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Latin America to participate in a debate between three Liberation Theologians ... and little Jaime Ortiz. Planners arranged the schedule so the several hours of debate would immediately precede election of officers for the accrediting association.

Jaime accepted the challenge and argued against his three opponents. In the course of Jaime's argument he began to show the intensity of his belief in the authority of God's Word, the priority of evangelism, and [p. 173](#) our responsibility to see that every man, woman, boy, and girl in Latin America has a chance to accept Jesus Christ as personal Saviour, experience His forgiveness and change in their lives.

When Jaime sat down, a man on the other side of the room said, 'The only reason you say that is because you've been bought with the dollars of the gringos.'

And Jaime pulled himself up to his full five foot stature and said, 'I say that not because I've been bought with the dollars of the gringos, but because I've been bought with the blood of Jesus Christ.'

Two hours later, Jaime Ortiz was elected president of the accrediting association of schools in the northern region of Latin America. Jaime has turned organization all the way around so that now it is being used to encourage evangelical scholarship in seminaries all over northern Latin America, to encourage young men and women to study the scriptures, to encourage professors to study God's Word and teach it boldly.

It can be done. Circumstances can change. The tide that's sweeping through Latin America can be stopped. Not just stopped, but can be turned. And that liberation movement that brings untold suffering to people throughout Latin America can be turned into blessing and power and joy and peace as the Holy Spirit of God sweeps through Latin America and establishes the kingdom of God in the hearts of men through conversion to Jesus Christ and the power of His Holy Spirit. Believe with us that God is not through with Latin America yet.

Ray Hundley serves with OMS International in Colombia, South America. [p. 174](#)

Theological Education: Is it Out of Practice?

Brian V. Hill

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This article is based on a lecture delivered to the Faculty of Union Biblical Seminary, Pune, India.

Theological education has a long pedigree reaching back through the centuries. It certainly pre-dates the development of studies into the teaching process as such, and may have something to learn from current educational theorizing and research. My thesis in this article will be that much theological education is 'out of this world', especially in the scant attention paid to experiences in the field. I will attribute this to some unfortunate

historical legacies, suggest some biblical correctives, and then propose some relevant educational strategies for those convinced of the need for reform.

I do so as one who is a layman to theologians, though professionally a trained teacher and philosopher of education. For most of those who write on theological education, the boot is on the other foot. I hope that the feedback I am giving from my side of the communion rail may be thought to have some relevance, since the products of theological training are called to minister to the *Laos* of God, and it is on this behalf that I speak.

UNFORTUNATE HISTORICAL LEGACIES

Historically speaking, theological education has largely been synonymous with the training of the clergy, viewed as a specially set-apart cadre in the church of God. A medieval view of the clergy has persisted into our time, leading us to think of the pastor of a church as a professional solo-performer, gathering up into himself all the functions scripturally identified with the 'gifts of the Spirit'. He is the shepherd; his congregation are the sheep, respectful of his office and submissive to his command. This has held us back from recognizing how extensive are the spiritual resources which lie buried in the average congregation, and the services which theological colleges should be extending to all the *Laos* of God.

A second unfortunate legacy has been the Greek model of [p.175](#) schooling.¹ The Greeks considered the education of upper class youths a matter too important to leave in the charge of the home. Instead, they were sent to schools and advanced academies run by professional teachers. The latter provided the model for the universities which later developed in the west. The Greek curriculum focuses particularly on academic studies in the literary mode, leading in its medieval imitations, to a very book-oriented, classroom-based emphasis on recitation. Along with this went a denigration of manual labour and technology, which were deemed to be the concern of the lower classes, and a disinterest in domestic and family relationships. Despite the demonstration of schooling as preached in the Reformation and hastened by industrialization, the schooling model continues to reflect most of these features, and to influence not only approaches to compulsory education but also learning styles in universities and seminaries.

A more detailed historical analysis than is appropriate here would of course acknowledge many good things in the Greek legacy as well. The Western intellectual tradition owes much to the Greek striving for knowledge, logic and objective reflection, and the founding of many disciplines of thought. But we seem almost to have learnt these lessons too well, to the detriment of the Hebraic side of our cultural tradition, to which I will refer in a moment.

The more unfortunate aspects of these legacies are reflected in the typical theological college in a variety of ways. It is rare, for example, to find lay students—that is, students not proceeding to ordination—in the class. It is equally rare to find colleges offering their courses off campus to facilitate lay participation, or developing specific lay-training courses. The great surge of interest in 'theological education by extension' is a testimony to the existence of a felt need amongst ordinary Christians and constitutes a rebuke both

¹ Useful references include William Barclay, *Educational Ideals in the Ancient World* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Book House, 1974); Kenneth O. Gangel and Murren S. Benson, *Christian Education* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983); Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, one vol. ed. 1981). E. A. Judge, 'The Conflict of Educational Aims in New Testament Thought', *Journal of Christian Education*, vol. 9, June 1966; and Reinhold Niebuhr, 'The Two Sources of Western Culture', in *The Christian Idea of Education*, ed. Edmund Fuller (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957).

to the colleges which have held back from this kind of service, and to the clergy they have produced who do not, or can not, teach their people what they themselves have learnt.

Secondly, most theological seminaries still focus on the standard literary-academic disciplines—Old Testament studies and Hebrew, [p. 176](#) New Testament Studies and Greek, Church History and Missions and Systematic Theology—with low priority and status attached to educational, relational and administrative studies. When the churches are crying out for church leaders who can marshal the diverse gifts and ministries of their congregations, they are being given schoolmen who relate better to books than to people in the midst of life.

Linked with this weakness is the poor integration in training of theory and practice. Field experiences off-campus are often squeezed into extra-curricular time, evaluated less keenly than academic studies, and treated slightly as practical work unrelated to a theoretical rationale.

Again, most theological seminaries for status reasons covet comparison with universities or other tertiary institutions, seeking accreditation within the academic community at the cost of innovations they would like to introduce, because literary-academic criteria tend, in universities, to out-rank field work and clinical experience. The emphasis on achieving graduate standing encourages a concern in the novice clergyman for professional status in the eyes of his people. And since seminaries, like most universities, make it easier for school leavers than mature-age candidates to take their courses, the theological graduate is often deficient in that experience of life which is needed in a leader and pastor.

BIBLICAL CORRECTIVES

The first biblical perspective which I perceive to be relevant to this debate is the metaphor of the Church as a body whose members exhibit and develop a diversity of gifts. This is not, of course, the only metaphor of the Church used in the Bible. But it is significant, as John Stott pointed out fifteen years ago, that whereas images such as the bride of Christ, the vineyard tended by the divine gardener and the flock led by the great Shepherd have clear continuity with the Old Testament, the image of the Body of Christ has no direct Old Testament equivalent.² The priesthood stood in the way of such a metaphor. In the New Testament however, this image is appealed to often, and reference to the development of the gifts of all the *laos* is equally frequent.³

The Greek model of education is ill-fitted to service this ideal of the lay-training Church. It is therefore very significant that Paul's reaction [p. 177](#) to that model is extraordinarily fierce, especially regarding tertiary and adult education. Paul rejects the confinement of the teaching office to paid professionals.⁴ He abhors the accomplishments of the elite graduate, while showing in parody that he can play the same game.⁵ Edwin Judge has proved, more clearly than any other writer, that Paul is seeking to offer a

² John R. Stott, *One People* (London: Falcon Books, 1969), pp. 22–25.

³ See, for example, [Romans 12](#), [1 Cor. 12](#), [Ephesians 4](#), [1 Peter 4](#) and [5](#), 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus.

⁴ [Titus 1:11](#), referring to those who teach, in the KJV's colourful phrase 'for filthy lucre's sake', is a clear warning against copying 'Sophists' of Greek culture.

⁵ This is the force of the inverted 'boasted' passage in [2 Cor. 11:16–12:10](#).

distinctive alternative to the teaching model enshrined in Greek education.⁶ It is one focussing on mutual ministry according to gifts. In such a pattern, the theological graduate is not a solo-performer but a team coach—indeed, a ‘playing coach’—bring each member to peak condition as a fellow minister according to gift.

The second biblical corrective is the Hebraic epistemology or theory of knowledge. In contrast to the intellectualist Greek epistemology, stressing the abstract and objective features of knowledge, the Hebrew concept of knowing integrates thought and experience. As Adam knew Eve, and she conceived ([Gen. 4:1](#)), so we are counselled, using the same Hebrew word *yada* ([Ps. 46:10](#)), to know God both intellectually and experientially. The New Testament makes a similar demand in relation to the concept of belief in God ([James 2:18–19](#)).

This implies a pedagogy of *praxis*:⁷ of reflection followed by action, of learning followed by doing, of theory alternating with practice. Jesus exemplified this in the training of the apostolic team. First came teaching, then the charge to go out on mission, then the ‘de-briefing’ when they returned, coupled with further teaching.

The third biblical corrective is the notion that learning is passed on best within a master-disciple relationship. In contrast to the instructor verbalizing in front of a relatively passive large group, the Bible illustrates constantly the teaching value of a relationship: with parent, prophet or teaching elder. So much is learnt by osmosis and example, like the trade apprentice at the master craftsman’s elbow *as he plies his craft*. The apostolic group comes to mind, as also does the example of Socrates (to make amends to the Greeks for my earlier sweeping generalisations!). Paul depicts the kind of progression in [2 Tim 2:2](#), where Timothy is admonished to pass on to faithful men the things he had learned from Paul, who had learned them from Christ, so that they might teach others. In the divine pedagogy, each learner becomes a teacher. The lecture class mostly lacks the feature of a discipling [p. 178](#) relationship and needs to be supplemented by other teaching methods and learning environment.

The fourth corrective is the teaching that elders should be mature. In the cultural setting of first century Palestine, ‘elders’ were usually older in years as well as in maturity. In today’s changing world, the enduring feature in this is maturity. It rules out assigning major leadership roles to either callow youths or conservative oldsters. Biblical maturity requires three hallmarks: growth and stability in an experiential faith, a developed understanding of Christian beliefs, and a consistently Christian life-style, both domestically and publicly. The maturity criterion is a direct rebuke to our predilection for school-leavers, or, at one remove, young tertiary graduates who have not yet been in the work force.

RELEVANT EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES

Certain educational strategies seem to me to be clearly implied by the foregoing. The first is to *DETERMINE OBJECTIVES BEFORE SUBJECT MATTER*. I know only too well as a university teacher the tyranny of traditional academic priorities and ways of doing things. Most colleagues are very reluctant to look beyond their specialist subject matter and ask what sort of a graduate their professional programme as a whole is meant to produce. Christians cannot let this pass, for they are committed to seeing students as whole

⁶ See Judge, *op. cit.*, and ‘Classical Education and the Early Church’, *Journal of Christian Education*, papers 77, July 1983.

⁷ Karl Marx ideologised the term, making it serve his materialistic epistemology, but he had found it first in his Jewish background.

persons, and careers as ministries. But how successful are theological halls in implementing this strategy?

My impression gained from involvement in sundry reviews at state and national level in Australia, is that the tyranny extends to them also and is most evident in small colleges able to sustain only three or four full-time staff. Old Testament and New Testament are the first posts to be filled. What shall the third be? Invariably the choice is seen to be between Church History and Theology. No doubt these have to be taught, but are there no other claimants for the full-time post? What about educational skills in such areas as curriculum development, teaching, lay training and the identification of gifts? What about the theory and practice of evangelism, and of counselling in its many forms? What about administrative theory, group dynamics and experience in team leadership? And is there to be no analysis of modern society and culture?

Such priorities will only gain support from those who have begun by [p. 179](#) setting objectives which relate to the kind of church leader we need today, liberated from medieval stereotypes. Increasingly I find colleges responsive in theory to a re-sorting of priorities along these lines, but the political reality of present staff appointments keeps the applicative disciplines down to half-units taught by part-time staff.

A second necessary strategy is to *INTEGRATE THEORY AND PRACTICE*. If proper learning occurs only through praxis, where learning is promptly reinforced by doing, then ways must be found to keep academic study close to the field experiences relevant to it, and correlated with them. How, in practical terms, is this to be done? Some programmes in other professions use an *end-on* approach, whereby a practical professional topping is added after some years in academic disciplines. An example is the graduate Diploma in Education after a first degree. It is a conspicuously unpopular and ineffective way to produce teachers! After theoretical studies at some depth, graduates adapt only grudgingly to 'introductions' to the disciplines of education coupled with demoralisingly crammed teaching practice in schools.

A second possibility is *concurrent* study. Some seminaries encourage students to combine a part-time pastorate with their college studies. It is my observation that this creates a debilitating tug-of-war between the pastoral conscience and the studious mind, the more so because this is not really perceived by the lecturers as an opportunity to relate theory to practice. A third possibility is *field-based* course-work, whereby college lectures are given off-campus in the field situation. Some teacher-training has been attempted along these lines, taking the lecturers out to the schools where students have been placed. Again it is my observation that even where the lecturers are adaptable enough to relate their disciplines to the problems of the work place, there is a loss by this method of intellectual synthesis and integration.

My preference is for a *sandwich-course* approach, whereby campus-based semesters alternate with field-based semesters throughout the student's years of study, maybe in a ratio of two or three to one. It is crucial that the field-based semesters, though practical, be anchored in good theory, founded on the applicative disciplines, which would be taught in this time, and be accorded credit loadings on a parity with the more text-centred disciplines. Field work is not to be viewed as 'extra-curricular'.

The third educational strategy is to *STRUCTURE FIELD-WORK AS TRAINING*. It is simply not good enough to place the student in some parish situation and let whatever will develop. Simply being told to 'observe' is as unlikely to develop skills in the trainee as is being used [p. 180](#) by the minister simply for odd jobs. The curriculum of desired experiences needs to be specified, monitored, and related to parallel theoretical sessions. Several guidelines are worth stating.

The first is to ensure *quality control* by selecting with care the pastors, churches and other organisers to be used, having regard to the experiences specified in your curriculum. Participating persons then need to be clearly briefed on what the seminary wants them to provide for its students, and why. They ought also to be invited to participate in evaluation of the curriculum from time to time.

The second guideline is to *plan the field curriculum* so that it is not just a random series of experiences but a cumulative exposure to the various role-aspects of the church pastor's task. This implies the inclusion of a *range of roles*, including such settings as the pastor's study, the church business meeting, crisis counselling and lay training. Students should not become bogged down in just one function useful to the church to which they have been assigned, such as leading a regular youth Bible study.

Another important guideline is to *buttress the field-work with campus analysis*. Applicative studies such as those listed earlier should not be purely experiential or treated as optional odds and ends in the training of Church leaders on the biblical model. Without campus analysis and synthesis, the field experiences will be fragmented and regarded as unimportant.

The fourth major strategy is to *ENHANCE THE ROLE OF PASTORAL SUPERVISOR*. This is, after all, the closest analogue to the master-disciple learning model of Scripture.⁹ By 'enhancing' the role, I mean granting it greater status in terms of staff work load and recognition in the curriculum. The ideal people for this are full-time staff rather than hired hands, because they are most aware of the study-load borne by their students, and are likely to bring praxis more into their own courses as a result of being reminded of realities in the field by their students. Some staff will not sit comfortably in this role, but that is no ground for leaving them free to pursue academic goals while the more sympathetic staff bear all the burden of taking the seminary into the market-place through field supervision. An appropriate *quid pro quo* would be to give them a complementary market-place role in designing and offering external and extension courses in their subject areas for the *laos* beyond the college. p. 181

Supervisors need to brief, monitor and debrief their students in their field work, both at an individual level, and in a corporate way through related campus classes. They should also do the same for the tutors they recruit in the field, so that a definite plan of cumulative learning is followed and feedback is regularly obtained on how both students and tutors are faring. Such supervision must not be treated as extra to one's 'normal' lecturing load. Any college seeking to be biblical in its teaching style as well as its teaching content must see this as an integral part of one's normal work load.

Finally, seminaries should *DEVELOP PROGRAMMES OF CONTINUING EDUCATION*. Most colleges are predominantly concerned with pre-service training, save for occasional 'retreats' for graduates in the field. But the Hebraic rhythm of learning and doing should not be cut at graduation. Graduates should keep returning, by arrangement with their churches, for further pastoral and theological education, and taking advantage of external courses offered. Seminaries should not begrudge the time spent on providing such facilities, for staff are again bound to benefit from the feedback from the field in modifying their courses to achieve more effective praxis.

The difficulty is that many colleges are poorly situated to provide further pastoral, as well as theological education at an appropriate level of theoretical integration because all their specialists are in the four primary areas of theology. If the principles I have

⁹ See articles on Clinical Pastoral Education in the *Journal of Christian Education* by Robert E. Hockley: 'Clinical Pastoral Supervision—A Rationale', Papers 60, Nov. 1977 and Jinny Hall 'Reflections on Clinical Pastoral Education as a Learning Method, by a former student', papers 66, December 1979.

enunciated are to be given more than lip-service, they will have to be reflected quantitatively in staffing priorities and work-load formulae. Such reforms are difficult to achieve in secular universities, inhabited as they are by competitive individualists who resent interference in their autonomy to teach and research topics of interest to them. But it is surely reasonable to expect that such attitudes will be outweighed in institutions seeking to serve the body of Christ.

APOCRYPHAL CONCLUSION

The words of Paul in [Romans 12:1–10](#) provide a fitting conclusion to these reflections. I have interpolated some apocryphal amplifications which give the passage more purchase on the theological graduate's situation without, I hope, distorting the essential perspective of the passage.

I urge you brothers (and sisters) in view of God's mercy, to offer your (total personalities) as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God ... Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world (with its Greek and medieval hang-overs) but be transformed by the renewing of your [p. 182](#) (theological education) ... Do not (my young ordained friend) think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgement, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others (not excluding the fulltime clergyman). We have different gifts according to the grace given to us. (Your gift, dear colleague, is to draw out the gifts of others. Do not let your calling become an occasion for stifling the gifts of your people, or for preaching at a level which does not intersect with their life-concerns, or for enjoying a sanctified ego-trip). Be devoted to one another in (filial) love. Honour (your parishioners) above (yourself). (It is just possible that by these means you will be saved from theological hyper-ventilation).

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