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A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

Equipping to Minister

A T DE B WILMOT

Biblical Priorities

A British theological student was in the final stages of earning a theological doctorate of philosophy. Addressing the present author about a paper read on graduation day at a third world post-graduate school of theology, the student wrote:

Your graduation speech concisely pin-points western theology as being held captive to secular rationalism. Your statement that 'we must be moulded into Christ's image rather than the world's' made my spirit soar. The whole reason I entered higher theological training was to know more of Jesus. Sadly my experience has been just the opposite. Thankfully my personal relationship with the Lord Jesus and my previous grounding has [sic] kept me secure against this blatant scepticism inherent in western theology. Thank you for this article which has refreshed me amidst the desert of rationalism. It has given me courage to finish my task at A.....

That student is not alone in recognising the aridity of much western theological education. Dr James Plueddemann, formerly Dean of Wheaton Graduate School, has declared that 'many of our efforts in theological education do not in fact facilitate growth and maturation in students'.¹

For historical reasons, religious and theological education and ministerial training in all countries with typical western educational policies are integrated into the national educational framework and controlled by persons who believe the arrangement to be advantageous or at least unavoidable. Within that framework religious, moral, pastoral and theological education is unable to express its sacred distinctiveness; it becomes less and less comfortable in an increasingly secular world with a naturalistic world-view.

Timothy and Titus, models both as ministers and as trainers of ministers, were given guide-lines intended for the whole period until Christ's return. They and their trainees were to be men with the courage to proclaim the gospel in a secular society which certainly would not have incorporated Christian training within its educational curricula nor would

1. James Plueddemann 'Toward a Theology of Theological Education' *Evangelical Theological Education Today, 2 Agenda for Renewal* Paul Bowers ed (Nairobi: Evangel Publishing House, Nairobi 1982) p 57

it have contributed state finance to such training. Christ's ministers were to be men whose faith was robust enough to accept suffering. Their loyalty to the Scriptures was to be beyond question. Their understanding of Scripture was to be well grounded. Both loyalty and understanding were to be given and sustained, not by autonomous reason, but by the indwelling Spirit of God, and were to be focused on the historic truth of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ and on a Spirit-given concern for the salvation of the lost. The minister was to be assured of his own identification with Christ crucified and risen. He was to avoid profitless wrangling and he was to display a number of stated moral qualities. His preaching was to reflect his loyalty to and understanding of Scripture.

Nowhere in Scripture is there the least suggestion that a ministerial qualification is measurable against secular qualifications by a common yardstick.

These biblical principles and priorities are not those adopted by the selectors and educators of today's ministers. Liberals, whose cognitive thinking style is virtually identical with the thinking style of secular modernity, dominate selection panels and the bodies ultimately approving or disapproving the curricula of theological colleges. Loyalty to the word of God is diluted by liberal and secular thinking and its concern for human concepts of 'relevance,' 'felt needs' and 'contextualisation'. The power of the Spirit to convict of real (as opposed to felt) needs and of divine relevance is unrecognised and implicitly denied. The prime focus is not the cross and blood of Jesus, sin, holiness, hell and heaven. The liberal mind-set enthrones flexible uncertainties in place of an assured knowledge of Christ by faith; it readily levels the accusation of 'fundamentalism' with pejorative overtones against any loyalty to biblical certainties; it finds heresy easier to contextualise than truth. Our most evangelical theological colleges are obliged, by virtue of their incorporation in the secular framework, to give almost exclusive attention to the cerebral and the intellectual. Scant attention is paid to the truth that the word of God cannot be understood, far less proclaimed with authority and eternal effect, by any process, however erudite, which lacks the illumination and persuasive power of the Holy Spirit. Paul insists on this dogma. He sharply contrasts the person who preaches with worldly, indeed wordy, wisdom on the one hand and the person who preaches in demonstration of the Spirit and power on the other hand. Secular wisdom – Paul calls it natural or carnal – is the product of man's fallen mind. Godly wisdom is God's gift to the regenerate mind which is defined as spiritual because it is the mind of the Spirit and therefore of Christ. The spiritual mind is unknown and unknowable to the unregenerate. The exercise of filling the carnal mind with biblical truth does not of itself develop the mind of Christ. God is not open to that sort of manipulation. A changed mind, in biblical terms, is more than a 'change of mind' which is simply a shift of rational persuasion. A changed mind is the work of God.

The Bible and the Mind

Biblical regeneration is more than rational response to evidence; it is not achieved by the human process of shedding prejudices. Autonomous human rationality makes a variety of responses to identical evidences but none of its conclusions carries the stamp of eternity. A mind dead in trespasses and sins, however brilliant in secular academic terms, is still a natural, carnal, worldly, secular mind even when it happens to reach conclusions consistent with the word of God. Every conclusion reached by the natural mind is susceptible to change under the influence of new rational arguments; human intellectual conclusions are reversible. By contrast, the spiritual mind is the product of regeneration which is the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit applying the justifying and sanctifying work of Christ so as to recreate the believing individual as a child of God; he then takes up permanent residence in that individual. As host, the Spirit initiates the life-long task of renewing the affections, the will and the mind. One proof of this process of spiritual maturation is the irreversibility of those fundamental spiritual convictions which are common to all members of God's family. Those biblical convictions become increasingly secure, increasingly purified of the old secular prejudices and increasingly deep-rooted. From the earliest stages of the regenerate life God graciously gives a sensitivity which distinguishes truth and falsehood. This sensitivity is confirmed, instructed and matured by an ever deepening assimilation of the inspired Scriptures illuminated to the individual who fears God and trembles at his word. Backsliding, though possible, can never be comfortable.

An unregenerate mind, even if it acknowledges biblical truth, lacks the Holy Spirit's protection against the danger of creeping liberalism and its priorities are those of the world, elevating the conceptual, the physical and the naturalistic. When Adam fell man lost his link with the spiritual and the divine. God himself thenceforth approached fallen mankind through the material and the physical. The story of God's dealings with mankind moves from a lost physical garden through the judgment of a physical flood to a promised physical country in which worship, repentance and service were to be expressed by the offering of physical sacrifices in a physical tent or temple. The prophets, themselves exceptionally enlightened, had no choice but to use physical models, spoken, written or acted out in public display. In keeping with this emphasis on the physical the inevitability of physical death is highlighted, not least by multiple genealogies of ever passing generations.

Christ knew that, until the Holy Spirit was poured out, he must continue to use the physical even whilst preparing the way for the days when his people would have new spiritual minds. The change from the mortal to the eternal was marked by the fact that the last two genealogies in the Bible end in Christ who had no physical progeny. He never spoke of future physical generations. He had come to establish a single generation which would never die. Nevertheless, as he himself admitted, his ministry was

restricted by the fact that the Holy Spirit was yet to enter redeemed men and women to give new lives, new minds and the capacity to absorb and understand eternal truth. He therefore authenticated himself and his ministry by the physical evidence of the miraculous and by parabolic use of physical phenomena. Those parables, as he said, conveyed nothing to the uninitiated. Even physical resurrection from death, he said, would not persuade those who had rejected divine revelation (Luke 16:31). Nothing but the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost could provide better exposure of truth than physical demonstration with its admitted limitations. Once the Spirit had come spiritual illumination would replace physical proofs. The Holy Spirit would bring, as a first step, conviction of sin, righteousness and judgment to come (John 16:8); then regeneration (John 3:5-8); then wisdom (John 16:13-15; 1 Cor 1:30). Lacking the Holy Spirit human reason cannot tolerate truths which go beyond that which is physically or experimentally demonstrable (see John 16:12).

The dramatic and fundamental change brought about by the post-Pentecostal gift of the Holy Spirit is well illustrated by the change in the teaching. The last 22 books of the Bible constitute a dramatic change from the Old Testament and the memoirs of Christ incarnate; they do not replace the latter but give them a new spiritual dimension and application only partially sensed in earlier times. These last 22 books are letters, not histories or oracles; they recount no miracles; they tell no parables; their few physical illustrations are direct and explicit; the physical, with the crucial exception of Christ's cross and resurrection, is not used as apologetic evidence. They do not call Christians disciples but brothers, emphasising the one eternal spiritual generation to which Christ had referred. At the same time they fully expose the fact that regeneration is not immediate maturity or adequacy of spiritual orientation, a truth most clearly exemplified by the Corinthian church which had failed to escape from the pressures of a secular mould. Though objects of grace its members were not developing the mind of Christ with which the Holy Spirit endows those he sets apart. Their immaturity in this regard was reflected, as is inevitable, in their contentious relationships and in their emphasis on physical phenomena. In ministering to their immaturity Paul does not advocate any dichotomy between the physical and the spiritual; rather he demonstrates the transcendence of the spiritual over the physical.² Modernity separates them; Christ integrates them.

The natural mind cannot integrate what it does not know and it can neither know nor find out the God who hides himself (Isaiah 45:15). We are eternally dependent on divine self-revelation which starts before conversion with conviction of our own sin. That conviction is the work of the Holy Spirit independent of rational argument or empirical demonstration. When convicted we recognise the need for illumination and so for explanation by someone who has that illumination. Like the

2 See Bryant Myers *Healing our Dichotomies* (Marc Newsletter June 1994) p 3

Churchman

Ethiopian reading Isaiah 53 we turn to someone who has that illumination and can open the Scriptures to us (Acts 8:31).

Unilluminated natural minds are by no means identical in their orientation. Paul refers to more than one category of natural mind. For the benefit of the Corinthians and many more down the centuries he contrasts the spiritual mind with two different expressions of the natural mind. He refers to the inadequate empiricism of those Jews who, still living in their past, looked for physical signs and wonders. He puts that empiricism alongside the vain intellectualism of the Greeks who sought answers in interminable philosophising (1 Cor 1:22,23). These are still valid categorisations of the secular mind.

The Historic Background

Paul was writing at a time when the ancient standards of Israel were threatened by the secularism and idolatries of Greece and Rome. This was particularly true for Christians who were excluded from the Jewish educational system. The content and methodology of that system had developed from biblical roots but failed to acknowledge Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. With the synagogue schools closed to them and unable to establish Christian schools, the only option for Christians was to send their young to Roman imperial schools staffed by slaves who taught philosophy, mathematics, literature, rhetoric and sometimes astronomy and architecture. Secular education of Christians had come to stay.³

- 3 The pattern of formal education in Israel developed over many centuries. Names scratched on pots are evidence of very early widespread literacy. The earliest lessons were taught by parents and incorporated in family prayers. On the sabbath the family worshipped together; there were no separate classes for children. Passover celebration was an annual educational experience for whole families. The earliest equivalent of a school seems to have been the attachment of boys to prophets (eg Elijah, Elisha) who acted in loco parentis (the boys were called 'sons of the prophets'). Their sisters were educated at home as, indeed, continued to be the case for most boys. Home education developed into group education in private homes. It was around 200 BC when synagogue (temple in Jerusalem) schools were established by rabbis. The principal textbook was the Pentateuch. Teaching concentrated on religion, morals, basic numeracy and literacy. In 75 BC Rabbi ben Shetach decreed that boys should attend elementary schools. The teaching cadre was widened to include men with a penchant for teaching; they became known as scribes. They developed a method of teaching through proverbs designed to influence daily living. Some were itinerant; pupils followed them in their travels. The scribes gradually absorbed the Greek educational system of question and counter-question. Scribes graduated their students by laying hands on them, thus conferring on them the right to wear the distinctive scholar's robe, to be an independent teacher of Mosaic law and to stand for election to the Sanhedrin. By Paul's time the average Jewish boy was skilled in reading and writing Hebrew and perhaps Aramaic. His reading was exclusively sacred texts. By age five a boy had acquired a good idea of the Scriptures with emphasis on the exodus and the law. By age thirteen the solemn importance of obeying the decalogue had become ingrained; by now a boy was responsible and could marry (girls at age twelve upwards) but age eighteen was regarded as the desirable age for marriage. From thirteen to fifteen a boy concentrated on the Talmud. After marriage he had secular vocational training. In AD 135 the Mishna (a commentary applying the Scriptures to daily life) was composed and it was required that boys should know its contents by age ten. See J A Thompson *Handbook of Life in Bible Times* (Leicester: IVP 1986) pp 83ff, 240, 245f, 335f, 344, 347, 352.

With secular education came the development of the secular mentality. Some of the mile-posts in that development have been identified by Eta Linnemann. She traces the development through the growth of the university system. Bologna concentrated on civil law and its pre-Christian, pagan origins. Paris focused on the study of Aristotle.⁴ From those early beginnings humanistic creeds have increasingly made man the measure of all things whilst paradoxically refusing to recognise man as uniquely created with a spirit. The humanistic trend was only partially held back by the Reformation. The subsequent pretentiously named Enlightenment virtually sealed western man's commitment to the enthronement of autonomous human reason as absolute monarch and despot. In the words of Peter Johnston:

Evangelical educators and their students are faced with the legacy of approximately 200 years of the so-called Enlightenment in the form of what is predominantly a post-Christian 'western' culture.... The word of God is widely regarded as a human production which may be dissected, questioned and even altered depending upon which forms of criticism happen to be fashionable in our time.⁵

Western secular academia provides the culture with its high priests; they are guardians of a system of rational autonomy in which metaphysical concerns do not deserve serious consideration except as historical or social oddities and measures of our progress. The system admits no necessity of involving God in human affairs either in science or in morality. Jonathan Sachs declares that the Enlightenment gave rise to an intellectual and social process which had a devastating effect on the traditions which give meaning and shape to life in the community thus inflicting a near-mortal blow on heteronomous morality. The philosophers of the Enlightenment massively relativised tradition and dissolutioned its claims on identity.⁶ In Robert Jenson's view, 'the entire project of the Enlightenment was to retain realist faith while declaring disallegiance from the God who was that faith's object.... Modernity was defined by the attempt to live in a universal story without a universal story-teller'. His comment is that 'if God does not invent the world's story, then it has none'.⁷

The Western Secular Mind

The western modernist world-view has spawned a form of secularised education which has deserted the holistic in favour of the utilitarian,

- 4 Eta Linnemann *Historical Criticism of the Bible, Methodology or Ideology?* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House 1990) p 23
- 5 Peter J Johnston 'Dangers Facing Evangelical New Testament Scholarship' *Perspectives on Leadership Training* V B Cole, R F Gaskin, R J Sim edd (Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology 1993) pp 223f
- 6 Jonathan Sachs *The Persistence of Faith, Religion, Morality and Society in a Secular Age* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson 1990) pp 4, 20
- 7 Robert W Jenson 'How the World Lost its Story' *First Times* October 1993 p 21

vocational, cognitive and phenomenological presentation of information to the mind and to the mind alone. The pupil's spiritual, moral, emotional, conative and aesthetic development receive scant attention. This, as James E Plueddemann has observed, is reflected at the level of ministerial training in the emphasis on skill-development at the expense of inner development and growth in grace.⁸ Secular education teaches us to treat man and his concept of God as objects of 'scientific' study. Absolutes and ultimate authority become equally impossible. The only authoritative, objective and absolute truth is alleged to be that there is no objective truth. There can be no heresy except that of denying that there is no objective truth. This relativistic framework, as Bob Fryling writes, 'produces moral decay, a viewpoint which psychiatrists, historians and philosophers have joined in stating'. He supports this statement with statistical evidence of immorality, including rape, in colleges in relation to the extent that relativism flourishes. Students, he avers, 'are confused because of relativism...minimised by technology, immobilised by over-choice, segmented by politics and desperately looking for wholeness within themselves'.⁹

When Descartes set up human rational proof as the only basis for certainty, he started a process which, far from producing certainty, has left a legacy of relativism and confusion. The absence of uniformity in human reason tends towards the anarchy of individualism which is reined in only by a measure of academic tyranny in the form of an imposed obligation to think and work within the accepted world-view and methodology.

Since God is undiscoverable by autonomous human reason it was natural for Spinoza to demythologise religious experience. God became another way of conceiving nature. Kant pushed this theme further and played a major role in creating the spirit of today's age and hence today's educational philosophies, especially the theory that children should be taught to reason without the employment of content. Secular educationists in general still believe that education, including moral education, can be underpinned with humanistic values. Consequently half-hearted official pressure, in Britain at least, to retain a form of religious education is often resisted; social education and ethics are preferred substitutes. Religion, says Paul Tillich, is the lost dimension.¹⁰ If not entirely lost, it is tolerated only so long as it is kept out of science and history. Paradoxically, it is the scientists who maintain the link between religion and science by using

8 James E Plueddemann 'Toward a Theology of Theological Education' *Evangelical Theological Education Today, 2 Agenda for Renewal* Paul Bowers ed (Nairobi: Evangelical Publishing House 1982) p 60

9 Bob Fryling 'Torn in the USA' *In Touch* (Harrow: IFES Issue 3 1992)

10 Paul Tillich 'The Lost Dimension in Religion' *Adventures of the Mind* Richard Thruelson and John Kaoler edd (Vantage Book Press 1958) p 2

their science as a basis for pronouncements about religion. The journal *Nature* which poses as science's most prestigious journal does not hesitate to mock theology and to deride the suggestion that theology can relate to science or indeed have any real value. Anti-theistic conclusions bespatter the literature of Darwin and Darwinists. The most blatant is Richard Dawkins' remark that 'Darwin made it possible to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist'.¹¹

Mankind's chronic ambition to be autonomous from God is written in large letters across what is said and done by the intellectual and political leaders of western civilization. Fear of religious fanaticism fuels their determination to maintain the stranglehold of naturalistic philosophy.¹² When a distinguished scientist suggested that there was an area in which naturalism was obliged to yield to metaphysics, a fellow scientist of distinction described the suggestion as disturbing.¹³ Darwin's followers, like Darwin himself, express pleasure when they think they have overthrown divine truth; dogma is by nature objectionable to them. They do not like to retain God in their science (epignosis, Rom 1:28).

Our western mind has been moulded through many centuries of conflicting influences but is increasingly dominated by blind faith in human reason. We know no court of appeal against this fickle master. We ignore the obvious truth that reason, as Pascal long ago pointed out, can be bent in any direction and is manifestly subject to prejudice and desire. Human pride is less well served by truth than by an imagination never wholly overcome by reason; we are best convinced by 'reasons' we have found within our own thinking which is coloured by our desire.¹⁴ Man's perverted will is bent on walking after his own devices (Jer 18:12); we reason towards pre-set conclusions which, in the controlling strata of western thought, are dictated by an uncompromising materialism.¹⁵ Kuhn states that 'an apparently arbitrary element, compounded of personal and historical accident, is always a formative ingredient of the beliefs espoused by a given scientific community at a given time.'¹⁶ The willingness of scientists to amend their theories is circumscribed by an unchallengeable world-view which is at heart religious. Western secular science and philosophy are ratiocinative and accepted as the foundations on which knowledge is built. Evidence which is inconsistent with the obligatory

11 Richard Dawkins *The Blind Watchmaker* as cited by Philip E Johnson *Darwin on Trial* (Downers Grove: IVP 1993) p 8

12 Philip E Johnson *Darwin on Trial* (Downers Grove: IVP 1993) p 154

13 Philip E Johnson *Darwin on Trial* (Downers Grove: IVP 1993) pp 158f

14 Pascal *Pensées* trans A J Kraitsheimer (Penguin 1966) paragraphs 190, 44 and 737

15 'Thus Gould on Darwin' cited by Philip E Johnson *Darwin on Trial* (Downers Grove: IVP 1993) pp 28, 33, 163

16 Cited by Philip E Johnson *Darwin on Trial* (Downers Grove: IVP 1993) p 118

world-view is treated as misleading and is either discarded or twisted. As Alan Mann, professor of palaeontology, admits, 'sometimes people deliberately manipulate data to suit what they are saying'.¹⁷

Moral and Religious Education

A naturalistic world-view cannot ignore ethics and religion. For its own inner consistency it must deprive moral values of any meaning or authority other than social convenience; or it must hold to the Platonic view that goodness exists beyond God and all being. In either case religion becomes a mere matter of personal choice and the Prince of Wales is right to view the crown as defender of all faiths. Against this background lone voices in the British Parliament complain that today's children are being cheated of their fundamental right to a Christian education.¹⁸ Lack of a genuine presentation of Christian truth results in an attitude to Christianity which is picked up in the market place, with its ignorance, derision and prejudice. This attitude has become so general that it now characterises education authorities and school teachers, many of whom tolerate religious education only so long as it is not Christian. For example, the Daily Telegraph of 12 December 1992 reported 'Many local authorities are discriminating against Christian groups when they choose who should sit on religious education advisory panels'. In an extreme case members of a minority religious group of only twelve followers were invited to a panel to the exclusion of any representative from several large Christian churches in the community.

In such circumstances it is hardly surprising that religious education syllabi are sometimes drawn up without mention of Jesus Christ, God or the Bible. Some include Elvis Presley, transcendental meditation, Malcolm X, Brigitte Bardot, Mahatma Ghandi and so on. Dr Robert Spink MP complains that schools deny our children a sound moral basis or the 'opportunity to know and love Jesus Christ'. The Government makes a token expression of concern but regards religious education not as a study of divine revelation but as a reflection of the nature of society.¹⁹ The Government enforces no policy but leaves decisions on syllabi to local education authorities, giving advice only.

Truth thus yields to opinion and taste in a secular community which, at best, gives half-hearted recognition to its Christian roots whilst happily acquiescing in its multi-faith composition. The result is written large

17 Cited by Philip E Johnson *Darwin on Trial* (Downers Grove: IVP 1993) p 178

18 See the remarks of Lady Olga Maitland, Mr Harry Greenway and Dr Robert Spink *Hansard* 16 July 1992 columns 1244 -1251

19 This view is expressed in the remarks with which Mr Eric Forth, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools, concluded a Commons debate on religious education *Hansard* 16 July 1992 column 1254

across our daily newspapers and TV screens; social depravity multiplies unchecked whilst bureaucracy busies itself bearing down on minor technical infringements of environmental pollution laws. It strains at a gnat and swallows a camel.

Religious education which takes its starting point from ever-changing contemporary attitudes, intellectual and social, has no lasting power. This is the weakness of liberalism and was the cause of the demise of the Student Christian Movement.²⁰ Christianity, if not wholly discounted, is at best reduced, in the words of Kurt Schmidt, to 'an enlightened religion for passing on humanistic civilization's values, reaching its climax in etiquette and morality, in science and culture'.²¹ It is no more than one among many religions; religion is one among many areas of culture; the Bible is one among many religious texts all equally human and none free from error. Such a parody of truth fails entirely to generate in students the distinctives of the Christ-life; indeed, distinctives are eschewed; we want to be like the nations (1 Sam 8:20).

Theological Education

The desire to conform to current intellectual fashion carries over into theological training. Theological researchers and students properly pursue theological insights but the pursuit is diverted into blind alleys as soon as the goal of knowing God is replaced by the goal of recognition by secular philosophers and academics whose methodology is therefore emulated. The pride of academic achievement, Lloyd-Jones reminds us, makes men wiser than God.²² It panders to the insidious temptation for human reason to regard itself as more reliable than the word of God.²³

This desire for conformity is in part a surrender to the determination of the secular world to press us into its own mould (Rom 12:2, Phillips). That determination takes the form of Government insistence on its assumed right to prescribe the place and nature of religious education in schools and to exercise controls over the character and standards of theological education. That secular influence, far from being resisted, is welcomed by church leaders and educators anxious for intellectual respectability. That, Lloyd-Jones warns, spells trouble in our faith.²⁴ Paul Bowers, whose skills in theological accreditation are internationally recognised, has rightly said '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

20 Geraint Fielder *Lord of the Years* (Leicester: IVP 1988)

21 Kurt Dietrich Schmidt *Kirkensgeschichte* 4th edition 1963 p 269

22 Iain Murray *D Martin Lloyd-Jones Vol II The Fight of Faith* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust 1990) pp 597, 607-8

23 D A Streater, letter to members of Church Society October 1993

24 Iain Murray *D Martin Lloyd-Jones Vol II The Fight of Faith* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust 1990) p 608

Churchman

wish to hear more voices where it counts sounding an effective alarm in this regard'. He adds 'the eagerness for recognition too easily passes into a perverting lust', and again, 'the temptation lurks to pursue recognition in careless disregard of biblically determined quality;...focusing only on traditional norms of quality is subversive of genuinely effective theological education'.²⁵

Bowers is not alone. The International Council of Accrediting Agencies has stated that we are at fault in that 'we so readily allow our bearings to be set for us...by secular rationales or by sterile traditions'.²⁶

Not only do we fail to act but there are among Evangelicals voices which place the western secular mind-set on a pedestal. Mark A Noll urges Christians to work within a western secular framework, to aspire for western secular recognition and even to aim for Nobel prizes.²⁷ Noll's call to Christians to use their minds is timely; moreover there are secular areas of study in which Christians can and do shine. Academic and experiential success in the secular world ought to be one of the qualifications for ministry. Nevertheless Noll fails to recognise that the western secular cognitive thinking style is shot through with faith in autonomous human reason; the 'truths' it develops must always be partial; neither its methodology nor its conclusions are appropriate in the area of sacred education and are deficient in other areas especially science and history. Learning in many areas and especially in theology must be illuminated by the Holy Spirit or it cannot but be clouded by the limitations of human reason and its metaphysical presuppositions which direct man's search to what 'must be true' and away from truth which denies those presuppositions. The result is that the secular mind is in practice untrue to itself. It abandons its own rules of evidence if they lead to conclusions inconsistent with its world-view. A professor of law, Philip Johnson, has demonstrated at some length that a wide area of science is based on conclusions built on prejudice and bereft of proof when tested by accepted rules of evidence used in courts of law.²⁸ His methodology could be applied with equally devastating effect to areas he has not yet tackled.

If theological study is the means for preparing Christ's ministers, we ought to be questioning the continued pursuit of its already suffocating integration into mainline academia. The falsities progressively generated

25 Paul Bowers 'Accreditation as a Catalyst for Renewal in Theological Education' *Evangelical Theological Education Today, 2 Agenda for Renewal*, P Bowers ed(Nairobi: Evangel Publishing House 1982) pp 31, 36, 38

26 'Manifesto of the International Council of Accrediting Agencies' *Theological News* (Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Fellowship April - June 1984)

27 Mark A Noll 'The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind' *Christianity Today* (Des Moines 25 October 1993). His book, with the same title, is published by IVP Leicester.

28 Philip E Johnson *Darwin on Trial* (Downers Grove: IVP 1993)

by a prejudiced humanistic culture can be exposed only by the liberation of sacred education from secularist restraint and preconception and by regulating theological study with biblically defensible structures and controls. The world shows no inclination to undermine its own roots; their natural product is liberalism in theology. We cannot justify prolonging the process of suffering its effects. Michael Green, advisor on evangelism to the Archbishop of Canterbury, recently remarked that during the past forty years congregations have suffered in silence liberal beliefs imposed on them by an academic and social elite. Authentic Christianity, he said, is not an abstraction but a living person who changes us.²⁹ The elite to whom he refers favour centralised official control of all education including religious and theological. The end of that road has been demonstrated in Communist countries but is in sight also in secularised western democracies. Eta Linnemann has exposed the disastrous effects of the control exercised by the German state universities over pastoral and theological training in Germany.³⁰ Carl Henry sees the secularisation of theology in western countries as a significant factor in the twilight of our civilisation and the dawn of the era when men will not tolerate sound teaching but will surround themselves with a multiplicity of those who teach what their itching ears want to hear (2 Tim 4:3). What they hear is believed because of the sheer power of the delusion.³¹

The Non-Western Mind

Western text books, educational theory and secular philosophy have been widely adopted in non-western countries during the twentieth century. Nevertheless cognitive thinking styles in many of those countries retain, in varying degrees, much that is culturally traditional. Consequently their people view western thought with a non-western mind. Their evangelical theologians are critical of the western church's espousal of the sterile secularism spawned by the Enlightenment and the Renaissance, which, writes a Kenyan, 'deposited a Euro-Hellenistic intellectualistic and scientific tradition'.³²

Most non-western traditional cognitive thinking styles contrast with western conceptualism by being anthropocentric, event-oriented and field dependent. They have a distinctly transcendent, spiritual and theological element. Professor T A Lambo, distinguished Nigerian psychologist formerly of the World Health Organisation, said of African peoples that their awareness of man transcendent is as effective as their awareness of

29 Michael Green, speech at Evangelical Alliance annual evangelistic conference December 1993 reported in *E A Snapshot* (Evangelical Alliance January 1994) p 2

30 Eta Linnemann *Historical Criticism of the Bible, Methodology or Ideology?* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House 1990) pp 8, 12 et al

31 Carl F Henry *Twilight of a Great Civilization* (Crossway 1988)

32 Joshua Obuhatsa unpublished paper 1994. I am indebted to him for a number of ideas and sources cited in this article.

Churchman

man empirical or rational. They know the power of supernatural agencies. The individual African focuses, not on his own autonomy, but on persons, the community, and spirits and their operations. The individual thinks with the group and, with them, recognises the superior power of spirits. This communication rules out individual rational autonomy, but does not prevent the individual from projecting his emotions into situations and becoming suspicious. The unwritten rules of the community control the individual's life and provide his security. However, his whole personality is disturbed when he is schooled in an imported western educational system; its permissiveness places a psychological strain on his traditional disciplines resulting in social disintegration and the sacrifice of socially inherited ways and values.³³

Dr Ociiti is speaking with the same voice when he says that, in African traditional education, individual freedom was completely subordinated to the interests of the clan or tribe; individualism was alien to African societies.³⁴

Much of this is true throughout the non-western world and affects the non-western view of western theology. Non-western evangelical theologians met in Seoul in 1982 and critiqued western theology in these words:

Western theology is by and large rationalistic, moulded by western philosophies, preoccupied with intellectual concerns, especially those having to do with faith and reason. All too often it has reduced the Christian faith to abstract concepts.... It has...been conformed to the secularist world-view associated with the Enlightenment.... Evangelical theology must be released from its captivity to the individualism and rationalism of western theology in order to allow the word of God to work with full power. Many of the problems of our churches are, in part, the result of this type of theology. Consequently we insist on the need for critical reflection and theological renewal.... The theological task must be done under the constant operation of the Holy Spirit.... We have concertedly committed ourselves to building our theology on the inspired and infallible word of God, under the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, through the illumination of the Holy Spirit. Those of us in Africa will have to take seriously the traditional African world-view, the reality of the spirit world, the competing ideologies, the resurgence of Islam and the contemporary cultural, religious and political struggles.³⁵

33 This paragraph is based on my notes of a discussion with Professor T A Lambo OBE,MD,FRCP in Abeokuta in 1961

34 J P Ociiti *African Indigenous Education among the Acholi of Uganda* (Nairobi: EALB 1973) p 92

35 Extracted from the Seoul Declaration as published in *Evangelical Review of Theology* Issue 1 of 1983

It will be noted that the dominance of autonomous reason is not universal. Our ministers in training need to be brought face to face with a world and its population which, for all its differences, is an integrated phenomenon under a God who is spatially immanent but ontologically transcendent and who alone legitimises values. If we have the courage to take it, the opportunity exists to develop a genuine sacred education starkly contrasting the secular in virtually every respect. If we miss the opportunity, western secularism will continue to undermine and ultimately invalidate the sacred.

Sacred and Secular

In Scripture the world (the secular) and the people of God (the sacred) are always in tension. They are irreconcilable in nature, methods and objectives. Western secular education aims to meet the temporal needs of the local or national community as assessed by the secular authority. The World Bank regards people as human capital; education's function is to train the workforce for the maximization of economic growth and productivity.³⁶ Sacred education, on the other hand, aims to provoke submission to God and to mature a divinely created new nature possessing a personal and spiritual knowledge of God, which is not open to challenge on merely rational grounds and is accompanied by a passion to obey him and by divine, supra-rational wisdom with his power to lead others, through repentance toward God and trust in him (and hence in his word), into the same new nature, knowledge, passion and wisdom. In secular education that which is not temporal is not relevant; God is an unnecessary hypothesis. In sacred education 'that which is not eternal is eternally out of date' (C S Lewis); 'all that is not God is death' (George Macdonald). The products of secular education must be marketable; those of sacred education must be holy. Secular education targets the individual mind and its academic achievement. Sacred education targets the family within the community as whole persons (spirit, mind and body) with a view to spiritual, moral and intellectual maturity expressed in consciousness of the sovereign presence of God and in holy living in private and public, in family and community. Secular education succeeds when it produces experts to whom we feel obliged to assent; they are the priesthood of our society. Sacred education succeeds when it produces examples whom we know we should emulate; they reflect the God who humbled himself and became obedient to death on a cross.

Secular education focuses on natural phenomena. Sacred education focuses on relationships, first with God, then with fellow human beings. Secular education is developed in an ivory tower where a spouse and

36 John Ashcroft and Catherine Barber, referring to a World Bank report on education in sub-Saharan Africa, *Christian Principles for the Educational Structure* (Cambridge: Jubilee Centre 1989) p 8

Churchman

family would be disruptive. Sacred education thrives in the real life situations which test its application. It belongs in the humble simplicity of the manger, Gethsemane, Calvary, the garden tomb and today's slums and war-torn areas. Secular education is shaped and standardised by its own criteria, by official recognition, by state legislation, by professional accreditation. Sacred education develops its criteria from the inspired word of God and its application to the spiritual and moral needs of the church and of the world to which the church must testify of Christ. It is accredited by the demonstration of the grace and power of God in the lives of its pupils (Acts 4:13; 1 Cor 2:1-5). Secular education selects its faculty and students largely on the grounds of previous academic achievement and on the standing, recognition or accreditation of the institutions the candidate has attended. Sacred education selects on the basis of the candidate's total person, the prime emphasis being on the quality of his or her faith, life and relationships along with the development of the mind and its proven knowledge and ability.

Above all and foundational to all, sacred education is distinguished from secular education by the recognised superiority of divine revelation over all possible alternative sources of knowledge, whether autonomous reason or revelation, real or alleged, from any source other than the only wise God. Secular education springs from the rational concepts of the fallen human mind and its prejudices whilst sacred education has its source in the word of God, illuminated and built into our characters by the Holy Spirit. The hidden agenda of sacred education is the transformation of whole persons – mind, will, behaviour, attitudes and relationships in the family and the community.

Secular education does not have the means to produce morality. Hannerford rightly says that reason alone cannot produce morality which presupposes belief and commitment.³⁷ Kohlberg, whose widely applied theory of moral education advocates rational autonomy, himself changed his view and admitted that indoctrination (teaching the content and language of morality) was fundamental to the process of moral education.³⁸

The compulsion of a moral code depends on its appeal to absolute truth and absolute authority. Sacred education consistently bows to the divine court of final jurisdiction and absolute judgment. Reason is humbled, exalted and enlightened by recognition of its own limits and by that

37 A Hannerford 'Autonomy, Moral Language, Ethical Neutrality in Education' *Personal, Social and Moral Education in a Changing World* J Thacker, R Pring, D Evans edd (England: NFER-Nelson) p 98

38 As reported by Priestley in *Comic Role or Cosmic Vision? Religious Education and the Teaching of Values* J Thacker, R Pring, D Evans, edd (England: NFER-Nelson) p 116

divinely generated conviction which confers a certainty of truth impossible both to autonomous reason and to blind faith. That certainty is centred not on what is known but on who is known (2 Tim 1:12). That knowledge is available to all (John 1:9) on God's terms. Reason itself tells us that its infinitely sovereign Creator is well able to remain beyond the apprehension of those who do not meet his terms. His self-revelation is controlled in heaven, not in human minds. Calvin points out that:

as God alone can properly bear witness to his own words, so these words will not obtain full credit in the hearts of men until they are sealed by the inward testimony of the Spirit. The same Spirit, therefore, who spoke by the mouth of the prophets must penetrate our hearts in order to convince us that they faithfully delivered the message with which they were divinely intrusted.³⁹

Light, then, is valueless without sight; inspiration is silent without illumination. Without illumination we have no knowledge of God and our vision of ourselves is at best clouded. The truth about God and ourselves may be read in the Bible but its force cannot penetrate us except by divine illumination. 'Since we cannot know ourselves,' writes Pascal, 'until we have submitted to God and we cannot submit to God without knowing ourselves there is a vicious circle broken only when God simultaneously instils eternal truth into our minds with reasoned argument and into our hearts with grace.'⁴⁰

The Holy Spirit's illumination of the inspired word, conveying the knowledge of Christ, is the only sure wisdom, the only conviction of absolute truth and hence the only foundation for true morality. Secular education cannot produce a valid substitute.

Reason Harnessed to be Free

Reason's greatest achievement, then, is the recognition of its own limits and particularly its inability to unmask its own Creator. When in grace he reveals himself to those who submit we must still join T F Torrance in admitting that

God . . . infinitely transcends all that we can think or say about him. . . . By its very nature . . . Christian faith is locked in an inexhaustible depth of truth in God which always exceeds what we may grasp of its revelation to us.⁴¹

39 John Calvin *Institutes of the Christian Religion* trans Henry Beveridge (London: James Clarke and Co Ltd 1949) Vol I p 72

40 Pascal *Pensées* trans A J Kraitsheimer (Penguin 1966) paragraphs 131, 172

41 T F Torrance *The Open Texture of Faith and Godliness in the Church's Confession* p 145

Torrance's insights are important. He writes:

...in faith we have to do with a way of apprehending God which does not confine him within the narrow limits of what we can conceive or express but is constantly being expanded under the power of God to make himself known.

That puts the initiative with God, not with the theological lecturer. Torrance continues:

...in the very act of apprehending something of God, faith is bound to confess the truth that it is incapable of comprehending him....In and through faith theology is engaged in a fathomless enquiry.... We are constrained by the error of others to err ourselves in the dangerous attempt to set forth in human speech what ought to be kept in the religious awe of our own minds....God is utterly ineffable and incomprehensible to us for his divine greatness and majesty infinitely exceed the capacity of human beings to know and describe him in his own nature. God...infinitely exceeds the resources of human thought or speech.⁴²

Knowledge is rational, empirical or spiritual. All humans have spirits and relate to one another on a level which involves the spirit. 'What man knows the things of a man save the spirit of man which is in him?' (1 Cor 2:11). At the same time it is true that the natural man 'does not receive the things of the Spirit of God for they are foolishness to him, nor can he know them because they are spiritually discerned'(v 14). The initiative, again, is with God, as Isaiah had long before declared (Isaiah 40:13). After citing Isaiah Paul adds the stupendous truth that those set apart in Christ have the mind of Christ although in our carnality we fail to mature that mind and so think and act like secular worldlings (1 Cor 2:16-3:20). The mind of Christ is not acquired by cerebral theology but by submission to the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit who witnesses with our spirit that we are the children of God (Rom 8:16). We know God, not just about God. Only by our knowing him can our reason be harnessed by the Holy Spirit and directed towards what Schaeffer calls 'true truth', truth which heals, corrects and unifies all that is genuine in the areas of the rational, the empirical, the personal and the spiritual. Lacking this personal, spiritual knowledge of God, theologising is a vain exercise of autonomous reason.

Western secular reason has closed the door to the spiritual and hence to the integration of all truth. The autonomous human mind cannot tolerate

42 T F Torrance *The Open Texture of Faith and Godliness in the Church's Confession* pp 146, 148, 153

ultimate truth. Only the Spirit of God opens the mind to truth in its real sense, especially the truth in and about Jesus glorified and returning (John 16:12–15). The Spirit of God is ‘the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees him nor knows him’ (John 14:17).

Divine Initiative and Human Response

Since the world cannot receive the Holy Spirit, in whom alone true wisdom is to be found, the initiative rests with the Holy Spirit; we are dependent on the grace of God. Pascal is right to say that only grace in the heart can prompt the admission by the reason that it ought to submit.⁴³ Acting in sovereign grace the Holy Spirit convicts of sin, dramatically turning our attention away from hitherto felt needs, physical and social in character, to a new and more urgent sense of our need of pardon, justification and reconciliation to the God we have ignored. This new conviction sets all that is physical, social and rational in a new context in which we begin to discern the extent to which we have used our reasons to camouflage our passions and prejudices. Pascal also makes that point.⁴⁴

Conviction does not save. It calls for a response of faith. Saving faith is a radical shift away from a centre of thinking within the in-turned human reason, alienated from its intelligible ground in God, to a new centre in God’s revealing and reconciling activity in the incarnation of his Mind and Word (Logos) in Jesus Christ within the temporal and spatial structures of our creaturely world. Grace alone makes that radical shift possible. It is neither taught nor learnt in the classroom. Faith is indeed an objectively grounded persuasion of the mind but it is defective unless it is supported beyond itself by the objective reality of God’s own being revealed to us in Jesus Christ by the operation of the Holy Spirit. Such God-given faith alone puts us in touch with reality independent of ourselves; our minds, thus freed from the darkness of autonomy, are open to that independent reality; but, being designed by the Source of reality, they assent to the intelligibility of things; they yield to the self-evidencing power of truth revealed by inspiration and illumination. This basic grace-and-faith contact with reality is the only foundation of sure knowledge and genuine understanding. Theological enquiry without that foundation is vain, for God alone is the ultimate ground of all intelligibility and truth. We believe in order to understand. Faith is not a non-cognitive or even non-conceptual relation to God; it involves very basic, intuitive acts of recognition, apprehension, conception and responsible assent to the truth inherent in God’s self-revelation to his human creatures. Nevertheless faith is generated by the creative impact upon us of God’s self-witness and self-interpretation in inspired Scripture; the claims of God’s divine reality are communicated to us with a spiritual power which we cannot in good conscience resist. We have no authority to think of God in any way

43 Pascal *Pensées* trans A J Kraitsheimer (Penguin 1966) paragraph 174

44 Pascal *Pensées* trans A J Kraitsheimer (Penguin 1966) paragraphs 174 and 418

but as he is presented in the Scriptures and only the Holy Spirit can mediate scriptural truth to us with irresistible power. In Hilary's terse summary, God cannot be apprehended except through himself.⁴⁵

These considerations should be enough to satisfy us that theological education and research are genuine only if they repose on a right relationship with God through faith. Truth is known through godliness. No theological formulation has validity unless it recognises that God is 'more to be adored than expressed'.⁴⁶ As Pascal points out, truth is no earthly denizen; it is at home in heaven, lying in the lap of God and known by man only to the extent that God is pleased to reveal it. It is inevitably believed when God so inclines the heart and equally inevitably doubted until he does. The divine activity of inclining the heart always magnifies Jesus Christ as the only valid revelation of God (Matt 11:27). At the same time that divine activity is inextricably related to our genuine seeking.

To seek God is to submit. Biblical faith is rational submission to God. That is neither submission to reason nor defiance of reason; it is response to God who reveals and makes rational that which is otherwise beyond reason. God gives faith as the supra-rational means to receive wisdom and truth which lie beyond the limits of fallen human reason. Christ himself, in person, becomes to the submissive individual wisdom, truth and light. He makes robust good sense to a mind taken over by the Holy Spirit.⁴⁷ This God-given wisdom is faith objectively grounded in the God who is and who has spoken in a normative revelation. It is not subjectively grounded in human feeling, prejudice or intellectual persuasion. It carries a divine certainty which excludes divergent belief and rejects contrary affirmations. It moulds the mind in godliness which, being the expression of the presence of the Holy Spirit, is a directive force in all sound doctrine and theology. Godliness is faith and truth incarnate in God's children. To theologise without godliness is a prescription for error. The indivisible Christ cannot be made to us wisdom without at the same time being made to us righteousness, sanctification and redemption (1 Cor 1:30). True wisdom cannot be isolated from righteousness.

Outside a personal, living knowledge of Christ, all absolute proof, even of the very existence of God, becomes impossible to human initiative. All apologetic argument is open to counter argument. Sound doctrine is equally impossible since God has been pleased to appoint Jesus Christ as the only channel by which truth can flow from God to man. He is truth (John 14:6).

45 Hilary *De Trinitate* 5: 20f cited by T F Torrance *The Open Texture of Faith and Godliness in the Church's Confession*. This paragraph is indebted to Torrance.

46 T F Torrance *The Open Texture of Faith and Godliness in the Church's Confession* p 154

47 Distilled from Pascal *Pensées* trans A J Kraitsheimer (Penguin 1966) paragraphs 131, 141, 380, 751, 173, 149

He is the word of God (John 1:1, 4). He is wisdom (1 Cor 1:24). He is the one absolute in a relativistic world. In him alone reason and experience are reconciled and we are made whole and by the maturation of that wholeness fitted to be his ministers. Where that is the true priority of ministerial training we may endorse Bruce Nicholls in stating that 'spiritual development is the primary goal of theological education'.⁴⁸

Implications for Sacred Education

In western countries our ministerial candidates have been nurtured in a society shaped by materialism, hedonism and modern scientific technology and its naturalistic assumptions. Western education's frame of reference lacks a coherent system of metaphysical and axiological epistemology. Significantly Kleinig, without confessing any personal commitment, has concluded that pupils should be taught *in* their religion rather than *about* religions but this is manifestly not happening.⁴⁹ Academic disciplines comprise teaching and learning about their various subjects within the prevailing naturalistic framework. That is the situation rejected by developing world theologians in affirming that 'theology as a purely academic discipline is something we must neither pursue nor import'. In theory, though not yet in practice, they see the church, not the ivory tower, as the hermeneutical community and the witness of the Holy Spirit as the key to the comprehension of the word of God.⁵⁰

Jenson agrees that it is the church which must pursue God's action in the world, taking full responsibility for the training of its own ministers. Modernity (modern secularism), he says, is a dying force; the church must face the new necessities mandated in that death.⁵¹ Certainly the church must teach *about* modernity but not *in* it. The framework must be divine revelation within which we study to understand the world's mould without being pressed into it or wedded to it. The longer the church remains wedded to secularism through failure to provide genuinely sacred education at all levels, the greater the certainty that the church will find herself in a common grave with modern secularism. Much current theological training adulterates the pupil's understanding of God's word by the wisdom of this world which has moulded western thought and culture. The church, for the sake of its members and of the world outside waiting to be won for Christ, urgently requires ministers moulded to the culture of heaven and equipped as ambassadors of the gospel addressed explicitly by God to all the world and every creature.

48 Bruce J Nicholls 'The Role of Spiritual Development in Theological Education', *Evangelical Theological Education Today*, 2 *Agenda for Renewal* P Bowers ed (Nairobi: Evangel Publishing House 1982) p 25

49 John Kleinig *Philosophical Issues in Education* (Routledge 1984) p 28

50 The Seoul Declaration as published in *Evangelical Review of Theology* Issue 1 of 1983

51 Robert W Jenson 'How the World Lost its Story' *First Times* October 1993 p 24

How then should we train? Brian Hill and John Dean remind us that Christ taught his first twelve apprentice ambassadors by a mixture of reflection and action. The Master taught; the pupils enquired. There was no group sharing of opinions. This Master-apprentice relationship creates its own succession (2 Tim 2:2). The lecturer-class relationship is normally overweighted with reflection with insufficient action. The value of the master-apprentice relationship depends on the spiritual maturity of the master in an experimental faith which is firstly rooted in a personal relationship with Christ and a knowledge of him through the inspired and illuminated Scriptures received by grace through faith, a faith secondly in a state of continuous development, a faith thirdly exhibited in a consistent Christian life-style in home and family as well as amongst the people of God and in public testimony.⁵²

Bruce Nicholls makes two necessary and complementary points when he says, on the one hand, that 'spiritual growth takes place in the acquisition of a cognitive knowledge of Scripture' and, on the other hand, that 'acquiring knowledge of the content of Scripture is no guarantee of spiritual growth'.⁵³ Judas Iscariot was apprenticed to the Word of life who lived, breathed and fulfilled Scripture but, as he affirmed, his pupils needed the Holy Spirit to lead them into all truth and Judas never submitted to that need.

The apprenticeship model was faithfully adopted by Paul and has been commended today by Tokunboh Adeyemo, Bruce Nicholls and others.⁵⁴ It was the educational model traditionally used in African societies in which religion with its moral obligations permeated all aspects of community life. It was the adhesive binding together the meaning and purpose of education. It sanctioned and legitimised instruction in values. The notion that education can be purely cerebral would be unintelligible in such communities. Kleinig moves a step towards this non-western view of education when he writes, 'cognitive development must not only transform the knower and the knower's understanding of the world but also enable the knower to transform the world around him or her'.⁵⁵ A truly educated person is more than merely knowledgeable. He or she acts in God-given freedom to give conscious, reflective obedience to duly constituted authority. Such a person knows that true truth is not the product of the science and culture industry. True truth is light; the light

52 Distilled from John Dean's summary of a lecture by Dr Brian Hill at United Biblical Seminary, Puna, India, published in *Asia Challenge*.

53 Bruce J Nicholls 'The Role of Spiritual Development in Theological Education' *Evangelical Theological Education Today, 2 Agenda for Renewal* P Bowers ed (Nairobi: Evangel Publishing House 1982) p 18

54 Adeyemo and Nicholls *Evangelical Theological Education Today, 2 Agenda for Renewal* P Bowers ed (Nairobi: Evangel Publishing House 1982) pp 7, 22, 23

55 John Kleinig *Philosophical Issues in Education* (Routledge 1984) p 19

which enlightens every man who comes into the world is never culture bound nor is it confined within the paltry limits of human reason (John 1:9). That is the light by which we are to walk (Eph 5:8) That light, that truth, is both divine and human. It cannot be expressed in exclusively conceptual format; conceptual systematisation depersonalises that which has no extra-personal existence; it isolates that which has no meaning when it stands alone; it petrifies that which evaporates when removed from its living context; it fragments that which has no reality except in its wholeness. The extraction of concepts from their God-based and person-centred essence spawns absurd non-questions such as 'Did God create sin?' The practice of divorcing the conceptual from the personal or the particular from the general throws up conflicting conclusions each isolated in the dungeon of its own autonomy.

True knowledge springs only from knowing Christ. Pascal, a mathematician, wrote, 'To know Christ is ultimately to know the reason for everything'. From this starting point, Pascal declared, knowledge is based on the word of God 'without which we know nothing and to which our reason must first submit'.⁵⁶ Torrance is saying the same in averring that Christ himself must constitute the controlling centre in all right interpretation of the Scriptures.⁵⁷ The Scriptures fuel the fear of God, the only agent of the maturation of wisdom (Job 28:28; Psalm 111:10; Prov 1:7; 9:10). To bow to the personal, living, present God is to be illuminated with wisdom; moral commands have absolute force because they come from him; in his presence we know and follow the good and eschew evil. God-given wisdom is not evidenced by examination answers but by right conduct, pure behaviour, meekness, justice and a love which promotes the maturation and sanctification of others.

Wisdom recognises that research into the profundities of God is the sole prerogative of the Holy Spirit; it would be a vain exercise for any mere mortal but for the fact that God graciously promises to the regenerate the impartation of the Spirit and his wisdom so that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God, things unintelligible and even foolish to the lost.

Theological and ministerial education's proper concern is the discernment of this God-given mind of the Spirit and its development along with that of the power demonstrated by the Spirit in producing conviction of sin, righteousness and judgment in men and women. This mind and this power are ministered by Christ through the inspired and illuminated word received in the fear of God. Paul's first concern for the churches to which he wrote was not for their physical or material well-being or career success; it was, as

56 Pascal *Pensées* trans A J Kraitsheimer (Penguin 1966) paragraphs 449, 417, 424

57 Torrance *The Open Texture of Faith and Godliness in the Church's Confession* p 151

seen in his recorded prayers for them, that they might be given wisdom, revelation, experimental knowledge both of God and also of the riches of the glory of his inheritance, the greatness of the divine power that raised Jesus from the dead, and the love that both exceeds and generates knowledge. For Paul, understanding was not a product of the education of an autonomous mind, but a gift of God capable of healthy development only in submission to God. Paul well knew that man's perverted will was bent on following his own devices (Jer 18:12). Our proud human concepts are entirely out of tune with the Bible's one continuous person-and-place-centred story of God working in grace and faithfulness to woo rebel humans into new relationships with himself and hence with each other. Torrance writes:

the Scriptures... as the inspired product of the Holy Spirit...have to be investigated and interpreted in accordance with their divine character...in a reverent and religious way, in the realisation that they have a 'superhuman' depth of meaning which does not admit of quick understanding. By their very nature, then, the Scriptures call for long study, meditation and prayer and for hard labour.⁵⁸

True theology starts in the Scriptures. The discovery of their wisdom, truth and power is the greatest need in the training of God's ministers.

Morality

Spiritual wisdom is inextricably interrelated with righteousness, both judicial and behavioural. Without Christ we have only the wisdom of this world and self-generated righteousness which is filthy rags in God's eyes. In Christ we have spiritual wisdom and God-given righteousness; nor can we have one without the other. Their interdependence is implicit throughout Scripture and explicit in a number of places (eg Dan 12:3; Hos 14:9; 1 Cor 1:30). That is not to say that morality is dependent on the cognitive ability to explain principles of behaviour; nor is it true that some understanding of morality coupled with a resolution to behave morally produces righteousness. Rather, the biblical position is that it is solely by the living mediation of the Holy Spirit of Christ that sound morality, such as gives heavenly beauty to earthly humans, is possible. The same mediation imparts wisdom to trust the revealed word and to seek a growing understanding of it. Greer, Dykstra and Priestley argue that religion must underpin morality because religion entails a special kind of perception which brings the soul in touch with God through genuine worship and gives a vision in which morality and religion meet; they hold that morality and theology must therefore go hand in hand.⁵⁹

58 Torrance *The Open Texture of Faith and Godliness in the Church's Confession* p 151

59 Priestley *Comic Role or Cosmic Vision? Religious Education and the Teaching of Values* J Thacker, R Pring, D Evans edd (England: NFER-Nelson) p 113

Neither morality nor theology can properly be taught alone. To attempt to teach morality divorced from divine revelation is to rob the learner of his or her ultimate source of grace and power to live morally. To teach theology and to neglect its moral power is to deny the goodness and holiness of God.

Morality has an essentially committed nature. Values can be meaningfully discussed only from a committed viewpoint. Ashcroft and Barber point out that communication of knowledge occurs within the content of a value system; knowledge cannot be envisaged or communicated without the acquisition of values.⁶⁰ The Schools Council Humanities Project, 1970, recognised that fundamental beliefs and commitments are crucial to moral vocabulary. Teaching morality without commitment to it in life gains no credence from pupils. In the same way, cerebral theological education is sterile if not wedded to moral development in the soil of spiritual maturation in Christ as the only foundation of wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.

Conclusion

In a particular western state – anonymity is prudent – the most vibrant denomination has its own official theological school training ministers and awarding them theological degrees. However, the vibrancy of the church owes nothing to that school. The ministers of two churches of the denomination have an independent school operating within the buildings and life of their churches; they train ministers and offer them nothing but a letter of recommendation. A majority of churches of the denomination within that state, when looking for a minister or assistant minister, ask for a candidate from the unofficial church-based school where the emphasis is on spiritual formation, the Bible and the effective transmission of the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit and where the curriculum, from start to finish, involves participation in the life and ministry of the two administering churches. For this training no grants are available from the denomination or from the Government.

Dr Tokunboh Adeyemo of the World Evangelical Fellowship has called upon modern theological institutions to consider with care a shift from the familiar formal structures to an informal academic structure.⁶¹ It may be that theological institutions may find the challenge too great and that the future lies more with courageous men of God like the ministers of the two churches mentioned above. Men moved by God achieve more than organisations or committees; those who can carry their congregations with them will surely find themselves in the line of blessing.

60 John Ashcroft and Catherine Barber, referring to a World Bank report on education in sub-Saharan Africa, *Christian Principles for the Educational Structure* (Cambridge: Jubilee Centre 1989) pp 7, 9

61 Tokunboh Adeyemo 'The Renewal of Evangelical Theological Education' *Evangelical Theological Education Today, 2 Agenda for Renewal* P Bowers ed (Nairobi: Evangel Publishing House 1982) p 8

Churchman

If no such men arise, and our ministerial training continues to be sterilised by its secular associations, the people of God will continue to lose their distinctives and to be assimilated into a world in which 'anything goes' provided it does not outrage fundamental secular rationalism. If, on the other hand, we begin to provide a distinctive theological and sacred education rooted in spiritual conviction and personal knowledge of Christ ministered through the Scriptures, that education will restore to the church the right and power to lead the world into a new era in which parents will begin to demand for their children an education freed from its current bondage to humanistic naturalism. The tables will be turned when the world wants to be cast in Christ's mould.

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