirituality. Worship without the luxury of privacy, or study in the context of people who are illiterate, brings a new kind of praxis into theological education that awakens a new understanding of compassion, an identity with the poor and deprived. Our Lord trained his disciples in the context of healing the sick, feeding the hungry, cleansing the lepers, and dining with prostitutes and tax collectors. The misunderstandings inherent in such ministries become, in effect, agents for spiritual growth in discipleship. Similarly evangelistic teams which for shorter periods of time live in the villages will experience new levels of spirituality. Jesus' instructions for such ministry are very clear, practical and embarrassing ([Mt. 10:1-20](#)).

Many religious cultures idealize the model of the teacher-disciple relationship, where the lifestyle of the guru as well as his teaching is to be emulated and faithfully followed by the disciple. This was our Lord's own model of teaching the twelve during his three years of ministry. It was on-the-job training in spirituality, involving teaching, preaching and compassionate service. It ensured a high level of commitment. It stood the test of persecution and suffering. Its implication for today is that the teacher-student ratio should be kept as low as possible and a continuity of personal relationship encouraged between the teacher and the student.

### **III. EVALUATING SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT**

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of making spiritual development integral **P. 235** to a programme of theological education is in the area of evaluation. We recognize that evaluating the spiritual growth of a student is inherently subjective and can be easily misunderstood. Yet a theological programme cannot recognize its achievement or lack of achievement in this vital area without some effective form of evaluation.

Evangelical accrediting agencies are rightly emphasizing that spiritual development is an integral part of accreditation, that it is as important as cognitive knowledge and communication skills. The student's spiritual development must be a fundamental factor in determining his preparedness for receiving the theological degree or diploma at the end of his course. The student who has failed in this area of spiritual development should have the granting of his degree or diploma postponed. This is particularly necessary in

areas of ethical misdemeanour such as cheating in an examination, mishandling of money, or sexual laxity. Failure in these areas should be approached through pastoral care and counselling. Once such a person is ordained into the ministry he may become a stumbling block to the spiritual growth of others throughout his life. It would be unwise to grade a person in spirituality in the same way as we grade a course. It would be better to grade him as either satisfactory or unsatisfactory. Unsatisfactory would be considered failure. Many schools offering a three or four year programme enrol students for an initial one or two years. The students then reapply for admission to the final year. This creates the opportunity to terminate the training of those students felt to be unsuitable for the high calling of Christian service.

I suggest that tools for the measurement of spirituality can be developed which, when taken together, evidence an overall picture of satisfactory or unsatisfactory training. These include:

1. Self-evaluation questionnaires and reports. Such questionnaires need to be carefully designed and might be completed by the student every term. They might be considered confidential to the office of the school, if necessary. The philosophy of accreditation is grounded on the principle of self-evaluation. Likewise the student's graduation begins with his self-evaluation of his spiritual progress during training. While such questionnaires are open to falsification, there are other tools of evaluation which can indicate the degrees of integrity of the student. For example, examination questions may include questions where the student is required to relate his knowledge of the subject to his own life. Again writing up case studies and research projects will reveal as much about the student as they do about the subject of his investigation.
2. Reports on counselling. The school chaplain or staff advisors should meet regularly with the students assigned to them for counselling sessions and reports on those might be compiled. Again, the leaders of student groups or student organizations may be requested to report on their fellow students' growth, stagnation or decline in spirituality. [p.236](#) Further, the pastor and elders of the local church with whom the students have worked, or the supervisor of the field activity, should be requested to fill in an appropriate questionnaire. Such reports may grade the student 1 to 5 with 3 as satisfactory. Compiling these reports over the student's whole period of study, even preparing a graph of each student's progress, will enable the staff finally to grade the student satisfactory or unsatisfactory. Such action should be the action of the whole staff. Thus the degree of objectivity in evaluating the student's spiritual development can be as reliable as the grading of an examination paper. A degree of subjectivity cannot be eliminated in evaluating spiritual development any more than it can be from the system of written examinations.

We may conclude that spiritual development is the primary goal of theological education, that spirituality is an essential element in commending men and women for ministry, and that such spiritual development can be adequately evaluated.

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# Accreditation as a Catalyst for Renewal in Theological Education

Paul Bowers

Within the larger discussion of the renewal of contemporary evangelical theological education world-wide, it is my particular contention that such renewal is properly integral to the accreditation mandate, and that accreditation is a key practical means for implementing that renewal.

This is not a prevailing notion. Renewal is often looked upon by traditionalists in theological education today as alien to the legitimate concerns of accreditation. And accreditation is in turn being treated by radicalists in theological education today as renewal's latest enemy, a tragic reinforcement of the very problems which make renewal so imperative.

I propose that both perspectives are in error, that properly conceived accreditation both should be, and also can be, a catalyst for renewal in theological education world-wide.

I do not make this proposition as one with theoretical expertise in the areas of accreditation and educational renewal. While I respect those who have these qualifications, my own professional training lies elsewhere. Like most theological educators today, I approach the issues of accreditation and renewal in theological education as a consumer not a technician, as one whose orientation has been gained by usage in the field rather than by detached analysis in the laboratory. I am conscious of the limitations this involves, but presume that the impressions which such practical engagement yields are not without worth for the larger discussion today.

Let me develop the proposition at hand by attempting to analyze in turn its two central foci, first *accreditation* and then *renewal*.

## I. ACCREDITATION

### A. Ingredients

In Third World theological education today we are, in large measure, launched in accreditation movements the inner structures or essential ingredients of which we have not paused to analyze. We have familiarized ourselves with the externalities of accreditation, with standards and [p. 238](#) with procedures and with modes for administering these. But we need also to address ourselves in lively discussion within our movements to the internal issues as well. Here I intend only to make a beginning by way of developing my main proposition. If we ask about the essential internal ingredients of accreditation—at least as represented in our recently emerging accreditation movements within evangelical theological education internationally—then let me suggest for your consideration that these ingredients are three in number, namely: quality, credibility, and collaboration.

1. *Quality*. The primary ingredient of our accreditation is a concern with quality, a concern which we believe to be rooted in biblical expectations. As Christians we are, in whatever we do, to do it well, to do our best, for the Lord. The Lord expects it, he deserves it, and he demands it. Not least therefore in theological education we are to pursue excellence, because of whom we serve. Sincerity, spiritual warmth, public reputation or internal satisfaction are not enough. We are under obligation to engage in regular



disciplined self-examination both with regard to direction and with regard to attainment in our theological programmes. We are under obligation to distinguish mediocrity from quality, in order to pursue and achieve the latter.

Accreditation has gained such a ready foothold in evangelical theological education around the world in recent years not least because it in part answers directly to this specific biblical mandate. Accreditation is centrally focused on quality. It defines quality, and it encourages and reinforces the attainment of this quality. To ask what is quality in theological education, and to ask how we may motivate and reinforce its attainment, is to ask the central questions of our accreditation movements. Our various standards and procedures represent pragmatic answers to these questions; whether they represent final answers is another matter, and a matter we do well to consider.

2. *Credibility*. If quality is the primary ingredient of our accreditation, credibility is its fundamental partner. The very word, ac-creditation, bears reference within itself to this ingredient. Extract credibility from accreditation and we do not have accreditation. Indeed in many parts of the world it is this ingredient, focused in terms of recognition, which seems often to be the principal attraction of accreditation. Theological schools feel themselves increasingly gripped by a need to secure recognition, from within their sponsoring church constituencies, from within society at large, and especially from within their academic marketplace, in order to facilitate admission of their graduates to advanced studies, proper job placement, local financial and moral support, and open doors for ministry and proclamation.

It is a concern not without its dangers, but also not without biblical warrant. The early Christians were of course taught to be governed not by the values and opinions of the world but by the word of the Lord and his judgment on their lives, but they were not thereby encouraged to ignore or disregard responsible external opinion and judgment, p. 239 whether from within the body of Christ or from without. The apostle Paul laid down the general mandate: 'Take thought for what is noble in the sight of all' ([Rom. 12:17](#)). A specific qualification of Christian leadership was respect from among the general public ([1 Tim. 3:7](#)). If anyone did suffer from ill-repute they were to be sure, the apostle Peter admonishes, that it was not in fact deserved ([1 Pet. 4:15,16](#)). 'A good name' the Old Testament taught, 'is to be esteemed more than gold' ([Prov. 22:1](#)). In similar style the modern theological school dares not function as its own self-sufficient measure, in disregard of external perception and opinion. A school owes it to its members and to its constituency to seek to be understood and trusted beyond its own walls, within its wider context of sponsorship and service, and to accept the healthy disciplines that this implies. That is not the last word on credibility, nor my last word here, but it is an important word. Quantity that is not also accompanied by credibility will soon find itself serving no useful purpose.

Accreditation has gained a ready foothold in theological education around the world in recent years not least because it is intentionally structured to respond to this need. For in the psychological laws which dominate the marketplace of credibility and reputation, externality plays a pivotal role. And such externality is of the essence of our accreditation processes. For example, if you were to ask me about the quality of the school where I teach, and I responded that it was good, you would rightly feel assured of little more than my loyalty to my school. But if someone from outside that school gives you a similar report, it has a different impact. And if more than one outside person so reports; and if they base their judgment on notions of quality externally established; and if they arrive at this judgment through procedures externally set and monitored, then your own positive impressions about the school are compounded and compounded again. Accreditation is deliberately designed to operate in precisely this way. To ask how modes may best be

devised for winning and nurturing external recognition of the quality of a particular programme of theological education is to ask a central question of our accreditation movements. Our systems represent pragmatic answers to that question; whether they represent the best answers is another matter, and one worthy of our attention.

3. *Collaboration*. There is a third basic ingredient of accreditation, in addition to quality and credibility. The tendency to go off and found one's own independent operation, so characteristic of the western evangelical world, is not in fact the New Testament pattern. There it is community and cooperation, team work and collaboration, mutual enrichment and edification, which form the normal pattern. We seem to be witnessing an era when theological educators are proving more and more alive to the need for just such mutuality. They are realizing that there are things urgently required in theological education which can best be cared for collaboratively, and they are ready to engage in such endeavours. p. 240

Accreditation has taken hold in part not least because it answers so readily to this sense of need. Our accreditation at its heart is a joint undertaking. The standards are arrived at by consultation among a wide cross-section of theological educators. Our evaluative procedures are always carried out as team operations. Accreditation survives indeed only where there is a willingness to help others and to be helped, where there is an openness to cross-pollination and mutual reinforcement. When we ask how we may most usefully collaborate together for the enhancement of theological education, we are asking a fundamental question of our accreditation movements. Our various associative devices represent pragmatic answers to this question; we do well to examine whether they are the most fruitful ones.

If therefore we should wish a short definition of accreditation as it has emerged in our movements, a definition focused in terms of inner ingredients, then I should say that such accreditation is: a collaborative effort among programmes of theological education to achieve and demonstrate a quality that is credible.

## **B. Tensions**

Before passing on to consider renewal and its relation to accreditation, there is one aspect of this internal analysis of accreditation which, I believe, requires closer comment. There are important segments of opinion in evangelical theological education today which tend entirely to ignore the role of credibility in such education. And there are other important segments of opinion which tend to treat credibility in practice as the paramount concern.

At the grass roots level of theological education, especially perhaps in the evangelical Third World, the achievement of recognition for programmes of theological education easily becomes the ruling policy, not to say at times an all-conditioning fixation. It is a road fraught with temptations not always easily recognized or controlled. The peril implicit in the desire 'to be like unto the nations round about' is by no means restricted to Old Testament times. There are prices asked in the marketplace of recognition which are too high to pay for those committed to the lordship of Christ, and one could wish to hear more voices where it counts sounding an effective alarm in this regard.

But among specialist theoreticians in theological education, especially in the evangelical First World, critique and evaluation proceed with often complete disregard for the legitimate need among theological programmes for credibility and recognition. In these circles credibility in theological education is a conspicuously absent issue. If it does by chance intrude itself, it is treated merely as a perversity. Would that some honest soul within these ranks would put an ear to the Scriptures, and to the ground, and begin to deal more reasonably and realistically with this earnest concern from the grass roots levels.

In contrast to these two approaches, our accreditation movements embrace the search for recognition, but only as it is attached and led by a search for quality. It is of the essence of accreditation that it is not merely [p. 241](#) an image-enhancement operation, engineering public endorsement as an end in itself. Accreditation does seek to achieve public endorsement, but only for a quality that has been priorly determined to merit such endorsement. If recognition is to be had only at the expense of quality, of a biblically controlled notion of quality, then we must forcefully reject such a tendency, and ensure that we are not found, even unintentionally, facilitating it.

But it is also at the heart of what accreditation is all about that it does not seek merely for quality; accreditation seeks a credible quality. We reject the casual disregard and vilification of this legitimate concern. Where credibility is made paramount, theological education will run askew; but where it is ignored, theological education will shrivel.

It is the special role of accreditation to attempt to deal with both of these dangers constructively. By its nature accreditation can look neither complacently on a good teacher who has failed to secure recognizable credentials, nor complacently on a well-credentialed teacher who has failed to develop teaching skills. It can look neither complacently on poor financial patterns which somehow pass an audit, nor complacently on good financial patterns which are not subjected to the disciplines of a regular external audit. Accreditation cannot look complacently on a library of two hundred well-chosen, well-used books, nor can it look complacently on a library of ten thousand poorly-chosen, poorly-used books. It is the peculiar challenge of our accreditation movements to occupy this point of tension sensibly and creatively, both in our formation of standards and in our application of those standards, seeking to serve both the need for quality and the need for credibility.

## II. RENEWAL

### A. New Opportunities

Where then does renewal fit into such a landscape? Perhaps we should begin by asking what we actually mean by renewal. Over the past two decades within the evangelical world a lively, highly audible critique has emerged of theological education as traditionally conducted, and a whole agenda of renewal propositions has been forcefully aired. Since among those involved the preferred terminology varies, let us agree to use the word 'renewal' only provisionally, leaving open the question whether another term might not serve better.

In large measure the lively critique to which I have just referred has arisen from within the new movement for theological education by extension, and has been directed against the defects of traditional residential systems. Yet in more recent years this too easy distinction in assigning praise and blame has perceptibly blurred. On the one hand TEE, with time and experience, has discovered vexing problems inherent in its own systems. And on the other hand large portions of the TEE-generated approach to theological education have been fruitfully adapted for residential programmes. It is my own impression that right now the larger portion of the renewal agenda has already attained acceptance among a fairly broad sweep of [p. 242](#) theological educators throughout the evangelical world. I wonder if those who have been most energetic in pressing the renewalist cause have yet recognized this achievement. There is something new here, an opportunity waiting to be grasped and built upon. Let me indeed urge upon you the notion that, with regard to the renewal agenda, between open-minded traditionalists and level-headed radicalists there is now far more common ground than is realized. Rather than continuing to pursue the older patterns of aggressive confrontation, it is time to capitalize

on this newly emerging consensus constructively. And here is where accreditation fits in; for our accreditation movements already stand at the juncture point of this new development. Here, perhaps, still largely unrecognized, the open-minded among traditionalists and the level-headed among radicalists have already joined hands, and seized accreditation as an exceptional instrument for effectively implementing the renewal agenda.

And none too soon it has been. Perhaps the gravest defect of the renewalist cause has been its general failure to communicate with the grass roots levels of already existing systems of theological education around the world, in a manner productive of change. So taken up in its own programmes of consultations and workshops, of publishing and research, it has not everywhere perceived this failing, taking its promotional activity for substantive achievement. In short, the renewalist has thought well but devised poorly, fashioning no broadly effective mode for pragmatic implementation.

As we all know, one does not move people merely by convincing them of their faults. Positive change begins to take place only where there is an effective combination of incentives to change. And accreditation is nothing if it is not just such a combination. To put it crassly, and far too simplistically, accreditation peddles recognition in exchange for the achievement of quality. It does not always require as demanded, nor deliver as promised. It is a finite operation, fallible in its judgment and ragged in its application. But all the same accreditation represents a classic example of the carrot-stick incentive mechanism. And it does work. It speaks a language understood at the grass roots and trades in commodities recognized and welcomed there. It does not settle for mere assertion, but goes on to stimulate, prod, encourage, and entice. And change, genuine change, has in fact begun to appear.

That is why accreditation has been seized upon by open-minded traditionalists and level-headed radicalists, operating in concert, as a singularly practical catalyst for achieving the renewal agenda. New times are upon us and new opportunities.

## **B. The Renewal Agenda**

I have referred repeatedly to the renewal agenda. What then is this agenda? Everyone would answer differently, according to particular convictions and experiences. Let me offer a brief sampling of what I take to be that segment of the agenda which has achieved broad consensus among evangelical theological educators internationally.

1. *Contextualization*. The renewal [p. 243](#) agenda is concerned that theological educational curricula be designed with deliberate reference to the cultural context in which the student will serve, rather than be imported from overseas or arrived at in an ad hoc manner.
2. *Outcomes measurement*. The renewal agenda is concerned that theological programmes continuously review the performance and attainments of their graduates, in relation to the stated objectives of the programme, and modify the programme in that light, so that actual outcome may more closely fit stated intention.
3. *Ministerial styles*. The renewal agenda is concerned that through the theological programme students should be moulded to styles of leadership appropriate to their biblical role within the body of Christ, becoming not elite professionals but equipped servants.
4. *Integrated programme*. The renewal agenda is concerned that theological programmes combine spiritual, behavioural, practical, and academic objectives

into one holistic integrated approach, rather than focusing narrowly on cognitive and academic attainments alone.

5. *Field learning*. The renewal agenda is concerned that students be provided with guided practical field experience in precisely the skills which they will need to employ in their work after completion of the course, rather than being introduced to these skills only within a classroom setting.
6. *Spiritual formation*. The renewal agenda is concerned that theological programmes deliberately seek spiritual formation, rather than leave this to evolve privately and haphazardly.
7. *Churchward-orientation*. The renewal agenda is concerned that theological programmes orient themselves not in terms of some personal or traditional notion of what should be done, but pervasively in terms of the needs of the Christian communities being served.

This list could go on; the area of consensus is more extensive than this. But if even this abbreviated version of the renewal agenda were implemented in current theological education, so far are we generally from these patterns that their achievement would look like a full scale revolution among us, and we would all be the richer and more effective for it.

### C. Reactions

When one speaks of a wedding of such an agenda to our newly emerging accreditation movements, reactions arise from two different camps. On the one hand, the traditionalist says that these things may or may not be good, but that they are not part of accreditation. To wed the renewal movement to the accreditation movement is to mix alien operations. And accreditation must not allow itself to be taken over or diverted by every prophetic cause out to change the world. We are not in the business of revolutions.

On the other hand, the radicalist asserts that accreditation merely reinforces and encourages the bankrupt [p. 244](#) patterns of the past, which continue to do so much damage to the cause of Christ and his church. The eagerness for recognition too easily passes into a perverting lust, and accreditation by catering to such tastes contributes directly to this perversion. Instead of recognition, we should be focusing on excellence. And instead of defining excellence in terms of books in libraries and credentials in hand, of buildings constructed and credit hours earned, we should focus on ministerial styles and spiritual formation, on outcomes measurement and contextualization.

There is important truth in what both these camps assert, which we do well to heed. And at the same time, I make bold to suggest that, over against these reactions, accreditationists have something important to say too, which our friends in these camps would do well in turn to heed.

To the traditionalist, we wish to say that the issues of the renewal agenda are not in fact alien to the inner concerns of accreditation. Every one of the renewal issues is focused precisely on the question of quality in evangelical theological education. Accreditation concerns are *not* being commandeered; they are being properly extended and deepened. The agenda for renewal represents a substantive contribution to the central focus of accreditation on quality.

At the same time, we need to heed the traditionalist concern that we keep our bearings in the midst of heady new causes. The renewal agenda does not cover everything there is to cover in the area of quality, nor does it cover the most primal. I say that with emphasis and care. To put it simply, what does not exist cannot be renewed. However important nutrition may be, the first thing a starving man needs is not a tract on nutrition. In other

words, sheer existence and survival is the primary level of achievement in any quest for quality. I do not believe our professional theorists in theological education have any adequate notion of just how subsistent the lives of most grass roots theological schools and programmes are. If there are no yams to be had for the student dining room, if there is no petrol to be had for the TEE motorbike, it is meaningless to talk of outcomes measurement and integrated education. We must not let ourselves be misled by those schools which, praise God, have risen well beyond the subsistence level in theological education, the Yavatmals and Ogbomoshos, JTS of Jamaica or CGST of Hong Kong, a Scott in Kenya or a Vaux in France. These are *not* the norm. Anyone closely familiar with the broad sweep of Bible schools and theological colleges throughout the evangelical Third World knows that the large majority are daily preoccupied with, and often overwhelmed by, the mere struggle for survival, for achieving the merest minimal of normal operation. Most of these schools recognize very much that they are not where they ought to be, even in the most basic features of a viable programme of theological education, and they welcome guidance and help. Accreditation is designed to respond first and foremost to this level of need, to help them in what we might call the [p. 245](#) survival level of the quest for quality. If we fail here we fail miserably, and we must heed the traditionalist call not to be mesmerized by vaulting dreams of what could be, while failing to aid in what is.

To the radicalist, we wish most firmly to suggest a second and a more responsible look. The newly emerging accreditation movements are not inherently inimical to the renewalist cause. Indeed they have already materially embraced and furthered the renewalist cause, and represent not only a potential ally, but an urgently needed one. In so far as the theoreticians of renewal have lacked a pragmatic strategy of implementation, accreditation represents one of the best opportunities currently available for bringing the renewal agenda into transforming contact with the grass roots of evangelical theological education.

So far the radicalist reaction has rarely gotten beyond rejection, and (I choose my words carefully) a blind rejection, of the new accreditation movements. A new enemy has been spotted in the woods. No fresh reconnoitering has been deemed necessary. It is time rather to blast away with the old standard ammunition at the old standard spots. Indeed an attack of this sort has already developed among missiologists in the evangelical First World. It has so far only partially reached print, but its outlines have become evident in papers being read at consultations, and lectures being given in leading educational centres, with full-scale public visibility only a matter of time.

And one must say, seriously and with sadness, that so far for the most part the reaction has been culpably ill-informed and unconstructive. Anyone engaged in the accreditation movements would be taken very much aback at the inexcusable caricatures being purveyed. I do not know what advantage is being gained by anyone. And since in the cases I have in mind, which can be readily documented, it is transparent that even minimal homework on our movements has not been done, one despairs of finding a route for positive communication, much less constructive collaboration. Perhaps in our accreditation movements we have moved too far too fast for these folk to keep pace. Perhaps the notion that we could enter into fruitful dialogue and even common cause is too radical. Perhaps we must be patient and wait while an orthodox radicalism of the 1970s reinforces and reorients itself with regard to the new times and new opportunities of the 1980s.

Nevertheless, we need to heed the radicalist concerns. Their alarm at undisciplined quests for recognition should be embraced. Even within the most respected citadels of evangelical soundness the temptation lurks to pursue recognition in careless disregard of biblically-determined quality. Yet few among us have spoken out on this pressing danger.

We need also to heed the radicalist concern that focusing only on traditional norms of quality is subversive of genuinely effective theological education. If it is true that a starving man does not initially need a tract on nutrition, it is also urgently true to say that once this man is on his feet he ignores the aid of the nutritionist at peril of a recurring pattern of starvation. The [p. 246](#) renewal agenda is not merely for those who have a taste for it or who can afford to dabble in it. If nutrition is not the front line of an attack on famine, it is the necessary follow-up if a cyclical recurrence is to be prevented. Once the yarns have been bought and the petrol found, once the audits have been scheduled and the library books acquired, once the programmed texts have been duplicated and the leaking roof repaired, if the incentive is not there to go on to questions of renewal, then schools and programmes will become too quickly trapped in an endless fixation on these operational details, and the true and weightier goals of their programme will never be achieved. If renewal is not implemented within our programmes of theological education, with or without the help of our radicalist brothers, we have failed in our central commitments to quality.

In summary then, to traditionalists we say that accreditation *should* be a catalyst for renewal in evangelical theological education world-wide. And to the radicalists we say that it *can* be effectively so.

### III. CONCLUSION

And in conclusion what can we say to the accreditationists, to ourselves? We must say that a statement of capability is one thing, and that performance is another. It is easy enough to say that we endorse the common ground of the renewal agenda as part of our mandate. It is easy enough to say that accreditation is a viable mode for implementing this agenda at the grass roots level. Both of these statements I believe to be true. But can we then go on to assert that indeed our newly emerging accreditation movements in international evangelical theological education are catalysts for renewal? It is a sobering question.

Perhaps the most appropriate answer would be that we have sincerely tried, but that we could certainly do more and better, and that we recognize a pressing responsibility to do so. There is work to be done. Let me make several suggestions in conclusion, intended merely to stimulate thought on what could be done.

1. Capitalizing on what I have suggested is a large measure of consensus on the already significant examples in our midst of positive innovation and renewal in evangelical theological education, by producing and promoting a series of simple pamphlets highlighting achievements such as the pioneering ThD programme at ATS in Manila, or the pace-setting incorporation of TEE principles into residential patterns at BEST in Bangui, to name only two.
2. Let us take practical steps to focus wide attention on the already significant examples in our midst of positive innovation and renewal in evangelical theological education, by producing and promoting a series of simple pamphlets highlighting achievements such as the pioneering ThD programme at ATS in Manila, or the pace-setting incorporation of TEE principles into residential patterns at BEST in Bangui, to name only two. [p. 247](#)
3. Let us inaugurate a special commission mandated to evaluate our own accreditation movements for their degree of involvement and effectiveness in promoting renewal, and then let us humbly and voluntarily submit our various movements to such external assessment, for our own greater good.

4. Drawing on all the expertise available, let us initiate a special joint international research project, to study in depth the more complex and difficult aspects of the renewalist agenda, where assertion of need has proven easier than actual implementation—such as the call for an emphasis in accreditation on spiritual formation. How do you write an effective standard for such a focus, and how do you undertake to measure its attainment?
5. As we all too well know, and perhaps too well represent, most people are given leadership roles in theological education not because of any particular training in the field of education, but because of some academic attainment in the field of theology. As a result most of us are not adequately equipped for this vocation in which we are called to bear responsibility. Let us therefore fashion a series of special seminars, designed for the top levels of international leadership in evangelical theological education, to bring such leadership effectively into appealing contact with the renewal agenda, with its rationale and with its practical implications. Let us design for ourselves and our fellow leaders a first-class learning experience of this sort, tapping the best expertise available, and then let us lead the way in humbly and cooperatively exposing ourselves to this experience.

Let us open ourselves and our newly emerging accreditation movements to renewal, so that we may in turn become effective mediums for an urgently needed renewal in evangelical theological education worldwide, for the sake of our Lord and the establishment and edification of his church.

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## The Future of Theological Education

Robert W. Ferris

The topic of this article lends itself to development in either of two ways. One could undertake an exercise in futuristics, spinning out various scenarios and their implication for theological education. Such an approach can be extremely helpful, and others have developed it thoroughly (Hoke: 1978). The alternative strategy would be to focus on theological education—its task, process, structures and controlling values—and derive from these a sense of direction for the period immediately before us.

Sometimes insight springs from unanticipated contexts. In a technical discussion of brain function, neuropsychologist Karl Pribram touches on processes related to linguistic and cultural understanding.

To man's view of himself the biologist's position has at least this much to offer. The mystery of man is biological and shared with other complex organizations which are never comprehended in their totality but only in [sic] piecemeal. Man's brain is so constructed that piece by piece he apprehends the whole through the operations of coding and recoding. Languages, verbal (linguistic) and nonverbal (cultural), are constituted of these



pieces. When, because of linguistic and cultural affluence, the means ends reversal occurs, these languages begin to live lives of their own. Thus complexity is compounded and the original organization can easily be lost sight of. Biological processes have, however, built-in renewal mechanisms. When the linguistic and cultural structures become too cumbersome or conflict with each other, they are often degraded, pruned back to their more essential roots. Clearer vision is then attained of the basic organization which gave rise to the process originally; historical comparison can be made between the primitive and the sophisticated version of the language or culture. (Cited in Padgham: 1983, p. 136f.)

I would submit that this is a helpful description of the current state of the field of theological education. Joe Bayly has quipped that the only similarity between modern training and Jesus' training of the twelve is that both take three years (Richards: 1975, p. 163). That is certainly an overstatement, but it is impossible to p. 249 deny that what Pribram terms 'the means ends reversal' does characterize much of Western theological education. In the name of equivalency and 'academic standards,' furthermore, those of us engaged in ministry training in non-Western societies have often emulated these complex and self-conflicting structures. The seminary's servanthood to the church is belied in our actions and our rhetoric. Professionalization of theological education has resulted in standards oriented primarily to schooling and technical proficiencies. Not only the content of theological education, but also its structuring, has developed a 'linguistic and cultural affluence' which permits accepted patterns 'to live lives of their own'. In compounded complexity, original organization is lost to view. A functional equivalent of the biological process of 'degrading' is much needed. I believe the instigation of Theological Education by Extension (TEE) in 1962 affords encouraging evidence that such a process is at work.

Nevertheless, I am concerned. In 1982 we observed the tenth anniversary of the introduction of TEE in the Philippines. On that occasion I reviewed the development of TEE in our country mission by mission and church by church (Ferris: 1982). The report provided little occasion for celebration. In the ensuing discussion I was asked whether our experience had, somehow, been different from that of TEE practitioners in other areas of the world. Feeling unprepared to speak for the world, I wrote to TEE leaders of international reputation in several countries. Some did not respond to my inquiry, but all those who did indicated that our experience in the Philippines was much more common than anyone had dared to admit. Wayne Weld specifically stated that many TEE programmes listed in his *World Directory of Theological Education by Extension* and its first supplement failed to respond to requests for current data when he was working on the second (1980) supplement. His conclusion is that most of those programmes no longer exist. Despite the enthusiastic reports which continue to emanate from some areas, in much of the world TEE has sputtered and burned out.

At the same time, TEE is enjoying unprecedented acceptance among residence school educators. Certainly the swelling commitment to renewal of ministry training among evangelicals, witnessed in our own 'Manifesto' (ICAA: 1984), helps to account for this acceptance. A second look at the circumstances of TEE's newfound acceptability, however, may lead to a more jaundiced appraisal. One might even conclude that, in some cases, TEE has become acceptable to residence educators because it has been effectively domesticated.

I would submit that the issues with which we wrestle are much larger than the significance of theological education by extension. Ten years from now, fifty years from now, TEE may or may not survive as an approach to ministry formation. My greater concern is for the 'degrading' process present in TEE. If that process is thwarted, it is the future significance of theological education itself which is in jeopardy. In the hope of

avoiding that risk, I would [p. 250](#) invite you to re-examine, with me, some of the foundational issues in theological education.

## THE TASK OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Traditionally, religious educators have viewed the instructional functions of the church from two aspects. 'Christian education' usually refers to those teaching functions which are directed broadly to all church members. 'Theological education,' on the other hand, represents specific training aimed at preparing pastors and leaders for congregational ministry. Sometimes the distinction has been maintained for the wrong reasons. When participation in ministry has been contingent upon attainments in theological education, the expansion of the church has been stifled and distinction between clergy and laity has been heightened. There is no biblical justification for separation of 'theological education' from 'Christian education' if the purpose is to enhance a clerical elite.

Another reason for distinguishing between 'Christian education' and 'theological education,' however, is rooted in the nature of the church. The church is represented in the New Testament as a ministering community. Those who lead this community are primarily responsible for nurturing persons under their care. Nurturing includes the teaching functions identified above as 'Christian education'. The task of 'theological education,' on the other hand, is to nurture these gifted leaders who, in turn, nurture the church.

A careful reading of [Ephesians 4:11-16](#) supports this understanding. The fact that God has gifted saints for ministry does not preclude their need to be 'equipped' to exercise those gifts. By the same logic, the fact that God has gifted some to be 'equippers' does not automatically ensure their readiness for an equipping ministry. Since giftedness is both recognized and confirmed in a context of ministry, those who are encouraging, enabling and promoting the participation of others in ministry are appropriate trainees in 'theological education'.

This rationale for theological education is familiar ground for all of us, yet experience indicates that danger lurks on both sides of our path. Some TEE programmes have failed in their mission specifically because they did not distinguish their task from that of 'Christian education'. Perhaps, like me, you know of TEE programmes which confused large enrolments with success. When nearly the whole church was enrolled in TEE, someone belatedly recognized that the few missing individuals were the leaders the programme had intended to train. Failure to define programme focus and establish appropriate admission criteria has led to the failure of many TEE programmes. If we and our programmes wander in that direction, we can expect the same fate.

The danger which lurks on the other side of the path is, if anything, even more subtle. The quest for excellence in education is a value which is rarely challenged today. The underlying concern for honouring God with our best is rooted in the biblical concept for stewardship. I like to focus on stewardship since it [p. 251](#) reminds me that 'excellence' is not an objective quality which some programmes possess and others lack. Excellence pertains to persons, not programmes. It describes the way members of a learning community steward the relationships and resources at their disposal.

On the other hand, a wrong view of excellence, combined with failure to recognize the real task of theological education, has led to many travesties in the name of ministry training. In our desire to develop programmes which honour God, all of us have at times adopted admission criteria which gave more consideration to schooling attainments than to demonstrated gifts for ministry. Rather than nurturing those who nurture the church, we have focused our energies on those who correspond most closely to our own academic

and theological interests. In the process, we have trained the wrong people. Those who are gifted for ministry have struggled on without training, and the church has suffered. Without anyone's even realizing it, programmes which appear to be thriving models of excellence in theological education are, in fact, models of failure. They have failed in their task and they have failed the church. Only by careful and constant attention to our task can any of us avoid the popular and professional allurements which beckon from the side of our path.

As we plan theological education programmes for our churches today and in the future, let us ever bear in mind what the task before us really is. Those programmes which train functioning church leaders require no other endorsement or justification. Those which ignore or exclude functioning church leaders must be evaluated in terms of the total needs and resources of the national church. Validation of such programmes is most difficult, perhaps impossible, if the more fundamental task of theological education is inadequately served. Our first responsibility is to identify and nurture those who nurture the church. Serious commitment to this task may challenge our assumptions and will strain our creativity. Creativity for the sake of creativity is barren, but creativity bent on more faithful fulfilment of our task is urgently needed. TEE was born in a burst of that kind of creativity. Assessment of present and proposed programmes of theological education in light of this task can guard against failure. It can also assure impetus for developing even more effective approaches to ministry formation.

## THE PROCESS OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

The processes of education inevitably flow out of perceptions about its purpose and goal. The New Testament teaches not only that the purpose of theological education is to nurture those who nurture the church, but also that its goal must be to present every church leader 'perfect' (i.e. 'mature') in Christ'. Maturity, or Christ-likeness, must be defined across several dimensions. Holiness, justice and love loom large among those dimensions, and therefore theological education is concerned with moral and spiritual formation. The capacity to apprehend, embody, communicate and [P. 252](#) defend God's revelation—also essential to Christian maturity—is appropriately reflected in the priority given to biblical and theological studies in our ministry training programmes.

Often it is not the content of our teaching which is problematic, but the processes we employ as we work toward these ends. Despite McLuhan's reminder that 'the medium is the message,' we have too often focused only on the content of training. While teaching truth with our lips, we frustrate our larger goals by the way we relate to our students.

One aspect of maturity is the capacity to acquire information and resources and to initiate a strategy of action. In other words, the mature person is able to learn and to act. Unfortunately, traditional schooling processes teach us to be taught, but they do not teach us to learn. Residence and extension programmes alike typically assign initiative to a teacher for planning, directing and evaluating learning. Whenever this occurs, our programmes risk cultivating dependency rather than the capacity for self-directed learning.

Research on adult education conducted over the past forty years has confirmed that procedures effective in teaching children are often unsuited to training adults. To facilitate discussion, assumptions and procedures most appropriate to adult education have been designated 'andragogy' (from the Greek *anēr*, meaning 'man, not boy'), to distinguish them from those of 'pedagogy' (from the Greek *pais*, *paidion*, meaning 'child'). Knowles has presented a comparison of andragogy and pedagogy in the chart which follows.

Knowles warns that pedagogy and andragogy should be seen 'not as dichotomous but rather as two ends of a spectrum, with a realistic assumption in a given situation falling in between the two ends'

Figure 1.

**A Comparison of Assumptions of Teacher-Directed  
(Pedagogical) Learning and Self-Directed (Andragogical)  
Learning  
(Knowles: 1975, p. 60)**

	<i>Teacher-directed Learning</i>	<i>Self-directed Learning</i>
<i>Concept of the learner</i>	Dependent personality	Increasingly self-directed organism
<i>Role of learner's experience</i>	To be built on more than used	A rich resource for learning
<i>Readiness to learn</i>	Varies with levels of maturation	Develops from life tasks and problems
<i>Orientation to learning</i>	Subject-centered	Task- or problem-centered
<i>Motivation</i>	External rewards and punishments	Internal incentives, curiosity

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(Knowles: 1980, p. 43). The purpose is not to force learners into prefabricated boxes, but to acknowledge that they often are more ready to participate in the direction of their own learning than teachers allow. Furthermore, Knowles' proposal for andragogical education serves as an appropriate reminder of our obligation to facilitate growth from teacher-directed to self-directed learning—from dependence to maturity.

Altered assumptions about learners call for corresponding alterations in training strategies. Adopting a new view of our task and our learners is not sufficient; we must also enlarge our educational repertoire. Fortunately, significant help is available.

**Paulo Freire**

From Freire we can learn the power and importance of 'problem posing' as a method of training for life. Freire is a Brazilian, a writer heavily influenced by Marxism, and an educator of substantial significance. Foundational to the development of Freire's educational method is recognition that one person may oppress but cannot liberate another. Liberation, development, and self-direction are realizable only through the participation of 'the oppressed'.

The starting point for organizing the program content of education or political action must be the present, existential, concrete situation, reflecting the aspirations of the people. Utilizing certain basic contradictions, we must pose this existential, concrete, present situation to the people as a problem which challenges them and requires a response—not just at the intellectual level, but at the level of action. (Freire: 1970, p. 85).

It is the task of the 'dialogical teacher' to 're-present' the sources of oppression to the people with whose help they were identified—and 're-present' them not as a lecture, but as a problem (Freire: 1970, p. 101). To do this requires that the problem first be 'codified', that is, expressed in a visual or verbal depiction which links the concrete situation and the underlying problem. As they discuss the codified problem, people articulate their perceptions and, in the process, come to understand their situation, themselves, and their perceptions. This recognition, which necessarily includes commitment to action, is designated by Freire as 'conscientisation'.

To initiate dialogue with church leaders so as to enter into their perceptions of reality, to 'codify' that reality, and to struggle patiently with church leaders until they come to awareness of their perceptions and 'name the world'—these are unfamiliar and highly demanding procedures. We may recognize the importance of reflection, but reflection in process calls for perceptiveness and discipline. Yet the theological educator who learns about problem-posing from Freire can contribute much to the development and self-directedness of pastors and their churches.

### Jean Piaget

From Piaget we can learn the formative significance of crisis and critical cases for growth and development. Until his recent death Piaget lived in his native Switzerland. Trained in [p. 254](#) biology and psychology, he preferred to describe himself as a 'genetic epistemologist'. As that term implies, his professional interests focused on the development of intellectual structures and knowledge.

Piaget's observation and research led him to recognize important parallels between the development of biological life and human intelligence (Piaget: 1971). Just as living organisms seek homeostasis, so intellectual development gives evidence of a need for balance among cognitive structures. Piaget terms this mechanism 'equilibration' (Piaget: 1977). Much of Piaget's research was related to observing the development of intellectual structures from earliest childhood through adolescence. He was able to discriminate distinct stages in development by analyzing children's descriptions of critical cases. Piaget's theory of intelligence suggests that major factors in cognitive development include biological maturity, experience, social interaction, and equilibration. Of these four, physical development and equilibration are internal functions inaccessible to manipulation. While experience, both general and social, may be ordered, Piaget cautions that experience alone does not ensure cognitive development. Actions aimed at facilitating development need to precipitate disequilibrium (which Piaget called 'disequilibration') among the learner's current cognitive structures. Since the organism cannot tolerate this condition of disequilibration, it begins to seek a new state of equilibrium which can accommodate the new experience. This process is designated 'reequilibration' (Piaget: 1980).

The challenge which Piaget presents to us as theological educators is clear. It is not adequate for us to classify church leaders according to schooling attainment without attention to their cognitive or moral processes. The most effective strategies for developing these processes, furthermore, will include experiences, either immediate or presented as critical cases, designed to challenge existing understandings.

Again, it is easy for us to shun these processes as unfamiliar and threatening. I once had a student tell me, 'Sir, it's hard to think.' To that I would add: it is hard to understand how students think. It is hard to recognize the critical points at which their mental and moral categories deviate significantly from normative biblical patterns. It is hard to isolate segments of experience within the life of the church or the church leader which brings those conflicts into sharp relief. It is even hard sometimes to recall or generate

critical cases which challenge the inadequate processes and categories we encounter. Yet these skills are important within the training repertoire of those called to nurture church leaders. By cultivating these disciplines we can facilitate development toward maturity and self-directedness.

### **Robert Carkhuff and Arthur Combs**

From Carkhuff and Combs we can learn the value of trainer modelling and experiential learning. Carkhuff is an American psychotherapist and educator who has published extensively throughout most of the past-two decades. Professionally, he has [p. 255](#) given himself to understanding those factors which most directly contribute to training for effectiveness in counselling. Combs is an American psychologist and educator whose life has been invested in improving teacher education. Although Carkhuff and Combs have pursued their research independently, their findings corroborate and supplement each other. Counselling and teaching both fall within the genre of 'helping professions', and the implications of research conducted by Carkhuff and Combs extend far beyond their own specific disciplines.

Carkhuff discovered that trainee effectiveness in counselling correlates with level of trainer functioning (Carkhuff: 1969, p. 238). Trainers who were, themselves, practising therapists stimulated maximum development toward effectiveness among trainees. Trainees exhibited lower levels of effectiveness as counsellors, on the other hand, when their trainers were absorbed in research and scholarly pursuits. Combs supports this finding with the observation that the procedures modelled by teacher educators are as important as the content they teach, since trainees learn not only subject matter, but how to teach it (Combs, Blumen, Newman & Wass: 1974, p. 58).

A second aspect found to correlate significantly with trainee development is the role of experience in training. Traditional counsellor training programmes tend to be either exclusively didactic and lecture-oriented or exclusively experiential. Carkhuff's research indicates that the most effective programmes of counsellor training integrate didactic, experiential and modelling modes of learning (Carkhuff: 1969, p. 151). Carkhuff found that this can best be accomplished in counsellor education through the use of role-play (Carkhuff: 1969, p. 215). Teacher education traditionally provided 'practice teaching' near the end of the training programme, to allow students to gain experiences, applying skills learned at the university. Combs recognizes classroom encounters with school children as the indispensable experiential base for effective teacher education. Accordingly, he advocates a training model which includes field experience throughout the period of training (Combs: 1978, p. 560).

In the light of research on training for helping professions, we can understand why many students find it easier to visualize themselves as theological educators than as pastors and church leaders. We need to model the pastoral role before our students. One of the greatest strengths of TEE must be seen as its capacity to reach church leaders in the context of continuing church ministry. Yet how have we capitalized on the experiential resources of our learners? Where is that integration of didactic, experiential and modelling modes of learning which contributes most to effectiveness in 'helping professions' (i.e. ministry)? Some of us have much to learn about the instructional use of supervised field experience, role-play, simulated professional encounters, and the associated skills required for effectively debriefing learner experiences. Carkhuff and Combs challenge us to acquire these skills for the sake of our students. [p. 256](#)

### **Malcolm Knowles**

Having begun this section with Knowles, we now return to him. Knowles occupies a position at the forefront of American studies in adult education. From him we can learn the strategic use of 'the learning contract'. Although Knowles has distilled several procedural principles from the andragogical assumptions listed above, there is one training method he has found especially suited for use with adults. He recommends it enthusiastically:

Finally, I would like to share with you a discovery that has solved more of the problems that have plagued me as a facilitator of learning over the years than all the other methods and techniques put together. It is a truly magical way to help learners structure their own learning—*the learning contract*. (Knowles: 1980, p. 243.)

The use of a learning contract recognizes that it is appropriate and important for adults to assume responsibility for their own learning. The learning contract provides for the differences in previous experience and learning styles which are so significant in adult education. And it provides a guided opportunity for adult learners to explore learning resources, design a learning programme, and define criteria for evaluating competency and achievement.

The simplicity of Knowles's approach to the learning contract masks its genius. Learners are provided with a contract form consisting of five vertical columns. From left to right, the columns are headed 'Learning Objectives,' 'Learning Resources and Strategies,' 'Target Date for Completion,' 'Evidence of Accomplishment of Objectives,' and 'Criteria and Means for Validating Evidence' (Knowles: 1980, p. 381). Minimal objectives for the learning experience are either stated by the instructor or (better) negotiated with all participants as a group. Individual learners desiring higher than minimal achievement then have the freedom to propose additional objectives which build on their unique experience and address their specific interests and needs. As the term 'contract' implies, learner proposals must be either approved by or negotiated with the instructor.

Knowles warns that learners may require special support and encouragement from their instructors and peers when first developing a learning contract.

Many students find that the idea of constructing learning contracts for the first time is so strange that they become overanxious. They have been so conditioned to having teachers tell them what they are to learn and how they are to learn it that they become confused and worried when confronted with the responsibility of thinking through what they want to learn and how they will go about learning it. (Knowles: 1975, p. 129.)

Knowles might well have added that instructors employing learning contracts for the first time also tend to become anxious. We are so accustomed to being in control of the learning which takes place in our classrooms, it is frightening to surrender significant measures of that control to inexperienced students. Nevertheless, the issues are large enough to provide the motivation we need. We are committed to training for maturity and self-directedness, p. 257 rather than dependency. We hope our students will assume responsibility for their own learning sooner or later—better that they do so in an environment of encouragement and support. Better yet that we act as facilitators in this important process. The learning contract can become an important means toward realizing that objective.

My purpose in focusing upon Freire, Piaget, Carkhuff, Combs and Knowles in the paragraphs above has been to illustrate that help exists for any who wish to enlarge their educational repertoire. I certainly have not exhausted the resources available. Nor is it necessary to look for others. Although we can learn much from these and other educators about procedures which cultivate maturity and self-directedness, we must also be willing

to interact creatively with our own churches and their leaders to develop methods appropriate to our contexts.

As I survey the developments of TEE over the past twenty years, one of my greatest concerns is the extent to which we have replaced one rigid and stylized training approach with another. Most often, TEE has been defined methodologically. In April 1976 Wayne Weld asked the readers of his monthly newsletter, *Extension*, 'What do you consider to be the essence of TEE?' Responses printed in the May issue came from a virtual 'Who's Who' of the international TEE community. Although a few respondents took a broader perspective, most identified the convergence of three factors as critical to TEE: first, self-study materials; second, practical work in the student's own congregation; and third, regular (usually weekly) encounters with tutors or 'centre leaders.'

In my work in the Philippines I have referred to this as 'the Guatemala model' of TEE. I applaud the effectiveness this model has demonstrated in meeting the training needs of the Guatemalan church (Mulholland and de Jacobs: 1983). Whenever this model has been transplanted to other soils and has proved productive, I have rejoiced. But in the Philippines I have argued long and hard that we must see 'the Guatemala model' as only one model of TEE.

I would propose that the essence of TEE lies not in a methodology, but in *the distinctive context in which ministry formation is undertaken*. TEE is church-based, versus campusbased, training for ministry. Any method may be employed which is appropriate to our leaders-in-training and to our task of equipping them for ministry in the context of their congregations. As I consider the future of TEE, I am challenged to reexamine the methods I employ and to enlarge my training repertoire. I want my educational processes, as well as my lesson content, to contribute to fulfilling my task and realizing my training goal.

## THE STRUCTURE OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

TEE educators have often had much to say regarding the importance of the 'structure' or design of training programmes. I should warn you, however, that I have no intention of reopening the debate about the **P. 258** relative advantages of residence and extension education. I believe the issues facing us are larger than the limited scope of that discussion. The dichotomizing nature of that debate has the effect of narrowing, rather than expanding, our view of potential alternatives. I am not concerned about the structures we choose, so much as the way we go about choosing.

Theological educators commonly acknowledge that the seminary exists to serve the church. It is uncommon, however, to explore the meaning and implications of that acknowledgement. Service and servanthood are biblical themes which directly challenge many of our assumptions and traditions. Jesus identified himself as a servant and clearly designated servanthood as the normative pattern for leadership in his church. There is something interesting about servant leadership—it can be taught only by example. That is why it is imperative that we, as theological educators, set aside the elitist postures so common in academia, and model servanthood in our relationship with our students. At an institutional level, that is also why it is both appropriate and necessary for our theological education programmes truly to serve the church.

There are several dimensions of the biblical concept of servanthood which would merit consideration, but at least one which is essential. This is the fact that servants never establish the agenda for those they serve; they do not exercise control. Control is power and, as such, is inimical to a commitment to servanthood.



Most of us are not used to thinking in these categories. As theological educators, we position ourselves over against the church and seek to develop ministry training programmes which will meet the needs of the church. We accept this role as a calling from God, and we seek to fulfill our responsibilities in ways that honour God and build up his church. The more we are inclined to take this view of our ministry, furthermore, the more likely we are to want to control the design and operation of these programmes. After all, we reason, God has called us to this ministry. He has gifted us as teachers and provided us the education needed to make the best training decisions. To surrender control of ministry training to others who are less qualified would be irresponsible.

There is at least one thing wrong with this kind of reasoning. By insisting on control of ministry training, we belie our commitment to servanthood. However benevolent our motives, however carefully we assess the needs and expectations of the church, however attentive we may be to the issues of context and community, our ministry training programmes will always be patronizing and oppressive. In other words, they will always belong to us. Because they belong to us, they serve us. As our Lord pointed out, 'No man can serve two masters.' The church may benefit from our ministry training programmes (few evils are unmitigated), but our programmes serve us; they do not serve the church.

For ministry training to serve the church, it must belong to the church. It must be controlled by the church. This suggestion frightens us, because [p. 259](#) we assume that control by the church means we will no longer have a voice in shaping theological education structures. But this reflects an inadequate view of the nature of the church and the nature of educational planning. We do not stand over against the church, but within it. And educational planning is best seen not as a technical exercise, but as an artistic and political process (Huebner: 1975).

If we permit the church to control the design and operation of ministry training, we can take our place within the church and participate in that process. As we articulate our values and observations, we must resist any tendency to assume a posture of power, intimidating others with our erudition and academic degrees, or manipulating others into concurrence with our precommitments. We speak, instead, as members of the body of Christ. We attribute value to the expressions of other members of the body, and listen carefully to them before we speak. By laying aside the prerogatives of power and taking the place of a servant, we emulate our Lord and obey his Word. Not only do we demonstrate servanthood, we also make it possible for ministry training structures to be owned by, and to serve, the church.

In addition to our theological commitment to servanthood, there are at least two other considerations which commend this approach to developing training structures. One is a philosophical recognition of *the critical role of context in shaping training programmes*. A report on the future of education prepared for the Club of Rome warns against undervaluing the importance of context.

There is a myth to be dispelled: the idea that real knowledge and learning may be attained only when they are 'purified' of their contexts.

We submit that many of the difficulties of learning today stem from the neglect of contexts. Statements, norms, values, cultural artifacts, technology and information are circulated or transferred from one place to another, from one group to another, and from one individual to another, with the pretension that they are comprehensible without regard for the contexts in which they were created or received. (Botkin, Elmandjra and Malitza: 1979, p. 23.)

Failure to recognize the critical nature of context contributes to and supports an informational and educational model which presents society as consisting of two parts—those who produce new discoveries, theories, beliefs and solutions on the one hand, and

those who consume this knowledge on the other. Those who generate knowledge, furthermore, live and work in centres of concentrated competence. The report continues:

The unavoidable consequence of this view of societal learning is elitism, technocracy, and paternalism. What is omitted is the fact that meaning and values—decisive for learning—are products of society at large, not of specialized centers. Despite all their technical advantages, the bodies of knowledge, technologies, know-how, and theories produced by such centers contain inherent shortcoming—they are too often divorced from the social context. (Botkin, Elmandjra and Malitza: 1979, p. 81.)

It is imperative that we develop [p. 260](#) ministry training structures *with* (rather than *for*) the church, therefore, because it is only through the participation of the church that those structures are endowed with meaning and value.

Another reason that we must develop ministry training structures with the church pertains to *ownership*. We noted above that ownership of any programme belongs to those who create and control it. That ministry training should be owned by the church is of utmost importance to the church itself, to theological educators, and to trainees. It is important to the *church*, because only by developing and directing its own programmes of training for ministry can the church ensure the appropriateness of ministry formation. It is important to use as *theological educators*, because only as we observe the church assuming ownership of its ministry training structures can we be sure we are not cultivating or contributing to dependency within the church. And it is important to *leaders-in-training*, because only as they see the church assuming ownership and control of training can they be assured that their ministry will be suited to and accepted by the church.

As we give ourselves to participation in the church's task of developing structures of training for ministry, we must beware of three kinds of assumptions. First, we must beware of *colonial assumptions*. Whenever we are inclined to believe Western solutions are inherently better than non-Western ones, we exhibit a colonial mentality. It is worth noting, furthermore, that one need not be a white-skinned Westerner to succumb to colonial thinking. Some of the more bizarre manifestations of colonial thinking I have observed have been exhibited by non-Westerners who had studied abroad. My purpose is not to point a finger (we are all guilty of colonial assumptions at times), but rather to warn that colonial assumptions destroy the bases of mutual respect and trust which are essential to develop ministry training with the church.

Second, we must beware of *institutional assumptions*. By rights, this could be considered a subset of the colonial mentality mentioned above. Western societies are totally enamoured of institutional solutions. The drive toward institutionalization of every creative advance, and institutionalized responses to every problem, is so powerful, however, that assumptions merit special attention. Let me clarify my point of concern: I do not mean to imply that institutions are necessarily a bad thing per se. On the other hand, I reject the suggestion that institutional solutions are necessarily good. As a matter of fact, I know that many creative and useful responses to particular problems have been killed by institutionalizing them. When we develop ministry training with the church, we do well to allow form to follow function without seeking institutional expressions. We can even afford actively to resist institutionalizing tendencies, knowing that absence of such resistance will leave us far beyond the golden mean.

Third, we must beware of assuming *that our fundamental needs are financial*. This is another fallacy of which we are all guilty. Those of us from the West tend to throw money [p. 261](#) at our problems, while our non-Western colleagues too often excuse inaction by pleading a lack of funds.

A number of years ago, when the Wesleyan Church opened its mission in the Philippines, it underwrote salaries of evangelists and pastors and supplied funding for construction of a Bible school. Missionaries soon became convinced that this infusion of dollars was doing irreparable damage to the church, so they changed their policy to one of completely indigenous support. Initially, some who had benefited from the mission's largesse expressed resentment and anger. The national leadership of the church possessed the maturity, however, to recognize that the move was beneficial to the church. In the years that have followed, the Wesleyan Church in the Philippines has not only paid its own way, it has also purchased from the mission those buildings which were constructed with mission funds. Today there are only two Wesleyan Bible colleges in the Philippines—one in Rosales, Pangasinan, and the other in Kabakan, North Cotabato. These schools do not have 30,000 volumes in their libraries. There are other schools in the Philippines which are better painted and more beautifully landscaped. Wesleyans in the Philippines are predominantly rural people in a nation with a *per capita* income of less than \$500 per year. But no other church could more fully own its ministry training structures—not only the land and the buildings, but the training programmes themselves. Their missionaries widely recognize that money cannot build the church, and the church refuses to heed those who argue that they cannot grow or provide training for ministry without Western money.

Any of these assumptions—colonial, institutional, or financial—will distort, undermine, and ultimately destroy the potential for developing ministry training structures within the church. Yet the only alternatives to participative development *with* the church are, first, to develop theological education structures *for* the church, or second, to abandon the task of training for ministry. Both alternatives are theologically, philosophically, and educationally untenable. As we take our place within the church, our training and incumbent roles impose upon us unique responsibility for the success of this undertaking. We can best discharge that responsibility by assuming the position of servants. By modelling servanthood in our own relationships, we open up the potential for developing ministry training structures which truly serve the church.

## THE CONTROLLING VALUES OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

I should not wish the heading of this section to be taken to be suggesting that the concerns discussed above are not controlling values. To nurture those who nurture the church is a task to which I am deeply committed. To relate to church leaders in ways that promote maturity and facilitate self-directed growth and ministry is my constant objective. To develop ministry training structures with the church—structures which belong to both and also serve the church—is my most earnest prayer. I **P. 262** believe all evangelical ministry training programmes should be shaped by these values.

Beyond these, however, there are three other values I would nominate for promotion and celebration in all our theological education programmes. First, *ministry training must ever be rooted in and growing out of ministry experience*. This is not simply because of the pragmatic concerns of trainee selection or an andragogical emphasis on experiential learning. The underlying issues are the relationship of the creative and rederuptive orders, and the biblical view of truth.

Our educational traditions have been heavily influenced by the ancient Greeks. As their philosophers struggled with the problems of pain and brutality, some of them concluded that temporal and material existence was essentially evil. Good, on the other hand, was associated with the realm of the spirit and of ideas. This type of thinking about reality led the Greeks to assign high value to intellectual and philosophical activities, while

the necessary tasks of life were consigned to those unqualified for nobler endeavours. This is most graphically seen in Plato's *Republic*, where the philosopher is king and the lowest orders of society are occupied by slaves and artisans.

The biblical view is strikingly different. The creative order is marred by the effects of the fall, but it is not essentially evil. Because the God of the Bible is the God of both creation and redemption, the Hebrews made no qualitative distinction between manual and intellectual, physical and spiritual pursuits. Physical labour is an act of obedience to the God who commanded us to tend the earth. To this day every Jewish rabbi learns a trade.

The educational implications of these contrasting views of truth and reality are striking. The Greek view leads toward isolation of the academy from the world, whereas the biblical view recognizes the world as our classroom. The Greek view tends to ignore experience in its preoccupation with ideas, whereas the Scriptures honour righteousness and justice in human relations, and call it wisdom. Educational systems rooted in the Greek view are characterized by *a drive to know*; those grounded in the Bible seek not only to know, but also *to do* and *to be*.

Christian educators are committed to representing a biblical view of being and truth in our ministry training programmes. All of us decry the 'ivory tower mentality,' characteristic of much of academia, toward which we so naturally gravitate. I would submit that the surest way to resist that mentality and to maintain our commitment to truth is to tie our training programmes—and our teaching—closely to ministry experience. A keen discipline can be developed through interfacing *reflection* and *experience*. Biblical and critical reflection corrects and informs experience; life and ministry experience corrects and informs reflection. Through this dialectic we can experience growth in knowledge and understanding, in wise and just living, in ministry effectiveness, and in conformity to the image of Christ.

I believe one of the great contributions of TEE to the field of theological education is its capacity to relate [p. 263](#) significantly training and ministry. Too few of our campus-based programmes have done this adequately. That is why we must affirm this value again. Ministry training must ever be rooted in and growing out of ministry experience. In our thinking for the future, we cannot afford again to compromise this principle.

A second value I want to affirm relates to style of leadership. *Ministry training must always be training for servanthood*. I have touched on the 'servant' theme above and will not belabour it here. The plain fact is, however, that our ministry training programmes are often more adept at preparing leaders for elitist roles than that of a servant. Our Lord must be grieved.

Sometimes specific actions are critical to being a servant; but more often it is attitudes embodied in one's view of oneself and others—that distinguish servants from tyrants. There is one thing that is certain about attitude formation: Positive attitudes are 'easier caught than taught.' That is why our relationships with students must model servanthood.

TEE has also helped us bring into focus the issue of servanthood. It is extremely difficult (although not impossible) to model servant attitudes and relationships in an institutional academic context. The formal relationships of classroom and campus, the limited life and ministry contact between faculty and students, and the preoccupation with courses and degrees, all cultivate and reinforce elitist values. TEE has provided opportunity to demonstrate servanthood by avoiding these patterns. Unfortunately, we have not always chosen to do so. That fact justifies raising the issue again. Being servants, and training others for servanthood, must constitute a controlling value for theological education in the future.

The third value I would lift up pertains to the search for alternative training models. I believe *the legitimacy and necessity of that search must always be affirmed*. The concerns

undergirding this commitment are closely akin to those reflected in the Reformation watchword, *semper reformanda*.

Several theological themes converge to illustrate and validate this point. On the one hand, we live as children of the Kingdom in a world marred by sin. As men and women created in God's image, it is our duty to work toward the progressive implementation of Kingdom values in this age. Until the Lord returns and establishes his reign, that task will not be finished. Because our educational structures are also marred, we must incessantly search for training models which more effectively reflect and cultivate Kingdom values.

Not only upon this world but also upon our persons lies the mark of sin. Through the redemptive power of the Word and the Spirit we experience progressive sanctification in this age, and yet the noetic and relational effects of sin persist. Because they persist, we must constantly resubmit our understandings and our relationships to the corrective scrutiny of the Word. This necessarily includes the theoretical and relational dimensions of our ministry training programmes. Until redemption is complete, we cannot [p. 264](#) be satisfied with intermediate structures.

Even eschatology supports the search for alternative training models. If eschatology provides a teleological view of history (and it does), then it also establishes an agenda for the present age. Until that agenda is complete and the eschatological vision is realized, we cannot rest.

It is interesting to speculate whether growth and development will cease in the age to come or will extend into eternity. Is perfection necessarily a static state? My view of God is different from that of Aristotle and Thomas; I certainly do not believe God is static. If this is true, then our search for alternative training models, like our commitment to growth and development in every area of life, reflects something of God's nature. It honours God and brings him pleasure. To abandon that search is to abandon our calling to be like him.

TEE was born of a desire to find a better way to train church leaders. The forms of TEE which exist today reflect the commitment of some to seek alternative training models. The church has benefited greatly, but that search is not over. By God's grace we must commit ourselves to resubmit our training programmes to the scrutiny of the Word, to reflect and promote more adequately Kingdom values, to advance the teleological agenda we have received, and to honour God and bring him pleasure.

In focusing upon the three values discussed in this section, I have argued that nothing less than these values should characterize our training for ministry. Ministry training should be rooted in and growing out of ministry experience. Ministry training should be training for servanthood. And we should continue to search for alternative training models. Commitment to the Bible and the God of the Bible renders these statements issues of obedience. The short history of TEE has demonstrated both the importance of these values and the necessity of affirming them again.

## **MINISTRY TRAINING, CHANGE, AND THE FUTURE**

At the outset of this essay we proposed to focus on theological education—its task, process, structures, and controlling values—and derive from these a sense of direction for the period immediately before us. As I survey the issues discussed, I recognize that TEE has contributed much toward the 'degrading' process (mentioned above) which is so much needed in theological education. Yet the things we have done well still require doing, and others which are also important are still lacking.

Our view of the future is inextricably bound up with our view of change. And so futuristics has much in common with education, since education is planned change. In an

article of immense importance, William Doll challenges us to reexamine educational practice in light of recent recognitions about the nature of reality and change. Doll writes:

I believe it is possible to organize the history of western thought into three broad epochs, each with its own view of change. These would be: (1) the classical view, represented by the p. 265 ancient Greeks, with its perspective of change as cyclical; (2) the scientific, represented by Newton and Darwin, with its perspective of change as determinate and progressive; and (3) the modernist view, represented by quantum physics, with its view of change as indeterminate, systemic, and interrelational. (Doll: 1983, p. 8.)

Under the classical view change occurs within a closed system, always limited by preexisting boundaries. Doll illustrates this from both Aristotle and Plato. In the former it occurs in the relationship between actualities and potentialities, in the latter, in his 'myth of the metals'. In his *Republic*, Plato asserts that each individual is born to a particular level—bronze, silver or gold. Education's task is to help each individual actualize the potential of his level. Justice or harmony exists when each individual is doing well that for which he is best fitted or naturally preordained.

Newton introduced a radically different view of change when he presented the universe as a collection of atoms, accounting for all that is observed, and the movement of which can be described mathematically. It is easy to see the logical step from Newton to Laplace, who held that the course of the future could be known if the state of the universe at any one moment could be determined. The order which Newton described in the physical realm, Darwin saw in the biological. And then Spencer added to Darwin's notion of 'descent with modification' the sense of progress.

Newton's model of the universe, subject as it was to exact mathematical description, gave rise to a scientific method which equates quantification with understanding. Within the field of education, this is known as behaviourism. Through quantified observations, the behaviourist expects to control and assure learning. B. F. Skinner provides the most extreme expression of this 'scientific' view in this development and defence of programmed instruction.

Darwinian influences can also be seen in some theories of education in the mystical value assigned to competition. Since the processes of natural selection—'the survival of the fittest'—have yielded progress and higher-order development in the biological sphere, they are incorporated into our learning programmes as well. Individual competition is viewed as a valid, if not prime, vehicle for bringing about growth, development and learning.

The modernist view of change has received little attention, but holds far-reaching implications. Because most people have so far continued to live in a world of Newtonian physics, Einstein's theory of relativity and Heisenberg's principle of indeterminacy are little understood. The world of advanced physics has been shaken by the recognition that absolute understanding of the material world is beyond our grasp. The observations we make are influenced as much by our perceptual vantage point as by the phenomena which exist. Beyond that, the advanced physicist has surrendered the particulate and atomistic universe of Newton for a systemic view of existence which acknowledges the significance of interrelationships.

For more than a decade a growing p. 266 number of educators has voiced dissatisfaction with the direction and assumptions of programmes based on a 'scientific' view of change (cf. Kliebard: 1970). What makes Doll's article so significant is the rationale it affords for more creative approaches to learning and training. The role of perception in understanding substantiates Piaget's contention that learning takes place through the transformation of cognitive structures. Training focused on mastery of facts or skills may have significance in particular cases, but is less than truly developmental.

Furthermore, programmes for human development will incorporate a systemic view of life and the universe which is interactive and interrelational. These programmes will not be characterized so much by prescribed curricula as by a *curricularizing approach* to human development—an approach which creatively transforms human experience into opportunities for growth.

An interesting parallel can be drawn between Doll's three concepts of change and historic views of God's relationship to creation. The cyclical view of change corresponds to mythical theologies which include gods and men in their own prescribed places within the created order. The 'scientific' view of change reflects a deistic, 'clockmaker' god who set creation in motion but is uninvolved in its operation today. But it is the modern view of change, with its systemic and interrelational perspectives, which can best be identified with the personal, active, immanent yet transcendent God of the Bible.

As we look to the future, we face the challenge of developing approaches to ministry training which correspond to our understanding of God, of the nature of the church, and of human development. If we rest on the patterns of the past, we have failed to fulfill our God-given mandate. I believe that through clarification of our task, of appropriate structures and processes for training, and of our controlling values we can gain invaluable—indeed, indispensable—guidance for the path ahead. We need creatively to seek more effective ways of equipping mature servant-leaders in the church. May God help us be faithful to this calling.

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# Accreditation and Excellence

Emilio A. Núñez, C.

## INTRODUCTION

This paper is practical rather than theoretical. It is to a large extent the product of personal observation and experience in the field of theological education in Latin America for the last forty-three years. It is also an expression of hope for better times to come in the ministry of training servant-leaders in close fellowship and cooperation with the church and for the church in Latin America, to the glory of God.

We are not called by the Lord to mediocrity in our lives and ministry, but to strive for excellence. The New Testament is clear in regard to the character, conduct, and Christian service of those who have a position of leadership in the Church: excellence is the goal established for them by the Lord. The servant-leader has to be blameless and effective in his life and ministry ([1 Cor. 4](#); [2 Cor. 4](#); [2 Tim. 3](#); [1 Pet. 5:1–5](#)).

Theological education has therefore to be a pursuit of excellence. Accreditation can help in the effort to achieve such a goal.



## CONTEXTUALIZATION

Theological education does not take place in a social vacuum. Consequently, excellence has to be related to cultural and social context.

In Latin America our theological education has been, generally speaking, an imported product. The underdevelopment in many of our countries is economic, social, political, *and* theological. We have depended on foreign sources and resources for our theological education programmes. In the past, there was a conscious or unconscious effort to reproduce in Latin America that which typified North American theological education. Theology was merely a translation of the original English. Most of the teachers were Anglo-Saxons. Money came from the North, and the methodology used came from there too.

The phenomenon of dependence is closely related to the lack of contextualization. Contextualization is the attempt to let the biblical text speak in a relevant manner to the needs of people within their own [p.269](#) culture. It is the interaction between the Text and our cultural context, without distorting the words of Scripture and without reducing its authority.

In Latin America the number of training programmes in Bible and pastoral studies is increasing, but the multiplication of these programmes does not necessarily mean improvement in theological education. In some cases all we have is multiplication of duplication, and foreign dependence is still evident. One of the questions to be asked for accreditation purposes should be: to what extent is a particular training programme progressing toward contextualization? Theological education has to be contextualized, but the accrediting agency has to contextualize itself as well. It has been said that to apply without any adaptation Western standards of accreditation would mean the perpetuation of colonial patterns. If accreditation is based on the academic entrance requirements, the academic degrees of the faculty, the ratio of faculty to students, the curriculum structure, the teaching methods, the number of books in the library, and campus development, among other things, very few theological schools in Latin America would qualify for accreditation. (On the other hand, we should not minimize the importance of Western accrediting standards if we want to relate ourselves to the international theological community.)

It is not an easy task to establish accreditation standards for theological education in the Spanish speaking world. There is a variety of training programmes at different academic levels, but precisely because of this complex situation, we urgently need some standards of accreditation if we are really looking for excellence in our educational efforts.

Our emphasis on contextualizing training programmes is in need of clarification. Missionary paternalism and colonialism belong to the past, but a negative and anti-biblical nationalism would deprive us of the benefits of interacting with other cultures at the international level. We need to relate ourselves in one way or another to the worldwide evangelical community. There is no room for provincialism in a world which is becoming smaller as a result of modern means of communication. There is no room for cultural arrogance in the presence of a church which is growing faster in the Third World than in countries that have traditionally been leaders in the missionary movement.

Above all, the New Testament teaching in the Body of Christ is a powerful incentive for fellowship and cooperation at the national and international level. All of us are in need of the encouragement and advice which comes from our brothers and sisters who belong to other cultures. The church universal has much to teach us on theological education. We have to learn one from another in the spirit of humility and love.

## THE PURPOSE OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Our context of excellence has to take into consideration the main purpose of the different training **P.270** programmes. For example, there is a vast difference between a programme designed to exalt elitist values and a programme oriented to holistic leadership training in the service of the church. There is a vast difference between an educational programme that over-emphasizes immediate results in evangelism and church planting for numerical growth, and a programme dedicated to the holistic mission of the church.

We assume that theological education is not an end in itself. It is only one of the means available for accomplishing the missionary mandate given by the Lord to his disciples. In Latin America, as everywhere in the world, all the programmes of theological education claim to be at the service of the Kingdom of God; but in practice they differ one from another in several respects.

First there are training programmes that place a high premium upon *academic achievement*. The academic aspect of theological education does need to be emphasized in Latin America. In a consultation on new alternatives in theological education sponsored by the Latin American Theological Fraternity two years ago in Quito, Ecuador, the conclusion was reached that we also need a programme of higher theological education at the doctoral level to train those who will later train theologians for the church. Another conclusion was that theological education at all levels, the doctoral programme included, has to be closely related to the local church.

In the past, theological education was used to preserve traditions, to maintain the *status quo*. At the present time, higher theological education is being used in some places to serve the purposes of a leftist political ideology. Higher theological education is necessary to meet on biblical grounds the ideological and theological challenges of a society in the process of transformation. Sociology and politics are becoming prominent in the Latin American theological community. It is fashionable to affirm, for example, that theological education has to take sides with the poor in their struggle for liberation. It is also said that theology should be made by the poor. In this case, the poor would not be the *object* but the *subject* in the process of theological reflection. What is not usually explained is that the theology made by the poor would be in subjection to the political left.

It is misleading to say that higher education is not necessary for underdeveloped countries. Liberation theologies are captivating the minds of many Latin Americans who live in extreme poverty and social injustice. We need to train the theologians who will lead the church in the midst of very difficult times, but evangelical higher education has to be dedicated to the task of edifying the church and disciplining the nations. 'Ivory tower' theologians isolated from the church and its mission are not required. We need highly trained theologians who as a gift to the church are deeply committed to the Lord and his Kingdom.

A second group of schools have as their main purpose that of *training expositors of the Word of God*. This purpose is in keeping with our fundamental evangelical conviction that the Bible is God's written revelation, the **p. 271** highest rule of faith and practice for the believer in Christ. We certainly need more Bible scholars and Bible expositors in the Two-Thirds World. A training programme especially dedicated to teach the Word of God has to be evaluated on the basis of this purpose. However, we cannot avoid asking whether the study of the sacred text is made in isolation from the social context of the interpreter. Are the teachers and students doing biblical theology in response to our Latin American reality? Are the students trained to proclaim the Word of God in a relevant way to the Latin American people? To contextualize our message does not necessarily mean underestimating the theology we have inherited from almost two thousand years of

Christian reflection, but it is an indispensable part of our task to make the gospel relevant to the new generations. This is precisely what our predecessors did in their own times.

Third, in recent times, there has been a new emphasis on *numerical growth*. There is a biblical basis for this emphasis; but statistics should not take place of holistic growth. We need both quality and quantity. In theological education the most important element is not a large number of students, but the quality of the programme and the quality of the graduates. Excellence depends on quality.

For a holistic theological education, both the teachers and the students need to be convinced that the mission of the church is much more than leading people to make a public decision for Christ. It is to make disciples, namely, people deeply committed to the Lord Jesus Christ; people eager to follow him, to learn from him, to imitate him, to serve him, and if necessary to suffer and die for him.

For a holistic theological education, both the teachers and the students have to be concerned about personal and social needs. Men and women do not live in a social vacuum. They belong to a family; they are members of society. Excellence in theological education in Latin America cannot be achieved apart from a deep interest in the total needs of both the individual and society. If theological education is considered to be at the service of the holistic mission of the church, accreditation cannot overlook the social dimension in the purpose of any training programme.

An overemphasis on numerical growth may seriously affect our programmes of theological education. In order to educate the largest possible number of our brothers and sisters for effective Christian service, it is not necessary to downgrade our academic standards. Excellence must be the goal at all levels of the education process.

In addition, there is in Latin America a functional concept of theological education, which says that a training programme is excellent if the graduates are able to get immediate and sensational results in evangelism and church planting. Any consideration of academic achievement is of secondary importance. Generally speaking, this emphasis has been one of the distinctives of Latin America evangelism; we have been encouraged to do, not to think theologically. There seems to be in the evangelical mind a dichotomy p. 272 between doing theology and 'doing the Lord's work'. Some of the leaders of functionalism are so pragmatic that they would like to see our seminaries changed into schools of practical training for evangelism and church planting. At the same time, these leaders offer degrees in theology.

There is a need, of course, for more training in evangelism, Christian education, and pastoral studies and worthy efforts are being made to meet this need in Latin America today; but theological reflection is also indispensable for Christian service, both inside and outside the church.

Fourth, *conferring degrees for academic prestige* is becoming quite popular in Latin American theological education. It is expected that an academic degree will give respectability to the messenger of the gospel. Humanly speaking this idea is good. In Latin America, as in other parts of the world, we admire academic achievements; but it is possible to emphasize academic degrees to the extent of making theological education a cause for derision.

A degree of theology is supposed to be a testimony of serious requirements maintained by the institution or programme conferring such academic recognition. An academic degree is supposed to be a testimony of intellectual discipline and hard academic work on the part of the student. Short cuts should be avoided. Serious students, who really have a call from the Lord to get the best possible training for the ministry, will give more importance to the content and methodology of the training programme than to

the resulting degree, although they realize that a degree is a necessary credential for functioning in some areas of Christian service.

In Latin America we may already be in danger of conferring 'cheap degrees', under the pretext that the country in which we are working is underdeveloped; or we may take contextualization as an excuse for our lack of seriousness in theological education. But the academic standards established in other latitudes to confer degrees in theology should not be overlooked if we want our graduates to be respected by the worldwide evangelical community, especially if we believe that they deserve academic credit in theological institutions abroad.

Contextualized accreditation may help Latin America to avoid the problem of 'cheap degrees'. We are thankful to the Lord for theological schools in Latin America which are seriously working at the graduate and post-graduate levels. The problem is with people who desire to possess a degree in theology at the lowest possible cost.

Finally, there are schools that hope to achieve a balance in their training programme *by emphasizing both academic achievement and practice*. Their main purpose is to provide a basic training in Bible, theology and pastoral studies. They hope that their graduates will use their seminary education in their particular ministry. The ideal of making a basic educational contribution to meet different needs in the church has prevailed in many of our traditional programmes of theological education. Strong emphasis has been given to helping the students [p.273](#) grow spiritually. Academic achievement, as well as the use of their own skills in Christian service, is expected from them. The educators want the students to be informed, formed, and transformed in the educational process.

Theological education has to be diversified because there is in the Body of Christ a diversity of gifts, a diversity of vocations, a diversity of ministries inside and outside the church. For instance, the new national missionary movement in Latin America creates the need of specialized training for the young people who are unwilling to cross cultural barriers to reach the unreached with the gospel of Christ.

## THE METHOD OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

One of the most important questions in theological education is that of the *methods employed*. There is a place for a variety of methods, especially if theological education is diversified to meet different needs inside and outside the church. In secular education in Latin America a methodological revolution was started by the Brazilian educator Pablo Freire, and his influence is also felt in theological education. His book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is well known by both Catholic and Protestant educators all over Latin America and abroad. His ideas permeated the document on education resulting from the Second Episcopal Conference held in Medellin, Columbia, in 1968. Freire's fame comes especially from his literacy method. He is able to teach adults to read in a few weeks, but he is also inclined toward the political left. His literacy method is a means to awaken the political conscience of proletarians and peasants on behalf of revolution. This is one of the reasons for his popularity among people who are enthusiastic about changing our social structures.

Freire repudiates what he calls 'banking education', by which the teacher reduces his role to deposit digested knowledge into the mind of the student. In 'banking education' the teacher has the monopoly of knowledge. He is above the student in a vertical relationship with him. Freire proposes a horizontal relationship with the student in a 'dialogical' and liberating education. The *magister dixit* principle is set aside. The teacher is not above the student, but at the same level with him, engaged in a meaningful dialogue. The teacher is not necessarily communicating truth, but discovering it in the teaching and

learning process with the purpose of liberating the student intellectually, socially and politically.

Whether we like it or not, Freire has made a disturbing impact on the methodology of education, with his belief that anthropology is the place to start theological reflection and the education process. Roman Catholic educators, for example, have not been immune to his ideas. We may detect his influence in the new emphasis on 'theology by the people'. According to this emphasis, theology is not to be made by bourgeois theologians *for* the people; the people *themselves* have to be deeply involved in doing theology. Gustavo Gutierrez says that authentic liberation theology will be written by the poor when they have a voice to p. 274 express freely their own thoughts and feelings.

But there are also evangelical educators who in one way or another are under the influence of Pablo Freire. Some of us insist that we have already a body of doctrine to communicate faithfully. We have to teach what we have received from God's written revelation. We are not searching for spiritual and saving truth. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. We believe that according to the Lord Jesus Christ the Word of God is truth. We are supposed to invite our students, under the ministry of the Holy Spirit, to search for revealed truth in order to communicate it to others; and we do not want to play the game for a political ideology, whatever this ideology may be.

At the same time we have to admit that much of our traditional methodology in theological education has been pure indoctrination, 'banking education', feeding the minds of our students with predigested food; and in many cases we have not gone beyond the stage of indoctrination which is necessary in training servant-leaders for the church. However, as educators we have to lead our students to the stage of evaluating theology; they have to become mature enough to exercise a critical attitude in subjection to the Word of God, under the ministry of the Holy Spirit, to evaluate different systems of thought. Then we have to lead the most capable students to be creative, to do biblical theology in response to their own needs, and in response to the needs of their own people, inside and outside the church. Contextualization has to lead us to this stage in the educational process. Excellence has to depend also on our willingness to evaluate our own methods in a critical and creative response to the challenges of today.

## THE OUTCOME OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

In the eyes of church and society, excellence depends also on the performance of the graduates in their respective field of ministry. Dr. Louis McKinney has said, 'There seems to be general consensus that data on educational outcome provides the most convincing evidence of educational quality.'<sup>1</sup> But performance is also related to spiritual gifts, natural talents, special vocation, and opportunities to serve. Training is, of course, exceedingly important; but it is not the only factor in a successful ministry.

The standards for excellence in ministerial performance are primarily in the Word of God. Excellence is much more than attracting multitudes to church on Sunday morning. Excellence is related also to the contribution made by the graduates to the holistic mission of the church. This means that not all of the graduates will serve as evangelists or pastors: some of them, or many of them, will be deeply involved in other ministries of the church.

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<sup>1</sup> Lois McKinney, 'Serving the Church in Cultural Context: the Role of Academic Accreditation'. A paper presented at the World Evangelical Fellowship Consultation on Accreditation, 17 March 1980, London, England.

And so we have seen that excellence [p. 275](#) depends on several factors. These include the purpose of theological education; the contextualization of its contents and method; the performance of its graduates; and the contribution made by the training programme to the holistic mission of the church.

## ACCREDITATION ENTITIES

'Self accreditation' is not enough. Someone else has to evaluate our work; we are accountable to God and to our fellow human beings. And so the accrediting agency comes into the picture. But there are other entities that may have a say on the quality of our educational efforts, and two of these are the church and the national government.

### Accrediting churches

In this context, by 'the church' we mean the local church, the church as a denomination or ecclesiastical body, the church as the evangelical community at the local, national, regional, and worldwide level. In one way or another theological education is under the scrutiny of the church.

The testimony of the church is of the greatest importance because we claim to be at the service of God's people in our ministry. When we are closely related to the local church, we constantly receive advice, encouragement, and even admonition from our brothers and sisters in Christ; but we need to remember that they have their own criteria for evaluating theological education. For instance, many evangelical churches in Latin America have *activism* as their main standard in determining the value of a particular training programme.

There are cases in which the most capable members in a local congregation are asking for renewal in theological education. Unfortunately, these members are in the minority in most local congregations and denominations.

The church may be either an incentive or an obstacle for renewal in theological education. How far we educators will limit ourselves to the patterns established by the church is a matter that has to be decided in a spirit of prayer, humility and love.

We are in need of the spiritual, moral, ministerial, and financial support of the churches. We cannot carry on our ministry in isolation from them. Yet at the same time we feel the responsibility of providing leadership to the evangelical community. In a sense, we are not supposed to go *behind* the churches, but *ahead* of them, helping them to interpret the signs of the times in the light of the Word of God, under the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Especially in times of crisis, the churches may look at the educators for a sense of direction in the midst of uncertainty and confusion.

It is true that we are training 'followers', because our students have to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, and they are supposed to be able to work with others in subjection to authority. All of us are in one way or another under authority. But we are called to train *leaders* as well, not just *followers*. We prefer to speak of servant-leaders, but the fact remains: they have to lead the way in their place of ministry, going ahead of, not behind their brothers and sisters [p. 276](#) in Christ. To train servant-leaders is a serious responsibility before the Lord, before the church, and before society in general.

Our task is to help our students be aware of personal, ecclesiastical and social needs in order that they may communicate the Word of God in a relevant way to both church and society. Our task is to educate the church in the process of educating ourselves and educating our students. Both the church and theological education are in need of renewal; but we must not wait for the renewal of the church to open our hearts to the work of the

Holy Spirit for our own renewal and the renewal of theological education. It is possible that the Lord wants to use *us* as instruments of renewal for *the church*.

### **Accrediting National Governments**

We are rejoicing in Latin America that some theological schools now have the recognition of their respective national governments. This is the case, for example, with the Evangelical Seminary of Lima, Peru. Two of the universities of El Salvador in Central America are evangelical. There is a school of theology in the university of the Assemblies of God. There is also a school of theology in the Universidad Mariano Galvez in Guatemala City. Government accreditation is a great blessing, especially in countries where the vast majority of people profess to be Roman Catholic. We have to pray for the leadership of those schools which are officially accredited to confer degrees in theology. We have to pray that our colleagues may have the wisdom that they need to respond adequately to the expectations of church and society. However, we have to realize that recognition by the national government is not in itself a guarantee of excellence in theological education, whether from the standpoint of biblical standards or from the criteria of evangelical accrediting agencies. It simply underscores the need for an evangelical accrediting association in continental Latin America.

### **Accrediting Associations**

In a paper written for the International Consultation on the Renewal of Theological Education, held in Malawi in 1981, Dr. Paul Bowers summarized the essential ingredients of accreditation: *quality, credibility* and *collaboration*.<sup>2</sup> We need these three ingredients everywhere in the world. As we declared at the beginning of this paper, the Lord has not called us to be mediocre in our lives and ministry, but to strive for excellence.

We have also suggested that we need recognition within the local and denominational church, within our social context, and within the international theological community. We need this recognition not to build up our own ego, nor just to enhance the professional reputation of our school or training programme; if we want recognition, we must be willing to evaluate ourselves in the light of accrediting standards. We will search for excellence to be more effective in our service to the holistic mission of the church. [p. 277](#)

Accreditation has been a means of promoting evangelical cooperation—that is undeniable. One of our greatest needs in Latin America is to express the unity we have already in Christ. There are at least two ways in which we may express this organic unity: namely, fellowship and cooperation. There is no room in the New Testament for churches isolated from other churches. In a variety of ways the apostle Paul motivated churches to have fellowship with one another and even to help those brethren in distant places who were in financial need. The Council of Jerusalem is a great example of fellowship and cooperation under the ministry of the Holy Spirit. In theological education we have much to receive from, and much to share with, our colleagues at home and abroad.

To train servant-leaders for the Church is a gigantic task. If our Lord does not come soon, we are training servant-leaders last years of the twentieth century and for the first decades of the new century. We cannot do it by ourselves. Our training programme cannot meet all the needs there are in theological education. And we can lose the ability to evaluate ourselves, if we try to do our job apart from other educators who are accumulating experience in their particular field of ministry. Rather than competition we

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<sup>2</sup> Paul Bowers, 'Accreditation as a Catalyst for Renewal in Theological Education'. A paper prepared for the International Consultation on Renewal of Theological Education, Chongoni, Malawi, 1–4 September, 1981.

need collaboration in the pursuit of excellence. A case in point is the need to provide training in cross-cultural missions for the young Latin American people who have dedicated themselves to serve the Lord in another culture. Shall we establish two or three independently-functioning missionary training centres in Guatemala City (for example), or shall we combine our efforts to meet this need in a more effective way to the glory of God? It is not duplication we need, but collaboration, in the Lord's work. An accrediting association may help us achieve excellence, recognition, and cooperation for the benefit of theological education, to the glory of God.

In conclusion, we may talk about the renewal of the church and the renewal of theological education; but what about our own renewal as educators, as servants of God? The renewal must start in us. We need to be transformed by the renewal of our mind to be agents of renewal in theological education today.

It is possible to say that there is a renewal for practical sanctification, for a holy life in the presence of the Lord as a testimony to the church and the world; and there is a renewal specifically related to our own ministry. To be renewed in theological education may mean, in the first place, that experience by which our minds are opened by the Lord to a new perception of the biblical standards for the training of servant-leaders in the service of the church and a new perception of our ecclesiastical and social reality. This perception demands relevance and contextualization. When our minds are renewed by the Holy Spirit and his Word, we are able to re-evaluate courageously our educational programmes. Most of all, we are open to changes, even radical changes in what we are all doing for the Lord. To be renewed is in this case to acquire a new mentality, a new way of perceiving and confronting [p. 278](#) reality, to the glory of God and the furtherance of his gospel on earth.

It is obvious that renewal in our ministry has to be a never-ending process, as practical sanctification is also progressive. The opposite of renewal is stagnation, but how can we be stagnant if the Word of God is constantly exhorting us to be renewed in our minds ([Rom. 12:1-3](#))? How can we be stagnant in a world which is in the process of rapid and radical change? In theological education we need both renewal as a *transforming experience* in a given time and place, and renewal as a *never-ending process* in the pursuit of excellence. May the Lord help us to achieve our goals, to the glory of his name!

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## Accreditation and Renewal

Ken R. Gnanakan

The Manifesto on the Renewal of Evangelical Theological Education has done well to admit that evangelical theological education today stands in need of a renewal—'a renewal in form and in substance, a renewal in vision and power, a renewal in commitment and direction'. Just at the right time it reminds us that 'there is now emerging



around the world a wide consensus among evangelical educators that a challenge to renewal is upon us, and upon us from the Lord'.<sup>1</sup>

Renewals refers to a freshness. The Greek word *kainos* denotes something new, not in time, but 'new as to form or quality, of different nature from what is contrasted as old'.<sup>2</sup> The quality of the 'new' wineskins in [Mt. 9:17](#), [Mt. 2:22](#) and [Lk. 5:38](#) could most appropriately be described as 'fresh'. [Rom. 6:4](#) (*kainotes*) refers to life of a new quality. Generally speaking then the word refers to a kind of a freshness in contrast to staleness, a newness in quality. The New Testament speaks of a 'new Jerusalem', a 'new song', a 'new heaven and new earth', and a 'new name', all in keeping with a God who desires to make 'all things new' ([Rev. 21:5](#)). It could be the very same thing that is already known; but it appears with an added freshness and vitality which makes it both more relevant and more acceptable.

All over the world God is pouring upon his church a spirit of freshness, and all the activities of the church are steadily falling in step with the Spirit. It is God who renews and we theological educators must come with humble submission to wait for his correction and direction. Any human effort or salvage operation could only be a show of renewal, on the outside, without the freshness which from the inside activates theological education into becoming all that God intended it to be.

God's renewal of his work is seen primarily when there is an urge to return to basics. In this paper we [p. 280](#) shall discuss four basic dimensions of primary concern which accrediting agencies must take seriously. They are:

1. Theological education Must be committed to the imparting of the knowledge of God.
2. Theological education must demonstrate a commitment to *build* people to *reach* people.
3. Theological education must be concerned for the building of values.
4. Theological education must be concerned for relevance.

## **1. THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION MUST BE COMMITTED TO THE IMPARTING OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD**

If we are convinced that theological education is about training up men and women to serve God, our top priority ought to be to impart a knowledge of God. It is this knowledge that forms the basis for communicating truths about God. No matter how much one strives to teach about God and godliness, if it is not producing a deep spiritual impact on the student, there is hardly any difference between theological education and any other form of education.

J. I. Packer's book *Knowing God*, in a chapter aptly titled 'The people who know their God', points out that it is possible that 'one can know a great deal about God without much knowledge of Him', or even 'know a great deal about godliness without much knowledge of God'.<sup>3</sup> Packer makes a distinction between *knowing God* and merely *knowing about him*. A renewal in theological education must highlight this difference, and aim for spiritual standards which may not be creditable by secular standards. There is an urgent need

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<sup>1</sup> Manifesto on the Renewal of Evangelical Theological Education (ICAA, 1983), see pp. 80ff.

<sup>2</sup> W. E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (London: Oliphant's), p. 109.

<sup>3</sup> J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1975), p. 22f.

for theological educators to develop criteria in accreditation that will measure how far theology is having its desired effect on the learner.

In one sense, the real impact of theological education will always go beyond the framework of any accreditation procedures. For instance, how does one measure 'godliness' with the accepted criteria for evaluation? Similarly, renewal in theological education cannot be measured merely by an increase in the enrollment of students, or a rise in the number of theological seminaries, or even improved performances. All these are just indicative of a work that is far deeper, and more fundamental to the edifice of theological education. The primary evidence of renewal in theological education is shown in the learner's longing for God himself, as a consequence of which he seeks to learn the word of God. In fact, the burden is not only on the learner but on the teacher as well. If the primary function of teaching theology is seen as the imparting of truths about God, the teacher himself must be so filled and renewed that his teaching becomes revitalized.

Accreditation agencies must be urged to develop criteria that assist in aiding in spiritual growth and godliness, rather than merely pressing for academic excellence. The kind of subjects taught, and the volume of knowledge acquired, should have the [p. 281](#) direct effect of increasing the student's godliness; and criteria should be developed to observe and encourage such standards. Renewal in theological education must reveal its inner compulsion towards such criteria, rather than continuing its emphasis on outward observable standards.

Layman have tended to see the study of theology as a dry academic pursuit, a specialized subject irrelevant and even unintelligible in everyday life. Rightly understood, theology *should* be seen as the study of God, absolutely essential and immensely relevant to every committed Christian. Such an attitude to theology would totally transform the impact of our pulpits on people in the pews. If theological education is to achieve its desired results then accreditation agencies must ensure this factor.

Theology was once the queen of sciences and set the trend for all other pursuits, with the church even providing the stamp of authority to other academic institutions. The knowledge of God was key to all other knowledge. In fact education itself was 'due almost entirely to impulses stemming from Christianity'.<sup>4</sup> In a drastic reversal of roles, we now have theological institutions subserviently bowing to a non-Christian institution which must provide the stamp of authority for their existence. Even though we accept that academic standards ought to be the same, whether in the church or in the world, we need to be concerned that we do not shift away from our primary distinctives, our call, our goal, our vision and therefore our effectiveness. Renewal in theological education must be evidenced in a longing for an approval that is higher than any other institutional demands for accreditation.

## **2. THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION MUST DEMONSTRATE A COMMITMENT TO BUILD PEOPLE TO REACH PEOPLE**

Institutionalized learning patterns have robbed the learning process of its people-centred approach. Our only concern seems to be 'excellence' in terms of our machinery functioning well, our structures neatly defined and our reports glowing with facts and figures. Accordingly, accrediting agencies and evaluation procedures lay stress on curriculum, library, buildings, and the like, and hardly at all on the developing of people for a mission to people.

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<sup>4</sup> K. S. Latourette, *Christianity in a Revolutionary Age*, Vol. I (Exeter: Paternoster, 1970), p. 141.

If people are important, our curricula and learning processes should be built around people. But the opposite has happened: we have had predetermined curricula forced on to people. Learning in such cases is evaluated only from the perspective of grades and examinations, rather than change in the individual. Accreditation procedures must emphasize learning in the sense of change, so that the impact of values on the individual is given more attention than merely the capacity of the student's mind to store and regurgitate facts and figures.

Commitment to people should go beyond the institutional framework to a 'people' setting. Theological p. 282 education has for too long been subjected to institutional demands in the form of outward factors familiar to any other institution. A commitment to a particular context, and to building people, should show in an openness to provide learning opportunities in 'real life' situations. Extension education has broken away from the four walls of campuses, but still needs to receive acceptance from the more traditionally-patterned educational institutions.

While one has no doubt about the value of the discipline of a campus setting for a theological degree programme, one has only to hear from some students of the shock of reentering the 'real' world after the three- or four-year security of the spiritual shelter of a seminary. Nonformal learning patterns, the open-university system, and such experiments, have received the wide acclaim of educational bodies all over the world, and it is disappointing to see theological institutions continue in traditions handed down the centuries. Theological education must keep abreast of such openness and thereby restore a people-centredness to the learning process by taking education to where the people are.

While standard, traditional structures for education and accreditation may be relevant in themselves, we need to seek a renewal to keep in step with the revolution in educational systems in universities all over the world. We stand in need of a renewal of these structures, not only in terms of the newer trends in education, but also to experience what God is doing in this age. A thorough and honest critical evaluation is needed of all that we are doing in the name of education.

In maintaining a people-centredness in theological education, we provide an atmosphere where the variety of the gifts of the body of Christ will be developed. Our programme has catered too much for developing one particular pattern of ministry, and all levels of leadership have had to go through the same process. If we truly accept the wide variety of people and gifts of the Spirit within the body, then we need to be sensitive to the developing of these gifts. The education process needs to be seen from the perspective of discovering and developing God-given gifts, rather than merely as the adding-on of material foreign to the learner. Theological educational institutions ought to be setting the trend for systems where the individual with a particular gift, called to a particular task, is equipped for service in and through the body of Christ.

The renewal of theological education must demonstrate a burden to develop the rich and wide variety of gifts to equip the total body. Consequently, accreditation procedures should stress the importance of the true development of leadership in its widest context of the variety of people. Building curricula around individuals does not mean having thirty separate packages for thirty different students. What is required is a *sensitivity towards the student* rather than the pressure of a programme. Whatever the context, if the knowledge and skills imparted are not making an impact on the life and witness of the student, learning is a futile engagement. An obvious p. 283 spiritual growth, an increasing effectiveness in communicating our faith, and a witness demonstrating Christian values with the potential to change the world around us, are essential to the theological learning process.

### 3. THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION MUST BE CONCERNED FOR THE BUILDING OF VALUES

All over the world, life in its totality is being threatened by the decay of moral and ethical values. The revolutions in the areas of science and technology, and the growing influence of materialistic philosophies, have not only dethroned man from his position in creation but have discarded values along the wayside. We as Christians, committed to a God who expects high standards, need to restore the foundation of basic human values into the education process, and thereby restore to education its originally intended purpose.

Early in 1985 the Government of India announced the formulation of a new education policy. One of its objectives, it claimed, was to combat 'the growing concern over the erosion of essential values and an increasing cynicism in the curriculum in order to make education a forceful tool for the motivation of social, ethical and moral values'.<sup>5</sup>

'Value education' is being promoted, the paper claims, to help eliminate obscurantism, religious fanaticism, violence, superstition and fatalism along with the benefits of its orientation towards the unity and integration of people. Such a stress ought to become the motivating factor for all levels of education. For instance, what is the benefit of the learning of science, if values have not been acquired in the learning process to enable the proper use of science? For theological education the pressure is even greater: to impact biblical values that will enable the learner to be a person of integrity, love, compassion, understanding and patience.

The goal of education is betterment and change. This change is not measured merely by the quantity of knowledge gained, but the quality of the values acquired which have become integral to the student. Unfortunately, even the concerns of theological education are so heavily oriented to academic excellence and the acquisition of degrees that accreditation has been forced to focus only on these aspects. Accreditation for theology needs to address its concern to unshakeable values that will strengthen the Christian community in an uncertain world. Recent reminders of our necessary concern for justice can be taken seriously only if value education is developed within the very fabric of the whole theological learning process. Accreditation systems should develop criteria and motivate institutions into this stress, not merely in the form of a few subjects, but as a foundation for the whole curriculum.

If theological education must be concerned for imparting godliness, then the imparting of Christian [p. 284](#) values should have foremost concern. Theological institutions must be concerned to correct the deterioration of standards in the ministry, the growth of corruption right within the church, and the lack of integrity amongst its leaders. Unless and until value education becomes the primary focus in the early stages of one's preparation for the ministry, not much change can be expected despite all the theological learning that is imparted.

Accreditation systems are limited, in being able only to evaluate observable factors with present criteria for evaluation. What is needed is for a process to be set up that will press institutions into building value education right within their curriculum. Efforts need to be made at all levels to compel and urge educational systems into such concerns. Educational institutions naturally tailor themselves to the demands accrediting agencies place on them. Accordingly, the curse of much theological education is its conformity to accreditation procedures, stifling values and attitudes in the learning process which are far more essential to the Christian minister than his degrees and

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<sup>5</sup> *Draft National Policy on Education 1986*, issued by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India Department of Education, May 1986. Part VIII.

academic laurels. Values and attitudes are seen as the burden of the individual learner rather than being accorded a place in an objective evaluation. If theology must be true to its objective of imparting the knowledge of God, character building through the imparting of values and attitudes should be given importance. If the fundamentals of education are seen as knowledge, skills and attitudes, then knowledge and skills ought to be seen as the cart drawn by the driving force of attitudes.

#### **4. THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION MUST BE CONCERNED FOR RELEVANCE**

Theology must be relevant, and hence speak to all situations and to each new generation. Theological knowledge and the methods of communication of this knowledge must be reinterpreted in each generation and to each culture, so as to make it recognizable in each context. Theological education must grapple with this issue so that the student takes away with him a body of learning that will be applicable to his area of ministry. Accordingly, accreditation procedures must struggle to find the kind of criteria that will put pressure on educators to make their curriculum relevant. What is absolutely necessary is that the learner is aware that his study is connected to a real world where problems and issues can be handled correctly only from the Christian perspective.

The prime objective of all theological education must be the effective communication of the gospel to real men and women in a real world. While we do not allow the context to dictate to us the content of the gospel, we ought to be making efforts to be meaningfully proclaiming the good news to men and women in varying cultural socioeconomic and political contexts. Surprisingly, there appears currently to be no such sensitivity either in the teaching or in the communication of the truths of the Bible.

A commitment to relevance must [p. 285](#) start with an awareness of the kind of people to whom we are seeking to minister. We still seem to carry on using unaltered packages transferred (for instance) from America to Asia without seeking to understand local distinctives. It is not at all surprising then that we face the criticism of Christianity being a 'foreign' religion. In most cases, a pastor trained in our urban seminaries comes out equipped with knowledge, skills and attitudes that betray a foreignness which he struggles to adapt into his new context. Also, urban thinking has been carelessly imposed on rural congregations. Evolving theological curricula in context means that we must also evolve accreditation standards that will be contextual. The educational patterns of some countries may need to be considered before importing elements foreign to their context. For instance, ATA accreditation must be cognizant of Serampore University's accreditation procedures in India, and must respond not merely by matching, but by developing and surpassing, their standards in keeping with the local context.

Renewal of theological education places before us the need to evaluate critically the content of our theological education. The crucial question to ask of each course offered is: how will this subject benefit the learner in his effectiveness as a minister of Jesus Christ in his given situation? The subject, the individual and the context must all receive their rightful importance, but above all the goal of the learning process must be fulfilled. Accreditation systems should be renewed to take into consideration the necessity of the stress on relevance, so that education can become meaningful not merely to the learner but to those to whom he prepares to transfer this learning.

Our commitment to relevance will certainly challenge both the *content* and the *structures* of our education and accreditation systems. Questions will arise even of their practicability, and educators must be honest enough to evaluate critically present patterns under the searchlight of God's Holy Spirit. There is no sanctity about traditional patterns so that they cannot be discarded completely, or at least reshaped according to the

demands of the age and the needs of people. Theological education is after all man's attempt to educate himself with the knowledge of God, and needs to be continually assessed and reassessed in the interests of relevance and in the search for excellence.

However, in labelling theological education 'man's attempt', we must not ignore the overall activity of God in this process; which makes it different from any other educational exercise. Accreditation of theological education must take into account the divine involvement over and above all the procedures we set up for human evaluation of our educational systems. There may be a need for a revolutionary attitude to our accrediting procedures if we accept that ultimately our aim is 'to be approved unto God' ([2 Tim. 2:12](#)).

Renewal of theological education and accreditation procedures must demonstrate itself primarily in a longing for the 'word' to become 'flesh' in each generation and in [p. 286](#) each culture. It is God's word, and that word needs to be actualized to the people to whom we educators are accountable. When God renews he does not merely take the old and patch it up with something new. Let us long for the freshness of God's work, as he takes us through the process of renewal, reshaping and reconstruction. Let us ask for a renewed attitude to the Scriptures, a renewed dependence on God himself and a renewed resolution to root out all that hinders God's complete work, through his desire to 'make all things new'.

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## The Future of ICAA

Tite Tiénou

The year 1990 marks the beginning of the second decade of life for the International Council of Accrediting Agencies for evangelical theological education. This seems therefore an appropriate time for attending to the question of ICAA's future. I wish to explore this topic under three headings: celebration, challenge, and call to action.

### CELEBRATION

It would be imprudent to consider ICAA's future without first taking account of its past. And in focusing on the past, I wish to speak in terms of celebration because we have now reached an important milestone in ICAA's history, the completion of a decade of service. This is a fitting time for us to pause and celebrate God's goodness to us, for enabling ICAA with increasing effectiveness to serve the needs of evangelical theological education worldwide.

ICAA was founded under the auspices of the Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Fellowship in March 1980, at a special international consultation on evangelical theological education held at Hoddesdon, England. The founding members of

ICAA (ACTEA, AABC, ATA, CETA and EEAA) are all still very active in their respective regions and in the affairs of ICAA today.<sup>1</sup>

Organizations such as ICAA are created through a delicate convergence of people, ideas and circumstances. This is not the place to enumerate all who laboured to see ICAA become a reality. But we should note that the immediate impetus came from ACTEA in Africa. ACTEA took the decision to call for the creation of such a body during its 1978 meetings at Miango, Nigeria, and wrote officially to its sister bodies to that effect on 22 December 1978. Somehow the time was right; and less than fifteen months later, ICAA was formally launched.

The founding vision of ICAA was to facilitate international cooperation in evangelical theological education. This is reflected in the fourth purpose stated in the constitution: p. 288

To promote a sense of community among institutions and programmes of evangelical theological education worldwide for mutual stimulation and enrichment.

Since its founding, ICAA has engaged in a wide range of activities in keeping with this original vision. International consultations were held in conjunction with the ICAA meetings at Hoddesdon, England (1980); Chongoni, Malawi (1981); Katydata, Cyprus (1983); and Weissach, Germany (1987). Papers read at these consultations have been published as books, which have offered stimulation to evangelical theological education worldwide.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to consultations, ICAA initiated a Library Development Programme in 1981, and this continues to benefit theological schools throughout the Third World. In 1982 ICAA adopted terms for associate membership status. This action allowed ICAA membership to be broadened, so that now six associate member organizations also participate in the affairs of ICAA.<sup>3</sup> In 1983 ICAA adopted its *Manifesto on the Renewal of Evangelical Theological Education*.<sup>4</sup> This document has proved of major significance. In 1984 ICAA initiated coordinating services for TEE worldwide. Four years later the *ICAA Compendium* was published. And so, despite the reference to accreditation in its name, ICAA's accomplishments over the years testify to the fact that its scope is much more comprehensive. As one ICAA publication puts it:

ICAA is concerned with the whole range of functions by which evangelical theological education might fruitfully collaborate at the international level.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The full names of these bodies are: Accrediting Council for Theological Education in Africa, American Association of Bible Colleges, Asia Theological Association, Caribbean Evangelical Theological Association, and European Evangelical Accrediting Association. In 1988 the South Pacific Association of Bible Colleges (SPABC) was also admitted to full ICAA membership.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Bowers, ed., *Evangelical Theological Education Today: 1—An International Perspective* (Nairobi: Evangel, 1982), and *Evangelical Theological Education Today: 2—Agenda for Renewal* (Nairobi: Evangel, 1982). Robert Youngblood, ed., *Cyprus: TEE Come of Age* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1984), and *Excellence and Renewal: Goals for the Accreditation of Theological Education* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1989).

<sup>3</sup> These are: The Committee to Assist Ministry Education Overseas (CAMEO), USA; Evangelical Association for Theological Training (AETTE), Brazil; Education Division, Church of God (USA); International Correspondence Institute (ICI), Belgium; Program for Theological Education by Extension (PTEE), Jordan; Overseas Council for Theological Education and Missions (OCTEM), USA.

<sup>4</sup> *Theological Education Today* 16:2 (April–June 1984), 136–143. Spanish and French versions have also been issued.

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## Challenge

While we may legitimately celebrate ICAA's past, we cannot afford to ignore the many challenges which it is about to face in its second decade. I highlight here those that I consider the most crucial.

In a general way, the essential challenge of ICAA's second decade could be simply stated: to recover and expand the original vision which led to ICAA's creation. Here are some specifics of what that would mean.

As we have seen, ICAA was inaugurated [p. 289](#) to attend to much more than accreditation, as its constitution and early documents testify. Consequently, the first challenge before us is to move forward in making ICAA a full service agency, not limiting its role merely to providing avenues for international recognition of degrees. The fact is that ICAA's larger role is unique. It is, as far as I know, the only established medium for international contact and collaboration in all aspects of evangelical theological education. If its function were to be restricted to accreditation, what person or organization would carry out this larger purpose? Accreditation is surely a vital element of ICAA's original vision; but it is not the only one, nor should be. ICAA is called primarily to humble servanthood, not to regulatory authority or empire-building. Developing a full range of services for evangelical theological education internationally bespeaks servanthood; limiting ourselves to accreditation can promote for us an unfortunate image of merely being the international academic police.

ICAA should also continue to strive to become truly international in perspective, in membership representation, and in staffing. To date, Hispanic Latin America is not effectively represented, nor are the evangelical theological educational structures of Britain, Canada and the USA. In this day of globalization of theological education, we should diligently work to keep ourselves international in fact as well as in appearance.

ICAA needs to nurture a sense of community and cross-fertilization among all forms of evangelical theological education worldwide. It should promote the modes for such fellowship and a sense of mutual identity. Similarly ICAA should establish itself as the forum for informed reflection and discussion within theological education worldwide. While ICAA has already made some contribution in these areas, I am suggesting here that we should become much more actively engaged.

The next challenge for ICAA concerns its role in the renewal of evangelical theological education. Here it must continue to articulate an effective ongoing call to renewal in this critical area of the church's life. ICAA should function not as reinforcement for traditional patterns, but as a true catalyst for renewal. (In doing so, however, it must not become a forum for castigating some forms of theological education while favouring and promoting others.)

In light of the above, TEE presents yet another challenge for ICAA. In keeping with its vision, ICAA should furnish evangelical TEE with international networking and support services, and confirm an integral role for TEE within ICAA, alongside residential structures. If ICAA accomplishes that, it will render a major service to contemporary theological education.

Lest you should think that I am calling ICAA to abandon accreditation altogether, I hasten to add that accreditation itself remains a challenge for us. ICAA should continue to nurture the means to ensure that our accreditation programmes are achieving the highest operational quality, and are therefore deserving of full public credibility. We must not [p. 290](#) allow our accreditation services to be cheapened by inadequate standards, inadequate procedures, or inadequate administrative practices. Nor, with respect both to TEE and to residential accreditation, should we endanger the larger enterprise through a careless assumption that credibility can be achieved simply through a forceful assertion of quality.



Quality may be asserted, but credibility must be won, by a persuasive demonstration of quality as judged by the wider public. This is just as essential a component of accreditation as is the component of quality. Our accreditation systems must take this component of credibility fully into account.

Another important challenge for ICAA has to do with relationships. ICAA must cultivate effective relations with other international evangelical bodies and movements, encouraging wider familiarity with ICAA's existence and role, demonstrating that ICAA can be a useful, necessary and reliable partner in achieving the larger evangelical agenda. This includes, first and foremost, good relationships with our parent body, the Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Fellowship, as well as with its study unit on theological education, and with WEF itself. We must also build relationships with regional and continental bodies, international evangelical funding agencies, and the Lausanne movement. The challenge here is that ICAA must begin to play its needed role within the larger international evangelical context.

An added benefit of ICAA's increased international visibility would be that effective contact and dialogue could be established between First and Third World structures for evangelical theological education. Such contact and dialogue should also be established with evangelical missions structures, especially those now embracing Third World missions initiatives.

As ICAA recovers and expands its original vision, it should help to sharpen the concern for theological education within the evangelical world. By this I mean that ICAA must become the voice for theological education on the global scene. We should begin ongoing measures to help international evangelicalism better improve its understanding of the strategic importance of theological education. In the arena of competing emphases in international evangelicalism, the significance of theological education is often eclipsed. May we seize the opportunity given to us.

## CALL TO ACTION

Having looked at some of the challenges for ICAA in its second decade, we are now ready for some specific proposals. My call to action will reflect the challenges already outlined.

1. In order to facilitate a sense of community, mutual familiarity, and common purpose, I submit that ICAA should re-establish its newsletter from earlier days, or produce a similar internal publication.
2. I propose that ICAA issue an international directory of associations and agencies involved with evangelical theological education. In addition to being a [p. 291](#) handy, needed reference tool, such a directory would serve to identify ICAA's intended constituency worldwide, and provide information about it. Such a document was issued in 1982, listing 23 bodies, but it was not widely distributed. A greatly expanded edition is now needed. Further updated editions could be issued on a regular basis.
3. ICAA must continue its series of international consultations on a biennial basis. We must make sure that these consultations attract wide representation and address key issues of the larger agenda of evangelical theological education. In this connection, ICAA welcomes the joint workshop between North American seminary leaders and Third World theological educators at Lausanne II in Manila. We must also seek an early opportunity to sponsor a broad consultation involving mission umbrella agencies such as IFMA and EFMA, the Third World Association of Missions Agencies, and comparable bodies from Europe and elsewhere.

4. In order to enlarge its membership, ICAA should actively recruit associate members from around the world. We should also grant our associate members a more efficient voice in the direction of ICAA affairs. For example, the ICAA associate membership should be granted representation on the ICAA executive.
5. We need to accord priority to improving cordial cooperative relationships with our parent body, the World Evangelical Fellowship Theological Commission. To achieve this, we should for example request a permanent representation of ICAA on the executive committee of the Theological Commission.
6. I also suggest that ICAA aggressively bolster its public relations in order to increase its visibility. If we do not attend to this, ICAA may be no more than a well-kept secret.
7. It is of urgent importance that we should republish the ICAA *Manifesto on the Renewal of Evangelical Theological Education* in a handy, attractive format, in order to facilitate wide distribution. We should also actively promote familiarity with its contents among our constituency, and find the means to focus commitment among theological educators to its practical implementation, lest the *Manifesto* remain one more document filed in the archives.

May God grant ICAA's second decade to be even more fruitful than its first.

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## **The Contextualization of Overseas Theological Education**

**Michael Griffiths**

We all know that good exegesis requires the context of a text to be given proper consideration. The text means what it means, because of the context in which it is found. In a similar way, good theological education depends upon how it relates with its own context. Traditional academic theological education has tended to become more and more detached from any context at all apart from its own internally inherited criteria. For us, good theological education must be defined as that which relates to its own context, in the churches whose workers it seeks to train. It can never be an independent, autonomous ideological island. It needs also to relate to its own social, cultural and historical context. We must not allow it to become isolated or distanced from the realities of the churches and the societies it seeks to serve. Just as those teaching individual disciplines have to be forced off centrifugally into their own little world, so also we have to resist the temptation to think and act as though we each reign in little theological kingdoms of our own, independent of, and unrelated to the rest of the real world. The world of the library (and even more the world of the computer terminal) can become a private fantasy world where theological Walter Mittys lead their own secret, and sadly irrelevant lives!

My approach is going to be extremely practical and concrete based upon specific examples from various parts of the world. I worked across most of the Far East for twenty-three years; then back in London and more widely within Europe for nine years; and now more recently in North America. Comments about Africa and Latin America then derive from friends and from what has been written.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF SECURING YOUR THEOLOGICAL BASE

Many countries have existing theological colleges, founded by older denominational missions, usually liberal ecumenical in overall orientation: e.g. the somewhat comical acronym ATSEA (Association of Theological Schools in East Asia). The work of some evangelical missions **P. 293** was vitiated because when their most gifted proteges went to more liberal seminaries they came out less committed to Scripture, and sometimes with no gospel to preach. For example, in **Thailand**: many graduates of the Presbyterian college used it as an academic ladder, so joining the brain drain, so that only a few went into the pastoral ministry in Thai churches. The faculty tended to be drawn from a wide spectrum of traditions. In Thailand, therefore, other missions started their own alternative theological colleges: Bangkok Bible College, the Phayao Bible Training Centre and the Southern Baptist Seminary.

Conservative mission agencies were often torn between their desire to exert some biblical influence in a theological college and the pressure from the North America segment of their constituency: 'How could evangelicals teach there without being co-responsible for the teaching of error?' asked home supporters in North America who had been brought up within a separatist tradition.

In **Singapore**, Dr. Alan Cole had to transfer from the Overseas Missionary Fellowship (OMF) to the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in order to teach at Trinity College, where he was something of a lone evangelical voice for many years. Largely through the faith, prayer and persistence of evangelical Methodists, the complexion of the college was completely turned around. A Chinese Lutheran principal who was an evangelical was appointed, and Alan Cole is back there again with many like-minded colleagues. A number of evangelical colleges have come into being since then, including Singapore Bible College, Far Eastern Bible College and the Discipleship Training Centre.

The history in Peninsular **Malaysia** has been very similar, with gifted lecturers in both streams training under the same evangelical scholars in the West, aided by some scholarships from wise missionary agencies.

The wisest approach seems to be to go both routes—i.e. by not writing 'ichabod' over the older seminary (how ever much it seems to deserve it) and praying for its return to biblical convictions, and then at the same time also starting something specifically evangelical.

In a similar way in the **United Kingdom** evangelical theologians wanted to recapture the university faculties from liberalism, but saw the London Bible College as an alternative expedient, not unlike the Free Faculty established by the **Norwegians** in competition with the older State faculty supported by a State Lutheran Church.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF STUDYING INDIGENOUS PROBLEMS

One of the principal problems of studying in Europe or North America is that students become involved in issues largely irrelevant to their own church context. Thus for evangelicals in Europe and North America major issues for debate have been inspiration and authority of Scripture; the substitutionary atonement; attitudes towards the

Ecumenical movement or controversies concerning Creative Evolution or Flood-theories. These are rarely key issues outside of Europe and North America. Just as the Monroe Doctrine attempted to forbid the importation P. 294 into the Americas of alien political theories or interference with a nation's internal affairs, we need a corresponding doctrine to prevent the export of Western issues into the Two-thirds world.

For example in the **Philippines**, the importation of a North American eschatology—a premillenarian, dispensational package—made it very difficult in the Asia Theological Seminary and the Association of Bible Churches of the Philippines, for non-Americans who had an equally biblical but different eschatology.

However the more serious problem is the reverse of this—viz, that issues crucial to the indigenous churches in Africa and Asia may not be touched at all in western-type theological curricula, so that the graduating student will not be prepared for his/her cultural and church context. In **Africa** for example, witchcraft, ancestor-worship and polygyny are all issues very unlikely to be covered in European and American seminaries. The church history of their own area is much more relevant than European church history.

For this reason, in spite of the stimulus of cross-fertilization of ideas in both ways, a graduate school in Africa is probably to be preferred in training people for their own context than attendance at a school in the West.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING TAUGHT BY THOSE WHO KNOW THE CONTEXT**

**National teachers** who have returned from study overseas may not know theological terms in their own language! Often such teachers try to reproduce the kind of system they knew overseas because that is the one they have been familiar with. We must think carefully to ensure that our theological education is in context!

**Expatriates** who have not served their apprenticeship within the indigenous churches may be ignorant of the context for which they are training workers. It is folly to think we can teach because we have theological qualifications in the West, without first studying the target audience in cultural context.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF TRAINING THOSE WHO WILL REALLY BE LEADERS**

There is sometimes a danger of training young people who carry little or no status in their own communities. At one time in **Thailand**, missionaries with a Bible school background in North America, encouraged teenagers to come for training—some even sent their bad boys to the college to reform them! We ought not to think they will be recognized as spiritual leaders when they have no voice in a society ruled by elders twenty to thirty years older than themselves! In some cultures the young and unmarried carry little credibility as pastors.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF TRAINING AT A LEVEL APPROPRIATE TO CONTEXT**

(a) Expecting non-graduates to minister to graduate technocrats.

For example in **Indonesia**: generally, those entering theological colleges are mainly 18–19 year olds who have failed to gain university entrance. In **Ghana** semi-literate high-school dropouts go to seminary for education. This may put the church in peril of schism,

for born again graduates converted through [p. 295](#) Scripture Union in high schools or Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship (IVCF) in universities, gifted professionals, academics and technocrats are dismissive of non-graduate ministers who seem to be timeservers rather than truly spiritual leaders.

In **Singapore**, of the first thousand graduates from IVCF, only three were in full-time Christian work, so Bobby Sng, who became the general secretary of Fellowship of Evangelical Students (FES) Singapore, appealed for a prayer target of ten graduates per year to train for full-time ministry. This wise step is transforming the situation. But this is a universal problem in developing countries. It can be extreme as in **Sarawak**. In the capital city of Kuching, the church includes many gifted graduates—a cabinet minister, medical consultants, the managing director of the dock company—but ministers with primary education and Bible college training. No matter how good and godly those ministers are, they are not equipped to give relevant help to the new university educated elite. We need to train graduates willing to make the financial sacrifice in committing their lives to serve either full-time or part-time in the churches.

(b) Theological education which is at too high a level for the context (the reverse problem!).

When I was principal of London Bible College we were constantly embarrassed by applications from Africans with denominational college diplomas, who wanted to upgrade to an honours degree, often involving the great expense of moving a whole family, or separation from family for years. When the question was asked why they could not study at excellent seminaries in Africa, they would explain that they could not, because they were not graduates! Here again is the mistake of exporting from the West the concept of a 'graduate' school, when the need of a non-graduate upgrading school has not first been met. Clearly we need both if we are going to meet the needs of the contemporary context.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF TRAINING PEOPLE FOR THE TASK TO BE PERFORMED**

In an earlier published lecture (*Vox Evangelica* 1990) I wrote about the importance of a goal-oriented approach to theological education. That is, determining the product (what a successful graduate would have learned to do) before designing the course. In this way we may discover the need for training people at a whole variety of different levels, depending upon the skills appropriate to the task.

In **India**, TAFTEE has been using theological education by extension (TEE) at the following levels of extension training, all of which keep in mind the variety of differing levels of church organisation:

- i. the city minister with a congregation full of university graduates all capable of studying by extension;
- ii. the circuit minister with ten congregations, to all of whom he cannot possibly minister properly, and where local elders and deacons need to be trained to teach using extension methods;
- iii. tribal church elders who may be [p. 296](#) only semi-literate, but who must be able to teach their own congregations none the less.

At these different levels, courses and curricula have to be carefully designed to meet the needs and provide the skills appropriate to a specific church context.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF NOT OVERLOADING THE CURRICULUM, ESPECIALLY WHERE FOREIGN LANGUAGES MUST BE LEARNED**

One invariable rule of theological education seems to be that new courses can always be added to meet contemporary demands, but nothing can ever be subtracted from the curriculum. This explains why in my generation most Anglican ministers were deemed to need only two years of training (if they were graduates), whereas now they seem to need three! Mainland Europe demands much longer courses.

Curriculum overload is well illustrated in **Indonesia**, where in at least one college, students already speaking both their own language and Indonesian, must also learn Greek, Hebrew, English and German (Dutch) in a five year theological course.

It is not easy to be radical about what to omit or what to leave in, in courses. Where indigenous literature is sparse, it is imperative that English or some other foreign language be mastered in order to have access to theological literature.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF USING LIMITED SCHOLARSHIP FUNDS WISELY**

In view of the limited financial resources available, some criteria have to be established to determine who will really benefit from overseas study. Some want to study abroad because to have done so is a useful status symbol. But it is not always satisfactory to separate a man from his wife for long periods of time, and the cost of bringing a wife and children to the West adds greatly to the overall expenses. The trauma of culture shock, moving children into a new educational system (and perhaps a different language) and back again a few years later, is considerable.

It is not always good to send people to the West for study. We in the West benefit greatly by having our own vision enlarged by international students, and they benefit from the stimulus of meeting churches that do things differently (though not necessarily better) from their own. This suggests that the following principles of selection may prove useful:

- i. only when individuals have got as far as they can in their own educational system;
- ii. only when no possibilities exist in their own cultural context;
- iii. only when it is essential to the needs of the churches or for providing theological educators. We need to be alert for people who want the prestige of having studies overseas, but are not really the most gifted people in their own context;
- iv. principally for those who will teach their fellow countrymen and can make the transfer to their own context.

## **ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES TO OVERSEAS STUDY**

- (1) Free standing, one year Masters programmes. **P. 297** The ATS in the **Philippines** was funded by a missionary agency (OMF) to bring in world class lecturers to reinforce teachers knowing the local context. So Carl Henry, Howard Marshall and Leon Morris each taught for a few weeks, providing a course the quality of which would have been hard to match anywhere in the world. It was a far cheaper alternative to sending Filipinos to study overseas.
- (2) Some Ph.D programmes require a minimum of overseas residence, provided good library facilities and a qualified supervisor in the appropriate discipline are available close at hand. This has the advantage of being more economical, avoiding

unsettling a whole family and leaving the doctoral candidate able to continue lecturing in his/her own cultural context.

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF AVAILABILITY OF THEOLOGICAL BOOKS IN TARGET LANGUAGE**

It has already been noted that in **Indonesia** several languages have to be learned by theological students. If we were to look at a typical minister's 'library' in **Sarawak** we would find in addition to vernacular Bible and hymnbook, one or two Indonesian Christian books and some notebooks of Bible college lectures. That is the minister's total written 'resource'. This is not likely to change unless there is time for him to learn to read English at some stage.

### **THE IMPORTANCE TO THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH OF COMMUNITY CONSCIOUSNESS**

There are various theories of collegiate life, from the intense ashram style where all live in close proximity, to the commuter style where lecturers usually appear only for lectures. The sense of belonging to a community—a fellowship of alumni—can be significant for church unity in later years. In **London** most black Christians segregate themselves in black congregations because they feel unwelcome in white churches and feel more at home with their own style of worship. In this context a mixed college allows black and white students to build lifelong friendships that will help to avoid perpetuating a ghetto segregation indefinitely. This aspect of collegiate theological education is extremely important.

### **CONCLUSION**

As good exegetes relate texts to contexts, so good educators relate theological education to its context. No theological institution can safely behave in isolation. We will not serve the Lord or our churches fruitfully unless we teach theology in context.

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# **Toward a Theology of Theological Education**

**Dr. Dieumeme Noelliste**

### **INTRODUCTON**

Contemporary theological education faces many challenges. One thinks for example of theology's struggle to survive in a pluralistic environment and science-venerating mentality which together deny it the right to objective truth claims, normative criteria and evaluative judgments. The recent call for a balance between globality and contextuality is another challenge. After years of stressing contextualization, it begins to dawn on us that unless contextualization incorporates a global vision it runs the risk of degenerating into an unhealthy contextualism. Now theological education is asked to educate persons who are able to think globally and act contextually. This is an admission that while the categories with which theological education deals must be concretized and made meaningful in context, their relevance, import and applicability are universal and timeless, which means that the categories themselves are context transcending. To all of this must be added the growing dissatisfaction being voiced in many circles regarding much of what theological education does. The discipline is being assailed for a plethora of faults: lack of purpose, the disparateness and inadequacy of its content, disconnectedness with the community of faith, insensitive policies, ineffective teaching methods, and many others.

These challenges are serious and must not be brushed aside as undeserving of attention. To adopt this attitude is to deny theological education the possibilities of renewal that these criticisms may well contain. While self-flagellation must be avoided, we would do ourselves and our calling a disservice if we failed to seize the opportunity provided by these critiques to rethink, assess, and scrutinize our approach to theological education.

Having said this, however, I would like to put forth the suggestion that there is a more fundamental and far reaching challenge than the ones already mentioned that theological education needs to address urgently if it is not to disintegrate and disappear as a discipline. I refer to the challenge of identity. In many conceptions [p. 299](#) of theological education, the adjective 'theological' is emptied of its content. In these formulations the accent falls on professional training, the acquisition of skills, sociological understanding, praxiological involvement and denominational advancement. The theological dimension is often minimized and misconstrued. This is evident in the fact that many of those who seek to reform theological education by giving it a theological grounding take as their point of departure and guiding principle a particular doctrine, a given understanding of the mission of the church, a certain conception of the ministry, and the nature of theology itself.

Edward Farley, for example, displays great insight when he propounds the thesis that for a reform to address the 'deepest problems' of theological education, it 'must find a way to recover theologia'.<sup>1</sup> But when Farley explains what theologia consists of we discover that what he has recovered is really anthropologia, not theologia. According to him, theology is the explication of the pre-reflective dispositions of faith. It finds its starting point in the contemporary experience of and devotes itself to explicating this faith experience.<sup>2</sup> Concerned with theology's lack of scientific standing and the prevailing scepticism regarding Christian faith. Karl Rahner, for his part, proposes that the concept of theology best suited to meet this challenge and solve the problems faced by theological education is an apologetic one. Theology is not the explication of pre-reflective faith, but the exposition and demonstration of the 'existential and anthropological credibility of God

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Farley, *The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education*. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), p. 156.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 156-159.



p. Revelation'.<sup>3</sup> Rahner urges that the whole curriculum be organized along this apologetic line. We too will argue for the recognition of the apologetic dimension of theology, but we doubt whether theology can be reduced to that element. In the proposals put forth by people like Farley, Rahner and others we note a dimming of the theological light. The result of this absence of clear theological focus has been a growing erosion of the distinctiveness of theological education.

The claim of this paper is that essential to the renewal of theological education is the retrieval and the maintaining of its uniqueness and distinctiveness. This, in turn necessitates the reclaiming of its theological character. But to be theological, theological education must be theocentric, that is to say it must take as its focus the knowledge of God, the people of God and the purpose of God. Theologically understood, then, theological education consists in the formation of the people of God in the truth and wisdom of God for the purpose of personal renewal and meaningful participation in the fulfilment of the purpose of God in the church and the world. This overall thesis will be analyzed under three p. 300 broad headings. But before we do so two caveats are in order.

First this thesis is not a totally novel one. H. Richard Niebuhr propounded it forcefully a generation ago in his *The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry*.<sup>4</sup> The Roman Catholic Bishops in the United States alluded to it in their 1982 document entitled *The Programme of Priestly Formation*. And most recently, Max Stackhouse refers to it in his *Apologia*. These works provide helpful insights in the formation of the guiding thought of this paper, but they contain major ideas with which our thesis disagrees.

For example in our view Niebuhr's formulation urges too sharp a dichotomy between God, Christ and the Bible. While one must always guard against the dangers of an undifferentiated Trinity and of bibliolatry, one must not lose sight of the fact that Jesus Christ is God's supreme revelation and that the Holy Scriptures are a witness to God's revelation. Likewise, while we concur with the Bishop's decision to provide a revelational grounding to theology and theological education, we find such a grounding vitiated by their heavy accent on ecclesiastical tradition and teaching.<sup>5</sup> Admittedly, Stackhouse is my closest kin, but his main concern in *Apologia* is apologetic not theological. In addition, the theocentrism advocated here is somewhat broader than the one articulated in his *Apologia*.<sup>6</sup>

Secondly, no claim of finality is made for the construal presented here. The scarcity of the biblical data on the subject and the plurality of purposes which often inform conceptions of theological education militate against the viability of such a claim. There is some truth to James Gustafson's suggestion that perhaps one should not talk about 'the theology of theological education ... but (about) theologies and their formative influences on theological education'.<sup>7</sup> This admission notwithstanding, we still believe that it is possible and worthwhile to identify in the biblical text inferences that constitute a basic

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<sup>3</sup> Rahner's view is summarized by Francis D. Fiorenza in 'Thinking Theologically About Theological Education' *Theological Education Volume 24*, Supplement II (1988): 99.

<sup>4</sup> H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry: Reflections on the Aims of Theological Education*. (New York: Harper and Rowe 1956).

<sup>5</sup> *The Program of Priestly Formation*, (Washington, D.C.: National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1982).

<sup>6</sup> Max Stackhouse, *Apologia: Contextualization, Globalization and Mission in Theological Education*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988).

<sup>7</sup> James Gustafson, 'Reflections on the Literature on Theological Education Published Between 1955 and 1985' *Theological Education* vol. 24, Supplement II (1988): 43.

framework within which as precise an understanding of the theological educational task as possible can be constructed.

## I. THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION AS EDUCATION IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

Theological education is essentially education in divine revelation as attested most clearly in the Scriptures, and in Jesus Christ, and interpreted by the church throughout history.

Genuine theological education is at the core an exercise in transcendental knowledge. If the root *theos* in theological means anything at all, p. 301 it must set theological education apart as an endeavour which has its source and ground in God and which has as its major concern communication about God. Sidney Rooy is correct when he affirms that to educate theologically is to transmit to 'another person what we know of God and his relationship to the world'.<sup>8</sup> The knowledge of God, then, is the primary content of theological education.

Despite the claim of western immanentist mentality what can be known of God is beyond our grasp. This does not mean that we embrace the claim of agnostic transcendentalism with its denial of the knowability of ultimate reality. Our contention is that data about ultimate reality is accessible. But it is accessible only through divine self giving and gracious disclosure. Even when he was in the presence of Yahweh, Moses could not intuit or infer that he was speaking to the self existing and eternally present I AM. That information had to be given ([Ex. 3:14](#)). Paul likewise was under no illusion regarding the fact that what he was communicating to his churches was knowledge hitherto unknown ([Eph. 1:9](#)), not the product of his thinking or his insight into the socio-historical context. What he was imparting was a mystery previously hidden but now freshly revealed ([Eph. 3:2-11](#)).

Theological education then is education in a word from beyond. 'We think theologically only because God has given us something to think (about) by coming to us first'.<sup>9</sup> Hence, what we endeavour to impart is not first and foremost 'our word about God but God's Word to US'.<sup>10</sup>

In the perspective of biblical faith the communication of the transcendent Word is not an option but an imperative. To the new generation of Israelites who were not present when the Torah was given at Sinai, Moses took time to explain it ([Deut. 1:5](#)), commanding them to treasure it in their hearts ([6:6](#)) and urging them to pass it on to the successive generations by any means possible ([6:7](#)). Paul took a similar stance with respect to the gospel. For him, the gospel which has been received is to be transmitted ([1 Cor. 15:3](#)), and kept unadulterated: 'Even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you let him be eternally condemned' ([Gal. 1:6](#)). To the young pastor Timothy whom he has been training, he gave the charge: 'What you heard from me, keep as a sacred pattern of sound teaching ... Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you' ([2 Tim. 1:13, 14](#)). And he is clear that transmission to posterity is the purpose of this safekeeping. 'The things you have heard ... entrust to reliable men who will be qualified to teach others' ([2 Tim. 2:2](#)).

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<sup>8</sup> Sidney Rooy, 'Modelos Histoicos de la Educacion Teologica' in C. Rene Padilla ed., *Nuevas Alternativas de Educacion Teologica* (Buenos Aires: Nueva Creacion, 1986), p. 43.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Gillespie, 'What is "theological" about Theological Education?' *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* vol. 14:1 (1993): 63.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

But notwithstanding the givenness of the revealed Word and the injunction to pass it on in its purest form, p. 302 that Word is apprehended only partially. The Word is greater than us and can never be grasped totally by us. 'Now we see but a poor reflection ... and [we] know only in part' ([1 Cor. 13:12](#)). Of necessity, then, what we impart can be only an approximation of the real thing.

This condition of epistemological inadequacy, however, does not render superfluous the effort for the most precise apprehension of revealed truths; nor does it cancel out the need to make a public case for the reasonableness of such truths. For even in our condition of insufficiency we are still obligated to strive for the 'correct handling of the word of truth' ([2 Tim. 2:13](#)), and 'to be ready to make a defence for the hope that we have' to everyone who queries ([1 Pet. 3:15](#)). Max Stackhouse is correct when he contends that a basic assumption of theological education is the possibility 'to speak with some measure of reasonable confidence about what is ultimately mysterious, that in some degree it is possible to point to, if not fully grasp the logos of God'.<sup>11</sup>

What the partiality of our knowledge demands is not the relinquishing of the use of reason but the adoption of an attitude of humility in the conduct of our task. Humility is displayed in at least two ways. First, it is shown in the acknowledgement of our insufficiency and our utter dependence on the Spirit of truth for understanding and insight into the truth of God. 'No one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. For he alone is able to probe the "deep things of God" ' ([2 Cor. 2:10, 11](#)). And secondly, there must be the willingness to engage in dialogical discourse as we strive to apprehend the knowledge of God. In his philosophical work, Paul Ricoeur sets forth the thesis that philosophic truth must be seen as the developing insight of diverse interacting perspectives. In this respect, objectivity is achieved only as an ideal of total communication in a context of dialogical interaction. The truth that is so achieved is never complete because the intersubjective communication itself is never complete due to the continuing disparity which plagues it.

Ricoeur's insight is relevant for theological truth as well. As a human activity, theology cannot claim finality and absoluteness for its formulations. Every theological system is but effort to approximate the truth. The theological task therefore requires critical conversation with other minds, perspectives and traditions—both past and present.

This emphasis on the knowledge of God as the key concern of theological education must not be construed as an attempt to do away with the need for practical training. The knowledge of God and the practice of ministry are not antithetical. What the emphasis implies is that theological knowledge must guide and shape ministerial practice rather than the practice determining the theology. In our perspective the practice of ministry whether it is preaching, teaching, counselling or administration 'is united and informed by the theological understanding of who God is, who we are in relation to [him]. and what God p. 303 wills to do for us and have us do in grateful obedience'.<sup>12</sup>

## II. THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION AS EDUCATION OF THE WHOLE PEOPLE OF GOD

If the ground of theological education is the knowledge of God as derived most clearly from the Scriptures and the Incarnate logos and interpreted by the church throughout history, its focus is the people of God. Biblically speaking, instruction in the knowledge of

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<sup>11</sup> Max Stackhouse, *op. cit.*, p. 211.

<sup>12</sup> Gillespie, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

God is an activity which involves the entire *laos* of God. Following its choice as God's 'treasured possession', Israel was given the privilege of witnessing the most impressive disclosure of God's character and will up to that point ([Ex. 19:5](#); [20:8-21](#)), And like the Sinai revelation, the rehearsing of the Torah, forty years later, had as its objective, the education of all the people in the knowledge and will of God. Deuteronomy, which is really a piece of theological instruction, purports to be an exposé of the commandments of God to all Israel including future generations ([Deut. 1:1, 3](#); [27:1](#); [31:1, 3](#)). The reading and interpretation of the law was to be a regular and perpetual exercise ([31:9](#)). Brevard Childs sees the significance of this in the importance attached to the proper understanding of the Torah by the people.<sup>13</sup>

The instruction of the people of God in the truths of God is a practice that the New Testament also endorses. After selecting the Twelve, Jesus spent much of his time teaching them. As the Incarnate logos, his instruction focused both on knowledge about God and on the knowledge of God himself. Hence, to his disciples he declared: 'Everything that I learnt from the Father I made known to you' ([John 15:5](#)). And to the Father he said: 'I have revealed you to those whom you gave me ...' ([John 17:6, 25](#)). Paul's expectation of doctrinal stability and spiritual maturity in the church of Ephesus assumes the education of the entire body of believers in the knowledge of God. Indeed, in the same passage where this hope is expressed, he calls for the training of all believers for the discharge of the ministerial task ([Eph. 4:11](#)). His own contribution to this process consisted in explaining to everyone God's redemptive mystery as it has been revealed to him ([Eph. 4:11](#)). His own contribution to this process consisted in explaining to everyone God's redemptive mystery as it has been revealed to him ([Eph. 3:9](#)). And as Moses of old, he insisted that the explanation of that message must be a perpetual task ([2 Tim. 2:2](#)).

Now this emphasis on the people as the target of theological education does not make redundant the singling out of a smaller group within the wider body of the *laos* for special attention. Biblical evidence for such a practice is not lacking. One thinks at once of Moses' band of assistant judges ([Ex. 18:15-26](#)), Elisha's school for the prophets ([2 Kings 6:1-7](#)), and Jesus' school of disciples.

What must never be lost sight of, however, is that such a special focus is meaningful only within the wider [p. 304](#) perspective of the theological education of the entire people of God. Its primary *raison d'être* is not professional practice, but the formation of the *laos* in the knowledge of God. Basing himself on Pauline thought, Orlando Costas notes three specific ways in which specialized theological education contributes to this process. His characterizations will guide our reflection here.<sup>14</sup> First is the preparation of 'teachers of ministers', known in Pauline parlance as 'doctors' and in ours as 'scholars' of the faith. Their role is to provide intellectual tools and resources necessary for Christian learning and teaching.<sup>15</sup> Their work is vital for the transmission of the faith to later generations.

The second contribution has to do with the preparation of the ministers of the Word. Paul calls them pastors/ teachers and assigns to them a variety of roles. Chief among these roles is the nurturing of the people of God in the faith. For Paul pastors are first of all 'teachers and theologians'<sup>16</sup> not practitioners of ministry. Again, this does not mean that ministerial practice is not part of their calling. Both Paul and Jesus take pastoral care and

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<sup>13</sup> Brevard Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press. 1979).

<sup>14</sup> Orlando Costas 'Educacion Teologica Y Mission in Padilla', *op. cit.*, pp. 13, 14.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

proper church administration seriously, ([Jn. 21:15–18](#); [Acts 20:25–31](#); [1 Tim. 5:1ff](#); [Mt. 18:15–19](#); [1 Cor. 7; 11:2–33; 14:26–36](#)). The point being made here is that not only must ministerial practice be informed by theological understanding, it must also be given the proper ordering so that it neither eclipses the teaching of faith nor is taken as a substitute for it.<sup>17</sup>

The third input concerns the development of a body of lay theologians whose rôle is to assist in the educational ministry of the church. Aided by the work of the scholars of the faith and formed through the teaching ministry of the ministers of the faith, lay persons are equipped to teach the basic elements of the faith to others, and thus contribute to the spread of the knowledge of God among his people.

Seen from this perspective theological education, even in its specialized form, is not elitist. It is education which provides knowledge not merely to be applied but first and foremost to be passed on—to be transmitted.

### III. THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION AS EDUCATION FOR RENEWAL AND PARTICIPATION IN THE PURPOSE OF GOD

Like everything genuinely Christian, the acquisition of the knowledge of God by the people of God has as its ultimate purpose the glory and praise of God ([Col. 3:17](#)). This overarching objective finds expression in two penultimate goals: the experience of personal renewal and involvement in the fulfilment of God's purpose.

Personal renewal is the primary objective of training in the knowledge of God. Israel was urged to learn and keep the law 'so that it may go well with you' ([Deut. 4:40](#)). This wellness was later defined as [p. 305](#) the enjoyment of peace, security, prosperity and longevity in the land the people were on the verge of occupying. Ezra's reading and fresh exposition of the law to the returning exiles resulted in the confession of sins, the revival of worship, the enactment of a self-imposed covenant, and a pledge to order life henceforth according to the will of God ([Neh. 8–10](#)).

The cause and effect relationship between theological knowledge and existential renewal is no less clear in the New Testament. For Jesus, to know the truth is to be freed by it ([Jn. 8:32](#)). For Paul, exposure to the teaching of Christ aims at nothing less than the transformation of the self toward full Christianity ([Eph. 4:13–24](#)). He is clear that the goal of Christian ministry and teaching in particular is perfection in Christ ([Col. 1:28](#)). To be sure, just as the knowledge of God, total renewal is an ideal achievable only in the eschaton ([Phil. 3:12](#); [2 John 3:1ff](#); [Jer. 31:33ff](#)). Even so, the process leading to it is set in motion here and now through contact with the divine Word ([2 Cor. 3:18](#); [5:17](#)).

In this perspective, then, persons are theologically educated when their lives become 'congruent with that which is made known of God and that from which is manifest by God through the Christ, the Revealer of God'.<sup>18</sup> This process involves more than cognitive impartation of the truth. Critical to it is the application of the Word of God to the hearts and minds of the people of God so that they become more and more like the Son of God.

If the immediate aim of theological knowledge is existential transformation its intermediate objective is altruistic service. Theological education is education for others. Here, the knowledge received and the renewal experienced equip and motivate for informed and meaningful participation in the work of God in both church and world.

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<sup>17</sup> Robert Meye 'Theological Education As Character Formation' *Theological Education* 24 Spring Supplement, (1988): 101.

<sup>18</sup> Costas, *opus. cit.*, p. 19.

This participation is multifaceted and wideranging. It includes the pastoral ministry with its preoccupation with the teaching and proclamation of the word, ecclesiastical administration and pastoral care. It covers the ministry of the laity, which having been formed through the pastoral ministry, is enabled to exercise more meaningfully its spiritually assigned gifts for the building up of the church ([Eph. 4:11](#)). It embraces the work of evangelization and social action through which the church reaches out to the world with the knowledge of God so that persons may be transformed by it and become participants in the work of God. It encompasses the prophetic ministry of the church which, through the witness of its individual members and its corporate stance, seeks to steer society in the direction of the will of God for the world. In each of its facets, this involvement necessitates an adequate understanding of the context in which it takes place. Hence the necessity to acquaint students with the skill of social analysis.

Both in its immediate and intermediate objective, theological education redounds to the glory of God by facilitating the fulfillment of its purpose in individual persons, the church and society. Although I have [p. 306](#) not used the term 'Kingdom' so far, in essence, theological education is education in the service of the Kingdom of God. Its objective is to teach the knowledge of God in a 'given context to form and inform witnesses of the Kingdom and make them [thereby] the instruments of its transforming power'.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has sought to suggest in very broad terms the trajectory that a theology of theological education might take. The contention throughout has been that such a theology would need to ground theological education in God himself. It would do so by making the knowledge of God its primary target and the fulfillment of the purpose of God in the individual, the church and the world its key objective. It is further suggested that this approach would restore the uniqueness or distinctiveness of theological education, thereby preserving its identity, which we claim is essential to its renewal.

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# Manifesto on the Renewal of Evangelical Theological Education

## PREFACE

*The origins of the MANIFESTO go back to meetings of the International Council of Accrediting Agencies for evangelical theological education (ICAA), held at Chongoni, Malawi, in 1981. As a new body linking programmes of evangelical theological education worldwide, ICAA determined to draw up for public consideration a 'Manifesto on the Renewal of Evangelical Theological Education'. After wide consultation, and several revisions, the following statement was unanimously adopted by ICAA in 1983, and was*

*subsequently published in Theological Education Today 16:2 (April–June 1984) 1–6, and in the Evangelical Review of Theology 8:1 (April 1984) 136-43. This second edition (1990) incorporates minor changes in wording and presentation, together with a revised preface.*

*ICAA wanted a very specific kind of statement for its MANIFESTO. It wanted a statement that would clearly articulate the broad consensus on renewal which it believed already exists—often unrecognized—among evangelical theological educators worldwide. And, realizing how far short evangelical theological education often falls with respect to such renewal, ICAA also wanted a document which could provide encouragement, guidance and critical challenge in pursuing renewal.*

*In using the MANIFESTO one must therefore carefully recognize both what it is trying to do, and what it is not trying to do. The MANIFESTO is trying to define those aspects of the renewal agenda for evangelical theological education which appear already to have gained very broad agreement, but which nevertheless have not yet been attained in large measure in practice. The MANIFESTO is not trying to present a comprehensive model for quality theological education. Rather it is attempting to identify certain specific gaps in our achievement of such a model. Nor is the MANIFESTO seeking to designate every form of renewal which ought to be pursued. Rather it is attempting to identify those particular aspects on which consensus now seems to exist. The expectation is that, once we recognize how much agreement already exists among us in what we have yet to achieve, we will be able to work together for its implementation in a better climate of understanding, [p. 308](#) with more attentiveness, with a greater precision of focus, and with an increased motivation to explore additional points of agreement. The MANIFESTO is intended therefore not as a final step, but as a specific, practical first step in an ongoing cooperative venture in renewal.*

*Through republication of this MANIFESTO in a second edition, ICAA and its constituent movements seek once again to declare publicly their commitment to the renewal of evangelical theological education, and to secure for themselves and for others a continuing sense of common direction in pursuing such renewal.*

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## INTRODUCTION

We who serve within evangelical theological education throughout the world today, and who find ourselves now linked together in growing international cooperation, wish to give united voice to our longing and prayer for the renewal of evangelical theological education today—for a renewal in form and in substance, a renewal in vision and in power, a renewal in commitment and in direction.

We rightly seek such renewal in light of the pivotal significance of theological education in biblical perspective. Insofar as theological education concerns the formation of leadership for the church of Christ in its mission, to that extent theological education assumes a critically strategic biblical importance. Scripture mandates the church, it mandates leadership service within that church, and it thereby as well mandates a vital concern with the formation of such leadership. For this reason the quest for effective renewal in evangelical theological education in our day is a biblically generated quest.

We rightly seek such renewal in light also of the crisis of leadership facing the church of Christ around the world. The times are weighted with unusual challenge and unusual opportunity, demanding of the church exceptional preparation of its leadership. In many areas the church is faced with surging growth, of such proportions that it cannot always cope. In many areas the church is also faced with open hostility without and hidden subversion within, distracting and diverting it from its calling. Everywhere the opportunities and challenges take on new and confusing forms. The times demand an

urgent quest for the renewal of theological educational patterns, that the church in its leadership may be equipped to fulfil its high calling under God.

We rightly seek such renewal also in light of the condition of evangelical theological education in our day. We recognize among ourselves exciting examples of that renewed vitality in theological education which we desire to see everywhere put to the service of our Lord. Things are being done right within traditional patterns and within nontraditional patterns, which need attention, encouragement and emulation. We also recognize that there are examples in our midst, usually all too close at hand, where things are not being done right. We confess this with shame. Traditional forms are being maintained only because they are traditional, and radical forms pursued [p. 309](#) only because they are radical—and the formation of effective leadership for the church of Christ is seriously hindered. We heartily welcome the wise critiques of evangelical theological education which have arisen in recent times, which have forced us to think much more carefully both about our purposes in theological education and about the best means for achieving those purposes. We believe there that there is now emerging around the world a wide consensus among evangelical theological educators that a challenge to renewal is upon us, and upon us from our Lord. We believe that there is also emerging a broad agreement on the central patterns that such a renewal should take. New times are upon us, and new opportunities. We wish to pursue these opportunities, and seize them, in obedience to the Lord.

Therefore, in order to provide encouragement, guidance and critical challenge to ourselves and all others who may look to us for direction, we wish to assert and endorse the following agenda for the renewal of evangelical theological education worldwide today, and to pledge ourselves to its practical engineering implementation. We do not presume that we are here setting forth either a full or a final word on these matters. But we do make this expression after extended prayerful reflection, and we wish to offer the hand of warm friendship to all those who may likewise feel led to endorse these proposals, and to express to them an invitation to practical collaboration in this quest, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord, the evangelization of the world, and the establishment and edification of the church.

Therefore, we now unitedly affirm that, to fulfil its God-given mandate, evangelical theological education today worldwide must vigorously seek to introduce and reinforce ...

## **1 Contextualisation**

Our programmes of theological education must be designed with deliberate reference to the contexts in which they serve. We are at fault that our curricula so often appear either to have been imported whole from abroad, or to have been handed down unaltered from the past. The selection of courses for the curriculum, and the content of every course in the curriculum, must be specifically suited to the context of service. To become familiar with the context in which the biblical message is to be lived and preached is no less vital to a well-rounded programme than to become familiar with the content of that biblical message. Indeed, not only in what is taught, but also in structure and operation our theological programmes must demonstrate that they exist in and for their specific context, in governance and administration, in staffing and finance, in teaching styles and class assignments, in library resources and student services. This we must accomplish by God's grace.

## **2 Churchward orientation**



Our programmes of theological education must orient themselves pervasively in terms of the Christian community being served. We are at fault when our programmes operate merely in terms of some traditional [p. 310](#) or personal notion of theological education. At every level of design and operation our programmes must be visibly determined by a close attentiveness to the needs and expectations of the Christian community we serve. To this end we must establish multiple modes of ongoing interaction between programme and church, both at official and at grassroots levels, and regularly adjust and develop the programme in the light of these contacts. Our theological programmes must become manifestly of the church, through the church and for the church. This we must accomplish by God's grace.

### **3 Strategic flexibility**

Our programmes of theological education must nurture a much greater strategic flexibility in carrying out their task. Too long we have been content to serve the formation of only one type of leader for the church, at only one level of need, by only one educational approach. If we are to serve fully the leadership needs of the body of Christ, then our programmes singly and in combination must begin to demonstrate much greater flexibility in at least three respects. Firstly, we must attune ourselves to the full range of leadership *roles* required, and not attend only to the most familiar or most basic. To provide for pastoral formation, for example, is not enough. We must also respond creatively, in cooperation with other programmes, to the church's leadership needs in other areas such as Christian education, youth work, evangelism, journalism and communications, TEE, counselling, denominational and parachurch administration, seminary and Bible school staffing community development, and social outreach. Secondly, our programmes must learn to take account of all academic *levels* of need, and not become frozen in serving only one level. We must not presume that the highest level of training is the only strategic need. We must deliberately participate in multi-level approaches to leadership training, worked out on the basis of an assessment of the church's leadership needs as a whole at all levels. Thirdly, we must embrace a greater flexibility in the educational *modes* by which we touch the various levels of leadership need, and not limit our approach to a single traditional or radical pattern. We must learn to employ, in practical combination with others, both residential and extension systems, both formal and nonformal styles, as well, for example, as short-term courses, workshops, evening classes, holiday institutes, in-service training, travelling seminars, refresher courses, and continuing education programmes. Only by such flexibility in our programmes can the church's full spectrum of leadership needs begin to be met, and we ourselves become true to our full mandate. This we must accomplish, by God's grace.

### **4 Theological grounding**

Evangelical theological education as a whole today needs earnestly to pursue and recover a thoroughgoing theology of theological education. We are at fault that we so readily allow our bearings to be set for us by the latest enthusiasms, or [p. 311](#) by secular rationales, or by sterile traditions. It is not sufficient that we attend to the context of our service and to the Christian community being served. We must come to perceive our task, and even these basic points of reference, within the larger setting of God's total truth and God's total plan. Such a shared theological perception of our calling is largely absent from our midst. We must together take immediate and urgent steps to seek, elaborate and possess a biblically informed theological basis for our calling in theological education and allow every aspect of our service to become rooted and nurtured in this soil. This we must accomplish by God's grace.

## **5 Continuous assessment**

Our programmes of theological education must be dominated by a rigorous practice of identifying objectives, assessing outcomes, and adjusting programmes accordingly. We have been too easily satisfied with educational intentions that are unexpressed, or only superficially examined, or too general to be of directional use. We have been too ready to assume our achievements on the basis of vague impressions, chance reports, or crisis-generated inquiries. We have been culpably content with evaluating our programmes only irregularly, or haphazardly, or under stress. We hear our Lord's stern word about the faithful stewardship he requires in his servants, but we have largely failed to apply this to the way we conduct our programme of theological education. Firstly, we must let our programmes become governed by objectives carefully chosen, clearly defined, and continuously reviewed. Secondly, we must accept it as a duty, and not merely as beneficial, to discern and evaluate the results of our programmes, so that there may be a valid basis for judging the degree to which intentions are being achieved. This requires that we institute means for reviewing the actual performance of our graduates in relation to our stated objectives. Thirdly, we must build into the normal operational patterns of our programmes a regular review and continual modification and adjustment of all aspects of governance, staffing, educational programme, facilities, and student services, so that actual achievements might be brought to approximate more and more closely our stated objectives. Only by such provisions for continuous assessment can we be true to the rigorous demands of biblical stewardship. This we must accomplish, by God's grace.

## **6 Community life**

Our programmes of theological education must demonstrate the Christian pattern of community. We are at fault that our programmes so often seem little more than Christian academic factories, efficiently producing graduates. It is biblically incumbent on us that our programmes function as deliberately nurtured Christian educational communities, sustained by those modes of community that are biblically commended and culturally appropriate. To this end, it is not merely decorative but biblically essential that the whole educational body—staff and students—not only learns together, but plays and eats and **p. 312** cares and worships together. This we must accomplish by God's grace.

## **7 Integrated programme**

Our programmes of theological education must combine spiritual and practical with academic objectives in one holistic integrated educational approach. We are at fault that we so often focus educational requirements narrowly on cognitive attainments, while we hope for student growth in other dimensions but leave it largely to chance. Our programmes must be designed to attend to the growth and equipping of the whole man of God. This means, firstly, that our educational programmes must deliberately foster the spiritual formation of the student. We must look for a spiritual development centred in total commitment to the lordship of Christ, progressively worked outward by the power of the Spirit and into every department of life. We must devote as much time and care and structural designing to facilitate this type of growth as we readily and rightly provide for cognitive growth. This also means, secondly, that our programmes must foster achievement in the practical skills of Christian leadership. We must no longer introduce these skills only within a classroom setting. We must incorporate into our educational arrangements and requirements a guided practical field experience in precisely those skills which the student will need to employ in service after completion of the programme. We must provide adequately supervised and monitored opportunities for practical

vocational field experience. We must blend practical and spiritual with academic in our educational programmes, and thus equip the whole man of God for service. This we must accomplish, by God's grace.

### **8 Servant moulding**

Through our programmes of theological education students must be moulded to styles of leadership appropriate to their intended biblical role within the body of Christ. We are at fault that our programmes so readily produce the characteristics of elitism and so rarely produce the characteristics of servanthood. We must not merely hope that the true marks of Christian servanthood will appear. We must actively promote biblically approved styles of leadership through modelling by the staff and through active encouragement, practical exposition, and deliberate reinforcement. This we must accomplish, by God's grace.

### **9 Instructional variety**

Our programmes of theological education must vigorously pursue the use of a variety of educational teaching methodologies, evaluated and promoted in terms of their demonstrated effectiveness, especially with respect to the particular cultural context. It is not right to become fixed in one method merely because it is traditional, or familiar, or even avant-garde. Lecturing is by no means the only appropriate teaching method, and frequently not the best. Presumably the same may be said of programmed instruction. Our programmes need to take practical steps to introduce and train their staff in new methods of instruction in a spirit of innovative flexibility and experimentation always governed by the [p. 313](#) standards of effectiveness. This we must accomplish, by God's grace.

### **10 A Christian mind**

Our programmes of theological education need much more effectively to model and inculcate a pattern of holistic thought that is openly and wholesomely centred around biblical truth as the integrating core of reality. It is not enough merely to teach an accumulation of theological truths. Insofar as every human culture is governed at its core by an integrating world view, our programmes must see that the rule of the Lord is planted effectively at that point in the life of the student, This vision of the theologically integrated life needs to be so lived and taught in our programmes that we may say and show in a winsomely biblical manner that theology does indeed matter, and students may go forth experiencing this centring focus in all its biblical richness and depth. This we must accomplish, by God's grace.

### **11 Equipping for growth**

Our programmes of theological education need urgently to refocus their patterns of training towards encouraging and facilitating self-directed learning. It is not enough that through our programmes we bring a student to a state of preparedness for ministry. We need to design academic requirements so that we are equipping the student not only to complete the course but also for a lifetime of ongoing learning and development and growth. To this end we must also assume a much greater role in the placement of our students, as part of our proper duty, and experiment in ways of maintaining ongoing supportive links and services with them after graduation, especially in the early years of ministry. By these means each student should come to experience through the programme not the completion of a development but the launching of an ongoing development. This we must accomplish, by God's grace.

## 12 Cooperation

Our programmes of theological education must pursue contact and collaboration among themselves for mutual support, encouragement, edification and cross-fertilization. We are at fault that so often in evangelical theological education we attend merely to our own assignments under God. Others in the same calling need us, and we need them. The biblical notion of mutuality needs to be much more visibly expressed and pragmatically pursued among our theological programmes. Too long we have acquiesced in an isolation of effort that denies the larger body of Christ, thus failing both ourselves and Christ's body. The times in which we serve, no less than biblical expectations, demand of each of us active ongoing initiatives in cooperation. This we must accomplish, by God's grace.

May God help us to be faithful to these affirmations and commitments, to the glory of God and for the fulfilment of his purposes. [p. 314](#)

# A Brief Introduction to ICAA

Roger Kemp

The International Council of Accrediting Agencies for Evangelical Theological Education (ICAA) is a network for contact and collaboration world-wide among those engaged in evangelical theological education. ICAA is an active part of the WEF family. Its membership includes regional associations of theological schools and programmes in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Europe, Latin America, and the South Pacific.

ICAA was launched in March 1980, in sessions preliminary to the Seventh General Assembly of the World Evangelical Fellowship. The initiative for these developments came from the WEF Theological Commission, who under the leadership of Bruce Nicholls, wished to develop facilities for linking evangelical theological education worldwide and encouraging its improvement.

To this end the WEF Theological Commission coopted Paul Bowers to a staff position, and assigned him to organize a consultation among the existing associations of evangelical theological schools around the world, to pursue the question of collaboration. Dr Bowers was at that time working for one of these associations, the Accrediting Council for Theological Education in Africa (ACTEA). When this consultation resulted in the successful founding of ICAA, Dr Bowers was elected as its first general secretary.

A follow-up consultation was immediately organized, which took place in Chongoni, Malawi in 1981. The principal papers from these two historic international consultations were published by ICAA in 1982. In the editorial Dr Bowers said of ICAA: 'For the first time there now exists an international medium for communication, coordination, collaboration among schools, programmes, agencies, and associations anywhere in the world concerned with evangelical theological education.' In those initial years ICAA also launched a library development programme, offering substantial discounts from leading publishers to schools within the ICAA constituency. ICAA also undertook to formulate a 'Manifesto on the Renewal of Evangelical Theological Education', which has since contributed stimulation and direction for theological education in many parts of the world. [p. 315](#)

In 1983 Dr Robert Youngblood became ICAA's general secretary. Under his direction ICAA held two further international consultations, in Katydata, Cyprus in 1984, and in Unterweissach, Germany in 1987. Also under Dr Youngblood's leadership, ICAA undertook a programme of service for theological education by extension.

In 1989, at ICAA's consultation in Wheaton, USA (held jointly with the WEF Theological Commission), Rev. Dr. Roger Kemp from Australia was elected general secretary. Further international consultations have been held since in London, England (1991), and Bangkok, Thailand (1993). The latter included a special component devoted to extension theological education. The next such ICAA event will be in April 1996, at Minehead, England, in conjunction with the Tenth General Assembly of the WEF.

In recent years the number of ICAA member associations has increased to seven, and now represents all major regions of the world. The member bodies are: Accrediting Council for Theological Education in Africa, American Association of Bible Colleges, Asia Theological Association, Caribbean Evangelical Theological Association, European Evangelical Accrediting Association, South Pacific Association of Bible Colleges, Association of Evangelical Theological Education in Latin America.

ICAA also has nine associate member agencies, concerned with theological education but not directly involved in accreditation services.

Presently ICAA has a task force working to encourage a much-needed dialogue within the ICAA constituency on a theology of theological education. ICAA is also formulating means for assessing and recognizing the accreditation services of its member bodies. And another ICAA project seeks to clarify and evaluate the variant modes for securing academic recognition presently in use in different parts of the world.

By these and other means ICAA continues to serve within the WEF family as a lively forum for contact and collaboration worldwide among those engaged in evangelical theological education—in their strategic common task of equipping disciplers for the nations. [p. 316](#)

## **Book Reviews**

### **BETWEEN ATHENS AND BERLIN; THE THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION DEBATE**

by David H. Kelsey

(Wm. B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1993, 229pp + index. \$18.99 paperback).

(Reviewed by Dr. K. Gordon Molyneux)

No, this is not a hitch-hiker's guide to Europe. It is in fact a very serious book about the nature and purpose of theological education, or, as the author often likes to express it: What is theological about theological education? The author is a professor of theology at Yale Divinity School, New Haven, Connecticut, USA., and perhaps not surprisingly the book he has written is academic and closely argued.

Kelsey sets himself to observe the evolving debate about theological education and what it is that constitutes excellence in theological education. He is concerned not so much with summarizing what each proponent says, but rather with discerning the 'movement

of their thought', their basic perceptions of what theology is and what education is. This leads Kelsey to propose a typology which he believes will clarify the debate. His dual typology forms the 'axis or armature' around which the discussion of the various voices may be organized. Kelsey chooses to label the first pole 'Athens' because it represents values and perceptions which characterized ancient Greek education and indeed many centuries of Christian education. It still exerts today a powerful influence on theological education. The 'Athens' model had as its central concept '*paideia*', the formation of character. Then, early in the 19th century a university was founded in Berlin with, among others, the renowned theologian Schleiermacher on its founding committee. Its perception of excellence was bipolar: rigorous scientific research on the one hand and professional education for ministry on the other. This twin emphasis provides Kelsey with his 'Berlin' model. His thesis is that these two models provide a conceptual framework within which the different voices in the debate can be situated and which can bring into focus the issues at stake in the discussion about excellence in theological education. p. 317

Kelsey's first chapter clarifies the two models and their associated terminology. Chapters 2 and 3 trace respectively the historical evolution of the two models in 19th century Europe (John Henry Newman's *The Idea of a University*) and in early 20th century America (W.R. Harper, Robert L. Kelly, William Adams Brown, H. Richard Niebuhr, Daniel Day Williams, and James M. Gustafson). Chapter 4 examines authors who have contributed significantly to the ongoing debate in the 1980s. It is here that a secondary axis, 'unity'—'plurality', is added to the first. 'Unity' relates to the identity of the 'Christian thing' or source subject matter of theology, while 'plurality' refers to the diverse world with which theological education must also concern itself. A variety of authors are discussed who promote different permutations of emphases within this expanded model. Some of these such as Edward Farley and the Mud Flower Collective (a group of seven women theological educators) negotiate their positions basically from the 'Athens' perspective, while others, like Joseph C. Hough Jr., John B. Cobb, Jr., and Max Stackhouse argue their various positions from nearer the 'Berlin' perspective. Finally, in Chapter 6, Charles Wood seems to offer a new synthesis of the two models. In a last chapter, Kelsey seeks to draw 'morals of the tale', that is, confusions to be avoided, ambiguities to be clarified, lessons to be learnt.

Without question, the book clears the muddied waters of the debate. It will help to answer the question of why it is that one school puts so much emphasis on one aspect of theological education while another places it elsewhere. The author obviously has a clear grasp of the issues. His keen eye exposes distinctions which a less discerning eye would not capture. His discussion of the different authors seems evenhanded and objective although his disquiet about the implications of certain positions frequently surfaces ('worried' and 'worrisome' seem to be his favourite words). He concludes that the two models are ultimately irreconcilable, and that theological educators have to settle for an uneasy, negotiated, truce.

The book does not make for easy reading; as the author himself concedes: 'At first exposure the relations among (the different approaches) are likely to seem hopelessly confused.' For this reviewer at least, some of that confusion remained even at the end of the book. Certainly the confusion would be greater if the book had been written by an author less on top of his subject, but this is certainly not light holiday or bedtime reading!

Theological educators in many isolated parts of the world, reading the book, will however be gratified to realize that the problems that they grapple with (overarching purpose of theological education, curriculum content, the balance between theory and practice, the concern to do justice at one and the same time to the source and also to the

multiple demands of contemporary pluralistic society)—all these are not peculiar to them but are being wrestled with by their colleagues in other parts of the world. p. 318

## **TEACHING FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH—AN INTRODUCTION TO CHRISTIAN EDUCATION**

by Perry G. Downs

(Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1994, hb 224 pp. ISBN 0 310 59370 0)

(Reviewed by Rev. Dr David Parker)

In *Teaching for Spiritual Growth*, Perry Downs, professor of Christian Education at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, has provided an easy-to-read, comprehensive manual on the theory of Christian Education that is not only well-balanced, but focused on precisely the right centre—teaching for spiritual growth.

Using an attractive large page layout, Downs begins by establishing the purpose of Christian education and relating theological questions about faith, the gospel and spiritual growth to the use of the insights of social sciences such as psychology and pedagogy. He adopts vigorously a harmonistic position which sees faith as the gift of God, Scripture as the revelation of his saving purposes and the social sciences as offering explanations as to how God has designed people to grow in learning and understanding. Hence, a full understanding of Christian education requires attention to both theology and psychology.

The first few chapters attend to theological questions, essentially a brief outline of relevant sections of systematic theology. The middle part then goes on to deal with psychological matters under the title, 'the renewal of the mind'. After briefly discussing alternate views, Downs works from a developmental point of view, believing that the best way to the understanding of the psychological make-up of people, especially children, is to realize that they go through more or less well defined stages in the development of the cognitive, moral and faith capabilities. He argues that Christian education must take full account of these stages of development and that such an approach is not out of harmony with the teaching of Scripture. He is not uncritical of pioneers of developmentalism, such as Piaget, Kohlberg and Fowler. However, he makes out a good case for using their views, at least cautiously, and then proceeds to present the essence of their theories sympathetically. In so doing, he points out comparisons with the biblical position and makes useful applications of their insights to contemporary Christian education situations. Especially valuable is his repeated warning about the importance of matching teaching to the level and stage of the audience. If this advice is followed, teachers and preachers can avoid expecting too much from their hearers or from manipulating them through the use of material too advanced for them to master.

The final section of the book, the weakest of all, focuses more on principles to be used in teaching and learning situations, but it is inclined to be repetitive and is often rather general. There is a much more theologically complex appendix on the evangelization of children where the author defends his developmental approach against those who argue for more forthright evangelistic strategies. p. 319

*Teaching for Spiritual Growth* clearly assumes a situation where large formalized programmes of Christian Education focusing especially on the Sunday School exist. As such it would make a good training and review handbook with its clear explanation of current theories, relevant applications and correlation with doctrinal beliefs. Many a teacher and preacher would gain wisdom from its insights, and in doing so would have the added confidence that its principles are well established theoretically and that it is focused on the important matter of spiritual growth. However, its theoretical discussions

are general enough to make the book usable in many other contexts as well, albeit with greater difficulty. It only needs a companion volume to deal as effectively with adult education in the church setting, and then the church would be well served indeed for guidance in the vital matter of its teaching ministry. (To be fully comprehensive, there is perhaps need for yet another similar volume—on theological education and pastoral training!)