

Radical Transformation in Preparation for the Ministry

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Abstract

The ancient question formulated by the North African Church Father Tertullian, ‘What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?’, would today be rephrased ‘What does the training center/academic programme have to do with the church?’ This question must be answered. This article takes an in-depth look at the emphases in current theological education to determine whether future Christian leaders are receiving the best possible training for doing ministry. Improvement requires change, and some major changes are suggested here. Such changes can be achieved only through the Holy Spirit.

Theology needs to be seen as a verb, not just as a noun, if men and women are to be adequately trained for servant leadership of the church. The Lausanne Covenant of 1974 (reproduced in full as an appendix to this article) provides a very unique summary of how theological education should be integrated into Christian ministry. Theological education must be understood as a process.

Introduction

Nearly a decade ago I published a paper entitled ‘Current Trends in Theological Education,’ which I closed with the following paragraph:

In my position with Overseas Council International I have the unique advantage of observing and evaluating hundreds of theological schools all over the world, and I would like to share three observations regarding very negative aspects that I believe must be overcome:

- A. Theologians within theological institutions like to talk and debate, often with few results. It seems that action or change is to be avoided at any cost.
- B. Theologians within theological institutions like to focus on the past. To plan ahead, to think futuristically, seems to be outside their comfort zone.
- C. Theologians within theological institutions seem to have difficulties with issues of management, fundraising, and outcome oriented assessment.

Revival is not only the result of the working of the Holy Spirit in the past, as recorded in history. A new focus on the essentials must become reality today.¹

Wherever I have presented this material, theological students and pastors in ministry have applauded, whereas theological educators have expressed skepticism or denial. A theologian myself, I can echo the statement of Alan Jones in his article on spiritual formation, ‘I am asking for nothing less than the conversion of seminaries.’²

In the past decade an enormous amount of material has been published on the need for change in theological education. Numerous conferences, seminars, think tanks, etc. have been held on the subject. Various accreditation agencies have made it their premier theme. International workshops for academic deans of seminaries have been organized to discuss curriculum changes. Overseas Council International dedicated an entire series of Institutes of Excellence around the globe, attended by hundreds of leaders of theological

¹ Manfred Waldemar Kohl, ‘Current Trends in Theological Education’, *International Congregational Journal* 1 (February 2001), pp. 26-40.

² Alan Jones, ‘Are We Lovers Anymore: Spiritual Formation in the Seminaries’, *Theological Education* 24:1 (1987): p. 11.

schools, to reflection on this topic. Out of this series of Institutes came numerous publications, including a five-volume set of books under the series title ‘Transformation in Ministry’ (in Portuguese, *Ações Transformadoras*).³ It seems that a legitimate concern is being recognized and that changes are indeed being considered. We would therefore do well to revisit the ideas expressed in the Lausanne Covenant⁴ and the ICAA Manifesto⁵ with regard to the renewal of evangelical theological education.

In this presentation, I will refer extensively to the two well-known texts on the subject, *Renewal in Theological Education: Strategies for Change*, by Robert W. Ferris,⁶ and *Reenvisioning Theological Education: Exploring a Missional Alternative to Current Models*, by Robert Banks.⁷ Both textbooks give a good summary of the entire debate and of the material published on the subject, as well as listing numerous practical recommendations as to what and how theological schools should teach. I would like to summarize the material from these texts in the following seven key points. To call attention to the urgency of the situation I will go beyond the “recommendations” of the textbooks to say that theological institutions must change, because I believe strongly that ‘as the seminary goes, so goes the church.’⁸

- 1) Theological education *must* give more attention to the schools’ constituent churches and their needs. In preparing pastors, they must deal with the issues the church faces today and with which they are likely to be confronted tomorrow.

³ Manfred Waldemar Kohl and Antonio Carlos Barro (Organizadores), *Ações Transformadoras* (Londrina, Brazil: Descoberta, 2006).

⁴ *The Lausanne Covenant*. Adopted 1974 by the International Congress on World Evangelization, Switzerland.

⁵ ‘Manifesto on the Renewal of Evangelical Theological Education’, *Evangelical Review of Theology* 8:1 (April 1984), pp. 136-143. Reprinted in *Theological News* 16:2 (April 1984), pp. TET 1-6. Also reprinted in Youngblood, *Excellence and Renewal*, pp. 80-87.

⁶ Robert W. Ferris, *Renewal in Theological Education: Strategies for Change* (Wheaton: Billy Graham Center, 1990).

⁷ Robert Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education: Exploring a Missional Alternative to Current Models* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999).

⁸ Charles Spicer Jr., founder and first president of Overseas Council for Theological Education and Mission, used this phrase as one of the foundational principles of the new organization, begun in 1975 in the United States of America.

- 2) Theological education *must* be more mission oriented. The missiological emphasis on bringing the good news of salvation to a lost world and nurturing the believers has to be the primary goal in preparing leaders for the church.
- 3) Theological education *must* put greater effort into spiritual formation as part of ministry skills, teaching – and especially modeling/practicing – servant leadership.
- 4) Theological education *must* focus on training outcomes, on the effectiveness of graduates in ministry. Realistic analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of a school's graduates is essential.
- 5) Theological education *must* rediscover the value in practical mentorship. Senior pastors and experienced missionaries are potential mentors, to be considered just as valuable as any of the professors of the seminary.
- 6) Theological education *must* address the needs of the laity at all levels, including professionals, as well as those who could and should be ministering in the marketplace, using recognized principles and designs of adult education theory and methods.
- 7) Theological education *must* start its renewal from the top. The chief executive (rector, principal, or president), with the support of the board, must embrace, promote, and teach the guidelines. The entire leadership of the seminary must learn to be vulnerable in seeking out and adopting new and effective ways of incorporating practical training into the total seminary experience.

From Ferris's and Banks's materials, as well as in numerous other publications, one could in fact add several additional topics for consideration.

1. The Needs of the Church

Overseas Council International has gathered general information on more than 7,500 theological institutions, bible schools, Christian leadership training centers, etc.,⁹ and detailed material on several hundred of these schools – their by-laws, constitutions, core values, mission and vision statements, course catalogs, etc. Nearly all of these institutions state in their legal documents that the purpose of their existence is to help the church by providing trained leadership for the various ministries of the church. Although pastors and mission and

⁹ For further information, write to Overseas Council International, PO Box 17368, IN 46217, USA. This material can be obtained electronically, on a disk, or as a hard copy.

denominational leaders often sit on the board of trustees of theological schools, seldom are they involved in the curriculum design and selection of teaching materials or courses. A conference held recently in East Africa at which pastors, theological teachers, and even regular church attendees met together for several days to discuss the teaching methods, the courses, and the outcomes of theological education is an excellent example that should be imitated everywhere.

In areas of the world in which civil/tribal war is a daily reality, theological schools must equip pastors in the theory and practice of reconciliation and peacemaking. When we know from statistics that HIV/AIDS has affected such a large proportion of the population, the seminary must include courses on how to deal with this pandemic. Given the unbelievably high incidence of divorce, single parenthood, promiscuity, teen pregnancy, violence, domestic abuse, etc., future pastors must be taught in the seminary how to deal with these issues if they are to be effective in their ministry. With more than half of the population in many countries under 18 years of age, and with so many children in AIDS-torn countries having to take on adult responsibilities at a very early age, seminaries must train future leaders to minister to children – in addition to and separately from the formal Christian education/Sunday School programmes. These are only a few examples of the issues faced by churches today and the need for theological schools to respond.

Do we as leaders in theological schools really know what the members of our churches need and what they expect from their pastors? If we do (and we can, given the many questionnaires and surveys that have been conducted lately), are we willing and able to make the necessary changes to meet these needs and expectations? Does your seminary have a required course on peacemaking/reconciliation? A required course on family issues, sex, domestic abuse? A required course on ministry to children? A mechanism to deal with the all-encompassing issue of HIV/AIDS? If we were to make such course requirements for every student, what other courses currently being offered would have to be dropped, not forgetting that biblical knowledge, church history, hermeneutics and communication, character formation, and other basic courses are essential? Such decisions have to be made in consultation with the “customers” of our constituent churches, not by the “academic circle” alone. Because seminaries are not meeting felt needs, many churches have recently begun their own seminary or training programme for their leaders. This is a trend that should be taken more seriously before it is too late to reverse it.

2. Focus on Mission, Evangelism and Outreach

Statements such as “Teaching theology without mission at its center is useless theory” or “Every theologian should practice evangelism, and every evangelist should focus more on theology” or “Without winning people for Christ, theology does not exist” are, of course, clichés. Nevertheless, the Great Commission of our Lord (Matthew 28.19-20) must be practiced. Evangelism/mission and teaching are two equal sides of the same “Christianity” medallion. Robert Banks clearly states that the problem lies between action and reflection and, even more, between theory and practice.¹⁰ Several partner schools of Overseas Council International insist that required courses in mission and evangelism include door-to-door visitation, giving out tracts, witnessing to unbelievers, etc., as part of their course requirements. If a professor of Mission and Evangelism gets directly involved with his students in winning people for Christ, he provides a model that, when his students become pastors, they will also practice with the members of their congregation to win others for Christ. The Bishop of the Evangelical Church of India, Dr. Ezra Sargunam, believes that every pastor must be a missionary. He requires all students in their theological seminaries be involved in evangelism and church planting before they are permitted to graduate. No student receives a certificate without proof that he or she has started a new church or an outreach ministry programme, with the result that the evangelical church of India (ECI) adds several new churches every week.

A North American foundation underwrites the financial needs for a seminary that includes in its mission course the requirement that all students have six weeks of practical ministry experience in such situations as confronting the reality of post-Communism evangelism in the former USSR, learning from an experienced missionary working with the AIDS-affected church in Africa, or working with street children in a mega-city of Asia. A professor in the Philippines accompanied his Master of Divinity students every week to the slums of Manila as part of his mission course. In Argentina, one seminary developed a mission course focusing on ministry among the super-rich, trying to reach them in their private clubs or gated villas.

¹⁰ Banks, pp. 157-68. Banks gives excellent examples of what different kinds of courses and actions should be considered. He also refers to T. Groome, ‘Theology on Our Feet: A Revisionist Pedagogy for Healing the Gap between Academia and Ecclesia’, in Lewis S. Mudge and James N. Poling (eds.), *Formation and Reflection: The Promise of Practical Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), pp. 55-78.

A theological institution (leadership/board, faculty, staff, and students) must have as its basic core value bringing the good news to a lost world and equipping believers to build God's kingdom. Mission (evangelism, discipleship, and outreach) is not merely a programme or a department. Mission lies at the center of God's purpose for the church. Bosch writes, 'Just as the church ceases to be the church if it is not missionary, theology ceases to be theology if it loses its missionary character... We are in need of a missiological agenda for theology rather than just a theological agenda for mission; for theology, rightly understood, has no reason to exist other than critically to accompany the *missio Dei*.'¹¹ A new passion for mission is needed. 'Let our hearts be broken with the things that break the heart of God.'¹²

3. Rediscover the Value of Spiritual Formation

Jesus the teacher demonstrated that spiritual formation was essential for preparing his students/disciples for ministry. He took time to help the twelve, both separately and collectively, with their spiritual growth and maturity. Everything Jesus taught he practiced – in every "subject." His teachings on prayer, on serving, on sharing, on stewardship, on worship, etc., were always accompanied by practical demonstration. Jesus was never a mere theorist.

Theological schools have to insist on sound academic training and have measurable goals of achievement, but these should not replace or minimize spiritual formation and character development. Both these aspects have to be emphasized equally. Interviews of hundreds of graduates of seminaries make clear that they received the greatest benefit from personal time spent with their professors discussing spiritual issues, taking time to pray, sharing values and dealing with challenges. Hardly any of these graduates mentioned the brilliant lectures they heard or the outstanding new discoveries or achievements shared with them. A chaplain whose specific responsibility it is to care for students' spiritual needs is no substitute for the valuable personal interaction between a professor and a student as they discuss how

¹¹ Bosch, *Transforming Christian Mission*, p. 494. See also Mark Young, 'Theological Approaches to Some Perpetual Problems in Theological Education', *Christian Education Journal* 2.1 (Spring 1998), pp. 75-87 and O. Costas, 'Theological Education and Mission', in C. Rene Padilla (ed.), *New Alternatives in Theological Education* (Oxford: Regnum, 1986).

¹² This was the underlying principle upon which Bob Pierce founded the Christian aid organization World Vision International in 1950.

biblical truth can become personal reality. 'Spiritual formation and ministry skill development,' says Ferris, 'are both renewal values.'¹³

The job description of a professor/teacher should state clearly how much time is to be allocated to meet with individual students to talk and pray with them, and promotion or tenure should be based not only on the number of publications produced or the number of papers presented at academic conferences but also on the depth of personal involvement with students.

It is very encouraging to see theological institutions beginning each academic year with a full day of prayer for their entire community; setting aside a week during the year for spiritual emphasis or a weekend for prayer and fasting; or conducting a spiritual retreat for faculty and staff. Several theological schools have instituted a programme in which graduates serving in ministry can return at regular intervals to their alma mater for several days of spiritual renewal and a time for quietness, reflection, and prayer. Although spiritual formation and character development in the life of a student is difficult to measure precisely, these qualities become very obvious in the behavior of graduates as they serve in ministry.

4. Outcome-Oriented Assessment and Ministry Effectiveness

Overseas Council's overall mission is to help the leadership of non-Western theological schools improve their ministry, to be more effective in their efforts in training leadership for the church. About three years ago the board of directors of Overseas Council International asked the management to reevaluate its entire operation to determine whether we are still being true to this overall mission and to assess the measurable results. Management was asked to perform an outcome-oriented assessment, with all implications of such an assessment. A series of studies was commissioned as part of this assessment. One study evaluated the various aspects of resource development, customer relations, and administration in the United States. Four studies focused on an evaluation of our ministry in each of four countries/regions: the Middle East, Philippines, Brazil, and Ukraine.

In these four parts of the world, we interviewed all of our partner theological schools, using a carefully designed evaluation formula covering the last fifteen years of their ministry. We interviewed board members, leadership, staff, faculty, and students from many schools and analyzed the results. The greatest emphasis, however, was given to meeting, interviewing and evaluating graduates of our partner schools

¹³ Ferris, p. 129.

in order to determine the value to them of their own theological training. More than forty questions were asked (either in written or oral form)¹⁴ with the express purpose of finding answers to the following three groups of questions:

- A. How helpful was your theological training? List the positive and negative elements. Evaluate its educational/academic value. Report on the effectiveness of your spiritual formation, character development, etc.
- B. What was most valuable in your theological training, and what was missing, in the light of the ministry in which you are currently involved? In contrast, what required subjects or courses were of little or no use?
- C. If you had the opportunity to start your theological training today, how would you structure the courses and programmes? In summary, help us to improve our seminary to be of greater help so that your ministry can be more effective.

The responses to these questions were almost identical to those obtained in the Murdock Study,¹⁵ which listed ten essential subjects that should be taught in every theological seminary. In our study, only some of the participants prioritized subjects according to their perceived importance; however, all participants felt that equal emphasis should be placed on these ten subjects:

- 1) Ministry and Spirituality
- 2) Understanding Scripture
- 3) Historic Overview of Christianity
- 4) Evangelism and Mission
- 5) Spiritual Leadership
- 6) Personal Growth and Skill Development
- 7) Theology of Ministry
- 8) Hermeneutics
- 9) Communication
- 10) Christianity and Culture or Christianity and Present Realities

It is time that we make sure that our curricula are based on what is needed for the graduate to enter, or to continue in, his or her ministry,

¹⁴ To obtain a copy of this questionnaire, write to Overseas Council International, PO Box 17368, IN 46217, USA. This material can be obtained electronically, on a disk, or as a hard copy.

¹⁵ The Murdock Charitable Trust. The study was conducted in 1994.

rather than on the “hobbies” of professors, based on their own dissertations and research.

Several seminaries have begun to invite alumni who have been serving in churches or missions for five, ten or twenty years to meet with their faculty or the board of directors to give honest feedback as to how theological training could be improved based on their own ministry experiences and effectiveness.

5. The Rediscovery of Mentorship

In the field of medicine, the training programme was changed decades ago to require every student of medicine to be part of a mentoring programme, working in a ‘teaching hospital’ for up to three years. The student is part of the senior physician’s team, visiting patients with the physician, helping to diagnose the sickness and determine the needed treatment. Students even assist in the operating theatre. This same mentoring process is needed in theological education. Some theological schools have now included in their programme ‘teaching churches,’ where a student is mentored for one to two years under the tutelage of a senior pastor or of a pastoral team. The students (pastors-to-be or missionaries-to-be) learn their future work step by step. They learn from their mentor how to prepare a sermon, how to begin the practice of prayer and fasting, how to engage in a devotional or ‘quiet’ time, how to handle staff, finances and board meetings, and how to deal with both supportive and critical deacons. They sit in on counseling sessions, participate in weddings and funerals, and so on. They are exposed first hand to all the positive and negative experiences they will face later in their ministry. All these mentors (senior pastors, missionaries, evangelists) are part of the faculty of the theological institution, just as are the professors who teach history, communication or culture.

New research shows that quite a large percentage of students are now requesting official mentorship programmes – guidance and “hands-on” experience in how to do ministry.¹⁶ Within the last decade, several theological schools in various parts of the world have begun to experiment with such a formal mentoring programme. Some schools have even joined together in a unified programme, some with hundreds,

¹⁶ Manfred W. Kohl, *The Church in the Philippines: A Research Project with Special Emphasis on Theological Education* (Manila: OMF Literature, Inc., 2005), p. 55.

others with only a few dozen students.¹⁷ In all of these programmes half the courses are taught by seminary professors and half by clergy, church staff members, or leaders of parachurch organizations. Students are individually mentored by their teachers. Under such an arrangement students are watching ministry being done in preaching, evangelism, pastoral care, management, and Christian education. By means of this mentoring process, students come directly into contact with the kind of ordinary men, women, and children to whom they will be ministering on their own following graduation. They learn to listen to them, to understand their needs and their ways of thinking, and to speak their language. In Christian ministry, one has to become bilingual. In the words of Henry Horn, ‘We must learn to live, think, and speak in two completely different languages – the language of the Bible and the language of modern man.’¹⁸

Let me conclude this topic by challenging you directly: Name the two people you are presently mentoring, with whom you personally take time to transfer your knowledge, experiences, and insights. If you cannot name two such individuals, you should immediately identify them and begin now to establish a mentoring relationship.

6. Serving the Laity and Ministering in the Marketplace

The recent trend toward changing theological schools or seminaries into Christian universities is one indication of the need for Christian impact in the marketplace. In this regard, it is important to learn from the historical development of many major universities in North America that began as evangelical theological institutions and, as they developed into liberal arts colleges, lost their Christian emphasis. To add to a theological school curricula several new academic disciplines in order to train social workers, high school teachers, nurses, secretaries, lawyers, etc. based on Christian principles is indeed a much more complicated and expensive undertaking than expected, as many of our partner schools have discovered. It is indeed very important to have training programmes based on Christian principles for these

¹⁷ The SATE model and other innovations are described in Timothy Morgan, ‘Re-Engineering the Seminary’, *Christianity Today* (24 October 1994), pp. 54-78.

¹⁸ Henry Horn, *The Christian in Modern Style* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), p. 68. See also Steele W. Martin, *Blue Collar Ministry* (np: The Alban Institute, 1989).

professions, but the provision of such programmes is not necessarily the responsibility of a theological school.

A different approach has been developed by several of our partner schools; namely, having their faculty and staff teach not only in their own theological school but also in secular universities, adult evening programmes, or gatherings of various professional groups. A professor of Christian ethics, for example, offers a course twice a week during the lunch hour at a restaurant in downtown Boston, a large city in the United States. This course is attended by a large group of businessmen, lawyers, and government employees. A professor of counseling gives a series of lectures on Christian principles at the local hospital in Bangalore, India, for all medical staff interested in the subject, again with an overwhelming number of people in attendance. In Nairobi, Kenya, several courses are offered every Saturday morning in several churches on topics geared to professionals. A team of teachers and students in Hong Kong offered a course on Christian commitment, honesty, and responsibility at a hotel right in the middle of the financial district with more people signing up for the course than could be accommodated. These trends are developing very quickly. The Victory Leadership Program in the Philippines offers courses for lay people on subjects relevant to them, bringing clear biblical teaching to bear on the subject matter. These courses are offered simultaneously in fifteen key locations of metropolitan Manila.

The voices of the “priest,” the “prophet,” and the “king” must be heard more clearly in the marketplace. At a recent faculty retreat at one of our partner schools, two days were spent discussing how to understand properly the biblical concept of the priest, the prophet, and the king in our time. During a recent debate between theological educators and business people, a challenging statement was made: “Training pastors to visit people in hospitals when they are ill is well developed, but the concept of visiting business men, bankers, and politicians in their offices or board rooms to speak with them about their spiritual problems and conflicts and to pray with them is still largely undeveloped.” We must have the courage to seek ways to train people so that they are able to be effective in all segments of society. ‘We need to break out of our ecclesiastical ghettos,’ as stated in the Lausanne Covenant.¹⁹

¹⁹ *The Lausanne Covenant*, paragraph 6.

The amount of excellent materials on adult education theories produced in recent years is overwhelming.²⁰ Faculty in theological schools must be trained in using this material, especially in order to reach the professional lay section of our society as part of the ministry of the church. One theologian said at an OCI Institute that his two weekly lectures on Christian principles at the local law school was mission/evangelism work at its core.

7. Renewal Starts at the Top but Must Be a Team Effort

At meetings with boards of directors/trustees of our partner theological schools, I have been asked repeatedly “What is the role, or the job description, of the president?” We must recognize that the president (rector, principal, CEO, provost, etc.), who must be responsible for the overall operation of the institution – from staff to finances, from strategic planning to evaluating results – cannot continue to teach courses on a regular basis as a member of the faculty. Such a statement normally creates great opposition, usually from the president himself. Trained as a teacher, a faculty member at the tertiary level, he wants to continue to teach and usually simply adds the responsibilities associated with the presidency to his teaching schedule. The result is that his performance suffers, both as president and as a teacher. Presidents have to learn the difference between being a member of the faculty and being the president, in charge of the entire institution.

The Institute of Excellence offered by OCI for the leadership of all our partner schools around the world was created primarily to help presidents to understand their role as “being responsible for the entire institution” and to learn to become more effective in this role. Training for members of the board is needed as well. Fortunately, in recent years good material has been produced and is available, in a number of languages, for both presidents and boards.²¹ Renewal must begin at the top. If the president and the board are not convinced that the present structure and curriculum must be changed, all efforts are futile.

In the business world, leadership is evaluated and leaders are promoted or dismissed according to the results of their leadership – outcome-oriented assessment. The same principle should apply to the leadership of theological schools and should be reflected in the job

²⁰ A catalog of many of these materials may be ordered from the Jossey Bass Publishing House. www.josseybass.com

²¹ An annotated bibliography is available from Overseas Council International.

description of the president. The president is responsible for his faculty and for his staff, and he should teach and supervise both groups. He should teach the faculty, or facilitate discussions with them, on issues such as core values, improvement of teaching methods, how to add new material, outcome assessment, training students in spiritual values, character formation, team teaching, and even areas such as management of time and resources. If a president requires that every faculty member participate in regular (weekly or monthly) training sessions, including reading in advance the well-prepared material provided, the chances of theological renewal are very high. Equally as important, a president should teach all other staff – from secretaries to accountants, from public relations employees to computer people – in regular (weekly or monthly) sessions geared to their personal and professional needs. The presidents of some of our schools that have begun such a regular teaching programme for faculty and staff report extraordinary results.

We must strive for more team effort. The board, faculty, and students of a theological school in Africa spent four months working together on a strategic plan in which each of them became a stakeholder. Another school worked on developing core values, receiving valuable input from alumni. Such activity coordination, teaching and leading faculty discussions, is the responsibility of the president, with the support of his board. These activities have greater significance for the school than teaching regular courses to students.

Conclusions

We would do well to reflect once again on the twelve specific points of the ICAA Manifesto: ‘We now unitedly affirm that, to fulfill its God-given mandate, evangelical theological education today worldwide must vigorously seek to introduce and to reinforce contextualization, churchward orientation, strategic flexibility, theological grounding, continuous assessment, community life, integrated programme, servant molding, instructional variety, a Christian mind, equipping for growth, cooperation.’²²

Could the leadership of each theological school set aside a period of twelve months (sooner rather than later) to establish a mechanism for serious evaluation, with the determinant commitment to confirm what is excellent, to change what needs to be improved, to add what is needed, and to cut out what is irrelevant and unproductive?

²²The ICAA Manifesto

One approach to the reorganization of a theological school would be a close examination and possible adaptation of Jesus' theological educational programme. For three years Jesus taught and mentored twelve full-time students (disciples) as well as many more part-timers or just listeners. As a teacher, whatever he taught he practiced himself, with his students. He seldom lectured; rather, he spent most of his time in dialogue and practical demonstration, using everyday issues as they came up as the basis for his teaching. His relationship with his students was sincere, penetrating, challenging, and goal-oriented. A simple imitation of his three years with his disciples might not be appropriate for a theological seminary. However, the key subjects he taught should provide guidelines for seminary education today.

One discipline Jesus practiced regularly in the presence of his disciples, that he taught them, and that he emphasized as all-important for their lives was prayer. Prayer was a "required" course, a discipline that penetrated all the other subjects. Jesus also taught and demonstrated service, a second core subject. His entire life reflected a serving attitude, and his students often had to learn this attitude the hard way. Thirdly, Jesus lectured on sharing and giving, more than on any other subject. His emphasis on biblical stewardship was very high on his priority list of discussion topics, and he demonstrated constantly his conviction that everything he was and had and did belonged to his Father. His teaching included personal evangelism. He taught the message of repentance and challenged people to follow him, the Way of Salvation. He sent his students out to do the same, and the great Commission is clearly a directive to evangelism and mission. Jesus also taught extensively regarding management of resources, people, and time. His students had to learn about the significance and beauty of unity without compromising the truth of the divine message about worship as a life style, about holistic and sustainable ministries, about futuristic thinking and strategic planning, a theme carried further by Paul.

To summarize, the required courses taught by Jesus in his "seminary" included prayer, serving, stewardship, evangelism/outreach, management, unity, worship, futuristic thinking, and strategic planning. Could the evaluation of our own seminaries include a comparison with what Jesus did, and a challenge to do the same?