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THE QUEST FOR RENEWAL IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

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The quest for renewal rests upon two assumptions: we are not perfect, and our world is not static. The former recognizes the fact that, fallen and finite as we are, we may not always have made the best decisions about our philosophy of education, our methodologies and materials, our structures, and our assessment of the kind and the extent of our clientele. The latter assumption recognizes that our world is changing and that we must continue to grow and to adjust to new situations.

But what is renewal? Renewal is the process of restoring to freshness, vigor or perfection. [1] Renewal in theological education does not necessarily imply a rejection of that which has preceded. The word *renew* suggests, rather, development--the building of that which is better upon that which has been good.

Renewal begins with *re-view*. This "viewing again" does not mean that our first view was faulty, but rather that our perspective has changed and new factors have been introduced. In the past decade developments inside and outside the world of theological education have been rapid and profound. It is essential, therefore, that we re-view our concept of theological education from today's perspective and then anticipate tomorrow's world in which our graduates will serve. Re-view leads to *refinement;* it may also lead to *redirection.*

Accrediting agencies must take the lead in establishing standards and setting forth challenges which will encourage the institutions for which they are responsible to articulate and implement philosophies of education which will constantly respond to the needs of the world in which they serve. The ICAA *Manifesto on the Renewal of Theological Education* is a landmark document in this respect, an expression of the highest ideals and criteria for theological education. Our task now is to show specific ways in which it must be implemented worldwide in the context of the last decade of this century.

Accreditation implies evaluation from the outside. Perhaps we could find a Biblical basis for this in I Corinthians 4:4 as Paul says, "I know nothing against myself." The same is true for accrediting agencies themselves. We need to "get outside of ourselves" and ask the right questions. We need to review our

purpose and performance, our methods and outcomes. Theological education should not be thought of as static or monolithic. Its basic premises must be applied with a flexibility that makes them meaningful and effective in changing times and in differing cultures.

Since our work is never perfect and our world is never static, renewal is never permanent. It must be a continuous process with built in check points and a commitment to confirm or change as evidence indicates. In the process we must avoid both the restlessness which demands change for the sake of change and the traditionalism which results in stagnation. The apostle Paul's exhortation to "stop being conformed to this world but to be continually transformed by the renewing of our minds" may well be applied to theological education., The result for our institutions will be "a testing to demonstrate the good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:2 adapted). Renewal is not an event but a process; it is a maturing which produces the fruit of excellence.

Like many commonly used terms, theological education is often not clearly defined in the minds of its users, and its meaning may vary from person to person. However, Ken Mulholland captures the basic ingredients most would accept: "Theological Education is all of the systematic Biblical and doctrinal teaching, both theoretical and practical, that has as its purpose the preparation of the believer, especially the leader, for the role of a special ministry in the Church." [2]

The term "theological" is imprecise because, used in this way, "theology" obviously includes a number of disciplines. Further, the phrase "theological education" does not indicate the purpose of the education nor the people who are being educated.

This imprecision is understandable but it has tended to blur such Biblical concepts as "teachers equipping believers for the work of the ministry for the purpose of building up the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11, 12). (Later we will distinguish several kinds of theological education such as "Christian education" and "ministry education.")

Mulholland's definition emphasizes the two basic elements of theological education, knowing Biblical content and training believers to minister in the church. As we consider renewal in theological education, we will need to consider these and other specific dimensions implicit in the term.

I. DISTINCTIVES OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Before noting specific indicators for renewal, we need to remind ourselves of some fundamental differences between theological and secular education. [3] We need to do this so that in the accrediting process we are not tempted to imitate uncritically those patterns in secular education which are built on presuppositions which are not necessarily compatible with Biblical values or cultural considerations.

Secular education prepares people to understand, relate, contribute to, and be rewarded by their societies. Although ideally secular education should produce knowledgeable, competent, effective people--among them many Christians--the effectiveness of secular education is increasingly being measured by the marketability of the skills of the graduate and the financial reward these are presumed to guarantee.

Theological education on the other hand involves several unique presuppositions which determine the standards by which theological education must be measured and the kind of renewal we must seek for it.

Responsibility to God. Theological education presupposes a mandate from God and primary responsibility to him. Although effectiveness in method and outcomes are to be valued, theological education must first of all respond to the commands of God and not the marketplace or a value system of society. Athough there is an implicit hierarchy of authorities in the educational process, from the student to the teacher to the administrator to the board and to the Church, all are ultimately responsible to God himself for their decisions and actions. This means that economic or social or other pressures of human origin must never become the dominant force in theological education.

Eternal significance. Although we marvel at the contributions which the research and initiatives of secular education make to the quality and duration of human life, there is an eternal significance to the contribution of persons trained for the tasks of evangelism and edification, the "greater works" Christ predicted. These outcomes far outclass and outlast the products of the greatest scientific, literary, and business minds in history.

Whatever the methodology, therefore, the results of our teaching, whether excellent or mediocre, are permanent. This eternal dimension of theological education constitutes both an encouragement and a challenge for renewal.

Absolute truth. Theological education began with the initiative of God himself as He revealed truth and provided for its communication to all peoples. While theological education involves the discovery of truth in Scripture and new experiences in applying it to life and ministry, it differs from secular education in that it begins with the premise that propositional truth is recorded in the Scriptures and that this truth is not to be determined but to be discovered by man. This means that we must constantly be alert for an overemphasis on "the traditions of men," and guard against a modern Pharisaism which would emphasize the theological accretions of scholars more than the Word of God itself.

Spiritual dynamic. Although many may achieve academic excellence through skill and determination, the Holy Spirit enables the believer to learn and live with a dimension unknown to the unregenerate scholar. This spiritual assistance is not a substitute for diligence but an added factor which affects the reason for and results of learning. While such virtues as personal integrity, reliability, and love for others may be

respected in secular education, they validate true theological education. Thus, without spiritual formation of the student, theological education differs from secular education mainly in subject matter. Evaluation of spiritual outcomes in the graduate, therefore, becomes one of the most important functions of the re–view and renewal process.

Centrality of the Church. Secular education prepares the graduate to work for oneself or for one's country or for a corporation. Theological education, however, prepares believers to serve the church under the authority of its Head. Whatever their office or salary, graduates are not in business for themselves but for the Lord.

The effectiveness of theological education, therefore, must be measured by how well it enhances the graduate's ability to contribute to the achievement of the building of Christ's Church. This does not imply that the Christian who receives secular education or, for that matter, no education at all, cannot make such a contribution. It does mean that the effectiveness of theological education must not be measured in terms of individual academic achievement but rather in terms of preparation for ministry through and for the Church.

II. FORCES REQUIRING RENEWAL IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Theological education does not take place in a vacuum but against the backdrop of change which continues to increase in speed and scope. In the last decade urbanization, economics, travel facility, social upheavals, political uncertainties, and medical advances have been among those forces which have drastically impacted our world.

Theological education must take into account the real and felt needs of people––inside and outside the church. In the immediate context of the church and school, however, several primary factors challenge us to renewal in theological education.

Impact of "consumerism." (especially in the West). With reference to education the questions, "What will it do for me?" and "Is it worthwhile?" are normal and appropriate. Laymen have probably always been particularly ambivalent about theological education, desiring learned authorities to lead them in spiritual matters but also being susceptible to the suspicion that theological study and seminaries in particular do not always relate to their everyday needs.

Since theological schools exist to serve the church, its members have the right and responsibility to expect from theological education positive results that will significantly edify and expand the church.

Increased value of education. Following World War II and the subsequent independence movements, the perception has grown that to obtain a degree of almost any kind is a guarantee of prestigious and well paying employment. With many countries experiencing increasingly severe and chronic unemployment, the prospect of earning a degree or some kind of academic recognition, even in a

theological school, holds a special kind of hope. This need not lead us to the conclusion that those who enter theological schools do so for unworthy motives. However, the idea generally held of the high economic and prestige value of a degree, especially in many non–Western countries, can well spill over into the church. A reverse thrust of this view is the reluctance of many extended family members to help support a young man or woman in theological training when they realize that this kind of education holds little hope of financial advantage.

Interaction between resident and non–resident programs. Doubt should no longer center on the validity of extension training as it did when TEE appeared two decades ago. Further, current discussion should not be limited to how extension type training relates to the preparation of church leaders and pastors, but expanded rather to address the question as to how it may also be applied effectively to train in context emerging leaders to disciple the great numbers of new believers and untaught believers who are filling our churches. Perhaps this is one of the greatest challenges in theological education today.

Increase in the number of church members. In places where multitudes are coming to Christ, structures and programs for theological education are often experiencing great difficulty in making productive adjustments. As noted above the issue is not just how best to train church leaders but rather to make sure that the heart of the Great Commission, "teaching them to obey all things . . .", is carried out for all believers. Theological education must also be missiological education if it is to be true to the commandment of Christ. This means making disciples who will go and make disciples.

In theory it is the graduates of our theological schools who should be accomplishing the task of edifying believers and equipping them to evangelize the lost. When the programs and practices of most churches are considered, however, we see a lack both of spiritual growth and enthusiasm for evangelism. What are we doing to meet the basic needs of those who are coming to Christ to equip and motivate them for reaching others? This question constitutes a pressing challenge for renewal in theological education.

Increase in the number of theological schools. A recent *Pulse* item notes that a theological school is born somewhere in the world every two days! [4] Established schools are making great strides in their academic programs. A decade ago they were putting down their roots, and now they are producing much fruit. As we multiply and gain academic momentum, however, we must always ask: What is the nature and extent of our impact? Are we responding with maximum effectiveness to Biblical mandates and contemporary needs? In what ways are we growing? What kind of fruit are we producing? Are we preparing men and women to equip believers to build up the church through edification and evangelism?

Development of accrediting agencies. The timely establishment of the International Council of Accrediting Agencies testifies to the contribution these structures are making to excellence in theological education. If theological education holds the key to the building of the Church, the task of accrediting agencies and the role of ICAA in particular are of crucial significance. Outside of North America

non–governmental accrediting functions were unknown in theological education as recently as a couple of decades or so ago. This new world wide development is now of great importance and must be used with the greatest possible effectiveness for good.

The international character of the task, however, must always be borne in mind. Although it is natural and right that national and regional aspirations in theological education should develop and that we should seek credibility through accreditation, comparing ourselves with others and the competitive spirit this generates, however, must never be our motivation for pursuing academic excellence and the recognition of it. Accreditation must never be seen as a prize to be won but as a part of the process by which an institution matures and becomes more effective in achieving its objectives.

As a unique force for cohesion and continuity in the development of theological education, accrediting agencies have the opportunity to guide theological schools towards increasingly effective and relevant contributions to the churches. This increase in the influence of accrediting agencies demands that they become catalysts in the renewal of theological education.

III. AREAS OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION WHICH NEED RENEWAL

Renewal in theological education at this time is not optional. A realistic look at our training institutions, the Church, and the world around us requires that we *re–view* what we are doing and ask God for guidance as we see need for *refinement* and *redirection.*

But where should we begin? When we conduct a campus accreditation visit, certain "soft spots" usually become evident. As I now look at the whole spectrum of theological education, I have several concerns. Others may add to the list, and perception of priorities will no doubt vary. But here are at least five "soft spots" which if addressed and strengthened would greatly increase the impact of theological education, especially in the churches where we must ultimately measure its effectiveness.

Definition of purpose. We need to sharpen the focus of our purpose, especially as this relates to recognizing the vocational goals of our graduates. Broadly speaking, most of them will become either "theologians" or "ministers." Lois McKinney has explained well this distinction:

> . . . ministry education is not to be confused with theological education. Theological education prepares scholars who develop and extend theological disciplines. Ministry education prepares servant–leaders for the Church. Both theologians and ministers are needed. The problem arises when we fail to distinguish between the two in the education programs we develop. [5]

Parenthetically, we should note a later comment by Dr. McKinney on this subject which makes application to expatriate workers.

> Implicit to what I have said so far is another task for missions: We must make sure missionaries are modeling ministry. We do not need more theologians, scholars, and professors in Third World schools (or in North American schools for that matter). What we need is role models for ministry. We need men and women who are both academically qualified and ministerially qualified. We need men and women who are as at home planting churches in an urban slum as they are when they are reading textbooks on ecclesiology. [6]

We should ask: Is this ideal true only for expatriates? Does it not also apply to those who in any cultural context are preparing men and women to serve?

It should be noted here that the configuration of personnel needs may vary from region to region. For instance, the Church in Latin America and Africa has many pastors but urgently needs more well trained theologians native to the area. This kind of disparity in church leadership from place to place reminds us that the purpose and the programs of theological education must take into aocount current and future needs of the Church with reference to these and other ministry functions.

While recognizing the value of both theological and ministerial vocations, we must also note that they differ and that these differences must be reflected in our educational processes. Robert Ferris reinforces McKinney's point:

> Traditional, religious educators have viewed the instructional functions of the church in 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 on 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 justificant 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. [7]

We are faced with the questions then of when, in what ways, and to what extent should we specialize our curricula for those who will become theologians/teachers and those who will become pastors and other kinds of leaders. Further, we may not know early in their educational sequences or for that matter, until after they have graduated, who will follow one path and who will follow the other. Even if we did know, in what ways would this affect the curricula they would follow? Put still another way, should future theology professors minimize or bypass ministry preparation and experience? If so, how, would that affect the content and method of their teaching? What effect would this kind of role model have on students who are preparing for local church ministry? Or should future pastors bypass serious study of Biblical doctrines and the developing of exegetical skills? What effect would this have on their ability to "feed the flock" and to teach that flock to feed themselves and others?

As we seek to refine our definition of purpose, we will need to avoid two extremes: (1) Making no distinction in our educational processes between future theologians (teachers, scholars, researchers, writers) and "ministers"; and (2) Making the distinction in our curricula too early and too completely.

As we seek to refine the definition of our purpose, then, we must remember that the minister needs to know both Bible and doctrine; and the theologian needs to know the church. Both need spiritual maturing: growth in holy living and in the practice and power of prayer, involvement in evangelism, and the development of those qualities and that conduct which characterize servant–leaders.

Identification of clientele. We often say that we are training "church leaders." We need to think more precisely about this concept, however, because it is easy to communicate too much or too little by the word "leader." Two terms need clarification:

> *Church Leader:* What do we mean when we say we are training "church leaders"? Do we mean pastors or other recognized officers in a local church or denomination? Should we include personnel in parachurch organizations where many of our graduates are finding fruitful ministries? Are "church leaders" only paid pastors, or male, or "preachers"? Do we realistically take into account the variety of roles and responsibilities and the gifts and skills which God uses to build and extend his Church?
>
> Further, what about Bible taught "lay people," the spiritually mature penetrators of the worlds of education, commerce, and government? Do we have a responsibility to prepare them for these and other kinds of non–

> ecclesiastical roles or at least to train their church leaders to prepare them.
>
> *Leader:* What do we mean by "leader"? Does a theological degree make a person a leader? Do we promise too much when we imply that our graduates will automatically become officers in God's army when many have never been NCO's? In seeking stature and students for our seminaries, do we imply that completion of a program will insure a special status in the Body of Christ?

A sharpening of our focus with regard to our product reflected in how we advertise our schools, how we admit our applicants, and how we adjust our curricula may be an important step in discouraging elitism and, on the other hand, encouraging the development of a broad spectrum of suitably prepared, productive members of a Body of Christ--true servant-leaders.

Relationship with churches. The structure and content of much theological education probably reflects more the interests of academia than the concerns of the churches. The cry is all too familiar, "They never told me about this in seminary!" (Faculty may respond that often the "telling" was more effective than the "hearing").

While we would expect that denominationally-related schools would be more responsive to the priorities of local church needs, such is not always the case. [8] We find this gap between the content and structure of pastoral training and the requirements of the ministry itself in the contexts of both denominational and independent churches. This is an area where accrediting agencies have the opportunity to exercise strong leadership to assure that theological schools are responsive to the churches and that graduates of our theological schools are ready for ministry, whether in the role of theologian-teacher or leader and equipper of a local congregation.

Contextualization. Contextualization of theological education involves both content (e.g. "developing ethnic theologies") and application (e.g. "dealing with the implications of theology for local issues and needs").

Theological education must be contextualized, however, not only in terms of relating it to the cultural and religious context in which graduates will minister, but also in terms of the kind of content they learn and the kinds of competencies they develop. Larry Sharp makes this point forcefully:

> Our Western theology is abstract, intellectual, and propositional. And we tend to teach the same way on the mission field. Alien practices like this must end, since they stress theology without social reality.
>
> On the other hand, evangelicals must not swing to the "obedience-before-faith" theology either. Rather, we must

> evaluate how our high-level theological education relates to the realities of living. The pastors we train must be able to communicate with farmers, bus drivers and peasants. When a man is unemployed, his son on drugs, or his wife unfaithful and he can't cope, he doesn't want to hear about Barth or Bultmann or eschatological truth. He needs an understanding person who can relate biblical truth to his need. [9]

Nunez adds:

> . . . in Latin America we are far behind in training leaders capable of carrying out contextualization; leaders rooted deeply in the Word of God and fully identified with their own culture; leaders who know the text and the context . . . [10]

The roots of our systematic theology go back to Europe, but the future of much theological thinking and education lies in the Third World. The relevance of "Western theology" is increasingly in question. Study in Western seminaries or under Western trained faculty serving overseas often raises the fear that the graduates will not be able to minister effectively in their own cultures.

From an African perspective Tony Wilmot pleads for balance:

> Accrediting authorities will need all the help we can give them to insure that, on the one hand, they do not rigidly cling to curricular traditions in such a way as to enforce irrelevance and stifle the right kind of contextualization, and, on the other hand, they do not allow "contextualization" to be used as an excuse for dropping difficult studies without a persuasive argument that such studies are generally irrelevant in the context served by the school in question. We are concerned to provoke some reader of this article to contribute to the task of developing a balanced set of priorities for theological education in Africa which can be sustained on grounds of relevance to the African context or to the missionary context in which the growing African Church must increasingly serve. [11]

Whether to establish academic credibility or to perpetuate Western precedence, we often tend to give more attention to the theological debates of centuries past than to the inductive study of doctrines explicitly recorded in the Scriptures. (Might some of the former parallel what Paul called "endless genealogies"?) We also tend to give more attention to preparing students for the traditional duties of the "senior pastor" than to training them to be competent in evangelism, discipling, and the "equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry for the building up of the Body of Christ."

A word of caution is needed concerning shaping our curricula and courses by a strictly local mold. In a world in which countries are becoming increasingly interdependent, ethnocentrism in terms of cultural pride and exclusivism can be detrimental to theological education. While by definition contextualization involves relevancy to one's own cultural setting, we have much to learn from each other, especially in the Body of Christ.

We saw this principle demonstrated in Church Growth Workshops which were held in over 60 countries. Virgil Gerber led most of the two or three member teams which differed from country to country. Conditions, cultures, and church/mission participants varied greatly. The general purpose, structure, content, and method, and even the outcomes, were remarkably constant, however. In each case people in one workshop learned much from the ideas and experiences of those in previous workshops even though they differed greatly in culture and church structures. Perhaps a parallel should be sought in theological education. The ICAA and the *Theological News* have high potential for this kind of networking.

Spiritual formation. We now have computers which can receive, process, store, and deliver information---all at the touch of a key. Graduates of our theological schools must do more than these functions; or the computer, *Time's* "man of the year" a few years ago, could become the pastor of the future! Although the parallel is ludicrous, it reminds us of the fact that our graduates need to be able to do more than passively collect and casually dispense information on command. They must be living, active personal demonstrations of the Biblical doctrines they have learned, capable of insights and initiatives.

In a recent meeting of the deans of thirteen leading evangelical seminaries in the United States, the subject which elicited the greatest concern and lengthiest discussion was the quality of the spiritual life of our students and ways in which we could help them grow. If the testimony of these deans and the spiritual quality of many churches indicates a "soft sport" in this area, this concern must be given high priority as we think about renewal in theological education.

When Jesus commanded us to "make disciples," He introduced a spiritual dimension to learning. In his day many disciples followed many teachers. But the word "disciple" came to be used in a special sense for those who reflected the character of their Teacher to the extent that the pagans at Antioch coined a new word for them, "Christians."

If we can assume that theological education rests on Christ's command, "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you . . .", we must take very seriously the continued spiritual growth of both the teacher and the student. The importance of this relationship is noted by Ferris:

> Often it is not our content 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. [12]

The selection of godly faculty and the monitoring of their spiritual development and their impact on students must take precedence over any kind of academic criteria if theological education is to differ from that which is secular. The kind of faculty that we employ and the spiritual standards we maintain for them will largely determine the kind of person we graduate. Is there not a correlation between how well we have implemented this principle in our seminaries and the present level of spirituality in our churches?

Several New Testament words suggest facets of this spiritual dimension of the teaching ministry. *Didasko* emphasizes the communicating of truth with authority and with impact on the learner. *Matheteuo* emphasizes the relationship between the teacher and the student, especially in terms of how the latter reflects his values and conduct. *Katartizo* means to "prepare, make complete, capable, competent to meet all demands" (2 Corinthians 13:9/2 Timothy 3:17). *Oikodomeo* emphasizes community, the building up of the church through edification and evangelism (Ephesians 4:12). It involves encouragement and the application of the Word among believers ––the common life experienced by the parts of an organism.

Three of these words are interrelated in Luke 6:40: "The disciple (*mathetes)* is not greater than his teacher (*didaskalon),* but when he is fully prepared (*katertismenos)* he will be like his teacher (*didaskolos).*"

The extent to which our faculty model these ingredients and thus impact positively and strongly the spiritual lives of their students will also strongly affect the quality and results of their future ministries.

Although spiritual formation is usually included in Christian accreditation standards, it is not always evaluated or emphasized as realistically as other criteria. Should deficiency here be outweighed by faculty credentials and curricular completeness? Should an institution be accredited if there is a marked lack of achievement in this area?

IV. RESOURCES FOR RENEWAL IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Emphasis on competency–based learning. The importance of competency in ministry––the ability to feed and tend the flock and to make disciples who can make disciples––can hardly be overestimated, but in some theological schools it is neither emphasized nor evaluated. In many situations academic excellence is measured mainly by the nature of the process, not by the quality of the product. But if the purpose of theological education is to prepare for ministry––academically or local church oriented––then our criterion of excellence must be the extent to which the graduate is ready (and shows potential for continued development) for functioning effectively in that ministry.

In theological education then the end does not justify the means; the end must determine the means. For instance, in its curriculum evaluation Western Conservative Baptist Seminary (Portland, Oregon, USA) has established

"competency-based learning" as its controlling criterion in determining curriculum.

The right educational process must be determined then, not by arbitrary or antiquated presuppositions, but by its effectiveness in producing the desired result. This concern has been emphasized by the (North American based) Association of Theological Schools in its Readiness For Ministry program which measures the student on admission and continues to monitor his or her progress throughout the program.

This kind of concern should put pressure on curricula and courses to achieve (or perhaps modify) stated objectives. It also involves realistic, evaluated experience as part of the education process.

Decentralization of learning through new delivery systems. Audio and video recording and playback facility, computers with capacity for desk top publishing, travel facility, and satellite communication have changed the potential pattern of education in ways we never dreamed of when our accrediting agencies were born. If TEE jarred the educational world twenty years ago, what will be the impact of current and future technology? The answer will be determined as with TEE by whether we see these developments as threats or as great new resources which can make possible quantum leaps in the efficiency and breadth of theological education.

We must avoid two extremes: resisting applications of new technology and delivery systems to theological education and relying on them to the extent that we erode the discipling dimension of the faculty-student relationship.

The challenge for involving these resources in renewal is not just to seek ways to make use of them. We need rather to envision ways to integrate them into the whole web of learning experiences. New delivery systems should not be viewed as competitors but rather as complements of the more familiar ones. The world of theological education can become a whole worldwide network of interrelated resources. For instance, by video tape, case studies from a variety of cultural contexts can be brought into the classroom, and courses can be taken to local groups who could never come to the campus.

As we seek renewal in theological education, we need to do more than review our achievements; we need to create new kinds of learning opportunities in which schools and churches worldwide can contribute to each other in practical and unprecedented ways.

Influence of accreditation agencies. Although accrediting agencies seek to insure that candidate schools are true to their mission statements and achieve their stated objectives, they are by no means limited to a passive role in theological education. They have the opportunity and responsibility not just to monitor but to motivate. They have the credibility and authority to make good things happen.

As ICAA is proving by this consultation, accrediting agencies, as they remain sensitive to the needs of the churches and remain true to biblical principles, constitute a key resource for renewal in theological education. They are more than caretakers of academic mores; they are visionaries peering over the horizon. They

are catalysts bringing together the old and the new to make crucial contributions to the life of the churches.

Accrediting agencies serve the schools which serve the churches. To serve well is to ensure the success of those served. It is not too much to say that as accrediting agencies go, so go the schools; and as the schools go, so go the churches.

V. THE URGENCY FOR RENEWAL

As we have noted some of the contemporary pressures in theological education, we conclude that renewal is not optional. We must further understand that *it is* urgent. At least four conditions challenge us to undertake renewal seriously and quickly.

Our world is changing. As Tofler predicted, the rate and extent of change is accelerating at an increasing pace. As we look at the students in our classrooms, we realize that they have come from worlds very different from ours. They are seeking answers to new questions and will have to address new conditions. They will be using new technology and techniques, and they will be wrestling with theological and ethical issues that were beyond our horizons.

One of the most important factors in their ministry will be the interaction among *various configurations* of the church— church/mission relations, church/parachurch relations, associations of churches and missions, and the implications of interdating among believers from different cultures and economic backgrounds. They will live their lives and do their work in the atmosphere of AIDS, economic uncertainties and catastrophes, the threat of nuclear war, the increase of violence, and the constant possibility of devastating political realignments both internationally and in their own communities.

As we reflect on our faculties and the nature of their training, the curricula and textbooks we use, and the way we teach, we must ask the questions: Are we doing the right things in the right ways to produce the right products NOW? Will our graduates know more than what theologians have been saying to each other for two millennia? Will they know what God is saying to their people in their world? Will they be able to bring their people into a growing, family relationship with God? Will they be motivated to reach out to those who have never heard of him?

Our churches are weak. With a few exceptions there is often little relationship between the extent of the pastor's theological training and the effectiveness of his ministry as reflected in the spiritual quality of the lives of his people. Of course we must take into account the resisting work of Satan and remember that even Paul's parishioners, notably at Corinth, did not always benefit from his ministry. And the Apostle John lamented that some "went out from us, for they were not of us."

Even so, we must ask: How effective are our graduates in modeling and communicating the teachings of Scripture? What have we really taught them?

What have we prepared them to do? Is there a gap between the kinds of facts and skills they learned and the kind of ministry they are expected to perform? Is the product they produce in their churches and communities a useful measurement of the kind of product we have produced in our theological schools?

These questions must be asked because throughout the world immorality, greed, spiritism, coldness, strife, and defection to non-Christian religions are evident among believers to an unprecedented extent. The predictions of the Apostle (1 Timothy 3) are being fulfilled with awful accuracy.

These questions must have better answers than we have given in the past. Their seriousness challenges us to urgency.

Our task is not getting done. Over three billion people in the world have yet to hear of Jesus Christ. With few exceptions there is little evidence that theological education is producing a measurable impact in terms of evangelism. Again we must ask the hard questions: How effective are our graduates in bringing people to Jesus Christ? Are they equipped and motivated to lead others in this? Is cross cultural evangelism one of their main concerns?

In many cases this is so. All of us could point to outstanding examples of men and women who have gone through our programs and who are being greatly used of God in this way. But as we reflect on our faculties, our curricula, and our courses, and on the experience these students had with us, are we assured that we have sent them out to win people to Jesus Christ?

Our faith is being challenged. Through the resurgence of old religions and the never ending concoction of new ones, through direct intervention by Satan in the spirit world, and through erosion by liberal theologians, God and his Word are under increasing attack. Our graduates are not going onto a beach but a battlefield. Are we training them to handle the Word as an offensive sword or as a relic to be discussed and admired? With the global aggressive thrust of Islam, the distortions of Communism, the cynicism of unbelief, and the intimidation of Satan through fear and confusion, we must consider whether our graduates should be more soldiers and perhaps less scholars in the classical sense. This is not to suggest that they pursue anything less than excellence in their study. It does affirm, however, that we need always to keep in mind the fact that they are going into battle and that we are military academies preparing them for the conflict. We must also remember that our ultimate objective is not to produce soldiers but to "win the war."

CONCLUSION

Theological education may well be the single most important issue in the church today. It is time for renewal in theological education, not a rejection of the past or a retreat from academic excellence, but a re-viewing of who we are and what we are doing and why. It is more fundamental than strategizing to "raise academic standards." It is the challenge to take the lead in the most basic area of church life, learning about God and his ways and teaching others to teach others.

As Paul challenged Timothy: "The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2). It is a task that the members of ICAA are uniquely positioned to under take. It is a task I am confident the ICAA will undertake and in which it will, by God's grace and power, succeed.

A paper presented to the ICAA Consultation on Accreditation Unter Weissech im Tal, West Germany, June 23–27, 1987.

Notes

[1] Adapted from **Webster: New Collegiate Dictionary,** (G & C. Merriam Co., 1976).

[2] Kenneth B. Mulholland, *Adventures in Training the Ministry* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1976) p. 3.

[3] The term is used here to refer to those institutions of higher education which do not base their philosophy of education on a Christian world view. The contrast is drawn between two generic extremes without reference to Christian institutions which provide mainly non-theological training.

[4] *Pulse,* (March 18, 1987), p. 1.

[5] Lois McKinney, *Evangelical Missions Quarterly.* (April, 1982), p. 90.

[6] *Op. cit.*,p. 94.

[7] Robert L. Youngblood, ed., *Cyprus: TEE Comes of Age,* (The Paternoster Press, n.d.), p. 43.

[8] Western Conservative Baptist Seminary in Portland, Oregon, faced this issue head-on a few years ago when they undertook a complete review of their M.Div. program. Data was gathered from alumni, denominational delegates, missionaries, current students, missionary statesmen, denominational leaders, and pastors. This two year study and its resulting deep curricular revisions constitutes an informative case study not only in its outcomes but also in the process and interpersonal dynamics involved.

[9] Larry W. Sharp, *Evangelical Missions Quarterly,* (July, 1987), pp. 34-35.

[10] Quoted by Carl E. Armerding, *Evangelicals and Liberation* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979), p. 99.

[11] *NEGST Bulletin,* vol. 2, no. 1.

[12] Youngblood, *op cit.*, p. 45.