De-schooling the Theological Seminary: An Appropriate Paradigm for Effective Ministerial Formation

Allan G. Harkness

Trinity Theological College, Singapore

Abstract. *The most common paradigm of contemporary Protestant theological education for ministerial formation is that of schooling, seen in the institution of the theological seminary/college. This article notes the limitations of the schooling paradigm for educational intervention in the range of domains inherent in effective ministerial formation; recognizes that teaching and learning take different but still legitimate shape when used to describe educational processes in this context; and argues for an integrated, formational, and missional community paradigm modeled especially on the relationship of Jesus with his disciples as being both more consistent with biblical precedents and more effective educationally. The implications of this for the role of faculty of theological institutions are explored.*

Christian theological education is an enterprise which is particularly wide-ranging in its scope and its efficacy. A scan through recent literature reveals comments such as "wherever we look today, especially in the West, theological education presents a confusing picture" (Banks 1999, 4); *Theological Education* continually publishes articles which raise concern about the nature and direction of the enterprise, as well as devoting an issue to "New Perspectives on Theological Education" (vol. 34, no. 2, Spring 1998); and titles of articles in a recent theme issue of *Christian Education Journal* (vol. 3 NS, no. 1, Spring 1999) included "Theological Education at a Crossroad" and "We've Got Trouble." This is not the picture of a settled discipline, especially where theological education as ministerial formation is the focus.

Numerous forms of contemporary theological education can be identified in the Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant Churches, but within the latter stream four main expressions are apparent:

1. Theological studies in a (usually) secular university. The studies are open to anyone for serious inquiry, similar to any other course of study in the humanities or social sciences. Theological studies are not necessarily equated with theological belief; there may be little advocacy for particular theological stances; and there may be neither specific requirement for, nor expectation of, a personal commitment to the belief system being studied by either student or teacher.

2. Theological education in a theological college, seminary, or divinity school. These institutions exist primarily to train people for some form of leadership in churches or church agencies. Their governance may be denominational, inter- or non-denominational. Most often there is an expectation that the students come with a level of personal commitment to the stated belief system of the institution, and are there to be equipped professionally and (frequently) vocationally. Satisfactory completion of the programs offered usually legitimizes ministry and leadership within churches and other institutions either under the auspices of the sponsoring/ governing bodies or recognized by them.

3. Institutions established primarily to equip laypersons for ministry and mission. These are situated in a wide range of both church-based and non-church-based settings. They may be a Bible school or college, some form of lay training institution, or an extension/distance learning program. The programs offered may be idiosyncratic to the institution or accredited through

an external authority. Participants in these institutions are most likely to be lay people seeking to be better equipped to integrate their faith into their regular lives, without necessarily going into full time Christian service.

4. Non-campus attendance theological education. This may take a variety of forms. For example, it is seen in the models of equipping non-stipendiary ministers and ordained local ministers in the United Kingdom, in which a significant proportion of the time spent in training by the participants is away from the physical site of an institution. Another, increasingly available, model is internet-based e-learning, combining elements of the well-established theological education by extension model with the advantages of radically shortened turn around time for contact between course facilitators and students and the potential of real-time interaction.

This paper addresses issues of Protestant theological education in the second setting, the theological college or seminary, because it is most frequently in this context, straddling the purposes and expectations of the other settings (especially the first and third), that the educational paradigm used is the subject of animated debate.

The Purposes of the Protestant Theological Seminary

Statements of purpose vary between theological institutions, but the following examples may be considered representative:

> The mission of Union Theological Seminary "is to educate men and women for ministries of the Christian faith, service in contemporary society, and study of the great issues of our time." (Union Theological Seminary, New York 2001)

> "According to its articles of union, Trinity Theological College exists to 'educate pastors for the church and to train full-time or voluntary evangelists and church workers for religious education or for Christian social service.'" (Trinity Theological College, Singapore 1998, 5)

> "St John's core purpose is to enable people to grow in relationship with God, through training and education in spirituality, intellectual enquiry and practice of mission and ministry, so that they are inspired and equipped to help others encounter God in Jesus Christ and make Christian disciples." (St. John's College, Nottingham 2001)

Despite the varied ways they are stated, at the heart of these statements lies a common purpose: the effective equipping of men and women for appropriate leadership and ministry within churches and associated organizations and institutions. For the purposes of this paper, this process will be termed ministerial formation – the provision of what is needed to form those being educated into people with the appropriate blend of qualities which will enable them to minister effectively, whether in an intra- or inter-cultural setting. (Major distinction between people commonly perceived to be *ministers* – serving in their own cultural setting – and *missionaries* – serving in a cross-cultural setting – is unnecessary here, as the essence of formation is the same, regardless of the cultural context in which the resulting training is applied.)

It is the efficacy of such ministerial formation through the medium of the seminary or theological college that continues to face a barrage of questions and concerns from both those within the institution and the stakeholders in such education outside.

The Dimensions and Challenges of Ministerial Formation

Ministerial formation encompasses a wide range of competencies and traits. For example, in her review of relevant literature, Patricia Lamoureux (1999) has suggested it includes "conversion of mind and heart, fostering integrative thinking, character formation, promoting authentic discipleship, personal appropriation of faith and knowledge, and cultivating a spirituality of the intellectual life" (142). Often the scope is summarized in a triadic know–do–be formula. Terms used to describe the dimensions vary, for example, "to be like Christ, to know the word of God, and to do the work of ministry" (Chow 1981, 2); cognitive input, psychomotor skills, and affective goals (Griffiths 1990, 13); academic, technical, and the molding of character and spirituality (Hwa Yung 1995, 4); "acquiring cognitive, spiritual-moral, and practical *obedience*" (Banks 1999, 144); and scholarship, training, and piety (Smith 1999). The expression of these three major dimensions may be summarized as the cognitive acquisition of appropriate knowledge, competence in required ministerial skills, and personal character development.

Faculty members of theological colleges are well aware of the difficulty of balancing these three dimensions within the curriculum of their institution. The curriculum, as "the intentional learning experiences planned by a faith community for its members" (Hill 1985, 94), is usually conceived to be more than the courses students attend (often termed "the syllabus"). It may include a range of other activities which are planned to contribute to the education offered the students, for example, participation in pastoral care groups, field education, and corporate worship events,

"on the assumption that any aspects of social organization are likely to have an educative (or mis-educative) effect" (Hill 1985, 94). But invariably pressure comes from the stakeholders of the enterprise – faculty members, students, churches or organizations as the recipients of those completing the program of the institution, and lay people within those churches/organizations – to give greater emphasis to one or other of the dimensions. This is a particularly tall order: "We have entrusted to our seminaries and theological schools a daunting responsibility. They are expected to prepare wise, compassionate, theologically astute and pastorally proficient servants who can lead the Church and our societies through the crises of the twenty-first century" (Dearborn 1995, 7).

In part, expectations may be unrealistic because the stakeholders fail to appreciate that "theological education is a life-long process. ... A theological college can only engage part of that purpose" (Stevens 1992, 9). But being a tall order should not prevent an informed critique of the efficacy of these institutions in achieving their stated purposes, that there has been sufficient ministerial formation to enable their graduates to move into effective ministry. The tenor of much of the literature suggests that the stakeholders express dissatisfaction with seminary-based ministerial formation in the following ways:

- From the perspective of the students: Many students leave their seminary satisfied with their experience, but both anecdotal and empirical evidence identifies a significant number who move into ministry settings either enthusiastically but soon discover that they lack some of even the most rudimentary qualifications for effective ministry; or (for a lesser number) "feeling spiritually cold, theologically confused, biblically uncertain, relationally cal-loused, and professionally unprepared" (Dearborn 1995, 7; see also Griffiths 1990, 7).
- From the perspective of the recipient churches, mission agencies, and organizations: Common criticism from this quarter reinforces dissatisfaction with the colleges, perceiving them as "ivory towers" or "theological sausage machines" (Starkey, cited in Cheeseman 1993, 484), or producing graduates who need to be re-tooled to be of value to the recipient institution.
- From the perspective of lay people: There is often an ambivalence by lay people towards seminary students/graduates. On one hand, they sense that the graduates deserve to be placed on some sort of ecclesiastical pedestal because of their theological education; while on the other hand, they wonder whether the same graduates fail to understand the reality of life in their societies – as if they graduate with the right answers, but to the wrong questions.

To address such criticism from an educational perspective, consideration must be given to the extent to which the predominant paradigm of Protestant theological education for ministerial formation enhances, or militates against, its efficacy.

The Predominant Paradigm for Protestant Ministerial Formation

A number of models for ministerial formation are recognizable. For example, Sidney Rooy (1988) has identified and analyzed four "theological cultures" ("meaning that contextual forces have influenced theology and the Church in certain historical periods" [52]) which have been apparent in the two millennia since the formation of the Christian church: the catechetical, monastic, scholastic, and seminary models. Grahame Cheeseman (1993) has identified five dominant paradigms in contemporary theological education: the academic, monastic, training, business, and discipleship paradigms. Drawing liberally on the seminal work of Edward Farley, and David Kelsey's analysis of the "Athens" and "Berlin" approaches to theological education, Robert Banks (1999) has described the two major positions in the current debate on theological education (more specifically in the North American context) as the "classical" and "vocational" models.

From this range of models available (and they are interrelated to varying degrees), and despite the development of a number of variants to the models, it is the scholastic or seminary form which is recognized as appropriate by the majority of Protestant theological institutions world-wide for ministerial formation, thus reflecting a pre-occupation with the educational paradigm modeled on schooling. The schooling mindset is most obvious in the nomenclature used (college and seminary; students, teachers and professors; classrooms and lecture halls; exams and papers; degrees and diplomas; and graduations and commencements).

Of concern to educationists is that the adoption of this model is not usually consciously considered. Banks highlighted this when he noted what theological seminaries have in common:

> [W]ith few exceptions, they all formally recruit qualified faculty, use critical methodologies, and value academic accreditation. Most still tend to view pastoral ministry as a profession, and provide training in relevant skills. Only rarely do they question the dominant schooling paradigm by which they fashion their lives. Seminaries have often adopted secular models of education, rather than subject them to rigorous theological or practical evaluation: even where such questioning takes place, it often parallels what is taking place in higher education or training for

the professions generally, not on any distinctive grounds. (1999, 6f.)

This criticism leads one to wonder whether the use of the schooling paradigm is in fact a major contributing factor to the dis-ease expressed about ministerial formation. Schooling and education are not synonymous terms, and this paper will argue that a non-schooling paradigm is a more effective educational paradigm to achieve the sense of integration of the strands required in the educational task of ministerial formation.

What Schooling Can – and Cannot – Achieve

The contemporary scholastic/seminary models of education can be traced back to Greek origins. The school became an important Hellenistic institution, with the children (usually only males) of those sufficiently affluent to be able to afford it going to professional teachers for tutoring towards the cultured life as citizens. This training continued on into adulthood for many. (Although note Pounds's suggestion that "actually, in the Athenian Greek situation, it would be more proper to speak of the development of specialized teachers than of schools because the youngsters went to a teacher of a particular subject or curriculum" [1968, 43f].) The primary focus was very much on intellectual development and acquisition of knowledge, especially encouraging "the development of the talents and potential of the gifted individual" (Giles 1981, 6; where "gifted" is not used in the New Testament sense of *charismata*). Thus it was an obvious precursor of the later "very book-oriented, classroom-based emphasis on recitation ... [which was to] influence not only approaches to compulsory education but also learning styles in universities and seminaries" (Hill 1986, 175). Compare this with the traditional Hebraic educational focus:

> In contrast to the intellectualist Greek epistemology, stressing the abstract and objective features of knowledge, the Hebrew concept of knowing integrates thought and experience ... This implies a pedagogy of praxis: of reflection followed by action, of learning followed by doing, of theory alternating with practice. (Hill 1986, 177)

The school has since come to be considered the major agency of education in most societies, and it is not without major achievements. Consider, for example, the impact of the post-Reformation phenomenon of universal schooling:

> It has helped [the masses] understand the modern world in which they must survive and brought useful knowledge and skills within the reach of most children. It has also somewhat reduced their fears of

ethnic difference in increasingly multicultural communities. It has given them access to a workforce requiring minimal levels of competence which most could not have acquired in any other way. It has widened their options for leisure. And it has empowered them to exercise more discerningly whatever political freedoms are available to them. (Hill 1997, 201)

But three concerns are raised about the usefulness of the schooling paradigm for education as ministerial formation.

The nature of learning

The first concern relates to an appreciation of the nature of learning in the educational process. Different forms of learning are reflected in the way in which learning is referred to in ordinary speech: for example "learning that ...", "learning how ...", and "learning to be (or become) ..." (Hill 1991, 2.5ff). The first two of these locutions are usually the focus of formal schooling, with "learning that ..." considered to imply the acquisition of knowledge; and "learning how ..." involving the disposition to perform certain activities skillfully, and (to differentiate this from conditioned learning responses at the subconscious level) to be able to modify the performance as a result of critical analysis. However – and of special significance in education for ministerial formation – concentrating one's understanding of learning within the boundaries of these two distinctions is not sufficient per se if integrated, mature personal development is under consideration. When this is of concern, Brian Hill, drawing on the insights of Michael Polanyi (especially his concept of "personal knowledge" and "tacit knowledge" versus "focal knowledge") suggested that

> the locutions "learning that" and "learning how" appear relevant but subordinate to the more integrative notion of "learning to be" ... filling out the notion of "learning to be" is dependent not only upon one's theory of knowledge and how it is to be transmitted, but also upon one's theory of personhood. ... (Hill 1991, 2.14ff)

This insight is particularly apposite for ministerial formation because learning to be (e.g., a minister) encompasses the holistic development of individuals and knowledge of other persons (especially, for the Christian, God-in-Three-Persons) rather than being limited to either the acquisition of knowledge about the faith, or even knowing how to behave as a minister. The whole person is involved in processes in which the various components of personality interrelate. All life's experiences, both formal and informal, have potential for learning in this broader sense, although this

potential may not be achieved, even in agencies which are established for the purposes of education. The acquisition of knowledge is essential in ministerial formation, but the scope of education must go beyond a restrictive cognitive qualification to more integrated human development. Such scope has been categorized in different ways, but Hill's seven domains in which effective Christian learning can take place are comprehensive:

1. cognitive (critical understanding of the faith and its application to life in society);
2. affective (the quality of the feelings we have towards God, ourselves, other persons, and nature);
3. dispositional;
4. Christ-based self-esteem;
5. the ability and desire to enter into caring relationships;
6. the development of spiritual gifts (*charismata*); and
7. assumption of responsibility in various spheres of leadership and ministry. (Hill 1985, 110ff. Cf. the typologies of Astley 1994, 111ff and Miller 1982, 89f)

It is this perception of learning as a process by which persons are shaped and fashioned holistically which is reflected in the strands of contemporary educational thought termed, inter alia, "emancipatory knowledge" (Habermas 1971), "the emancipatory domain of learning" (Mezirow 1991) and "transformative learning" (Cranton 1994).

Learning values

The second concern about the schooling paradigm for ministerial formation relates to the extent to which the school can transmit values. Questions are raised, on both empirical and ethical grounds, about the ability of schooling to bring about attitude change, and the matter of indoctrination versus freedom of choice in the owning of values. In the latter case, "indoctrination" is used with the negative connotations which arise when it is used to describe "the attempt to impose beliefs and belief systems on others by authority and by methods which allow little or no room for questioning, when the beliefs themselves more properly call for a free and critical acceptance" (Melchert 1974, 19). Hill (1990, 22) has summarized the concerns:

> We know from abundant research … that schools can transmit useful ideas and information; they can foster critical thinking, physical skills, and social awareness; they can acquaint students with the modern map of knowledge; and they can develop individual strengths and skills in the areas of thinking, feeling and self-expression … But the evidence in regard to values education is more sobering. Schools which seek to foster attitudes, beliefs, and values appear to succeed only when they are broadly reflecting the home background and social class of their students, while attempts to change students values in directions not endorsed by these influences generally seem to make little difference.

The development of appropriate values and attitudes are essential ingredients in ministerial formation; and there must be careful scrutiny of the ability of the seminary, when modeled on the school, to ensure that the desired values and attitudes are acquired – and acquired free from coercion, albeit unintentional coercion. This is to recognize that, in common with local church congregations, theological seminaries face the continual temptation "to distribute approval and measure institutional success by the extent to which [people] *conform* to the language of Christian belief and the behaviour expected of believers" (Hill 1994, 126).

Teacher/learner relationship and roles

Traditionally, the schooling process is essentially a unilateral transmissive model, in which the teacher controls the educational interactions. Much is thus determined by the ethics of, and methodology applied by, the teacher as the one with knowledge imparting it to those without it. Henri Nouwen, drawing on the work of Paulo Freire, has distinguished between "violent" and "redemptive" models of teaching (cited in Croucher 1991, 74): Teaching as a violent process is competitive (knowledge is property to be defended rather than as a gift to be shared); unilateral (imparted by a strong teacher to a weak student); and alienating (teachers belong to a different world to that of the students). In contrast, teaching as a redemptive process is evocative (drawing out the potential of others); bilateral (teachers and students learn together and from each other); and actualizing (envisaging the building of a better world). The schooling context of ministerial formation makes it difficult for teachers to conscientiously apply the redemptive approach.

When the *modus operandi* of a seminary is based closely on a schooling paradigm, there is grave danger that the expectations of that paradigm will be detrimental to the effective achievement of the aims of the formational processes. Unfortunately, what will be done well is to inculcate the perception that schooling values and principles are the key ways for the learning of ministry, and the shaping of ministers. Few of the learners will question the approach as normative for ministerial formation because of their expectations born out of their prior learning

experiences, but will instead adopt it as the normative model for their own educating role in the church or organization. Insights on the power of the "hidden curriculum" in educational intervention (e.g., see Astley 1992) and cognitive dissonance theory (e.g., see Hull 1991, 117–132) reinforce this point.

A De-Schooling Option

In 1971, in his provocatively-entitled book *De-schooling Society*, Ivan Illich challenged the educational establishment to consider whether the role of the school was overrated in what it could achieve in society. This book suggested that pupils are "'schooled' to confuse teaching with learning, grade advancement with education, a diploma with competence, and fluency with the ability to say something new" (1). Defining "school" as "the age-specific, teacher-related process requiring full-time attendance at an obligatory curriculum" (25f), he argued for each of these criteria that they were incompatible with what he perceived to be real and appropriate learning for life in society. One of his controversial conclusions was that "if schools are the wrong places for learning a skill, they are even worse places for getting an education" (17). Illich's argument, conveyed in a style akin to that of an Old Testament prophet, sought to persuade readers that schooling may be a particularly significant example of "hidden curriculum" at work, with a certain manipulative and even ideological dynamic of which perhaps even the teachers, as those who inhibit learning at the expense of maintaining the institution, may not be aware. In this respect Illich's work complemented Freire's insights on models of teaching.

Christian educationist Brian Hill picked up Illich's term, asking (as the title of his article) "Is it time we de-schooled Christianity?" (1978). Although alert to the justified criticism Illich faced, Hill used the concept of de-schooling to critique the development of Christian-run schools as effective vehicles for achieving the objectives of Christian nurture, but the same question can easily be addressed to education in theological institutions. Indeed, Hill's article was selected by Francis and Thatcher for their reader in the theology of education, suggesting that Hill was "throw[ing] down a significant theological challenge" (1990, 119). At about the same time, American John Westerhoff had published his tract *Will Our Children Have Faith?* (1976) in which he argued that, for church-based religious education, "the schooling-instructional paradigm is bankrupt. An alternative paradigm, not merely an alternative educational program, is needed" (23).

In a recent article, I suggested that the schooling paradigm, however much it is sanctified for the use of the educational processes of Christian faith communi-

ties, cannot enable effective holistic development because of the limitations outlined in the previous section (Harkness 2000). Foundational to the thesis of the article is recognition that "a key component in the achievement of educational objectives is the setting utilized for learning. The setting – in both its physical and psychosocial qualities – is well-recognized as a powerful component of the 'hidden curriculum' within any learning experience" (52), especially for the range of domains of educational potential beyond merely the cognitively oriented acquisition of knowledge (or information, more frequently). And, Hill has noted, "[the classroom] prejudices, in particular, the initiative and dispositional domains of learning" (Hill 1994, 174).

The nature of education for holistic development in Christian faith communities, unlike liberal education, may be considered to be focused on the concept of *oikodomē*, the word in the New Testament letters often translated as "edification" or "building up," and which identifies the transformational process towards maturity of individuals and Christian faith communities alike (see Harkness 1996, 1998). It appears likely that the functional *oikos* (household) setting used by the early churches provides normative principles for the style of education which expresses the comprehensive spiritual growth and formation connoted by *oikodome*. The potential efficacy of the *oikos* locale, *vis-à-vis* a schooling one, can be seen in four respects:

1. It better encourages the development of all aspects of holistic personal development;
2. It better enhances the opportunity to build quality relationships necessary for Christian development;
3. It recognizes that the expression of the disciplines of the household are those which can have special impact on lasting spiritual development; and
4. It provides the setting for appropriate parenting for spiritual growth. (Harkness 2000, 57–59)

When seminaries have as their major aim the comprehensive know–do–be formation of people for Christian ministry, such formation will take place most effectively in settings which provide for similar aspects to be expressed, and a significant proportion of this necessarily will need to be in the setting of a non-schooling paradigm.

A Non-Schooling Paradigm for Ministerial Formation: Jesus' Relationship with His Disciples

The setting of an appropriate paradigm for ministerial formation must be one which enhances the recognition

and development of the elements crucial for effective ministry, and a strong case can be made that the normative features of such a paradigm can be found in the relationship of Jesus with his disciples. There is a range of teaching and training styles apparent in the New Testament documents, but the paradigm of Jesus with his disciples is suggested for normativity because it appears that the early church consciously adopted as its benchmark the principles affirmed by Jesus, and adapted distinctive aspects of his educational practice also, as is demonstrated below.

One of the titles most frequently used of Jesus in the Gospels is teacher, and it is widely acknowledged that the teaching he modeled in both content and process was outstanding. But Gangel and Benson (1983, 66) have suggested that "Jesus Christ was maladjusted to the educational status quo of His day," a proposition on which Ted Ward had earlier expanded:

> Jesus deliberately chose not to adopt [the Greek concepts of knowledge and learning]. He built no school, put himself in no high-status lectureships, and raised no funds to perpetuate his teachings through an endowed institution. He could have done so; among the elite of that day, such practices were more acceptable than what he chose to do. He selected a handful of candidates and lived among them, an itinerant community of friends. (1977, 345)

Jesus' approach to the formation of his disciples was significantly different than the educational status quo in a number of ways. In his cultural setting Jesus could have chosen any one of the four common types of teacher to achieve his educational goals: available to him were the models of the philosopher, sage, prophet (or seer), and interpreter of the Jewish Law (scribe, Pharisee, and rabbi). Each of these types of teacher drew adult followers and had a specific focus. Rather than adopting one of these over the others, however, Jesus is observed in the Gospels embodying a style of teaching which drew on aspects of each model to create his own unique style (Perkins 1990, 2–22). Of special note in his historical-cultural setting is his choice not to establish a rabbinic-style school to which his disciples would come, but instead to utilize an itinerating context which generally took him away from the synagogues and school buildings (where a rabbi would have tended to stay), and he persuaded his disciples to join him in his itinerations, thus creating a learning community on the move.

A praxis-based pedagogy

This community was significant, not for its mobility so much as it enabled Jesus to fully utilize what is presented in the Gospels as his preferred educational style, the action-reflection mode popularized more recently in praxis-based pedagogies in both secular (e.g., Brookfield 1990) and religious (e.g., Groome's "shared Christian praxis" [1980]) settings. Educationists (e.g., see Brubacher 1966, ch. 12; and Richards 1975, 236–239 and 317–319) have identified a range of settings for education, ranging from formal learning (intentional learning in a formalized setting, e.g., a lecture, or a training program), through non-formal learning (learning which is intentional, but which takes place in a non-institutional setting, e.g., outdoor education) to informal learning (learning which occurs apparently spontaneously or coincidentally in the course of life, e.g. watching children play, or picking up cultural values). While Jesus is seen in the Gospels teaching in the more formal settings of synagogues (Matthew 9:35, 13:54; Mark 1:21) and in the temple (Matthew 26:55; Mark 12:35; Luke 21:37), he is not limited to these settings as a rabbi would have tended to be. Rather, the mode he adopted with his disciples accentuated the training potential of non-formal learning environments in which a life context, modeling, and "transactional relationships" (Richards 1975, 31) between persons are key features. In this, Jesus was expressing his continuity with the basic and enduring Hebraic educational values, which were focused on training the Israelites for the effective service of Yahweh – "education in holiness" (Blackburn 1966, 56) – and for which the institution of school is notably absent!

Teaching as discipling

The nature of the teacher/learner process which Jesus modeled with his disciples is much closer to the concept of learning as an apprentice than as a student: Priority in the former is given to holistic growth for effective ministry rather than the more common emphasis on the teacher conveying information for the students to seek to apply by themselves. It is this sense of apprenticeship which lies behind the secular Greek usage of *mathētēs* ("learner, pupil, disciple"), possibly extended in the New Testament usage to indicate total attachment to someone in discipleship (Blendinger, in Brown 1975, vol. 1, 486). The Greek words *didaskalos* ("teacher") and *didaskō* ("to teach") were used typically also for the relationship between instructor and apprentice. Thus for Jesus' disciples effective learning resulted as they participated together with Jesus in ministry, and then reflected on what had transpired, so that their approach to future service was modified. The close relationship was maintained even when the disciples were sent out by themselves for practical ministry, with the ensuing de-briefing being significant for its relational component (e.g., see Mark 6:6b–13, 30–32).

The approach adopted by Jesus with his disciples was integrated with his content, in that his focus went far beyond merely imparting information for his student-disciples to acquire. Thus Kevin Giles concluded that "we are not surprised therefore that Jesus' teaching is not a Rabbinical system that takes a lifetime of study to master, but is in essence a call to enter into a right relationship with God" (1981, 8). This was a call to a discipleship which inverted the social and religious conventions of the day, not least in its implications of interpersonal mutuality and responsibility; and it was out of the resulting transformation – attitudes, values, and dispositions – in the lives of the disciples that acts of service and ministry were able to flow. This transformative approach, with its inherent sense of liberation at all levels, was totally consistent with the theological significance of his incarnation; and it was further reflected in the level of relationship he encouraged with the disciples: the more authentic person-to-person than the task-oriented persona-to-persona mode commonly reflected between teacher/learner in seminary training.

Teaching in the New Testament churches

The paradigm used by Jesus to initiate the formation of the disciples did not change significantly with his death. The same concept of discipling, which would have included formation for leadership and ministry, is seen to continue into the post-ascension development of the Church. The means by which this happened is summarized most clearly by Sylvia Collinson:

> The characteristics of post-ascension discipling may thus be summarized as teaching which was intentional, relational, largely informal, communal, reciprocal, and centrifugal. It involved two individuals or a small group, who typically functioned within a larger nurturing community and held to the same beliefs. Each made a voluntary commitment to the other/s to form close personal relationships for an extended period of time, in order that those who at a particular time were perceived as having superior knowledge and/or skills attempted to cause learning to take place in the lives of others who sought their help. Such discipling was intended to result in each person becoming an active follower of Jesus and a participant in his mission to the world ... There was only one guru, and that was still the Lord himself. (2000, 15f)

The developing church seen in the New Testament also had a range of schooling models available to it. But the processes of formation centered on the *oikos* and reflecting the key principles of Jesus' style seem to have been quite deliberately adopted by the early church leaders to contrast with the schools in the surrounding Greco-Roman and Jewish cultures (see the

unparalleled work of classical historian Edwin Judge 1966, 1983, 1985). The early church certainly did not reject teaching per se, but the move away from the terminology and setting of classical teaching on the part of the early church served to refocus both the place of teaching and knowledge: "the teaching ministries [in the churches] ... have as their sole objective the sharing of the knowledge of God that will transform one's thinking and life-style" (Judge 1983, 31). The dynamic of praxis in a non-formal setting as a means of achieving this transformation was an important part of the educational process, not least the training of church leaders, as Paul Stevens has recognized:

> Biblical theological education is a complex reality involving many strands of learning, faith development and active ministry evoked by authentic relationship with the living God ... it is community-oriented (rather than individualistic), co-operative (rather than competitive), life-centered (rather than merely school-based), oriented towards obedience (rather than the mere accumulation of cognitive information), life-long (rather than concentrated in a degree program), and available for the whole people of God, the *laos* (rather than a clerical elite). (1992, 17, endnote 14)

Can the Paradigm Be Replicated Today?

The paradigm for ministerial formation represented by Jesus' training of his disciples and continued to be used by the early church, may be described as that of an integrated, formational and missional community. The specific ways in which the paradigm was expressed by Jesus with his disciples cannot be replicated in our contemporary societies. However, the principles underlying the approach adopted for formation in such a community may be considered normative for ministerial formation today, and these principles will be expressed in a wide range of ways, depending upon varying cultural, theological, and social settings.

Integrated formation

The elements necessary for effective ministerial formation may be summarized as in Figure 1.

The four key areas of formation (expanded from the triadic know–do–be formula outlined above) are knowledge (gained primarily through academic study), skills (through experience, e.g., in a local church or organization), character (through formational experiences and reflection on them), and empathy and passion (through personal awareness training). Each of the four areas impacts on each other and, especially, on one's journey towards wholeness in Christ and effectiveness in ministry and mission. The developing integration results in credible minister-leaders who are

Figure 1 *Development Model for Training Pastoral Leadership Students. (© Carey Baptist College 2000. Used with permission.)*
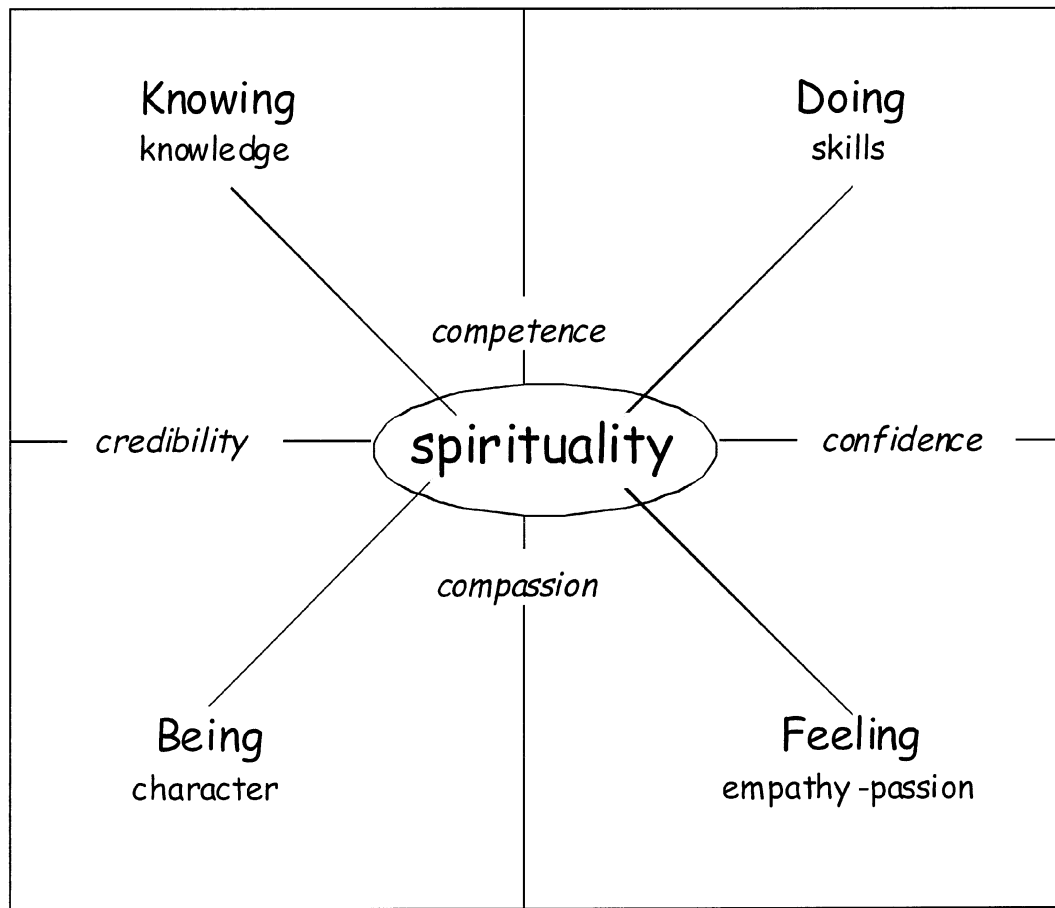
competent, confident, and compassionate (Carey Baptist College 2000).

The use of integration rather than balance is intentional. Balance implies doing one thing at a time, and seeking to juggle priorities. Integration, however,

> means bringing these aspects together in a whole, and doing them at the same time ... no one aspect negates the other, as though the presence of one would imply the absence of the other. ... [Each] should be mutually permeating ... Each aspect necessarily presupposes, implies, or contains the others. (Chow 1981, 2f)

Thus it may be counter-productive, for example, to focus initially on the knowledge area, as if "all that is required is 'to have one's philosophy – or theology – straight'. ... Such a view fosters a widening gap between theory and practice" (Van Dyk 2000, 140). The first phase of effective intentional ministerial training may need to be out there rather than in here if it is to be truly transformative in a holistic, integrated sense. Nor should integration be expected through a quick curricular fix of introducing more practical courses into the curriculum (Zikmund 1993, 121f). Some writers (e.g., Gnanakan, cited in James 1998, 71; Smith 1996) urge that personal spiritual formation take priority; but that approach also implies juggling to achieve a balance rather than the careful and intentional integration throughout which there is potential for comprehensive formation. Simultaneous intervention of each of the four areas must be aimed for.

Formation in a functional community

If the principle of the well-known architectural maxim "form follows function" is to be applied to the intentional processes of ministerial formation, much more of the technique of community than the technique of schooling (Emil Brunner, cited in General Synod Board of Education 1991, 5) will be required for the integrated formation which will achieve the development outlined in the previous section. Much has been written on the qualities of community, but its major features for ministerial formation can be seen in Lamoureux's summary:

It is through the gathered life of the community that people are drawn out of the solitude of study and prayer into communion and relatedness. It is in a communal context that personal biases and distortions are checked, that the meaning of texts is interpreted, that virtues and qualities of character are identified and formed. What is lacking in spiritual growth may be discovered in community through mutual encouragement and challenge. (1999, 144)

In other words, what is required is an existential expression of a community of God's grace, reflective of the church as "a community of *generosity* and *sharing*, of *friendship* and *belonging*, of *mission* and *identity*, of *freedom* and *risk-taking* ... of *passion* ... of *partnership* ..." (Riddell 1998, 69f), a modeling of alternative community counter-cultural to the grossly individualistic mindset often witnessed. Reflective participation in such may result in significant learning of the nature of Christian community, and therefore the nature of ministry within such community. What Riddell does not state explicitly, but which is developed in Dietrich Bonhoeffer's classic *Life Together* (1954/1996), written from his experiences as director of the Finkenwalde seminary community in 1935–7, is that such expressions of Christian community will also have a certain liturgical rhythm, in which intentional worship and the work of the seminary is integrated, so that "[t]he whole day now acquires an order and a discipline gained by winning this unity of the day" (76).

Two contemporary institutions are of special note to this author because of their long-time commitment to modeling the features of an integrated formational community: All Nations Christian College (ANCC) in the United Kingdom (Harley 2000) and Discipleship Training Centre (DTC) in Singapore. The ashram of modern India is another exemplar of the expression of many of these values of an integrated formative community (Klaudt 1997).

In the case of both ANCC and DTC, as well as the ashrams, residential expression of community is significant. Non-residential options are also valid, whether expressed as students living off campus attending regular classes through the week or when those involved in distance learning come together several times a year for intensive training, but the challenges of sustaining viable community are much greater. Realistically, authentic community life is always fragile, and what must also be stated clearly, to avoid putting any institution on an idealistic pedestal, is that just as families may exhibit degrees of dysfunctionality, so do theological institutions, either at a corporate level or in various strands of the relational networks that exist within the institution. Indeed, in a relationship-oriented situation any strength is potentially an Achilles' heel. But significant growth comes as the community struggles and wrestles its way into fuller expressions of its corporate life.

Ministerial formation offered in the context of intentional community will have a different quality about it than in the traditional seminary approach. The pedagogical approach will more clearly demonstrate the inter-relationship between the forms of learning discussed above, with a greater emphasis on the non-formal opportunities which present themselves. An "ecology of venues" (a phrase adapted from John Westerhoff) will be important, and legitimate venues for formation alongside the classroom or lecture hall may be found both on site (e.g., in the chapel, dining room, basketball court) or in the field (busy train station, hospital ward, counseling room, community center). Similarly, and in line with accepted principles of adult learning (as seen, for example, in the extensive range of publications from the Jossey-Bass Higher and Adult Education Series), the classroom may be used, but as a site for a greater level of non-formal learning, for example, through simulations, case studies, interviews, and so forth. For those responsible for formulating rather than determining the educational process, the challenge will be to learn to recognize and capitalize on the potential of such settings, using any setting to achieve what it does best and not expecting it to do what it inherently is unable to do. In this paradigm there must be a significant sense of mutuality between those perceived to be teachers and learners, even in determining the curriculum of formation. This is important in the light of the nature of the Gospel community for which formation is taking place, and is reinforced by accepted principles of adult learning. If not, the power of the hidden curriculum may be evident again.

The role of teacher

The teacher/learner relationship will need to undergo modification in the move towards expressing a more redemptive communitarian approach. A strength of community, as in a functional household (*oikos*, mentioned above), is that formation may be enhanced as the disciplines of the household are lived out. Such disciplines include presence and care of those among whom we live; participating together in the responsibilities of the community; and a growing expression of interdependence with each other, in contrast to unhealthy dependence or independence (Aleshire 1989, 209). Michael Hester (1989, 165) lists as further qualities of community: growth in intimacy; covenant love which is intentional, incarnational, conflictual, encouraging, and intimate; and the ability for sensitive and creative listening.

Teachers will need to recognize themselves more as co-learners in the processes of formation at the same

time as being directors of the process. Features of the role of spiritual director or mentor will take precedence over transmitter of knowledge, and as such the teachers can act in the various capacities of visionary (aware of what each individual can become), guide, model, mediator of the faith, and even guarantor (Matthaei 1991). Doing so will encourage movement away from the potential problems of the teacher/student relationship identified most notably by Ivan Illich and Paulo Freire.

A helpful complementary metaphor of the teacher/ learner role is parenting. Parenting may have both a narrow and broad focus:

> Parenting on the small scale is the effort at integrating a child into the family, of teaching it basic skills, providing basic information, encouraging inventiveness, and fostering the mysterious differences among one's offspring. On the large scale, parenting is the effort to introduce one's child to the culture at large, and ultimately to the variety of cultures whose appropriation is the sign of a truly civilized and educated person. In fact, that is precisely how one becomes a person. (Schner 1993, 134)

Elements of these processes obviously lie at the heart of ministerial formation, thus George Schner (1993) encourages the adoption of the parenting metaphor by theological educators:

> [Its] usefulness is in its preference for an understanding of Christianity as principally a social, cultural reality, and education within it as comparable to the rudiments of education in any human society as it takes place under the aegis of persons who have a relationship of oversight which goes beyond contractual responsibility. (135)

Parenting is not an individualistic affair. It must be done – as in a family – in a communitarian setting. There may be several people (or more) involved as parents, each contributing to the matrix of formation. And there may also be some surprises in the parenting process. For example, chronological age of the parent and of the one being parented is not the major criterion; rather, "what is important is the quality of the relationships, enabling more effective growth towards holistic development, something which the typical expectations of a teacher-student relationship do not allow for" (Harkness 2000, 59). Thus teachers may be parented in significant ways by their students.

The perspectives on the teachers' understanding of their role described in this section are reinforced further by insights of Parker Palmer. Palmer has suggested that "we teach who we are"; thus the first question asked should not be "what will be taught and how will it be taught?" but rather "who am I?" –

because "as we learn more about who we are, we can learn techniques that reveal rather than conceal the personhood from which good teaching comes" (Palmer 1998, 24). It is this self-understanding which will enable developing levels of person-to-person relationship to be formed; and which, perhaps more than anything else, will enable theological educators to provide what Earl Thompson has termed:

> a covenantal responsibility to co-create with our students ... a secure base, that is, a safe and trustworthy relationship or set of relationships that will provide our students encouragement, support, protection, and guidance in their efforts to become more loving and faithful. Above all else, we theological educators will have to set an exemplary standard of emotional and spiritual competence by modeling it in all our communications. (1997, 34)

A missional focus

Reflected in Jesus' training of his disciples, the leadership of Paul and others in the early churches, and the ethos of colleges like ANCC, DTC, Carey College, and others is the importance of involvement in ministry as a crucial part of the training program: equipping for ministry is done in the context of ministry. From the perspective of pedagogical effectiveness, and moving from a teaching to a learning orientation, active participation is a characteristic of effective learning, and field work can achieve this in ways which a classroom setting cannot.

But field work for ministerial formation has a much more significant role than being a good pedagogical idea, or applying what we are learning in the classroom. Effective supervised field education in a seminary may state a more comprehensive purpose, for example "to acquaint students with areas of ministry, help them improve skills in ministry and examine themselves, their roles and their call in ministry within the context of experiencing ministry" (Baptist Theological College of WA 1998, 1). This is seen too, in the Clinical Pastoral Education program, with its emphasis on ongoing learning from actual ministry through the processes of reflection and discussion with peers and supervisor. The concepts present in such programs closely mirror the goals of holistic ministerial formation outlined earlier in this paper, but the context in which they are being achieved as a praxis-based approach is a non-formal setting.

"Missional," a term drawn from Robert Banks, is an appropriate way to describe the focus of activity for ministerial training. Field-based activity is a significant ingredient of the missional component of the paradigm, but it is more than that. Nor does missional refer to merely having missiological courses or a

mission (or missions) orientation in the formation program, as important as such courses are. Rather, it

> places the main emphasis on theological *mission*, on hands-on *partnership* in ministry based on interpreting the tradition and reflecting on practice with a strong spiritual and communal dimension. On this view theological education is primarily though not exclusively concerned with actual *service* – informed and transforming – of the *kingdom* and therefore primarily focuses on acquiring cognitive, spiritual-moral, and practical *obedience*. (Banks 1999, 144)

This missional focus may well arise as the seminary wrestles with being the functional community expressed in the previous section; but becoming missional will also enhance the building of the community as an integrated and holistic formational "seed-bed" (Latin *seminarium*).

Two concerns arise from this. First, acknowledgement of the validity of this focus will put under scrutiny the assumption that the appropriate framework for theological education for ministerial formation is the standard literary-academic disciplines, the fourfold theological encyclopedia of biblical studies, systematic theology, church history, and practical theology (Banks 1999, 20; see also Hill 1986, 75ff). Instead, the curriculum will be shaped more by a praxiological agenda, the issues and concerns arising in and from the ministry involvement of learner and teacher alike, so that, for example, theology is taught pastorally and missiologically, and biblical studies both drive and are driven by the pastoral and missiological concerns – in an integrated rather than balanced way. Adequate attention to these concerns will demand greater interdisciplinary initiative than is currently evident in most seminaries, and teachers of ministerial formation may need to allocate a greater proportion of their time to ministry activity, most frequently as co-participants with their students. It is recognized that "some staff will not sit comfortably in this role, but that is no ground for leaving them free to pursue academic goals while the more sympathetic staff bear all the burden of taking the seminary into the market place" (Hill 1986, 180). This issue needs to be carefully addressed in the selection criteria and procedure for faculty, and then continually reinforced.

Second, the *out there* expression of a missional focus will most often be in the context of local churches (and/or organizations in which the learners are involved) and their areas of service and mission. A major problem arises if the seminary sees itself as the community that has the responsibility for ministerial formation. Symbiotic partnership between seminary and church provides an extension of an understanding of the scope of the formational community (Dearborn

1995). The potential of this partnership is maximized, as Tim Dearborn has suggested, when the institutions recognize their interdependence on each other's distinctive contribution to ministerial formation:

> *First, they exist as a spiritual community …* each participates in the Spirit's work of equipping …
>
> *Second, they form a hermeneutical community.* Each has a distinct contribution in enabling Christians to reflect about the biblical-theological-historical "text", and to reflect about our present cultural-social "context" …
>
> *Third, they provide a community of critical enquiry …* The academy's critical reflection without being rooted in the realities of the parish and world can be esoteric and fantastical …
>
> *Fourth, they exist as a praxiological community …* The church calls the academy to be faithful to God's mission in people's lives …
>
> *Fifth, they provide the world with expressions of a community of cooperation …* (Dearborn 1995, 9)

Again, application of this principle of partnership is not as an optional extra, but is posited on the assumption that significant learning and formation will happen in a non-formal, non-schooling setting, provided that adequate attention is paid to the facilitation of the process.

Conclusion

A sound principle of curriculum theory is that the setting in which learning occurs should reflect the objectives of the learning. To counter the view which theological education all too commonly presupposes, that the most important learning happens in a schooling setting, this article provides a rationale for a non-schooling paradigm for ministerial formation: a community-oriented one in which holistic and comprehensive development is enhanced, and which is missional in focus. Within this paradigm multiple settings will be used, but primacy will be given to those which enhance the achievement of the stated formational purpose, and so will tend to be non-formal settings reinforced by formal settings, rather than vice-versa.

In this paradigm, there is a conscious shift in appreciation of the scope of education. Too frequently, teaching and learning are used in a way that assumes that education equals schooling. However, this article has suggested that a different, but legitimate and more relevant understanding of education for ministerial formation conceives of teaching and learning as much broader in its scope, more akin to the concept of the

processes by which people are assisted to relate to, and take their place in, a functioning community.

When the challenges posed by this paradigm are adopted by the faculty of a seminary or theological college, and the roles of teacher and learner are thus modified, it is more likely that the powerful elements of hidden curriculum will work in favor of, rather than against, effective formation; and the outcome will more likely reflect the stated purposes of the high endeavor of theological education for ministerial formation.

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