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The Crisis of Training for Ministry in the Church in India

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Introduction

I would like to be reading an Old Testament paper to this conference—since that has been the area of my study. One reason why I am not—apart from my lack of competence—is that for the past few years I have sensed an increasing dissatisfaction with our present patterns of teaching and training. I have become convinced as a result that there is a need for radical change in the whole structure of our training for ministry. Until that happens, our efforts at teaching, whatever the subject, are in danger of being nullified and frustrated.

This is the reason for the title of this paper, which may otherwise seem rather dramatic and negative. I will try to explain what I mean in a moment, but I should say first that my analysis and suggestions arise out of experience of involvement in the training programmes of Protestant theological colleges, chiefly from an inter-denominational and evangelical background. My comments are therefore addressed primarily to them. I do not know how far colleges of other backgrounds will find their own situation identified here.

Background : The crisis of ministry

The 'crisis of training' is linked to a prior 'crisis of ministry' in our churches. There has been much study and discussion of this in recent years, for example in Bergquist and Manickam's 'Crisis of Dependency in Third World Ministries', (CLS, Madras, 1974) and the stimulating report on 'Renewal of the Ministry in Andhra Pradesh', (ACTC, Secunderabad, 1974). In an earlier paper ('The Crisis of Ministry in the Indian Church', TRACI/ETS Journal No. 15, 1979), I tried to analyse these and other discussions in the ten years 1967-77. The conclusion of the analysis

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was the need for change in the basic structure of ministry in the local congregation. There is little value in adding new types of ministry as long as the basic clergy-centred, professionalised, one-man ministry structure remains unchanged. Evangelical groups have been busy adding on different kinds of organisations and structures for evangelism (and recently for social action as well). 'Ecumenicals' have developed frontier ministries for socio-economic liberation. Both have neglected, or failed, to bring change in the pattern of ministry in the local congregation, and therefore have missed the basic issue.

Since writing that paper I have had further opportunity to learn at first hand of the situation of churches in Central India. The main features, on the surface, appear to be: the struggle for status and position within the church, division into groups and consequent 'church politics', an almost total lack of concern for anything outside the church, lack of involvement in any kind of ministry except property and administrative matters. Underlying all this is a much more basic search for identity and personal significance on the part of church members. But instead of finding their fulfilment in ministry and service, they are seeking it in positions and personal gain. The clergy appear unwilling, or probably unable, to help them out of this situation.

The basic problem remains the same: the failure to develop adequate, Biblical patterns of ministry, with all their diversity and richness—*diakonountes has kaloi okonomoi Poikilēs charitos Theou* (1 Pet. 4 : 10f).

How can change come? Ultimately it can only be in the renewing work of God in our midst. But can we look to theological education as a means of contributing to change and renewal? The answer should be yes, but I think it has to remain a question. I believe we are facing a corresponding crisis in training for ministry, which can be summarised as follows :

Our training does not prepare students for the actual situation in the churches and enable them to become agents of change; because we are training the wrong people in the wrong way in the wrong place.

I realise this is a very sweeping statement. I have deliberately over-simplified in order to make my point. I am also aware that changes are taking place.

But it is still true to say that our present system of training does not match the needs of the church, because it is separated from the church. We can only be trained to meet the actual situation in the churches by being involved in it. This our present system does not allow.

A recent graduate, now doing the M.Th. in Christian Ministry, with three years of B.D. study and two years of church work behind him (preceded by some years in industry) told me the other day that he had just realised that there were basic faults in the present structure and pattern of ministry, which needed to be changed. We must congratulate him on his realisation. But then we must ask ourselves why it took him so long to make this discovery. Where did our training fail? What if he had not had the opportunity for reflection which the M.Th. study has afforded?

The fact that he has come for further study, after two years in pastoral ministry, is itself significant. Many other recent graduates face a crisis in their first two years of pastoral ministry. They are trained to expect that if they are spiritual and prayerful, faithful in preaching, counselling and visiting, God will bless their ministry and the church, though it will not be easy. They arrive in the church to find themselves saddled with administration and committees, their people divided into groups and contesting elections, and their congregations widely scattered. Everything revolves around them and they do not know where to begin. Nothing in their training has prepared them for this. As one recent graduate put it: 'The college taught me what the church ought to be, but not what the church is'.

At this point a large number opt out of pastoral ministry and move into an organisation, an administrative post, or further study. Like their elders all they can do is try for some new form of ministry, without change in the basic structure in the local congregation. They have come up against the crisis of ministry, but their training has not provided them with any way of tackling it. The two systems do not match.

The addition of different subjects in the curriculum, or the creation of new departments, will not solve the problems, as long as they are modelled on the present structure.

The crisis of ministry requires change in the *structure*, not just additional forms. And the crisis of training also requires change in the structure, not just additions to the curriculum.

Our training : the lack of integration

There are many ways to formulate our criticisms of theological education. They are taking place all the time, and this is healthy—a sign of life and of willingness to change. I have tried to summarise them under the heading of a lack of *integration*, or *wholeness*. Our training is fragmented, lacking in overall cohesion, not achieving its intended purpose, which is to prepare people who can

minister effectively in the context of the local churches and congregations which make up the church.

(N.B.—By this I do not mean that *they* are to go and minister alone in the local churches. This is our present, sterile pattern. Rather they are to provide an enabling and equipping ministry for 'all God's people' (Eph. 4 : 11f). Our present crisis of training is seen in the fact that neither are they able to minister themselves (because of the problems in the churches), nor are they trained with the necessary skills, perspective and practical experience by which they can equip others for ministry. I also do not mean that their ministry is restricted to the church. Through the church there is a ministry to society.)

There is, of course, a tension here for theological colleges. To what extent is their role limited to providing training for local church ministry? Can they become so closely involved with the churches that they lose their freedom—and responsibility—to be a little bit *out of step* with the churches? There *are* tensions here—between depth and spread in our efforts, between institutionalisation and decentralisation, professionalism and non-professionalism, specialised study and general study, formal and non-formal, academic and non-academic, theory and practice, research and application.

We all recognise the tensions in our own teaching and research ministries. Where do we put the emphasis? Insofar as our primary goal is training people for the church, that must be our emphasis. We exist for the church and not the opposite. And with the church in its present state, we must set ourselves the goal of bringing change in the structures of its ministry, which in turn means change in the structure of our training. The emphasis, if we are not careful, moves too easily in the wrong direction, away from the church, away from wholeness and integration.

This lack of integration can be seen in five areas :

1. *Lack of integration in our context*

Training should be in context, as we all agree. And that context must be the church, in *its* context of society. But our training takes place in the institution, which is largely separated from the church and society. We train our students in the institution, with occasional forays into church and society, in the hope that when they finish they will be able to fit into that context. On the whole, they don't. Of course, this problem is more severe for some colleges than others. It is most acute for union colleges, using English as the medium of instruction, having students who are cut off socially, geographically, and linguistically from their

context, and who return as strangers after an absence of three or more years.

How do we integrate our training firmly into the context of church and society? This is probably the most serious defect in our training and the hardest to solve, because of the very nature of institutions, which have a tendency to isolate.

A radical solution here is to remove the institution altogether and rely on the local church to provide training. Some groups, such as the Bakht Singh Assemblies and other independent groups, have done this very successfully—but with certain limitations. Some kind of institutional structure seems to be needed, but it must be much more flexible and capable of closer relationship to the local church context. In order to achieve this, the lack of integration or wholeness in other areas needs to be analysed.

2. Lack of integration in our methods

Until quite recently, almost the only teaching methods used have been lectures, linked to notes and essay-type assignments, tested by essay-type examinations. A lot of change has taken place in the last few years, with much more creative use of small groups, seminars, and different kinds of evaluation. But we still face the basic problem that most of our teaching and learning is *primarily* academic and theoretical, while many of the skills and attitudes needed for ministry must be learned outside the classroom and the college. We have practical training departments to look after this side, but how do the two come together? How do we integrate our learning in the class-room with what we learn in the church, in the factory, the slums, the hospital?

3. Lack of integration in our objectives

The objectives of our training, if we state them at all, are usually comprehensive and far-reaching, embracing the total person of the student in his thinking, attitudes, spiritual life and practical ministry. But when we look at our courses and the actual tests we give our students, they often turn out to be essay questions, which at best exercise their intellectual skills and at worst just test their power to memorise and repeat.

In other words, our actual objectives in practice are narrowly cognitive. They do not match the broad range of objectives—including attitudes, skills and knowledge—which we all recognise to be necessary. How do we formulate such objectives and incorporate them into our actual teaching and learning?

Integration or wholeness in our objectives will give us the capability to be more relevant and appropriate to the needs of the

churches, not just the few members training for specialised ministry, but the majority as well. Our failure in this area is connected to the next.

4. *Lack of integration in our scope*

Theological education is understood by the majority of people in the church as something narrow and specialised. It is intended for the few, the specialists, the professionals, the clergy. For the rest, if they have the desire and interest for anything more than the weekly sermon, it is 'Christian Education' or 'Christian nurture'. We have narrowed the scope of theological education, which ought to be available for all in the church, adapted to their age, background, educational level and commitment to ministry.

How do we achieve this broad scope of training, which must surely be our goal? One of the constraints is the rigidity and narrowness of our course design.

5. *Lack of integration in our course design*

When designing our overall courses—their length, requirements and entry-qualifications—our criteria seem to be almost wholly academic. 'Is this person a graduate? He can do the B.D. Is he a matric pass? He must go into B.Th. Is he not quite' up to B.D. standard? Let him drop down into B.R.E'. There seems to be no effort to take other factors seriously, such as the age and background of the students, and the type of ministry for which they are preparing—local pastoral, cross-cultural, urban, rural, teaching, training, evangelistic, administrative and so on.

There may, for example, be highly intelligent and qualified people in our congregations who would like study and training at their academic level, but just one or two hours a week. They need B.D. level but not the whole range of B.D subjects or the length of the B.D. course. Conversely, a group of village leaders may lack formal qualifications, but need to be equipped with a whole range of pastoral and theological skills for the task of leading their congregations. Their course needs to be more demanding in terms of time, effort and range of subjects, while beginning at an academic level which is lower. Under our present system, the first group will be considered to be at a 'higher' and more demanding level.

We need a more complex and multi-linear approach to take these other factors into account, which will enable us to develop a wider and more varied range of courses. This will then enable us to provide opportunity for *all* God's people to be trained—in the appropriate way.

There is nothing very new in all these criticisms. We are already familiar with them—perhaps too familiar. How do we move from criticism to construction?

Biblical patterns of training

This should be the subject of a whole paper or papers. I will just mention three major patterns or principles.

A. Teaching all God's people

From the beginning of Israel's history the Pentateuch provides us with far more than a law-code. It is a comprehensive system of laws, principles, attitudes and practices which were intended for the instruction and healthy growth of the whole people of God. Numerous references are made to this: some parts of it were written out (Ex. 24 : 3-7 ; Dt. 31 : 9, 24) ; others were taught orally (Dt. 27 : 15ff) ; songs were composed (Dt. 31 : 22) ; pillars of stone were erected (Dt. 27 : 2f ; Jos. 4 : 5ff) ; provision was made for public recitation (Dt. 27 : 11f)—all this with a view to instructing and teaching the whole people. The priests had a major role as teachers and interpreters of the law (Lev. 10 : 11), but so also did the heads of families (Dt. 6 : 6ff ; Jos. 4 : 6). We can be sure that the festivals, with their songs and probably dramas, were used as a powerful teaching medium.

Whatever view we take of the date of editing of the Pentateuchs there can be no doubt that this instructional system goes right back to the beginning of Israel's history. The historical books, of course, illustrate what happened when the system failed, or was not developed: the people fell back into spiritual decline or apostasy. There are occasional periods of activation of this learning system under various Kings like Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah and Josiah (2 Chron. 17 : 7ff ; 35 : 3).

The prophets represent an alternative system of teaching and instruction, required by the failure of the priests to fulfil their teaching role (Hosea 4 : 4-6 ; Mal. 2 : 7). They addressed the whole nation (primarily through the leaders), in addition to developing, in some cases, their own schools of disciples (Isaiah 8 : 16).

Finally, in the revival under Ezra we find re-established the teaching role of the Levites, exemplified in the great assembly in Nehemiah 8 when Ezra read the law and the Levites 'gave the meaning clearly' (8 : 8). The whole chapter is fascinating when studied as a pattern of teaching and learning. The principle which emerges from all this is the need for teaching and equipping *all* God's people, through the use of different media of instruction,

through the use of selected teachers, and through instruction in the family.

B. *Learning in a community of disciples*

The New Testament takes up and re-affirms this principle (Eph. 4 : 11f) while demonstrating further the means by which it can be accomplished. Jesus' primary method of teaching and training was in the small community of his disciples, in which he used various methods. First of all, he gave them a model, by his own example. They saw him in action, teaching, preaching, healing, dealing with crowds and with individuals, engaging in controversy, praying and suffering. Then he exposed them to various situations and needs, and gave them practical tests and assignments to fulfil. As they performed these, or failed to perform them, he used their experience as a basis for reflection, from which lessons could be drawn for the next time. Much of Jesus' actual *verbal* teaching to his disciples arises out of such situations. Thirdly, being in a community, they also learned from each other, in all the different aspects of life, not just the narrowly spiritual.

This pattern could also be called the apprenticeship model. Learning is continuous, on the job.

C. *The chain of reproduction*

Paul seems to have followed the same pattern, working always in a team, often with several younger assistants.

A further principle especially emphasised by him is that of reproduction in a chain, best summed up in 2 Timothy 2 : 2 : 'What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.' Here we see four links in the chain, from Paul through Timothy to another two generations. It is similar to the Old Testament emphasis on parents teaching their children and so the succeeding generations (Psalm 78 : 5f), but here applied to spiritual generations. There are those whom God specially gifts and equips, in order that they may be able to equip others (Eph. 4 : 11f). The goal, in the line with the first principle, is that *all* God's people may grow to maturity (Eph. 4 : 13-16) and all be able to teach and exhort each other (Rom. 15 : 14).

This very brief and sketchy survey is enough to show us the contrast between the biblical pattern and our own. We could summarise it by saying that in the Bible, and especially the New Testament, we can see the pattern of equipping all God's people through gifted leaders, in the context of the local congregation or community.

Today we find ourselves equipping (?) a few pastors (for what ?) in the context of the institution.

Can we go back to a 'pure' Biblical model, following the pattern of calling a few students/disciples together and training them on the job? Some have tried this, sometimes with good results. In many ways it fits our Indian pattern of the guru/sishya relationship.

But of course it has limitations. Most obvious is the limitations on numbers. Not only that, but today's complex world seems to require a broader base of experience and exposure than one leader or teacher can usually give. And today's technology—of print, audio-visual media, and especially the new electronic media—enables us to multiply materials and share resources.

Even more important than those pragmatic arguments against a simple return to the small group of disciples is the fact that the New Testament *also* recognises a 'trans-local' ministry, beyond the local congregation, for equipping God's people. Apart from the local leaders whom he appointed in each congregation (Acts 14 : 23) Paul also visited them himself, corresponded with them, called them for special leadership training (Acts 20 : 17ff), or sent assistants to teach and organise (cf. the Pastoral Epistles). He thus exercised, and encouraged a trans-local ministry to augment and complement the resources of the local congregation. The Didache and other sub-apostolic writings show the same pattern of itinerant prophets and teachers.

Some current solutions

We are all aware of these problems and to some extent have worked out solutions to some of them. In recent years several approaches have been made, including :

(a) A strong emphasis on field work and an attempt to integrate this into the curriculum. This may be through regular church planting work at weekly and other intervals (Madras Bible Seminary); or internship years (ACTC, Secunderabad; Union Biblical Seminary, United Theological College, Bangalore.); or exposure by living in different situations (Tamil Nadu Theological Seminary, Madurai).

(b) Discipleship training, with a strong emphasis on community living and close inter-action. This has been the emphasis of the UESI's Asian Bible Study Centre, of KBS, Allahabad, of the new ACTS institute, Bangalore, a proposed new Bible school in Valathi, Tamil Nadu and many others. The question of size is crucial in such an approach.

(c) Continuing education for pastors is now seen to be a vital need. Considerably more thought needs to be given as to how this is to be offered and by whom. Is the church responsible for this, or the institution? How can pastors be motivated for this?

(d) Extension education. This includes both TAFTEE and other programmes inspired by the Theological Education by Extension (TEE) movement, and also the external degree programmes which have been available for many years. Extension education provides answers to many of the problems noted above and has proved itself a vital and creative method and catalyst for change. But it has its limitations, of course. One of the most basic questions concerns the provision of materials. To make them genuinely effective for self-instruction requires a lot of work. A balance has to be found between giving too little help and guidance and giving too much. Other questions relate to adequate supervision of practical work and the provision of the right kind of tutorial help.

Some proposals for integration of our training

Our goal is integration of our training into the needs of the local congregation, so that it can begin to meet those needs in context. In order to do this four steps are proposed. There is a progression from one to the next, though in a way they all have to be tackled simultaneously.

1. Integration of content around the person of the student

There are two continuing dilemmas for theological education and training:

- what to include in the curriculum, as new disciplines, new problems, and new learning are constantly emerging in our rapidly changing society.
- how to integrate the different subjects *and* how to integrate the academic, practical and spiritual.

We have already touched on these problems. There is no way we can 'solve' them but one way in which we can at least approach them is to find their point of integration in the person of the student. In practice that is where integration must take place (or fail to take place) and so it is reasonable for us to attempt to plan this in a systematic way. This means that we start our planning from the student himself—as he is now, with the varied experiences and gifts that he already possesses—and as he will be as a result of the training he will undergo. We need to develop.

therefore, a profile of the kind of person that our training is intended to produce. This needs to be spelled out not only in terms of the knowledge he will have, but also the attitudes and skills he will need to develop.

This may sound stereotyped and mechanical. We must guard against any such tendency, since each student is unique, with his or her God-given gifts and potential.

In practice, we already have some kind of profile or picture in mind of the ideal we are aiming at: 'man of God', or 'agent of change' or 'preacher-teacher'—whatever our ideal happens to be. This may or may not be explicitly stated. What is very rarely stated or spelled out is *how* the student will develop into that intended mould.

As a result our ideal does not correspond to the *actual* training that we give. For example, we want our students to become disciplined thinkers, but we teach and test in such a way that only rote learning is encouraged. Or we speak of the importance of reflection, but leave no time for it in the weekly schedule.

So it is essential that we work consciously at developing a profile, and *also* ensure that both teaching and learning experiences, and methods of assessment and evaluation match our objectives. This needs to be done at the level of the whole course, different subjects and individual lessons. This can be hard work, but results in rewardingly creative new ways of learning and evaluation. For example, a course on 'Religion' includes the objectives that the students will learn to 'appreciate and respect the values and views of people of other faiths.' This is an attitude. It cannot be taught, or tested, only by lectures or essay questions. So the student is required, as part of the course, to go and talk to some Hindus or Muslims, to find out their views on various topics, and then reflect on his findings. After wading laboriously through all the schools of Hindu philosophy, the student finds that this assignment, with the reflection that follows, leads him to a *person*, for whom Hinduism is not just a philosophy, but part of his life. It enables him to integrate his theoretical study of Hinduism into some kind of coherent and meaningful whole.

Simple, perhaps. It should be happening anyway, without being required. But how many courses build such assignments into their requirements, so that integration can consciously take place?

A result of this line of approach is that assignments become more complex and creative. So too does evaluation. How do you measure attitudes and skills? Can you give them a grade?

Probably you cannot grade them, but you *can* measure them. But your measuring rod will not be an essay or examination, but perhaps the experience of discussion in a small group, which meets to reflect on ministry to share questions and discuss issues. In such a close-knit group attitudes are revealed and often challenged and re-formed. Evaluation becomes an on-going process of mutual challenge, exhortation and encouragement. With many groups of students this process is likely to be happening already, in an informal and un-structured way. It is not just a question of formalising and structuring it, which might also kill it, but of consciously including such experiences in the design of our training, and involving the teacher also in the process, where possible.

Thus small groups, action-reflection assignments and interdisciplinary approaches to study become an inevitable part of the curriculum, all contributing to the development of the total students into the kind of person that he is aiming to become. (There is no reason why the students also cannot participate in drawing up the profile : in fact they must do so. This is part of their growth).

At Union Biblical Seminary, Yavatmal, we have gone part of the way in integrating our curriculum around a profile of the kind of person we want to see as a result of our training. We have begun to use small groups for integration of different parts of the curriculum. We still have a long way to go. A major limitation at present is that in our isolated setting the students' opportunity for ministry and any kind of experience outside the seminary is very limited, especially for those who do not understand the local languages (a majority). We trust that our forthcoming move to Pune will help to change that.

2. *Integration of methods around an open-learning system*

Open learning is an approach in which the student is provided, not just with one resource for learning—the teacher—but with many. The teacher's role is primarily to direct the students to these resources, which will include himself, but also books and other printed materials, audio-visual study materials, and other learning experiences both inside and outside the class-room.

The result of this approach is not only that it promotes independent thinking and discovery-based learning on the part of the students, but that it also provides great flexibility in terms of the time and place of learning. If the *content* of the lesson is available in printed or other self-study form, then the students can assimilate it at the time and place which suits *them* and then participate at an agreed time in discussion on its implications. The teacher's time can be used for small group seminars or tutorials.

The students do not all have to be living in the same place. In fact, with the provision of a local tutor students in widely separated places could go through the same learning experiences at their own pace. Different sub-centres can be linked together, or colleges can agree to provide tutorial help and other resources to students in their area using common materials.

Such flexibility enables us to broaden the scope of our training to include those who could not fit into the requirements of an institutional time-table. Thus resource-based learning becomes open learning in the further sense that it is open to a much wider number than is normally possible.

In secular education whole universities and further education programmes are being developed around the concept of open learning, which is now increasingly possible because of technological advance. We are on the verge of a revolution equal in importance to the printing revolution of the sixteenth century, as the electronic information media become cheaper and cheaper and even more widely available. We can use such advances to make theological education more widely available, beginning with the printed materials that we already have.

Open learning also enables the institution to make its own timetable more flexible. This becomes necessary in order to take the next step in integration.

3. *Integration of the context around the local church*

The goal of this step is to bring the institution and local congregations into partnership, so that the church provides the context for training the institution's students and the institution provides resources to local congregations for equipping all their members, at appropriate levels, for different kinds of ministry.

In fact the distinctions between institution and church, students and church members, can be narrowed or even disappear.

Such a partnership is not easy to develop. It is rich in potential but can also be delicate and easily over-strained or unbalanced.

At the simplest level the relationship can consist of sending students from the institution for their practical experience in a local church. Faculty members can also participate in local churches and, in the opposite direction, local pastors can be invited to the institution to preach or to share about their work.

Such a relationship is fairly simple and undemanding. It also does not develop anything like the potential of full partnership. For this at least three steps can be suggested.

(a) *The institution is seen as providing a resource* which can help the local congregation in its task of training and equipping all its members for ministry, according to their gifts, availability, age, and educational level. This is in line with the first Biblical principle we noted. This will of course involve radical change on the part of the congregation's leaders and members. The leaders will have to see their role as equipping all God's people. The people will have to be ready to be available for ministry and for being equipped. In this the institution can be a catalyst for change, being careful neither to dominate nor to acquiesce in the *status quo*.

It is hard to bring change in a local congregation, but if a group of teachers and students together cannot do anything, what hope is there that those same students in the future, on their own, will be able to bring change when they are sent out into the churches?

As such change begins slowly to take place and a few people in the congregation begin to take up training, a change will already have taken place in the relationship between the institution and the local church, opening the way for the next step.

(b) *The local church is seen as providing the context* in which both the full-time students of the institution and the members of the local church can be trained. Here the Biblical principle of learning in a community of disciples can be rediscovered in a new way, as groups of God's people learn together by being involved in all aspect of the churches' life and worship, fellowship, instruction and outreach of many kinds into society. As leaders and members both from the institution and the local church plan and do these things together, there will surely be an impact both on the institution and the local church. The local pastor will no longer be an individual operating on his own, either as an authoritative, paternal leader, or a frustrated, helpless figure. He will be part of a team, assisted first, perhaps, by members of the institution, and then by the leaders who will develop in his own congregation. The students from the institution will be able to see this team ministry in action and it will provide a model for their own future ministry. They will also be able to model themselves on the pastors and other local church leaders, instead of (subconsciously) on their college staff, who often do *not* provide the right model. This can be made explicit by inviting pastors and local leaders into the institution to share in seminars, group reflection and counselling.

(c) *The Biblical principle of the chain of reproduction* needs to be implemented. Those who are preparing to be leaders and equippers can be given experience and training by helping to teach

other members of the congregation, in Bible studies, small groups, Sunday schools and so on.

This kind of partnership may seem ideal, but it should not be impossible. It will require care and patience on both sides, to develop a relationship of trust, in which neither side dominates or obstructs the other. There could be a tendency for the institution to take over and do everything for the local church. This might even be with the approval of the church leaders and members, who would see the students as a source of free labour to do their work for them, while they remained passive. Or the local church could keep the institution at arm's length, welcoming its attendance in church but not wishing it to get too close for fear of change. Or both sides could simply acquiesce in the *status quo*.

Developing partnership will also require skill on the part of the institution in co-ordinating the resources of its different departments to make them available to the churches—for example practical training, public relations, Christian education, research, extension training and so on. Each department will view the local church in different ways, as potential resource, target, training ground, or object of study. Each of these different approaches and perspectives need to be blended together. This will be difficult but by no means impossible.

4. *Integration of the pattern of training around a flexible and continuing residential/extension system*

It is not enough for the institution to develop partnership with the local congregations in its place. Integration with the church must begin with the students' *sending* churches. How are candidates selected for training? How is their call to ministry tested? How can we be sure they have real commitment? These questions concern both the sending church and the college. The responsibility for answering them is usually divided between them, with varying degrees of effectiveness. The system works, for the most part. But on the whole it is true to say that the church *hopes* that the candidate is suitable, but particularly with young candidates, there is often insufficient testing of their calling and gifts. They are still potential. The college is expected to provide the atmosphere in which they will be actualised and developed.

A simple way to provide more effective testing and development of calling and gifts would be for candidates to remain in their church context for at least one year after acceptance by the institution, and relating their study to actual ministry in their churches, under supervision from their pastors and other leaders. Only

after successful completion of at least a year or two of extension study, would they proceed for residential study.

Many churches already have a probationary period of pre-seminary experience. The difference here is that the student has already begun to study in a formal way, while continuing his ministry. This preliminary period would make a great difference to his sense of calling and understanding of his gifts. It would also bring their institution and the sending church into much closer partnership.

Later the same pattern could be repeated, with the student going *back* to his church for further study/ministry experience and also going *out* for experience in some different situation—for example an urban or rural development project. Again, he would continue studying—by extension—and so would not ‘lose time.’ The whole period of study in this way might take four years instead of the usual three, but that would include ministry experience and probation.

A third stage would be at the end of the course. But in this new system the ‘end’ would not be so sharply demarcated. A student would return to work in his church, having completed all, or most of the college requirements. But he would continue to study and would perhaps return to the college each year for the next two or three years for periods of reflection on his experience in ministry. Thus *continuing education* would be built into the system. Many churches already have a probationary period of two or three years after initial appointment. It would be a matter, again, of integrating this into the college syllabus.

This may seem very time-consuming and unnecessary. But it could result in a significant integration between study and ministry and an orientation to life-long study, that at present is almost totally lacking. Hence the stagnation of many of our pastors, or their flight back to college in search of ‘higher’ degrees to improve their status.

There could be many different variations on this pattern. The important principle is for college and sending church to work in partnership and for students to spend a significant part of their study time off-campus, in their sending church or some other learning environment.

Conclusion

Such a process of integration could bring change to our institutions and churches. It will take time. It will inevitably lead to a much more flexible approach to training in which longer

and shorter courses, extension and residential training, initial and continuing education, formal and non-formal, institution and non-institutional, will not be seen as mutually exclusive, but complementary—parts of the whole. Students will spend time on and off campus according to their needs and situation.

An institution will not be confined to one campus, but will see the local congregations in its area as part of its campus. It may also be linked with other sub-centres where a nucleus of staff and students share resources with other institutions or a group of local congregations. In such a system the training of many different kinds of workers and the emergence of different kinds of ministry, as envisaged in the Andhra Pradesh proposals, become both practical and necessary.

There may be other changes which cannot now be foreseen. There will certainly be difficulties. The greatest pressure will come on the present staff of our institutions, who will have to change the most. All change is painful. But it is preferable to our present crisis.