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**See back cover for Table of Contents**



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# Towards a Missionally Integrative, Evangelical Theological Education

Seth J. Nelson

## I. Introduction

In 1989, the renowned missiologist and churchman Bishop J. E. Lesslie Newbigin lamented, 'It seems clear that ministerial training as currently conceived is still far too much training for pastoral care of the existing congregation, and far too little oriented towards the missionary calling to claim the whole of public life for Christ and his kingdom.'<sup>1</sup> To what extent is Newbigin's lamentation true of theological education globally thirty years later? How have evangelical seminaries responded to the call to recover a biblical, missional theology over the last twenty years?<sup>2</sup> Have they reconceived their institutional missions and practices for training leaders to participate actively in the *missio Dei*?

In this article, I explore how a gos-

pel-centred, missional theology could serve as both the integrating point and motivation for evangelical theological education<sup>3</sup> around the world. I will first discuss the contours of an evangelical, missional theology within the context of the larger *missio Dei* movement that emerged in the twentieth century. Then, to establish the current need for missionally integrated theological education, I will present two related historical surveys. In the first survey, I discuss how the church in the West has conceived of pastoral leadership in different paradigms and suggest what a missional pastoral paradigm might look like today. In the second, I interact with the ongoing debate in the West over the unity, fragmentation and purposes of theological education. On this basis, I propose an integrated model, adapting from Darren Cronshaw's work,<sup>4</sup>

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1 Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 231.

2 For example, Darrell Guder, ed., *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) became the seminal work that sparked the emergence and development of the 'missional church movement' in the United States.

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3 Although I recognize that theological education can encompass all formal, non-formal, and informal study of God, in this article I use the term to refer to formal, post-baccalaureate education in seminaries and divinity schools.

4 Darren Cronshaw, 'Reenvisioning Theological Education and Missional Spirituality', *Journal of Adult Theological Education* 9, no.

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for evangelical, missional theological education. Based on this model and the review of the missional literature, I suggest seven commitments and practices which a theological school could employ to become more missionally integrative. I conclude by offering my perspective on the state of evangelical theological education concerning mission, as a way to encourage schools towards deeper missional impact.

## II. The Contours of an Evangelical, Missional Theology

If a gospel-centred, missional theology could serve as both the integrating point and motivation for evangelical theological education, what might be the contours of such a theology? Before answering this question, I will first sketch the main contours of the larger missional conversation and situate it within what has become the consensus view of the *missio Dei*.

### 1. Missio Dei and Missional Theology at Large

In 1998 Darrell Guder and his colleagues, in *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending Church in North America*, coined the term ‘missional’<sup>5</sup> to express the integration between missiology and ecclesiology and affirm that mission is essential to the church’s very being, not something the church does.

Guder and his colleagues ignited a

missional conversation by applying the seminal work of theologians and missiologists Karl Barth, Lesslie Newbigin and David Bosch. Bosch’s oft-quoted statement about the emerging ecumenical consensus on mission summarizes the situation well:

Mission was understood as being derived from the very nature of God. It was thus put in the context of the doctrine of the Trinity, not of ecclesiology or soteriology. The classical doctrine of the *missio Dei* as God the Father sending the Son, and God the Father and the Son sending the Spirit was expanded to include yet another ‘movement’: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world.<sup>6</sup>

This understanding of the *missio Dei* represented an important development within the larger Protestant missions movement in the mid-twentieth century because it provided a justification for world missions work rooted in the Trinitarian nature of God.<sup>7</sup> Providing a robust foundation, Barth, Newbigin and Bosch confessed that God is a missionary God and that the church is missionary by its very nature. Thus, in the oft-quoted words of Jürgen Moltmann, ‘It is not the church that has a mission of salvation to fulfil in the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the church.’<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 20th anniversary edition (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2011), 399.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Schirrmacher, *Missio Dei: God’s Missional Nature*, ed. Thomas Johnson, trans. Richard McClary (Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2017).

<sup>8</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Pow-*

1 (2012): 9–27.

<sup>5</sup> Darrell Guder, *Called to Witness: Doing Missional Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 11.

Since the World Missionary Conference held in Willigen in 1952, Protestant Christianity (both mainline and evangelical), Roman Catholic, and Eastern Orthodox have embraced the understanding of mission as *missio Dei*.<sup>9</sup> Evangelical Protestants, with their high view of scriptural authority, recognized and were persuaded by the overwhelming biblical evidence for God's singular mission.<sup>10</sup> From creation to new creation, God is on a mission to 'unite all things in him [i.e. Christ], things in heaven and things on earth' (Eph 1:10) and 'through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of the cross' (Col 1:21). The church partners with God in his mission by the commission of Jesus Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit (Jn 20:21–23).

Within the missional movement, the church partners with God in mission by proclaiming and demonstrating the kingdom of Christ to the world. God's reign, begun in Jesus Christ's life, death, resurrection and ascension (and which will be complete at Christ's return), bears upon all aspects of human life and calls all things towards reconciliation in Christ Jesus (Col 1:21). Newbigin repeatedly emphasized that 'the church is the sign, instrument, and foretaste of the reign of God.'<sup>11</sup> He argued, 'The church is a movement launched into the life of the world to bear in its own life God's gift of peace for the life of the world. It

is sent, therefore, not only to proclaim the kingdom but to bear in its own life the presence of the kingdom.'<sup>12</sup> Thus, preaching the gospel of the kingdom (e.g. Mk 1:14–15) and demonstrating Christ's healing presence, through deeds of mercy and acts of justice in the world, become equal priorities for the church's mission.

Newbigin went farther by applying this kingdom-oriented theology to the state of the West in the late twentieth century. He asked, 'What would be involved in a missionary encounter between the gospel and this whole way of perceiving, thinking, and living that we call "modern Western culture"?'<sup>13</sup> Behind his question resides his perception that due to Enlightenment influences, Western culture had become increasingly post-Christian. The era of Christendom was over. The church could no longer assume that Christianity, much less the gospel of Christ, was part of the main cultural narrative. Therefore, in a post-Christian West, the church found itself in a similar situation as it did during the first three centuries of the church before Constantine: it was a missionary, counter-cultural, messianic community once again. Further, this movement has also exposed and critiqued the ways Western culture, a Christendom mentality and modernistic thinking have co-opted theology, especially ecclesiology.<sup>14</sup>

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*er of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology* (London: SCM Press, 1977), 64.

<sup>9</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 400.

<sup>10</sup> Schirmacher, *Missio Dei*.

<sup>11</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995).

<sup>12</sup> Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 49.

<sup>13</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 1.

<sup>14</sup> E.g. Guder, *Called to Witness*; Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st-Century Church*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013).

## 2. An Evangelical, Gospel-Centred Missional Theology

Since the missional conversation driven by the *missio Dei* consensus encompasses a wide swath of Christian traditions, what additional contours especially characterize an evangelical missional theology? The evangelical stream of the missional conversation includes all the contours I have described above and also affirms at least three other commitments, to the primacy of the church's role in God's mission, Christocentricity, and the logical priority of gospel proclamation.

First, an evangelical missional theology values the church as the primary vehicle for God's mission in the world. The missional movement has rightly recognized that God's mission to redeem the world through Christ remains prior to the church. Further, missional authors call the local church to join in God's mission by discerning what God is doing in the world around them and what he wants to do (through that church) for local mission.<sup>15</sup> However, while appreciating these commitments, an evangelical missional theology also affirms the church as the primary vehicle for God's mission (Mt 16:18; Col 1:18–20). Thus, evangelicals hold together both Moltmann and St. Cyprian (d. 258 AD). Moltmann: 'It is not the church that has a mission of salvation to fulfill in the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the

church.'<sup>16</sup> Cyprian: 'No one can have God as Father who does not have the church as Mother'.<sup>17</sup>

Second, an evangelical missional theology is both trinitarian and Christocentric. A thoroughgoing trinitarian theology remains central to the *missio Dei*. Essential to God's very being is a sentness in love—the Son is eternally generated by the Father and the Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father and Son. The love within the trinitarian persons overflows into God's acts of creation and redemption. In redemption, the Father sends the Son, and together they send the Spirit. However, an evangelical missional theology will always seek to hold trinitarianism and Christocentricity together, for the Father can be known only through faith in the Son (Mt 11:27; Jn 1:18), and the Holy Spirit's role always points to and glorifies the Son (Jn 16:13–15). Therefore, the *missio Dei* remains fully trinitarian but focused in and through Jesus Christ, requires the proclamation of Jesus as Lord over all, and calls all people to personal repentance and faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

Third, consistent with Christocentricity, an evangelical missional theology both proclaims in word and demonstrates in deed the kingdom of Christ to the world, but it logically prioritizes the proclamation of the gospel (Lk 4:42–43).<sup>18</sup> This convic-

<sup>16</sup> Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, 64.

<sup>17</sup> Cyprian, *On the Unity of the Church*, in Philip Schaff, ed., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1885), vol. 5, <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf05.html>, 979–95.

<sup>18</sup> David Gustafson, *Gospel Witness: Evangelism in Word and Deed* (Grand Rapids: Eer-

<sup>15</sup> E.g. Craig Van Gelder, *The Ministry of the Missional Church: A Community Led by the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007); Frost and Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come*.

tion does not mean that evangelism has a temporal priority over social responsibility. Rather, it affirms that individuals can find eternal salvation only through personal faith in Jesus Christ, while at the same time affirming the integral relation of social responsibility to the gospel.<sup>19</sup> The Lausanne Movement's 'Cape Town Commitment' expresses this well, using the language of 'integral mission':

Integral mission is the proclamation and demonstration of the gospel. It is not simply that evangelism and social involvement are to be done alongside each other. Rather, in integral mission our proclamation has social consequences as we call people to love and repentance in all areas of life. And our social involvement has evangelistic consequences as we bear witness to the transforming grace of Jesus Christ. If we ignore the world, we betray the Word of God which sends us out to serve the world. If we ignore the Word of God, we have nothing to bring to the world.<sup>20</sup>

### III. Pastoral Paradigms in Historical and Cultural Context

Having outlined the contours of an

evangelical, missional theology that could serve as both the integrating point and motivation for evangelical theological education, I will now take a step back and explore the history of pastoral paradigms in the Western Protestant church. Because theological schools educate towards some paradigm of the ideal pastor, this historical investigation will help to situate the present state of pastoral education, while exposing deficiencies in the previous paradigms and demonstrating the need for a new missional pastoral paradigm.

Alan Roxburgh<sup>21</sup> suggests an historical sequence of four pastoral paradigms informed by the cultural and social location of the church in the West, calling them apostle, priest, pedagogue and professional. According to Roxburgh, in the early church, pastoral leaders operated from an apostolic identity, and their goal was to 'enable the church to carry out its fundamentally missiological purpose in the world: to announce and demonstrate the new creation in Jesus Christ'.<sup>22</sup> Pastoral leaders sought to equip the people of God to live as a communal witness to Jesus Christ in word and deed. Therefore, in the apostolic paradigm, pastors *served* the church *for the salvation of the world*.

In the era of Western Christendom, from Constantine to the Reformation, an apostolic paradigm gave way to a priestly paradigm. After the Edict of Milan (313 AD), which decriminalized Christianity and led to the 'Christianization' of the Roman Empire under

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mans, 2019).

<sup>19</sup> Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization and World Evangelical Fellowship, 'Evangelism and Social Responsibility: An Evangelical Commitment', Lausanne Occasional Paper 21 (1982), <https://www.lausanne.org/content/lop/lop-21>.

<sup>20</sup> Lausanne Movement, *The Cape Town Commitment: A Declaration of Belief and a Call to Action* (2011), <https://www.lausanne.org/content/ctc/ctcommitment#p2-6,1.10.B>.

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<sup>21</sup> Alan Roxburgh, 'Missional Leadership: Equipping God's People for Mission', in Guder, *Missional Church*, 183–220.

<sup>22</sup> Roxburgh, 'Missional Leadership', 185.

Constantine, the church and state became intermingled so that to be a citizen was to be a Christian. 'Membership in the church through baptism was concomitant with citizenship in the state.'<sup>23</sup> Thus, pastoral leadership became focused solely on shepherding and dispensing the means of grace to a static people of God in a particular locale within the empire. In this historical-cultural context, priests did not need to serve apostolically and missionally. Mission concerned only the 'pagans' yet to be converted outside the Roman Empire. Thus, in the priestly paradigm, pastors *tended* the church *for the salvation of the church*.

With the emergence of Protestantism in the Reformation, the priestly paradigm shifted to a pedagogical model.<sup>24</sup> The magisterial Reformers took up significant ecclesiastical reforms related to 'pure doctrine, pure sacramental administration, and pure discipline', but they never questioned or challenged the Christendom assumptions of 'the church as static server of religious grace and [its] power within a Christian society.'<sup>25</sup> Although the Reformers' doctrine of the priesthood of all believers dissolved in some ways the sacred-secular divide and the priest-laity distinction, a separate clergy class still continued. Roxburgh suggests that within Protestantism the pastoral paradigm shifted from Roman priests to Reformed 'pedagogues', in which "Teach-

ing and preaching, oversight of right doctrine, and proper administration of the sacraments became the normative forms of Protestant leadership.'<sup>26</sup> In sum, in the pedagogical paradigm pastors *taught* the church *for the salvation of the church*. This paradigm reigned in Western Protestantism from the Reformation period through the nineteenth century and implicitly directed how theological education prepared pastors for ministry.

In the West by the end of the nineteenth century, this third paradigm would give way to a fourth: the pastor as professional.<sup>27</sup> Enlightenment rationalism challenged Christian belief and the church's relation to society. 'Theologians like Friedrich Schleiermacher attempted to sustain theology's place in the academy by proposing a new model based on the scientific study of religion's role in culture.'<sup>28</sup> So, for example, as the first denominational seminaries were born in the United States in the early to mid-1800s, they responded to Enlightenment thought by increasing disciplinary specialization (e.g. the fourfold theological encyclopaedia of Bible, theology, church history and pastoral theology) and professionalization, akin to similar developments in medicine and law. 'This shift essentially placed the training and functioning of church leadership in a new setting organized or controlled by Enlightenment categories of competency', such that 'seminary training remains firmly committed to

23 Roxburgh, 'Missional Leadership', 192.

24 Roxburgh, 'Missional Leadership', 193.

25 Roxburgh, 'Missional Leadership', 193. In contrast to the magisterial Reformers, radical Reformers created alternative ecclesiological conceptions of the church in relation to the state, but their views were never in the majority.

26 Roxburgh, 'Missional Leadership', 193.

27 Glenn Miller, *Piety and Profession: American Protestant Theological Education, 1870-1970* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007).

28 Roxburgh, 'Missional Leadership', 194.



the model of preparing a professional clergy for a set of tasks considered to be “ministry”.<sup>29</sup> While Protestantism continued to affirm the priesthood of believers, the professional paradigm maintained a Christendom mentality and continued the bifurcation between ordained clergy and laity. Professional clergy did ministry to gather their people and grow their churches.

More recently, as Roxburgh argues, professionalism can be observed in how pastors are trained as counselors, managers and technicians ‘focused on the provisioning of personal, individual needs and technical management of growth, market, and success so admired in modern culture’.<sup>30</sup> Thus, in the professional paradigm, pastors *lead and manage* the church *for the salvation of the church*.

However, with the demise of Christendom in the West and the transition from modernity to late or post-modernity, the deficiencies of the professional model of pastoral leadership, along with those of the previous two paradigms, can be clearly seen. The church and the world need a new missional paradigm for pastoral leadership that is thoroughly biblical, returns to its apostolic roots, but also respects aspects of the pedagogical and professional paradigms which resonate with biblical teaching about pastoral ministry.

In a missional paradigm, pastors *equip* the church to *deploy* the church *for the salvation of the world*. A missional pastor teaches, leads and manages a congregation not to gather

and tend to a static people of God, but to equip an active people to be sent out into the world as a communal witness to Jesus Christ’s reign. A missional pastor is not just a pastor-teacher but also exercises apostolic, prophetic and evangelistic functions (Eph 4:11).<sup>31</sup> As Newbigin puts it, the pastor is ‘to lead the congregation as a whole in a mission to the community as a whole, to claim its whole public life, as well as the lives of all its people, for God’s rule’.<sup>32</sup>

But how can theological schools train such ministers? What kind of missionally integrated model could seminaries embrace to form such leaders?

#### IV. Towards an Evangelical, Missionally Integrative Model for Theological Education

I contend that a missional model of theological education has progressively emerged from within theological institutions themselves and can provide unity and purpose for such institutions. Although many important voices could be considered in the development of a missional model, I will draw on five: Edward Farley, David Kelsey, Robert Banks, Brian Edgar and Darren Cronshaw.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>31</sup> In suggesting that missional pastors exercise apostolic and prophetic functions, I do not intend to imply a position regarding the continuing use of the miraculous sign gifts of the Holy Spirit.

<sup>32</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 234.

<sup>33</sup> Farley, *Theologia*; David Kelsey, *Between Athens and Berlin: The Theological Education Debate* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993); Robert Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological*

<sup>29</sup> Roxburgh, ‘Missional Leadership’, 195. Cf. Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2001).

<sup>30</sup> Roxburgh, ‘Missional Leadership’, 196.



The publication in 1983 of Farley's *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* inaugurated the contemporary debate over the unity, fragmentation and purposes of theological education. Farley wrote at a time when the professional clergy paradigm had reigned for about one hundred years and its deficiencies were becoming apparent. Farley opined that theological education in the twentieth century had lost all sense of unity, except for a functionalist, externally imposed unity, in what he called 'the clerical paradigm'. He observed, 'The only thing which studies of Scripture, theology, history, and pastoral care have in common is their contribution to the preparation of the clergy for its tasks.'<sup>34</sup> In response, Farley proposed that the aim of theological education should be to restore *theologia*, or 'the personal, sapiential knowledge (understanding) which can occur when faith opens itself to reflection and inquiry'.<sup>35</sup>

In this definition Farley seeks to hold together the two original aspects of *theologia*: theology as a personal quality and as a discipline. As a personal quality, theology is a '*habitus*, a cognitive disposition and orientation

of the soul, a knowledge of God and what God reveals'.<sup>36</sup> As a discipline, it is not 'one technical and specialized undertaking among others' (e.g. only systematic theology),<sup>37</sup> but a disciplined and reflective, unitary enterprise.

Farley's proposal provoked a lively debate over the next ten years, with scholars articulating several views including 'character or moral formation, vocational identity, or liberation and perspectival theologies'.<sup>38</sup> But with Kelsey's *Between Athens and Berlin: The Theological Education Debate*, a turning point was reached. In an intentional allusion to Tertullian's famous quote, 'What has Athens to do with Jerusalem ... or the Academy with the church?' Kelsey proposed that theological education in North America could be generally grouped into two models represented by 'Athens' and 'Berlin' (see Figure 1). Athens represented a more ecclesial, classical model, following the ancient Greek 'academy' and focused on personal formation or *paideia*, or *theologia* in Farley's language. Kelsey 'argues that the early church adopted and adapted this model'.<sup>39</sup> In contrast, Berlin represented a more professional or

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*Education: Exploring a Missional Alternative to Current Models* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999); Brian Edgar, 'The Theology of Theological Education', *Evangelical Review of Theology* 29, no. 3 (2005): 208–17; Cronshaw, 'Reenvisioning Theological Education and Missional Spirituality'. My model-building endeavour has also been significantly influenced by Perry Shaw, 'Holistic and Transformative: Beyond a Typological Approach to Theological Education', *Evangelical Review of Theology* 40, no. 3 (2016), 205–16.

34 Farley, *Theologia*, 114.

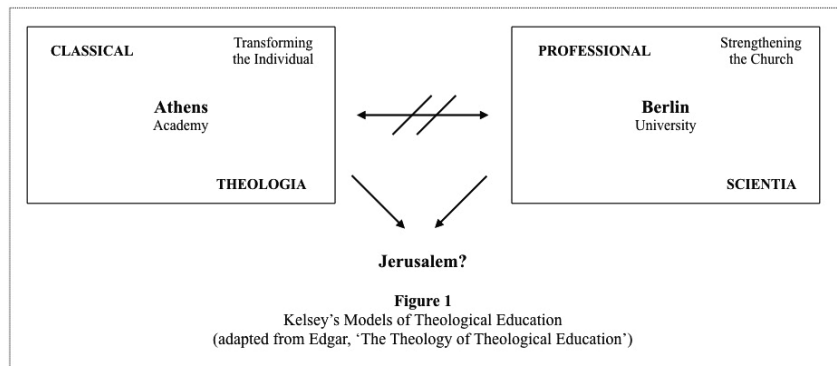
35 Farley, *Theologia*, 156.

36 Farley, *Theologia*, 35.

37 Farley, *Theologia*, 39.

38 Kyle Small, 'Missional Theology for Schools of Theology: Re-Engaging the Question "What Is Theological about a Theological School?"', in Craig Van Gelder, ed. *The Missional Church and Leadership Formation: Helping Congregations Develop Leadership Capacity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 45. For a helpful overview, evaluation and critique of these various views, see Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education*, 17–45.

39 Edgar, 'The Theology of Theological Education', 209.



scholarly model, following the university approach inherited from the University of Berlin (and as especially promulgated by Schleiermacher), focused on theological science (*scientia*) or *Wissenschaft*, and seeking to prepare an educated clergy.

Kelsey recognizes the limitations of his bipolar analysis and in a passing comment points to the possibility of a third model of education: 'Jerusalem'.<sup>40</sup> In doing so, he opens a way for the emergence of a missional model of theological education that is biblically rooted and more representative of evangelical education.

Both Farley and Kelsey's analyses consider the whole of Western theological education, but from a mainline Protestant perspective. Additionally, absent from their account is any language of mission or ideas associated with the *missio Dei*. Banks moves the debate forward by taking up Kelsey's comment about 'Jerusalem' and proposing an evangelical and missional model. Banks writes, 'What [Kelsey] terms "Jerusalem" and I describe as a "missional" alternative—that is,

a more integrally and distinctively Christian approach to theological education ... opens upon the most fruitful, as yet largely unexplored, direction for the theological education debate'.<sup>41</sup>

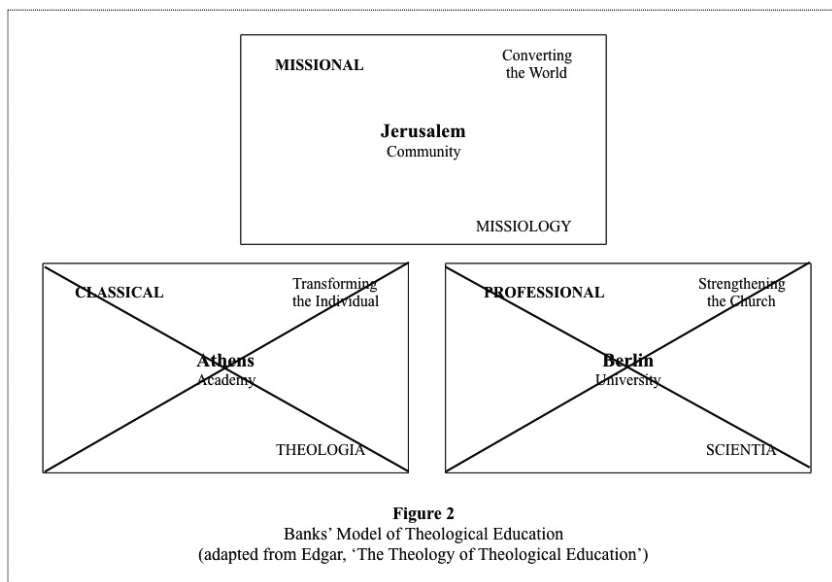
Banks goes on to develop his alternative view of missional theological education by directly interacting with Scripture. He surveys how the people of God were formed in the Old Testament, how Christ formed his disciples, and how the early church was formed by the apostles through the Spirit (according to Acts and the epistles). From this biblical analysis, he concludes that missional education is

undertaken with a view to what God is doing in the world, considered in a global perspective. ... I'm thinking ... of reflection, training, and formation for work on the mission field, whether the latter takes place overseas or locally, ... and that [it] involves some measure of doing what is being studied.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Kelsey, *Between Athens and Berlin*, 5–6.

<sup>41</sup> Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education*, 70.

<sup>42</sup> Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education*, 142.



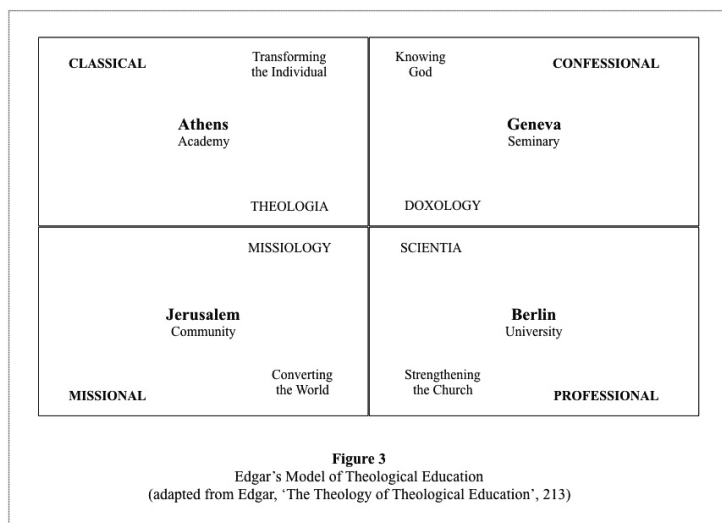
For Banks, theological education is not only for those preparing for pastoral ministry, but for the broader people of God as well as they seek to integrate mission into their whole lives as family members, friends, citizens and workers, not just members of a church. He seeks a thoroughgoing missiological expression of Christian faith in the world for the conversion of the world to Christ. Further, study with a community of disciples and action in the world with that community become central to theological education. Finally, Banks develops his missional model (see Figure 2) as an alternative to the previous approaches rather than a synthesis.

Also coming from an evangelical perspective, Edgar proposes another model (see Figure 3) for the theological education geography. Using a more synthetic rather than a bipolar or antithetical approach, he builds upon Kelsey and Banks by taking up their

models and adding 'Geneva', which he describes as 'a confessional approach to theological education [in which] the goal is to know God through the use of creeds and the confessions, the means of grace and the general traditions that are utilised by a particular faith community.'<sup>43</sup> The proper context for such an education is the seminary. The goal is to know God through a particular confession of the Christian faith for the purpose of doxology.

In this synthetic approach, Edgar agrees with Banks that missionality is a vital component of theological education. But unlike Banks, he recognizes that Athens and Berlin can and should be meaningfully integrated with a missional approach. He further does justice to the Genevan tradition, which Farley and Kelsey ignored. This

<sup>43</sup> Edgar, 'The Theology of Theological Education', 212–13.



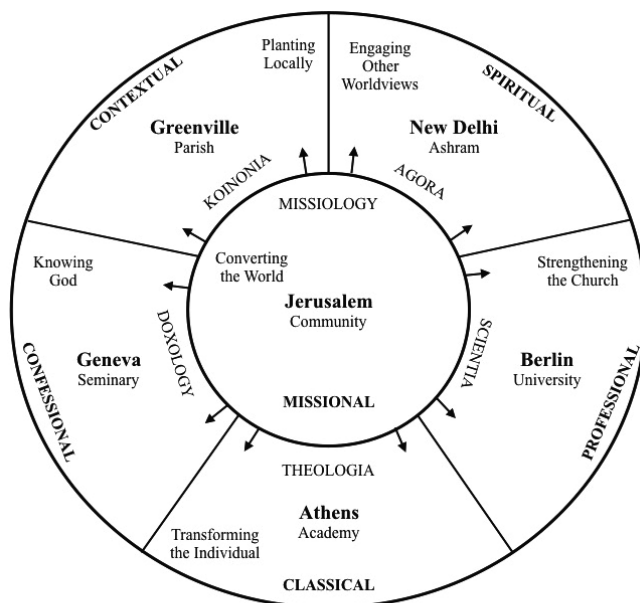
tradition has been a key component of evangelical theological education in the United States, especially within the evangelical streams of Presbyterianism, Episcopalianism, Methodism and Lutheranism. However, Edgar's model still does not do full justice to a missionally integrated theological education, one in which the *missio Dei* provides both the integration point and motivation for the whole educational endeavour.

Since Banks, a growing number of theological educators have called for theological education to begin with the missionary character of God.<sup>44</sup>

What could this missional model look like? In Figure 4, I have adapted Cronshaw's recent model, which he in turn built upon Edgar's. To Edgar's model, Cronshaw adds two more dimensions: 'Auburn' (which I have renamed 'Greenville' since that is where I currently live) and 'New Delhi'. He relocates mission ('Jerusalem') to the centre, making it the integrative point for theological education. God's mission to redeem the world through Jesus Christ and the church's role in

<sup>44</sup> Linda Cannell, *Theological Education Matters: Leadership Education for the Church* (Newburgh, IN: BookSurge Publishing, 2008); Darren Cronshaw, 'Australian Reenvisioning of Theological Education: In Step with the Spirit?' *Australian E-Journal of Theology* 18, no. 3 (2011): 223–35; Cronshaw, 'Reenvisioning Theological Education'; Steve de Gruchy, 'Theological Education and Missional Practice: A Vital Dialogue', in Dietrich Werner, David Esterline, Namsoon Kang and

Joshva Raja, eds., *Handbook of Theological Education in World Christianity: Theological Perspectives, Ecumenical Trends, Regional Surveys* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010), 42–50; J. Andrew Kirk, 'Re-Envisioning the Theological Curriculum as If the Missio Dei Mattered', *Common Ground Journal* 3, no. 1 (2005): 23–40; Mark Laing, 'Recovering Missional Ecclesiology in Theological Education', *International Review of Mission* 98, no. 1 (2009): 11–24; Bernard Ott, 'Mission and Theological Education', *Transformation* 18, no. 2 (2001): 87–98; Shaw, 'Holistic and Transformative'.



**Figure 4**  
 Missional Model of Theological Education  
 (adapted from Cronshaw, 'Reenvisioning Theological  
 Education and Missional Spirituality', 13)

that mission—to collectively witness to the reign of Christ over all things—become the organizing centre for theological education. Thus, all the other vital aspects of theological education revolve around the hub of the *missio Dei*.

Cronshaw's additions of 'Auburn' (my 'Greenville' in Figure 4) and 'New Delhi' add important dimensions to a missional model of theological education. 'Greenville' represents the missional affirmation of contextuality and locality. It pays attention to the physical neighbourhood ('parish') and city of its students, as it seeks to apply the gospel faithfully to the sociocultural context where God has planted them. Learning how to cultivate *koinonia* among Christians, which welcomes those who are not

yet Christians, becomes a vital component of student formation.

As the centre of world Christianity has shifted away from the West, 'New Delhi' describes another important aspect of a missionally integrated theological education. It represents the need for biblical Christianity to interact with other spiritualities, religions and worldviews. Relying on Klaudt,<sup>45</sup> Cronshaw suggests that Indian ashrams display helpful characteristics that theological education could adopt. They 'are located "in the world" without fences; are open to all; offer community living that is en-

<sup>45</sup> Kraig Klaudt, 'The Ashram as a Model for Theological Education', *Theological Education* 34, no. 1 (1997): 25–40.

gaged in service; emphasise ... spiritual maturity; ... [and] provide a holistic curriculum of intellectual, spiritual, political, aesthetic and relationship development'.<sup>46</sup> In other words, theological education must equip students to respectfully, intelligently and apologetically live out their faith in the public square (*agora*), conversant with the world's spiritualities, so as to bring Christ's redemption to the world.

In short, a missionally integrated evangelical theological education finds its centre and motivation in the mission of God in Christ. Using the proposed model, theological schools can more adequately prepare missional pastors—that is, as noted above, pastors who seek to *equip* the church to *deploy* the church for the salvation of the world. This missional model seeks not only to be anchored scripturally in the *missio Dei*, but to respect the historical development of theological education and the contemporary need for contextualization in a post-Christian West. Thus, an evangelical, missionally integrated theological education is a holistic model, motivated by love for God and his mission. Jesus Christ sends students out from 'Jerusalem', as pilgrims journeying often through 'Athens', 'Geneva', 'Berlin', 'New Delhi' and 'Greenville'.

## V. Criteria for an Evangelical, Missionally Integrative Theological School

Having discussed a missional pastoral paradigm and a model for the missional theological school, I will

conclude by suggesting a series of commitments and practices that an evangelical school could employ to become more missionally integrative. The relevant literature<sup>47</sup> is replete

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<sup>47</sup> A growing body of literature since 1999 seeks to specifically integrate theological education and missional theology, along with offering practical suggestions and key curricular commitments for such an education. Along with sources cited previously, this literature includes Orlando Costas, 'Theological Education and Mission', in *New Alternatives in Theological Education* (Oxford, UK: Regnum, 1988), 5–24; Christopher Duraisingh, 'Ministerial Formation for Mission: Implications for Theological Education', *International Review of Mission* 81, no. 321 (1992): 33–45; Darrell Guder, 'Theological Formation for Missional Faithfulness After Christendom: A Response to Steven de Gruchy', in Werner et al., *Handbook of Theological Education in World Christianity*, 51–55; Carlos Emilio Ham, 'Missional Formation at the Evangelical Seminary of Theology in Matanzas, Cuba', *International Review of Mission* 106, no. 1 (2017): 80–88; Christopher James, 'Education That Is Missional: Towards a Pedagogy for the Missional Church', in *Social Engagement: The Challenge of the Social in Missional Education* (Wilmore, KY: First Fruits Press, 2013); J. Andrew Kirk, *The Mission of Theology and Theology as Mission* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997); Karina Kreminski and Alan Frost, 'Theological Education for Missional Leadership', in *Theological Education: Foundations, Practices, and Future Directions*, ed. Andrew M. Bain and Ian Hussey (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2018), 175–86; Mark Laing, 'Recovering Missional Ecclesiology in Theological Education', *International Review of Mission* 98, no. 1 (2009): 11–24; Bernard Ott, *Beyond Fragmentation: Integrating Mission and Theological Education: A Critical Assessment of Some Recent Developments in Evangelical Theological Education* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011); Ott, 'Mission and Theological Education', *Transformation* 18,

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<sup>46</sup> Cronshaw, 'Reenvisioning Theological Education', 12.

with helpful and practical suggestions, but I will limit my list to seven criteria, which are recommended by multiple sources or which I consider particularly important for a missionally educational education. I offer these following principles in the spirit of the Lausanne Movement's guidance, 'We urge that institutions and programmes of theological education conduct a "missional audit" of their curricula, structures and ethos, to ensure that they truly serve the needs and opportunities facing the Church in their cultures'.<sup>48</sup>

### 1. Mission and Vision Statement

First, an evangelical, missionally integrative theological school will clearly express its role in serving the mission of God in the world in its institutional mission and/or vision statements. A school's understanding and articulation of its mission should drive eve-

rything it does. Further, all assessment activities centre on whether the school is fulfilling its mission and how it can do so more effectively in the future. Therefore, institutional mission must be explicitly linked to the *missio Dei*. As Shaw states, if the

'Vision Statement' is focused on our students or even on the church, then something is fundamentally missing. Yes, we want our students to learn and grow and we want strong churches, but these are merely a means to an end—which is the acknowledgement of the Triune God and his Kingdom.<sup>49</sup>

Thus, missional theological schools have done reflective work to discern before God how their school with its particular history, context and constituencies supports God's mission to redeem the world in Jesus Christ. This reflection is then translated into clearly articulated institutional mission and vision statements.

### 2. Theological Education for All the People of God

Second, when God's mission for the world drives a theological school's mission, the resulting student body is inclusive of all the people of God, not just those training for pastoral ministry in the church.<sup>50</sup> As the Lausanne Movement's *Cape Town Commitment* states, 'Theological education

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no. 2 (2001): 87–98; Ott, 'Mission Oriented Theological Education: Moving Beyond Traditional Models of Theological Education', *Transformation* 18, no. 2 (2001): 74–86; Gerald Pillay, 'Theological Education and Missional Formation in the South African Context', *Transformation* 35, no. 3 (2018): 179–91; Ian Randall, 'A Mode of Training': A Baptist Seminary's Missional Vision', *Transformation* 24, no. 1 (2007): 2–13; Kyle Small, 'Missional Imaginations for Theological Education: Mixed Model, Exploratory, Action-Oriented Research Mapping the Theological Identity and Organizational Readiness for Change of Five Theological School Systems in the United States Originating after 1945' (PhD dissertation, Luther Seminary, 2009); W. Michael Smith, 'Missional Faithfulness: An Expanded Agenda for Theological Field Education', *Encounter* 61, no. 2 (2000), 167–86.

**48** Lausanne, *The Cape Town Commitment*, IIF4C.

**49** Shaw, 'Holistic and Transformative', 211–12.

**50** See Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education*; Cronshaw, 'Australian Reenvisioning of Theological Education'; Cronshaw, 'Reenvisioning Theological Education'; Kreminski and Frost, 'Theological Education for Missional Leadership'.



serves *first* to train those who lead the Church as pastor-teachers, equipping them to teach the truth of God's Word with faithfulness, relevance and clarity; and *second*, to equip all God's people for the missional task of understanding and relevantly communicating God's truth in every cultural context.<sup>51</sup> Missional theological education provides avenues, programmes, degrees, certificates and informal educational opportunities for Christians in any and all vocations to learn how to integrate their work with their faith and conduct their work in a way that is aimed towards kingdom fruitfulness.<sup>52</sup> Even if a theological school continues to prioritize clergy preparation, it will do so in a way that emphasizes the minister's missional equipping role for the whole people of God.

### 3. Theological Reflection and Curriculum

Third, a missional theological education infuses mission-related theological reflection throughout its entire curriculum.<sup>53</sup> Missiology or missions are no longer relegated just to the 'school of intercultural studies' or to the practical theology department. Rather, missional theology permeates all departments and all courses. Biblical courses apply 'missional hermeneutics' (discussed further in the next criterion). Church history courses are also histories of God's

mission through the 'World Christian Movement' and pay attention to how the sociocultural dynamics of paganism, Christendom, the Enlightenment, and late and post-modernism have influenced the church's development. Theology courses develop from a trinitarian theology of the *missio Dei* and debate the contours of a missionary ecclesiology. Thus, Ott urges, 'Every programme aim, every course objective, every assignment, every research paper, every test must be developed in view of the church in mission'.<sup>54</sup>

### 4. A Missional Hermeneutic

Fourth, if missionality permeates the whole curriculum, then a missional hermeneutic<sup>55</sup> must be specifically taught in biblical studies classes and utilized in pastoral studies courses for teaching and preaching. In *The Mission of God*, evangelical scholar Christopher Wright describes a missional hermeneutic as follows:

Mission could provide the framework both for our hermeneutical approach to reading the Bible and for organizing our account of biblical theology. ... A missional hermeneutic proceeds from the assumption that the whole Bible renders to us the story of God's mission through God's people in their engagement in God's world

<sup>51</sup> Lausanne, *The Cape Town Commitment*, IIF4.

<sup>52</sup> Mark Greene, *Fruitfulness on the Front-line: Making a Difference Where You Are* (Nottingham, England: IVP, 2014).

<sup>53</sup> Ott, 'Mission and Theological Education'; Guder, *Called to Witness*.

<sup>54</sup> Ott, 'Mission and Theological Education', 91.

<sup>55</sup> George Hunsberger, 'Proposals for a Missional Hermeneutic: Mapping a Conversation', *Missiology* 39, no. 3 (2011), 309–21; Christopher Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006); Guder, *Called to Witness*.

for the sake of the whole of God's creation.<sup>56</sup>

Thus, theological students should learn how to read Scripture as a cohesive, single drama of God's mission to redeem the world through Jesus Christ and to locate their place, time and context in God's ongoing dramatic mission. Guder extends this idea by arguing that the whole thrust of the New Testament is to collectively form God's people for witness. He asks, 'How did this particular text continue the formation of witnessing communities then, and how does it do that today?'<sup>57</sup> Theological schools ought to provide the exegetical tools that students will need to answer this question in their contexts.

### 5. Cultural Exegesis and Contextualization

Fifth, corresponding to a missional hermeneutic in biblical studies, a missionally integrated theological school should train students in cultural exegesis and contextualization.<sup>58</sup> Students should learn how to disentangle the church's gospel from Christendom and modern distortions. They should learn how to confront society's idols and offer the grace of the only true God, Jesus Christ. In this way they can be prepared to equip the church to speak and act into the world in ways that make the gospel distinct, understandable, tangible and attractive to

those who are not yet Christians.

### 6. A Praxis Approach to Learning

Sixth, if the content of the theological school's curriculum is permeated with a missional emphasis, then the process of learning should also be missional—a cycle of action and reflection. 'Missional educators embrace a praxis approach. The educational process is therefore imagined as a continuous cycle of action and reflection, rather than linear movement from reflection to action.'<sup>59</sup> Students remain engaged and active in their ministry contexts throughout the duration of theological study. They are not only preparing for ministry, but actually doing ministry.<sup>60</sup> Their actions for Christ in the world are brought into the classroom for theological reflection and further action. Theological reflection in classes results in thoughtful and prayerful contextualization of action in students' various contexts.

### 7. Mission-Compatible Pedagogies

Seventh and finally, beyond a praxis approach to learning, evangelical and missionally integrated theological schools employ diverse missionally compatible pedagogies.<sup>61</sup> Nearly fifty years ago, Paulo Freire exposed the dangers and deficiencies of the 'banking' concept of education,<sup>62</sup> but this

56 Wright, *The Mission of God*, 104, 122.

57 Guder, *Called to Witness*, 109.

58 Ott, 'Mission and Theological Education'; Kirk, 'Re-Envisioning the Theological Curriculum'; de Gruchy, 'Theological Education and Missional Practice'; Kreminski and Frost, 'Theological Education for Missional Leadership'.

59 James, 'Education That Is Missional', 150.

60 Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education*.

61 E.g. Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education*; Ott, 'Mission Oriented Theological Education'.

62 Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*,

approach still remains widely used in theological schools. Instead, Freire proposed an approach that included 'the posing of problems of human beings and their relations with the world'<sup>63</sup> and collaborative dialogue between teachers and students and between students themselves, with the goal of raising consciousness towards transformative freedom. If God's reign in Christ brings the ultimate kind of freedom and flourishing to the world, then theological educators should use pedagogies that align with that vision. Missionally attuned theological schools recognize that their students do not need more theological or biblical knowledge deposited in their heads; they need more active, collaborative reflection and practice, applying their biblical knowledge in service to God's mission in the world.

## VI. Conclusion

Certainly, the world needs theological schools that form Christian leaders 'to lead the congregation as a whole in a mission to the community as a whole, to claim its whole public life, as well as the lives of all its people, for God's rule'.<sup>64</sup> To aim at this kingdom vision, as I have suggested, evangelical schools must intentionally prioritize a gospel-centred, missional theology at the nexus of their education endeavours. The *missio Dei* must serve as the integration point and motivation

for ministerial training. Thus, I have proposed a new missional model, based on Cronshaw's prior work, according to which schools seek to form pastors who can *equip* the church to *deploy* the church *for the salvation of the world*. The question thus remains: How are evangelical theological schools around the world doing in this regard? How do they compare to the criteria I have proposed? I will conclude by offering my thoughts on this question, which may help to provide a practical way forward for evangelical schools seeking to fulfil their kingdom mission.

From my anecdotal and limited perspective,<sup>65</sup> it seems to me that evangelical schools around the world, by and large, have made good progress with regard to criteria 1 and 5 (mission and vision statement, cultural exegesis) and are beginning to make progress on criteria 2 through 4 (educating all the people of God, theological reflection, missional hermeneutic) but have made little progress on the last two criteria (praxis approach, mission-compatible pedagogies).

First, theological schools have made substantial progress in refocusing their institutional mission, vision and purpose statements on God's kingdom mission. For example, my denomination's seminary, Covenant

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trans. Myra Bergman Ramos, 30th anniversary edition (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2000).

<sup>63</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 79.

<sup>64</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 234.

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<sup>65</sup> In my current roles at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, IL, USA, I have contact with educators and students from around the world, representing the beautiful breadth of worldwide evangelical theology. Thus, while I cannot speak about individual schools outside the United States, I do have a general sense that my concluding observations may also be generally representative of international contexts.

in St. Louis, Missouri (USA), added the words 'All for God's mission' to its long-standing purpose statement in 2010 after a year-long discussion among the faculty, administration and board.<sup>66</sup> Further, evangelical schools appear to have also progressed in teaching students how to exegete their cultures and how to contextualize the gospel (criterion 5). At the institution where I currently study and teach, in every class session we discuss the learners' ministry contexts and how to apply pastoral learning in ways that are culturally sensitive and contextually appropriate.

Evangelical theological schools have more recently begun to make some missional progress in three other categories. First, they have begun to embrace the belief that theological education exists for all the people of God (criterion 2), not just those preparing for pastoral or congregational ministry. For example, seminaries in the United States have noted the most recent statistics from the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) in the United States and Canada, which show that nearly 39 percent of graduating seminary students expect to work or are working in a non-congregational setting,<sup>67</sup> and have expanded

their programme and degree offerings accordingly. Additionally, as the 'Faith at Work Movement'<sup>68</sup> expands around the world, seminaries such as Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, with its Mockler Center for Faith and Ethics in the Workplace, have begun to purposely apply missional Christian faith to people's everyday 'secular' work.

Furthermore, schools appear to be taking more seriously the task of training students in missional theological reflection and missional hermeneutics (criteria 3 and 4). Through my direct experiences with five evangelical seminaries in the United States and in conversations with my international colleagues, I sense a deepening commitment to a missional and kingdom-wide expression of the gospel. They recognize that Jesus Christ did not die just for the salvation of individual sinners; rather, God has a broader mission to 'make all things new in Christ' (Rev 21:5). However, my impression is that this missional commitment and reflection tend to be concentrated in the biblical studies and practical theology departments. Substantial work is still needed to achieve missional integration across the seminary curriculum and between the theological disciplines.

Although missional theology has grown and permeated evangelical theological education in some important ways, in other ways it has hardly been realized. From my perspective, evangelical schools must do far better with regard to a praxis approach

66 Mark Dalbey and the Faculty of Covenant Theological Seminary, 'Systematic Theology at Covenant Seminary Is Biblical and "Missional"', n.d., <https://www.covenantseminary.edu/systematic-theology-covenant-seminary-biblical-missional-2/>.

67 Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada, 'Total School Profile: Graduating Student Questionnaire 2017–2018 Profile of Participants' (2018), <https://www.ats.edu/uploads/resources/student-data/documents/total-school-profiles/gsq-total-school-profiles-2017-2018.pdf>.

pdf.

68 Cf. David Miller, *God at Work: The History and Promise of the Faith at Work Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

to learning and mission-compatible pedagogies (criteria 6 and 7). For example, when interviewing a recent MDiv graduate from a well-known US seminary, I asked the graduate to describe the types of pedagogies and assessments that the faculty employed. With the exception of a handful of practical theology classes and the pastoral practicum, which employed interactive pedagogies, most of this student's professors lectured for the entire class period, devoting only a short time to clarifying questions. Most classes required a midterm and final examination and one research paper, with no other graded assignments or assessments given. Such practice remains not only deficient from an educational perspective (still

attached to Freire's 'banking' model) but, more significantly from a theological perspective, incongruent with kingdom mission.

The world does not need more seminary graduates with heads stuffed full of theological data; it needs more fully formed graduates who love Jesus Christ, his kingdom and his church. It needs more self-reflective, wise graduates who can immediately apply their theological learning to their local contexts and ministries in a collaborative way while working with all kinds of people. In a word, the world needs missional seminary graduates who can equip the church to deploy the church for the salvation of the world and for the glory of God.