

Title; Spiritual Formation as a goal of Theological Education

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Summary; This is a survey article of the major ideas and development, from the 1960s to today, of the role and practice of the development of the student in theological education, in the areas of spiritual and moral development.

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Introduction

One of the three major goals for theological education in the Bible College model, is that of spiritual formation. This term is of recent use within the movement, but the need to progress in the Christian life and discipleship, to deepen one's relationship with God and to work out holiness in living have always been seen as a bundle of fundamental aims for a college. This survey essay attempts to set this goal in the context of theological education's thinking about the matter in the second half of the 20th century.

Within our period, there was a major revival of interest in spirituality, particularly in the 70's and 80's, arising at least partly from disillusionment with the way western society had marginalised the spiritual in an age of rational explanation. This was a major factor in stimulating consultations on Spirituality in Theological Education and resultant documents within the World Council of Churches the Catholic Church, and American Seminaries. In the decade 1979-1989 the programme for theological education in the World Council of Churches concentrated on the issue of spiritual formation for ministry, particularly in the major consultations of '87 and '89. The Roman Catholic Church produced relevant documents at Vatican II and then again in 1992 as a result of a bishop's conference. In the USA three major studies in 1972, 1980 and 1987, were undertaken by the Association of Theological Schools which, with a number of concurrent important articles, were a major analysis of what is believed and put into practice in the Liberal Seminary world in the late 20th century.

There are clearly some common influences on the World Council of Churches programme, the modern Roman Catholic formulations and the ATS consultations. In addition, there has been a significant amount of cross-fertilisation leading to a body of shared ideas about spiritual formation in theological education today - increasingly drawn on by the Bible Colleges in the last 10 years.

The atmosphere of the study of this part of the model is significantly different from that of training. There, fierce debates were common. Here, different ideas of spirituality rarely clash head on and we chronicle differences in emphases and developments rather than controversies.

A. THE PROGRAMME FOR THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION IN THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

History of the Consultation

Soon after the Sixth World Council of Churches Assembly in Vancouver, Dr Samuel Amirtham turned the focus of the Programme for Theological Education towards the concept of spiritual formation and this resulted in a series of important consultations.

From the 24th - 28th April 1987, a small but influential workshop was held at The Abbey in Iona comprising 21 people involved in Theological Education, drawn together under the sponsorship of The Programme of Theological Education. The subject was spiritual formation, particularly in the leadership training of the churches.¹

It was not the first time that this subject had been the reason for a conference within the ambit of the WCC. There had been a conference on Ministerial Formation held in The Philippines in July 1979² and a European Consultation on Theological Education in the German Democratic Republic in October 1980³. Both of these had addressed the issue of Spiritual Formation. In October 1985, just 18 months before the Iona conference, there was an all India consultation on Spirituality in Theological Education⁴ and some of the participants of this conference also attended Iona.

What made Iona so influential was the consultative document produced. 5,000 copies of the official report were circulated and responses were encouraged as the preparation for a larger conference planned originally in 1990⁵.

As the responses came in, other regional conferences were held on the subject which later influenced the discussion. Notable among these were the ASIT consultation in Salta in September 1988⁶ and the consultation in Indonesia in 1988 on Spiritual Formation in Asian Theological Education⁷.

The major conference was in fact held from June 20th-25th 1989 in Kaliurang/Yogyakarta, Indonesia and it was designed to be the "final phase of a study/action process"⁸ on Spiritual Formation. It did not produce another report but it developed the themes of Iona, added a few of its own and out of the Indonesian conference came the World Council of Churches book, Invitation to the Feast of Life: Resources for Spiritual Formation in Theological Education⁹.

1 "Spiritual Formation in Theological Education - an invitation to participate", Ministerial Formation 39, September 1987, p.2.

2 Ministerial Formation (Report of the consultation on ministerial formation, Tagaytay City, Manila, Philippines, July 7-10, 1979) Geneva, PTE/WCC, 1978.

3 See Ministerial Formation, 11, July 1980 and 12, October 1980 for the relevant reports.

4 H.S. Wilson (ed.) Spirituality and Theological Education: Papers presented at the All India Consultation October 1985, Bangalore, The Board of Theological Education at the Senate of Serampore College, Bangalore, 1986.

5 Letters from PTE Staff, Ministerial Formation 47, October 1989 p.3 & 39 September 1987, p.2.

6 "Spirituality and theological Education" a report by Juan Driver in Ministerial Formation July 1989, pp.12-25.

7 Spiritual Formation in Asian Theological Education ed. Samuel Amirtham and Yeow Choo Lak, ATESEA, 1989.

8 Invitation to the Feast of Life ed. Samuel Amirtham and Robin Pryor, Geneva, WCC, n.d. pp.2&4. See also Ministerial Formation 47, October 1989, pp.4-6.

9 See previous note.

While some of the themes of this World Council of Churches sponsored study programme are common to the general discussion, there emerges a specificity, almost a sense of mission, in a number of areas such as the denial of unconnected internal spirituality and the affirmation of the importance of the context - particularly that of the poor and exploited. The movement addressed three major tensions; between internal and external spirituality; between academics and spiritual formation and between personal and communal spirituality.

1. Internal and External Spirituality

The Iona document consciously draws on the 1984 consultation of the sub unit on Renewal and Congregational life of the WCC entitled A Spirituality for our Times. The report of that conference warns against "other worldly piety"¹⁰. This is a dominant theme of the document and its accompanying papers¹¹. A bi-polar view of spirituality occurs throughout the document in such forms as Love of God and Love of Neighbour, Contemplation and Compassion, Contemplation and Combat, and Internal and External. It is well summed up by Samuel Rayan in a paper presented to the Iona consultation (from which it seems the document has taken a number of leads, not least in Spirituality as Discipleship and Spirituality in Context). He saw the first task of the conference as to discuss, "How do we integrate spiritual experience (which is 'interior') and work for liberation and development (which is political and conflictual)"¹². The process makes a conscious attempt to swing the pendulum in the other direction away from the traditional emphasis on private meditation, retreats, prayer and internal self-examination (though all of these are included in the document). In order to do so the models of spirituality as discipleship and a holistic spirituality embracing body, mind and spirit are used.

This perceived tension and a need for an integrated spirituality with an emphasis on the needs of the world was equally reflected in the February 1989 All India Conference. For instance, in the influential paper of the Rev. V. Debasahayam, he remembers how at Union Theological Seminary "an individualistic spirituality was challenged by an intense awareness of the need to be related to others particularly of the oppressed. A spirituality of escapism has given way to a spirituality of identification and involvement with the marginalised."¹³

The previous September, the ASIT conference in Salta¹⁴ had (from a Protestant Liberation Theology perspective) distinguished between the devotional life (which was internal and personal) and spirituality which was involved with the needs of the world, especially the poor; "individualist privatising distortion of the legacy of pietism" was partially blamed for the present situation amongst Protestants¹⁵. Just as liberation theology saw theology arising from reflection on praxis in the light of the Word of God, so the conference delegates saw true spirituality arising in the same

10 "The Iona document in Feast of Life, p.148.

11 published in Ministerial Formation 39, September 1987

12 Ministerial Formation 39, September 1987, p.4.

13 Ministerial Formation 46, July 1989, p.7.

14 Ministerial Formation, July 1989, pp.12-25 contains the report of this conference.

15 Ibid. p.13

way. This means it will have to be a spirituality of the Cross, a taking up of the cross for the world and God's sake¹⁶.

The 1989 consultation in Indonesia was a wide-ranging, broadly-based conference. Not only did it have before it the Iona document but many of the responses which, at least as summarised in *Feast of Life*¹⁷ did not entirely reflect the emphasis of the original document away from interior spirituality. Thus, the larger conference diluted the emphasis of the smaller working group and swung the pendulum more towards the centre. There was plenty of space to talk about personal prayer, monastic life and classic spirituality from the early and medieval monks and nuns. It is notable that many of the examples of spiritual formation in the curricula of Theological Schools drew strongly from the traditional material. However, there remained a clear strand of emphasis towards the external in spirituality. The conference picked up the idea of the praxis model of spiritual formation from ASIT and repeated the dichotomies of Iona such as 'inside' and 'outside'.

As a way of developing the theme of the importance of the external in spirituality, the programme talked about context spirituality. A formative and important paper presented by Samuel Rayan at the Iona Conference¹⁸ had as a fundamental thesis that formation is largely determined by context and this affects both the end and the means¹⁹.

In describing the context in which spirituality is to grow today, he concentrates almost exclusively on the economic situation, the crisis brought on by capitalism and the need to develop a counter culture to the capitalist system. So, "the question of the poor and the liberation of the oppressed is crucial to any relevant understanding of spirituality and practice of spiritual formation"²⁰. He uses Gutierrez's concept of the two-fold conversion. "Spirituality is a process of double conversion: to God and to our neighbour."²¹ Iona reflected this concern that spirituality is rooted in our present history. Although the Iona document widened the analysis of that present context in which we need to speak of spirituality, one element that is important for spiritual formation is "The economic culture of international capitalism" and "The Global System of Domination"²².

This coming together of the Asian (Father Rayan is a scholar at the Indian School of Ecumenical Theology in Bangalore) and the South American concerns for Context located in the needs of the poor is also developed in this process by an insistence on the cultural and religious context as well as economic context of spiritual formation. Debasahayam in 1987 drew a distinction between the socio-political context and the religio-cultural context and stated that as regards the amount of work done "more is to be desired" in the second area. Iona had noted the presence of positive non Christian spirituality within Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam and suggested that spiritual formation could benefit by cross cultural exchange in multi-cultural, multi-religious

16 Ibid, p.25

17 pp. 172-181

18 Ministerial Formation 39, September 1987, pp 4-13

19 Ibid. p.5

20 Ibid. p..8

21 Ibid. p.9, Gustavo Gutierrez, *We Drink from our own wells*, , London, SCM, 1984.

22 *Feast of Life* p.150.

communities²³ but it was left to the Indonesian conference in 1989 to flesh this out with a number of indigenous cultural elements in the programme such as dance and art and two workshops on the relationship of culture and the relationship of inter-faith dialogue as to spiritual formation²⁴.

The workshop on the cultural dimension of spiritual formation was dominated by a transferral of the language of contextual theology to contextual spirituality. The old cultural pot in which Christian spirituality is imported has to be broken for it to be implanted in the soil of the new culture. Hence "Christian Spiritual Formation must be built on the spirituality of the society"²⁵. This is the only way to authentic spirituality. Especially where Christianity is a minority religion or part of a pluralistic religious scene, dialogue and joint action is the way forward. We must always reserve the right of the Word of God to judge the cultural situation and be willing to enter into conflict for Christ's sake, but also to learn²⁶.

5. Academics and Spiritual Formation

With a special interest in theological education, it is natural that the process examined and commented on how academic theology and spiritual formation inter-reacted. Western cultural models of theology have marginalised spirituality. We have been botanists analysing a flower without feeding on its beauty²⁷.

The Iona document makes the point that the development of scientific theology in the West has created a separation of theology from the spiritual life of the church and of the students. This has been a false development because "the proper study and teaching of theology is already a beginning of spiritual formation"²⁸. This occurs as critical theological methodology challenges previous inadequate spiritual formation and opens up new horizons²⁹. However, spirituality also needs specific and deliberate cultivation in any seminary or college situation³⁰. These phrases touched a chord which resonated in the responses to Iona. Educators wrote back of the "frenetic paper chase" we set our students rather than "the cultivation of spiritually sensitive souls".

The 1989 Indonesian conference tackled the issue in a big way. A major paper was delivered by J Severino Croatto of Buenos Aries on Spiritual Formation and Critical Study and a working group on critical study of the Bible and Spiritual Formation was set up.

There seemed to be a general agreement in the conference that theological education is faced with the problem of a lack of inter-relatedness between critical study which is often regarded as a disinterested scientific exercise and spiritual formation. Often then a gap is produced between academics and spirituality, especially if critical study disturbs the fundamentalist faith of the students. When this is combined with a

23 Ibid. pp.151 & 158.

24 Ibid. pp.61-72,82-84 & 86-87.

25 Ibid. p.82.

26 Loc. Cit.

27 See the lament of Debasahayam, Ministerial Formation 46 July 1989, p.9.

28 Feast of Life p.154.

29 Ibid. p.158.

30 Ibid. p.157.

"banking system" attitude to learning - filling up the mind to deposit it in the exam, the matter is serious. However, this need not be the case. As Croatto says, if theological study is discerning "the way of God in the life of a people" then it leads naturally to spiritual formation³¹. It is a key, a means to a spiritual end - especially when it completes the closed circuit between God and the world by raising the student's consciousness of the poor and the need for compassionate action.

But for this to work there has to be a specific hermeneutical intention in our teaching. The consultation endorsed specific spiritual formation courses in the curriculum, but the teaching of the Word of God and theology in this way is a far better method than we usually have at present which allows the scientific study of the Bible to produce the empty spaces in the student's development which we then try to fill with spiritual formation classes.

3. Personal and Community Spirituality

The Iona document set out to examine the nature of communities that foster spiritual growth and their characteristics. This was rooted in a deep conviction expressed in Iona's sixth mark of authentic spirituality. "The spirituality we seek is rooted in community and centred around the eucharist"³² and the first means towards spiritual formation "spiritual formation is always lived and sought in community"³³ and again, this community is the community of faith especially in the celebration of the Eucharist³⁴. Such a community is characterised not by competition but by sharing and trust and a particular style of teaching and corporate worship³⁵. The Kaliurang (Indonesian) consultation in April 1988 which was the Asian segment of the WCC consultation process notes that the trend is now to acknowledge a common communal dimension in two ways.

1. "Formation is a shared experience as all 'build each other up' and
2. There is a new sense of accountability and mutual responsibility".

This means that we now acknowledge that spiritual formation takes place in relationships which are always more powerful formers than curricula or religious events³⁶.

While the 1989 Indonesian conference did not ignore the general points made about the need for spiritual formation to grow in community, it particularly picked up the importance of the liturgy in this respect. A major presentation was made to the conference on spiritual formation and liturgical life by Daniel Ciobotea of the Romanian Orthodox Church and a case study was presented by Sister Minke of the Community of Grandchamp in Switzerland. Ciobotea accuses the West of the scholasticising of theology by removing from theology proper the church's practice of spirituality and liturgical sacramental and contemplative forms, hiving them off into

31 Ibid. p.13.

32 Ibid. p156.

33 Ibid. p158

34 Ibid. p158.

35 Ibid. p160.

36 Quoted in *Feast of Life*, pp.180f. See also *Spiritual Formation in Theological Education* edited by Samuel Amirtham and Yeow Choolak, ATESEA, Singapore, 1989.

another area and calling it devotion. He welcomes the liturgical renewal accomplished in the Roman Catholic church after the Second Vatican Council and in other areas of the church world-wide. The liturgy has to be central to the process of spiritual formation as well as theological education in general. It used to be the only school or place of theological formation prior to the foundation of the medieval universities in Europe and it had to be central today because it is the intimate communion of the church of the risen Christ and the Holy Spirit and the location of the offering of ourselves to God, not just individually but in liturgical community. This in turn becomes the self-offering of ourselves to our neighbours³⁷.

Tentative assessment

Any such broad ranging consultative process as that conducted by the WCC will inevitably lead to a "scattergun" approach to the subject and, of course, not all of the issues at the conferences are represented in the material above. Four comments can be made at this stage.

1. The whole process was characterised by a great concern to avoid personal internal piety as an adequate description of spiritual formation. In particular the concerns of the organisers and those at the centre of the consultations were to see spirituality as engaging with the economic problems of the world in a compassionate way. In its conception, this would be welcome as a return to more biblical models of discipleship after the tendency of classical Roman Catholic and Protestant Pietist spirituality to concentrate heavily on the inward relationship with God and the spiritual exercises associated with this relationship. In its outworking in the documents studied, however, it fails to achieve either a balance between the two or an adequate theoretical base to link them together.

2. It is a pity that, in the process, evangelisation, the other valid and central form of engagement with the world in the mission of the church, was ignored. Even in discussion of the Eucharist as a mark of our engagement with the world, we are told in the Iona document that it is to be a reminder of our commitment to heal the brokenness of society. One would have thought that in such a context there would have also been a mention of God's redemption and forgiveness of sin as pictured in the sacrament and to be taken to the world. The consultations occurred within the World Council of Churches at a time when missions as social action was sweeping all before it but the Bible Colleges in their tradition would quite rightly insist that if spirituality drives us into the world to meet its needs then such a mission must firmly include the compassionate act of preaching the Gospel of salvation through Christ.

3. It is clear that theological educators in this process were struggling with the inability of their model of theological education to embrace spiritual formation. The enlightenment model of theology which redefines theology in such a way that it can be done without faith and therefore be separate from devotion is rightly rejected by the consultations, but they have no alternative which allows them to abandon this model for their work. Clearly much more work needs to be done on precisely how the critical study of the scriptures and historical theology will act as an engine for spiritual formation.

³⁷ Feast of Life pp.31-36.

4. The Orthodox participation in the consultations ensured a prominent place for the liturgy as the expression of community and an essential element in spiritual formation. A good case was made for this, but many theological schools are not defined or positioned in such a way as to be able to take advantage of these insights. Few seminaries or colleges are able to form themselves around the liturgy as strong faith communities today. Yet possibly it is the worshipping faith community which will eventually provide the best model and location for the task of theology - a model which will give the right place to spiritual formation within the integrating intention to please God together.

B. THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION AS SPIRITUAL FORMATION IN ROMAN CATHOLIC SEMINARIES IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY

Catholic seminaries, see themselves as creating a specific atmosphere of spiritual formation, leaning on an old tradition. In 1989, John O'Malley, SJ, wrote, "In contrast with Divinity schools not in the Roman Catholic tradition, our schools assume not only that spiritual and moral formation is crucial in the preparation of future ministers but also that it can and should be promoted in formal ways by the Institutes in question"³⁸.

Two great issues have dominated the development of thought and practice in this area after the second world war. Firstly, the decrees of Vatican II through its desire to interact with the situation in the world and in the other churches; and secondly, the crisis in vocations which particularly affected Europe and North America in our period. After a brief sketch of development up to Vatican II, we will look at the relevant documents of the Council, particularly *Optatum Totius*. We will then briefly reflect on how these were implemented in the succeeding years before turning to the major apostolic exhortation of 1992, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*.

Background to Vatican II

Prior to the medieval development of the universities, the apprenticeship system for the training of priests dominated but the development of the universities and scholastic philosophy from the 13th century onwards gave a new prominence to the classroom over against the monastic chapel or the Episcopal school. This movement was not particularly conducive for an emphasis on spiritual formation which subsequently was to be found more in the Orders such as the Franciscans of the 14th century and then the Jesuits from the 16th century onwards than among diocesan clergy. Taking their cue from the Franciscans, the Jesuits believed that spiritual formation was necessary for ministry and developed the idea into a programmatical training in spirituality for that purpose. Spiritual retreats, the spiritual exercises, their emphasis on spiritual direction, spiritual reading, the sense of a vocation and the cultivation both of the conversion of the heart and the external life were all clearly articulated among the Jesuits at this time³⁹.

The local diocesan clergy and their training must be seen as developing parallel to that of the Orders. However, there was significant interaction between the two both in practice and in concept. Concern for the spiritual formation of the priest in the diocese developed subsequent to the abuses of the late Middle Ages and the Reformation. The Decree of the Council of Trent in 1563 did not concern itself particularly either with the study of theology or spiritual formation of the priest but it did develop in the concept of the seminary, the atmosphere of training which was to be conducive to spiritual formation. Soon, seminaries became places where trainee priests were guided in spiritual and moral formation. By the 17th century, the primacy of spiritual formation as preparation for the ministry was beginning to be stressed for

38 John O'Malley "Spiritual Formation for Ministry: Some Roman Catholic Traditions - Their Past and Present" in Richard John Neuhaus (ed.) *Theological Education and Moral Formation* Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1992 p.18.

39Ibid. p..84.

the diocesan clergy⁴⁰. And by the beginning of this century it was generally assumed that candidates for the diocesan priesthood were responding to a vocation, although this was not immediately the internal matter that we regard it today. Pius X's codification of Canon Law published in 1917 proscribed that every seminary is to have, besides at least two confessors, a spiritual director and that every seminarian is to spend some time each day in mental prayer, go to confession, hear an exhortation every week, and go on a retreat of some days each year⁴¹.

Vatican II

In its decree on the ministry of priests⁴², the Council established that the spiritual life of the priest is not simply an internal matter for him and cannot be a replica of the monastic situation. It is inextricably linked to his pastoral life by mutual interdependence of the two. His pastoral life is "the source and fruit of his life of prayer"⁴³. His spirituality is fundamentally the same as that of every Christian, in that he is bound by his baptism to the pursuit of holiness which is the imitation of Christ. However, for the priest, the imitation of Christ has a special dimension in that the priest also imitates Christ the Redeemer in seeking the redemption of others in giving his life for the flock. For the priest, spiritual life would be nurtured primarily by scripture and the sacraments (penance especially) and also by reading, devotion to Mary, retreats, spiritual direction and prayer.

The decree on the training of priests⁴⁴ is the most important document for our purposes. Prior to the Council, there was general awareness that much was wrong with the old system of preparing priests for today's world⁴⁵. The Council's re-emphases of the ministry of the Word, of pastoral guidance and of living in the world required new thought on the way in which such a priest should be prepared. In general, it provided this by orientating everything to the general aim of pastoral formation⁴⁶, adding theological depth and rationale to the concept of formation⁴⁷ and paying particular attention to the humanity and personality of the priest and the development of his social virtues⁴⁸.

The decree on the training of priests went through six drafts before the final document of October 1965, beginning as two separate documents, one on the need to foster ecclesiastical vocations and another on the formation of candidates to the priesthood⁴⁹. In the process two things are of particular interest to us. Firstly, Wiltgen points out that the final draft contained considerable material that was of importance to the German speaking and Scandinavian Council Fathers⁵⁰ and secondly, what

40 Ibid. p. 89.

41 Ibid., p.91.

42 *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, *Documents of Vatican II*, Austin Flannery, Dublin, Dominican Publications, 1988, pp.863-902.

43 Dennis E. Hurley and Joseph Cunane *Priests and Seminaries* Dublin, Sceptre Books, 1967, p.18

44 *Optatum Totius* of 28 October 1965.

45 Hurley and Cunane *Op. Cit.* p.180.

46 *Optatum Totius* p.711.

47 Hurley and Cunane pp.191.

48 Ibid. p.192.

49 Dennis Hurley "Bishops, Presbyterate and the Training of Priests" in *Modern Catholicism : Vatican II and After* Adrian Hastings (ed.) London, SPCK, 1991 p.143, Hurley and Cunane, *Op. Cit.* pp.171-180.

50 Ralph Wiltgen, *The Rhine Flows into the Tiber: The Unknown Council*, N.Y., Hawthorn Books, 1967, p.223.

began as a four-fold model of formation, by the third draft had coalesced into a clear three-fold model of spiritual, practical and theological preparation⁵¹.

Summary of Optatum Totius

The decree begins by stating that "Desired renewal of the whole church depends in great part on a priestly ministry animated by the Spirit of Christ"⁵². It knows that it cannot lay down detailed instructions for every part of the world and requires that each nation or rite should have its own programme of priestly training built upon the principles laid out in this document.

The original document on fostering ecclesiastical vocations provides Section 2 which is an appeal for all in the church to help in this task which was already exercising the church. Section 3 deals with the purpose of the major seminaries which requires them to provide priests echoing our Lord's example of teacher, priest and shepherd, that is preparing them for the ministry of the Word, the celebration of the liturgy and the pastoral care of the flock⁵³. This should be done in a family community and with vigilant and careful enquiry on an individual basis. Small group work may be particularly useful in larger seminaries⁵⁴. Section 5 deals with revision of ecclesiastical Studies, section 6 with pastoral training and Section 7 with continuing study and formation in the priest's life.

It is Section 4, the largest, which is entitled Greater Attention to Spiritual Training⁵⁵. The aims of a programme for spiritual formation in the seminaries are, on the one hand, that spiritual formation should not be an isolated objective but "should be closely associated with doctrinal and pastoral formation" and yet that it should have a personal and private objective "that the student may learn to live in intimate and unceasing union with God the Father through His Son Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit", drawing close to Him as a friend.

This can be achieved by living the Paschal mystery, finding Christ in meditation on the Word, participating in liturgies of the Eucharist and the Divine Office, finding Christ in the Bishop and also in the ordinary people to whom they are sent, particularly in the weak, the marginalised and the unbelievers. Devotion to Mary and the traditional "exercises of piety" are important but the outward practical life of the student is important also, that they might learn to "live according to the standard of the Gospel"⁵⁶. It notes also that students will develop spiritually as they bind themselves in obedience to the church, under the Bishop and in harmony with their fellow priest because, as Augustine says, "a man possesses the Holy Spirit in the measure in which he loves the Church"⁵⁷. Celibacy is to be embraced with a sense of gratitude as a precious gift from God and as a special consecration to Christ.

51 Hurley and Cunane Op. Cit. pp.175, 180.

52 Optatum Totius *Documents of Vatican II*, Austin Flannery, Dublin, Dominican Publications, 1988, p.707.

53 Ibid. p. 710-711

54 Ibid. 712, 713

55 Ibid. pp.713, 4, 5, 6 & 7

56 Ibid. p.714

57 Ibid. p. 714

Within the section on Spiritual Development, a special interest is shown in "developing in the students a proper degree of human maturity" (p. 716). This would show itself in stability of character, the ability to take decisions, sound judgement of people and events, self control, strength of character, sincerity, love, justice, faithfulness, courtesy, modesty and charity. To that end, the discipline of seminary life becomes a part of preparation and human training for the future as within its discipline they gradually acquire self mastery and learn to relate to others. Indeed, the whole programme of the seminaries should be organised to be an initiation to the students' future lives as priests rather than something essentially different from their future lives.

Dennis Hurley, who was one of the Council Fathers, and spoke during the debate on *Optatum Totius*⁵⁸ offers two criticisms of the Decree. Firstly, love, although mentioned often enough, does not have sufficient depth to it nor the sense of joy that it should have in the preparation of the life of a priest. Especially, he notes that little is said about the work of the Holy Spirit in forming the priest⁵⁹.

Two important factors also need special praise. Firstly, in basing, at least partially, the spiritual formation of the priest on his pastoral charge and duties, Vatican II links personal spirituality with the world in a fruitful way through the apostolic imperative. Secondly, the council begins to address the key issue of the importance of human development for spiritual formation, although it does not provide an integrating model for the two. Vatican II set a new agenda for seminary life in the second half of the twentieth century.

The 25 years following Vatican II

Writing in 89, Fred L Hofheinz of The Lilley Endowment Corporation said, "The Roman Catholic Church has made more changes in its thinking about the education of its priests during the past two decades than it did over the previous four centuries."⁶⁰

We will look at the 25 years following Vatican II under the three headings of Changes in numbers, Changes in the seminary and Changes in the contents of the training.

1. Changes in Numbers

Dennis Hurley calls the problem, "a crisis of priestly and religious life"⁶¹. Between 1964 and 1986, 50,000 priests left the priesthood according to official figures, but some put the numbers at nearer 100,000⁶². In addition, the number of deaths has been greater every year than the number of ordinations, altogether resulting in the loss of about 1,000 a year in the total number of priests for every year of that period.⁶³ The problem is not uniform throughout the world and so priestless congregations occur in greater numbers, for instance, in Western Europe than Poland. A number of reasons are given for this phenomenon, but the two that occur most often in the literature are the lack of clarity over the role of the priest, post Vatican II and the issue of celibacy.

58 Wiltgen Op. Cit. p.224

59 Hurley and Cunane Op. Cit. pp.193/4

60 Katerina Schuth *Reason For the Hope: The Futures of Catholic Theologates*, Wilmington, Delaware, Michael Glazier, inc., 1989, p.xiii.

61 Hastings,, Op. Cit. p. 147

62 Michael Gaine, "The State of the Priesthood" in Hastings, Op. Cit., pp. 246-248

63 (The total number of priests in 1985 was 399,400). (Ibid. p. 246).

Following Vatican II, a debate that had been simmering in the church was given greater freedom of discussion. The shift of emphasis from the church as a hierarchical and clerical institution to the church as the people of God meant priests had to learn again what they were and what they should do. The old confidence about the role of the priest in the world and the church disappeared⁶⁴ and, as Pussey says, "I was ordained to do the work of the church, and you were supposed to support me in that. I hope that the young priests today have a better sense that you are all baptised to do the work of the church, and they are ordained to support you in that. It's a very dramatic change in focus."⁶⁵

Secondly, celibacy became less attractive in the cultural attitudes of the late 20th century and also in the context of the celebration of human-ness so important to Vatican II⁶⁶. So again Pussey can say in 1988, "In hindsight - and it is only in hindsight - the recent decline in the number of priests, and the present straits to which we are reduced are the natural and, perhaps even inevitable, result of the documents of the Second Vatican Council."⁶⁷

2. Changes in the Seminaries

One great cause of change in the seminaries was the smaller number of vocations. This led to a drop in the number of seminaries themselves⁶⁸. A significant drop in the number of students in some places, particularly those that did not wish to diversify their provision of education occurred⁶⁹. Those that chose to diversify admitted non-ordinands in large numbers⁷⁰, including women at the rate of 21% in the USA seminaries in 1988⁷¹. This significantly complicated the issue of the purpose of a seminary. Other matters that were disturbing the seminaries at the time were the "brain drain" of the better professors who began to turn more towards university work, the increasing cost of seminary education and the different class of students coming in. More often than before these were older men with other ties outside the seminary⁷². The youngest students more often came with less formal religious educational background⁷³ and more problems resulting from the breakdown of family values in the world from which they came⁷⁴.

3. Changes in the contents of the Training

In response to these pressures and in an attempt to work out the new perspectives of Vatican II, spiritual formation in the seminaries underwent a number of changes. A particularly useful study led by Katarina Schuth occurred from 1984-1989 amongst

64 *U.S. Catholic Seminaries and their Future*, Conference proceedings January 1988, Washington, Foundations and Donors interested in Catholic Activity, 1988. p. 23.

65 *Ibid.* p. 55

66 Hastings, *Op. Cit.* p.147

67 *U.S. Catholic Seminaries and their Future*, p. 67.

68 (For instance in the USA they dropped from 110 in 1968 to 54 in 1988. *Ibid.* p. 49).

69 *Ibid.* p.1

70 about half the total student population in Catholic seminaries in the USA in 1988, *Loc. Cit.*

71 *U.S. Catholic Seminaries and their future*, p.97

72 *Ibid.* p. 43

73 *Ibid.* p. 44

74 Schuth, *Op. Cit.* p.143

the Catholic seminaries of the United States. The importance of Schuth's study lies in its comprehensiveness. She researched extensively 50 theologates, visiting all and talking at length to students and staff. Her conclusions are careful and subtle and she raises issues affecting seminaries throughout the world.

The first thing of major interest to this thesis is that she discovered that the seminaries were working firmly on the three-fold pattern of personal and spiritual, academic and pastoral development. This is a reflection of the patterning of Vatican II which was influentially repeated in the programme of priestly formation, the specifically North American document applying Vatican II to these seminaries⁷⁵. We must note, however, that already the spiritual has been sub-divided into personal and spiritual, a division which will be complete 27 years later in *Pastores Dabo Vobis*.

Schuth found a significant increase in the emphasis on personal and spiritual formation in the years leading up to her study. Almost every person interviewed stressed the centrality and importance among faculty and students. (pp. 138, 139, 141). However, the old stereotype of monastic spirituality was giving way to the new type of pastoral spirituality, asking "What is authentic spirituality in the context of the secular culture? What is the vision of a holistic spirituality from the perspective of the Gospels? and talking sometimes in psychological and developmental models of personal growth⁷⁶. This did not, however, diminish the emphasis on habits of personal prayer. When students were asked what were the most important qualities for anyone engaged in religious ministry, being prayerful was the first or second choice of 84% of the respondents⁷⁷.

This reflects the comment of Francis Butler one year previously, perhaps drawing on some of the early material of Schuth who said, "It is a very different enterprise than it was just two decades ago. The seminary of the 1960s when stress was placed upon the observance of strict rules has been replaced today by an institution laying emphasis on maturation, personal autonomy and developing a sense of responsibility in candidates for the priesthood."⁷⁸ This was clearly now being reflected in the way people looked at their spiritual lives. Seminaries were seeing the goals of personal and spiritual formation defined in relation to personal development in prayer life, their own personal values and maturity, and their apostolic service. As Schuth says, "Nearly all theologates are in a period of transition between the classical models of formation drawn usually from either the 17th century or monastic traditions, and contemporary models that adopted more apostolic and pastoral orientation⁷⁹.

The study points out, two basic models of spiritual and personal formation active in the seminaries. The first is the integration model that lays the emphasis on the students themselves and their own responsibility (with guidance) to integrate and internalise the information and values as a basis for their identity and outlook. The ultimate goal is internal control and development of psychological strength, discernment and vocation, etc. The identification model assumes rather that there is

75 Ibid. p. 137

76 Ibid.. p. 144

77 Ibid. p. 141

78 *U.S. Catholic Seminaries and their Future*, p. 1. We can trace a similar development in the Bible Colleges around this time which indicates parallel development, perhaps pushed by similar forces rather than cross fertilization at this stage.

79 Schuth, Op.Cit. p. 147.

an objective standard and priestly role against which the seminarian is measured and he is required to emulate that model or "master image", often depicted as the figure of Christ the Priest. Schuth clearly prefers the first but does see the need for elements of both. She notes that "most models of formation now operative are located between the two extremes of integration and identification"⁸⁰. What is essential is to go beyond conformity to role expectations, to go beyond compliance with standard requirements and ensure that full internalisation takes place. Public and private identity need to merge and this can probably best be done by using a model that depends on self reflection within the context of activity of the church. (p. 152, 153, 154).

In practice, formation programmes are very diverse with a number of different elements. They include retreats, conferences, workshops, taught classes, the liturgical life of the seminary, special days of prayer and the overall community life of the school as important. The most effective programmes seem to be those that are using a developmental approach, laying down the foundations in the first year and building on them, where goals are set for the student's development at each stage.

However, the key element in the provision of spiritual formation had by then become the provision of spiritual direction. Most students found it the most useful and effective way to grow⁸¹, the majority of seminaries had already designated one or more spiritual directors to work within them. They were at work with the students, using one to one situations on a regular basis helping them to grow and mature as individuals, dealing with, more specifically, counselling of their problems (for some this involves 60% counselling and 40% spiritual direction)⁸², helping them to internalise the requirements of priesthood, reflect on their life and development as believers and helping in setting up patterns of prayer. A number comment that there is a significant difference between spiritual direction (which clearly in this model incorporates pastoral counselling) and the role of confessor. The students suffer when the two are confused. It will be interesting to see later how Pastores Dabo Vobis and subsequent studies re-assert the importance of the role of confessor over against that of spiritual director in the later 90's.

Pastores Dabo Vobis

From the 13 September to 28 October 1990 a synod took place in Rome for Roman Catholic bishops under the presidency of Pope John II specifically to discuss the formation of priests. The bishops then drew up a certain number of propositions which were developed by the Pope in his apostolic exhortation Pastores Dabo Vobis⁸³ promulgated in Rome on 25 March 1992. It was not an urgent response to a difficult situation but part of a series of three synods. In 1985 a special synod had taken place to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the conclusion of Vatican Council and as a result of this a programme of three synods, one on the laity which took place in 1987 and issued in the apostolic exhortation, *Cristifideles Laici*⁸⁴, the third took place from 2 - 29th October 1994 on the consecrated life of the religious from which a working

⁸⁰ Ibid. p. 151

⁸¹ Ibid. P. 156

⁸² Ibid. p. 144

⁸³ I will give you shepherds

⁸⁴ Christ's faithful followers, the laity

document was issued⁸⁵. *Pastores Dabo Vobis* was the second of the series on the formation of priests.

Pastores Dabo Vobis begins with the stated intention of moving the debate on from a preoccupation with the nature and role of the priest to the means of formation of the priest⁸⁶. Its subsidiary title, "The Formation of Priests in the circumstances of the present day" indicates that this must be contextual, i.e. the preparing of priests for the third millennium and today's church⁸⁷. The document therefore begins by outlining some of the problems and opportunities of today which form the background against which priestly formation has to occur. Positive things mentioned are a thirst for justice and God, the return of ideals, voluntary service on the increase and the collapse of great ideologies have made people more spiritually aware. However, rationalism, personal subjectivity, practical atheism, the break-up of the family, a distorting of the true meaning of sexuality and the development of a pluralistic society means that young people are giving only conditional allegiance to the Church and vocations are suffering. It is this analysis which will later prove to be useful when the issue of the need for human formation is discussed. After all, as Dolphin states, "our personal maturity and concerns affect the way we read the Scriptures and how we form our picture of Christ and his demands on us"⁸⁸. When a vocation finally turns itself into a seminarian, there is a significant need to deal with societal and cultural baggage.

As noted by Frost, the section on the priest's identity is strongly Biblical⁸⁹. In particular, it revolves around Christological and ecclesiological themes⁹⁰. One key passage on p. 39 says,

"In the church and on behalf of the church, priests are a sacramental representation of Jesus Christ, the Head and Shepherd, authority to be proclaiming his word, repeating his acts of forgiveness and his offer of salvation, particularly in baptism, penance and the eucharist, showing his loving concern to the point of a total gift of self for the flock"⁹¹.

This helps the document to define the difference between the holiness of the priest and the holiness of all the baptised. In one sense, all the baptised have a priesthood but that does not mean that the holiness of the priest is simply a matter of leadership. It is 'sacramentally worked out' that the priest is 'ontologically changed'⁹². In fact, the priest's relation to Christ is the basis of his relation to the Church⁹³. This sees to be a movement back to a more traditional view of the priest which is pre-Vatican II, the "Alter Christus" rather than the "Alter Episcopus" of Vatican II⁹⁴. The priest then

85 "The Consecrated Life and its role in the Church and the World" printed in *Catholic International* Vol. 5 No. 11, November 1994, pp516-548.

86 *Pastores Dabo Vobis* p 8.

87 *Ibid.* p. 12

88 Brenda Dolphin "Human Formation, the basis of Priestly Formation" in Bede McGregor and Thomas Norris (eds) *The Formation Journey of the Priest: Exploring Pastores Dabo Vobis*, Dublin, The Columba Press, 1994, pp. 70, 71, 72

89 Francis Frost "Pastores Dabo Vobis: the Formation of Priests in the Contemporary World", *Ministerial Formation*, 61, April 1993, p.36, 37

90 Cardinal Pio Laghi "The Identity and Ministry of the Priest" in McGregor etc. *Op. Cit.* pp. 25, 26

91 *Pastores Dabo Vobis* p.39

92 Laghi *Op. Cit.* p.26

93 *Ibid.* p. 27

94 *U.S. Catholic Seminaries and their Future*, *Op.Cit.* pp 67 and 74

has a particular imitation of Christ. This is a specific vocation to holiness⁹⁵ in addition to the common vocation to holiness rooted in baptism⁹⁶. This particular imitation of Christ involves a consecration of mission and this would be under the seal of the Spirit and the influence of his sanctifying power⁹⁷. He will minister the Word of God, celebrate the sacrament, encourage and lead the ecclesial community. There are a number of ways the document emphasises the work of the Spirit⁹⁸, answering in part, Hurley's objection to Optatum Totius of Vatican II.

The key section for our purposes is chapter 5⁹⁹. - The formation of candidates for the priesthood. Once again the basis is the Gospel and the life of Christ. In particular Mark 3: 13-15 "and he went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired; and they came to him. And he appointed 12 to be with him, and he sent them out...". The great aim is therefore communion and fellowship with Christ - "to be with him" and arising from that will be to follow Christ as the apostles did and be sent out imitating the service and ministry of Christ.

Chapter five goes on to make one of the major innovations of *Pastores Dabo Vobis* in that it then deals with the concept of human formation as a distinct objective of theological education. We are to seek that priests reflect the human perfection of Christ and this would be seen then in the development of qualities of a balanced strong character, compassion, a sense of justice, integrity, judgement, the ability to relate to others, affective or emotional maturity, a coming to terms with their sexuality, a training in freedom and an education of their moral conscience. Dolphin in his paper expands these concerns basing them on the fundamental need for self understanding which then makes it possible to nurture the ability and desire to grow¹⁰⁰. A number of commentators pick out in particular the importance of handling the emotions "The human deals primarily with affected maturity"¹⁰¹. And there would seem to be a clear linkage between this section and the earlier description of the state of society which produces consumerism, alcoholism, lack of clear sexual identity and a difficulty in commitment, holding people back from becoming "cheerful givers" of themselves¹⁰².

Personal formation is a necessary concomitant to spiritual formation. Guidance in prayer is not enough in our present circumstances and some form of analysis and psychological help is often required¹⁰³. But neither is the analysis and psychological help adequate without spiritual growth because it is faith development that helps human development. Accordingly, we need as "formators" people of prayer and human maturity, people with self understanding as well as understanding of the Scriptures, people who have come to terms with their own sexuality and the decision for celibacy, making it a generous gift of their life to God in commitment¹⁰⁴.

95 *Pastores Dabo Vobis* p. 52

96 *Ibid.* p.51

97 *Ibid.* p.61

98 See for instance *Ibid.* p. 71

99 *Ibid.* p.113-139

100 Brenda Dolphin *Op. Cit.* P.73.

101 *Ibid.* pp 74, 75 and see Michael Drennan "Special issues in Human Formation" in McGregor etc. *Op. Cit.* p. 83.

102 Dolphin *Op. Cit.* p.8 and Drennan *Op. Cit.* p. 86.

103 *Ibid.* p. 88

104 *Ibid.* pp 92-95.

Specifically, spiritual formation for PDV is ultimately the development of a relationship and communion with God¹⁰⁵. It means first of all being united with Christ and developing a close friendship with Christ and secondly, the journey of the search for Jesus¹⁰⁶ which means not only the search for closer communion with Him but the imitation of Him as well. Six major helps to be found in the seminary for this purpose are; the Word of God and meditating on it¹⁰⁷, the development of a life of prayer and silence¹⁰⁸, a celebration and appropriation of the eucharist and the liturgy of the hours¹⁰⁹, the right use of the sacrament of penance¹¹⁰, seeking Christ in people¹¹¹, and a free and generous celibacy¹¹². Later¹¹³, onwards, the discussion of the setting of priestly formation in the major seminary adds the vital importance of the community of the seminary as the place where people come apart to be with Christ and their fellow trainees in the apostleship. It will be a "specifically ecclesial community", a community that re-lives the experience of the group of 12 who were united.

At this point we encounter a difficulty of emphasis. In the section on the seminary as the location of spiritual formation, the spiritual director is briefly mentioned as one of the agents of formation along with the Holy Spirit, the Bishop, the Rector and the Professors¹¹⁴ and again in the matter of ongoing formation, the importance of the priest after leaving seminary having a spiritual director is mentioned¹¹⁵. These are the sum of the brief references to the work of a spiritual director and they clearly do not reflect "the phenomenon of the growth in interest in what one might call formal spiritual direction" mentioned by McCullen¹¹⁶ and others. Indeed, the international conference called at Maynooth in 1994 to study and apply PDV has five main sections, The Vision of the Priesthood for Today, Human Formation, Spiritual Formation, Intellectual Formation and Pastoral Formation. The section on Spiritual Formation consists entirely in the printed documents of two presentations on spiritual direction. It is clear that the conference and many of the seminaries today see spiritual direction as the best way towards spiritual formation in the seminary, seeing it as a key tool to encourage human formation and self understanding and nurturing the desire to grow, providing an honest review of the priorities in one's life, dealing with practical and psychological problems in the seminarian's life and helping to establish patterns of prayer.

Reardon notes that PDV says very little about spiritual direction and nothing about how spiritual direction should be given¹¹⁷. He also notes that the papers originally sent to the bishops prior to the Synod, give spiritual direction a higher profile than it

105 Patres Dabo Vobis p. 123 echoing Optatum Totius

106 Ibid. p.126

107 Ibid. pp. 128-9

108 Ibid. pp. 129-130

109 Ibid. pp.131-3,

110 Ibid. p. 133

111 Ibid. pp. 134-5

112 Ibid. pp. 136-139

113 Ibid. p.160 onwards.

114 Ibid. p.175

115 Ibid. p.218

116 Richard McCullen "To the Street Called Straight, the Priest and his Anamchara" in Mc Gregor and Norris Op. Cit. p. 122

117 Myles Reardon "What is Spiritual Direction ?" in McGregor and Norris Op. Cit. p. 134-5

finally was given in the document¹¹⁸. He accounts rather lamely for this by saying that it is "not a reduced appreciation of spiritual direction as a ministry, but rather an awareness of its silent and hidden character"¹¹⁹. What this shift of emphasis has certainly done is to require the commentators to explore in greater detail the inter-reaction between the ministry of reconciliation in confessional penance and the matter of spiritual direction. McCullen sees them as distinct ministries because sometimes our problems in development are not directly linked with sinful acts, yet even psychological help, the analysis of problems and difficulties must always be bathed with the light, hope and power of the resurrection of Christ.

It may be that a corrective is being applied in PDV so that while the importance of spiritual direction is affirmed, the seminaries are being asked to note that they should not be overwhelmed with current fashion and keep their eye on the fundamental importance of confession. Possibly the development of spiritual direction in various ways, such as the illustration given in Reardon towards current psychological and counselling theories, is seen to have its dangers¹²⁰. The methods rooted in Ignatian tradition and post Vatican II tendencies to use the Scriptures far more as the revealer and healer in a spiritual direction situation, would perhaps be favoured by the bishops.

118 Ibid. pp. 138-9

119 "The background to this contemporary way of spiritual direction is partly the methodology of Rogerian client-centred counselling". Ibid. pp. 134-5

120 Ibid. Pp. 133ff.

C. THE ATS CONSULTATIONS IN NORTH AMERICA

The development of North American theological education through the 50's and 60's is the story of an increasing emphasis on academic ability and interaction with contemporary culture in the quest for a professional training of the clergy akin to that of medicine, law and other professions. Increasingly, this brought the seminaries into the realm of the academic enterprise of western society. Schools moved closer to universities. The inter-confessional element increased as, for instance, Old Testament scholars met each other from different seminaries or university backgrounds. Schools of theology or religious studies were created within the university complexes. This created, amongst others, two major tensions. Firstly, how faith commitment can be squared with the "scientific" attitude to knowledge which was then normative for the academy and secondly, how other matters apart from academic study, could find adequate space in the curriculum or even in the mission statement of the Protestant schools. By the 70's, there was a ground swell of opinion that the issue of spiritual formation had been marginalised, coming not only from the seminaries themselves, but from the churches as recipients of their under-developed products.

The historical reason for the growth of this concern affected the emphasis of the subsequent discussion. So, although the whole range of subjects related to spiritual formation were touched on in the ensuing debate, the central issue to which it returned again and again was the relationship between academic theology and spirituality and how a seminary can assist students to grow in both.

The Task Force on Spiritual Development

The re-appraisal began with the American Association of Theological Schools (later to become the ATS) setting up a task force to report at the 1972 bi-annual meeting. It was asked to "shape a set of concepts and principles that can guide a programme of spiritual development"¹²¹.

The report bases its work on an analysis of the situation in the early 70's and so provides a very contextual approach. It intends to speak into a specific situation which, in North America at the time, was more parochial than global¹²². Firstly the world of young people conditions the student. There is a new attitude to freedom in the areas of sex, drugs, leisure, that creates inner conflict. The student feels the tug of agnosticism on his faith, especially if he rejects the precise claims of his local church or denomination. The counter culture of the 60's and 70's is very attractive with all its attitude to establishment whether it be of church or state¹²³. Secondly the report paints a less than glowing picture of seminaries. Corporate worship is breaking down, with occasional bursts of enthusiasm for new experiments never providing long term solutions. The atmosphere and competitiveness of the classroom often enters such times, with speakers looking to please men rather than God¹²⁴. Student life exhibits a resistance to talking about spirituality, especially in the older language which is regarded as outworn terminology and empty clichés. Those who do talk about these

121 "Report of the Task Force on Spiritual Direction" *Theological Education* Spring 1972, pp.153-197.

122 Ibid. p.164

123 Ibid. pp. 165-6

124 Ibid. pp. 185-6

things usually do so, either within psychologically orientated concerns or as members of neo-fundamentalist groups such as the Jesus people¹²⁵.

The report also notes a lack of guidance on spirituality by the faculty and quotes a student as saying, "I went through four years of divinity school and no one ever asked me about the condition of my soul."¹²⁶ It notes the current tendency in both religion and education to "de-emphasise their regulatory function" in a freedom-loving environment and that this has led to a lack of discipline in the schools which is important for spiritual growth¹²⁷. The seminaries' spiritual life and task is in the "doldrums"¹²⁸. Ultimately, says this report, this is due to a lack of attention to the task. Seminaries have been so concerned with other things - notably academics.

And this has left such a gap that the students are trying to fill it themselves. There is a hungering for more attention to be given to the spiritual life amongst students, seen, for instance, in the spontaneous formation of small groups for prayer and meditation¹²⁹ but the seminary authorities themselves need to take a lead. Just how the report suggests that the authorities of the schools react to the situation gives us a picture of their concept of spiritual formation.

The seminary is firstly to be regarded as a Christian community¹³⁰, not only one which will form the basis of spiritual growth now, but that will also provide a point of reference for the student's later participation in the Christian community. It is the fundamental task of the leadership of the school to create this. Spirituality is a product of both individuality and community, distance and solitude on one side and body membership on the other. The meaning of the corporate life of the body of Christ is a fundamental lesson to learn and students have a profound spiritual hunger for Christian community based on the need for self definition and the perceived need for growth¹³¹.

In this context corporate worship is the "crux and core"¹³² of Christian community. All the staff should be involved. Here (unlike the classroom) staff and students sit at the same level before God in the community as fellow believers. Here is the demonstration of the old Protestant adage that spiritual formation follows the same basic rules for seminary or church, ordained or lay. The worship must not be largely cerebral or a reflection of the classroom and the report notes with encouragement the increasing use of eucharistic liturgies¹³³.

The report advocates the evaluation of the student's spiritual growth against a set of clear attainable standards, with grades given in this area as in academic achievement. This must be done carefully, based on a good knowledge of the students and with

125 Ibid. pp. 187-8

126 Ibid. p.190

127 Ibid. p.192

128 Ibid. p.188

129 pp. 168 & 185

130 Ibid. p.160

131 Ibid. pp 177 & 178 and 183 & 184

132 Ibid. p.184

133 Ibid. p168.

their full knowledge and co-operation¹³⁴. This quirky enthusiasm to apply the testability of academics to the spiritual life quickly waned among the seminaries as they began to appreciate the difficulties involved.

The dichotomy between human and spiritual has to be addressed. Although to be spiritual has a necessary reference to God, "to be spiritual is simply to be truly man"¹³⁵. The acceptance of our humanity, our body, our embeddedness in our culture is important. All authentic spirituality then has a specific cultural expression and personal and psychological maturity are an important part of formation¹³⁶. This is not so much a pre-empting of the later Roman Catholic emphasis on spirituality building on personal maturity as a recognition that both body and soul are components of formation, even spiritual formation.

The great message of the report, however, is, in its own words,

"The spiritual formation and development of seminary students begins with, and is dependent upon, the spiritual formation and development of the faculty"¹³⁷.

Curricula revision, student evaluations, reorganisations, cannot turn the situation around, only Godly faculty.

This must become the principle of selection of faculty. In theological education, the scholar is not necessarily king¹³⁸. Problems cannot all be resolved at the intellectual level. Yet, as things stand at present professors are appointed primarily for academic achievement. There would be a dramatic turn around if they were also appointed also for spiritual concern and spiritual charism¹³⁹. All professors need to be involved in this matter of spiritual formation. There will be some with special responsibilities, but no professor should be retained on a seminary faculty if he does not take responsibility for the spiritual growth of students¹⁴⁰. The report calls "upon all of them to take up the leadership in the area of spiritual development"¹⁴¹ - presumably in private consultations with the students and in the example of their own concern for spiritual growth.

The ATS - Shalem Institute on Spirituality¹⁴²

The period subsequent to the 1972 report saw much activity in the seminaries relating to the "new" subject of spiritual formation. Most importantly, it was unlikely that the problem of academic theology and spirituality could be addressed for long by asking (as did the 1972 report) for a re-emphasis on the latter. Educators began to debate the linkage between the two. In 1978, the Rockefeller brothers and gave grants to the ATS to facilitate a two year programme of consultation on Spiritual Formation in Theological Education and the role of faculties in this task¹⁴³. The national conference

134 Ibid. pp. 168,169,190

135 Ibid. p.168

136 Ibid. pp.168 & 169

137 Ibid. p.161 c, p.179

138 Ibid. p.179

139 Ibid. p.188

140 Ibid. p.168

141 Ibid. p.197

142 "Spiritual Formation in Theological Schools : Ferment and Challenge" Tilden, H. Edwards, junior, *Theological Education*, 1980, pp.7- 52.

143 Ibid. p.7

culminating the process was held in Denver from June 13-15th 1980 and comprised 80 participants from 57 different theological schools. They consciously drew on the 1972 report¹⁴⁴ and reflected on the development and ideas since then in the seminaries. Firstly, we will examine some of the growth of understanding and commitment to spirituality evidenced in the report and then look in more detail at its conclusions as to the relationship between theology and spirituality.

The report begins with a comprehensive attempt to define the main terms used in the discussion (10 of them), a sure sign that either a new subject is being discussed or that an old subject is enjoying a new lease of academic life. Spiritual formation is defined as "the process of allowing the liberation of the real unique 'Christ form' within us"¹⁴⁵ It can be furthered by any events or experiences including the critical study of theology, but of especial importance are the intentional practical provisions we make for such growth¹⁴⁶.

As to why the subject has assumed such importance in the world of theological educators in North America at this time, the answer of the report is complicated and multiplex. I list the eight reasons given because they provide a good picture of the background to the subsequent discussion and they have relevance beyond the ATS discussion.

1. Students often come to the seminaries with little or no spiritual formation. Some come from recent conversion experiences, others from backgrounds where the disciplines of Christian life have not been taught.
2. In an era of the pre-eminence of individual conscience, and a weakening of general norms for the Christian life, students are looking for more individual guidance.
3. There is a broadening sense of the ecumenical inheritance of all Christians in this area, leading to an openness to learn from other traditions and explore the roots of their own traditions of spirituality.
4. A growing interest in Asian religions with their emphasis on contemplation and non-intellectual awareness of God.
5. A continuing emphasis on personal experience in North American Christianity.
6. The "analytical distancing" from the subject of our studies (God) that occurs when the scientific attitude prevails as it has done in the seminaries for some time. The new emphasis on spiritual formation is therefore seen as a corrective or backlash against the objectivity of the theological methodology adopted.
7. The fragmentation of the cultural situation in which the students and faculty live which turns their minds to spiritual things.

144 Ibid. p.8

145 Ibid. p.10.

146 Ibid. pp. 9-12

8. It is becoming increasingly recognised that spiritual formation has the power to integrate the disparate elements of theological education. (We will deal more with this later.)¹⁴⁷.

As a consequence of these pressures and the stimulus of the 1972 conference, plenty of experimentation had taken place in the schools and the atmosphere of the initial regional conferences in this investigation was that of sharing their experiences¹⁴⁸. The Faculty were very conscious of their lack of knowledge and skills as they attempt to model and lead spiritual life among the students¹⁴⁹. One problem the schools ran into early was that academic pressures left little space in the timetable for the day to address the issue¹⁵⁰ and similarly, faculty time to guide students in this area was at a premium¹⁵¹. There was widespread desire for more information and sharing of experiences over specific courses on spirituality which seemed to be at an early stage of development - when the participants were asked, "Has your school developed an intentional, mutually explored set of assumptions and practices in this area?" most replied with a qualified or unqualified "no", the exceptions generally being faculty from the Catholic schools¹⁵². It is clear however that by 1980 most ATS schools were addressing the issue seriously.

Academia and Spiritual Formation

The central theme of the 1980 consultation was the relationship of academic theology to spiritual formation in the schools. The report notes that rising interest in the subject of spiritual formation had been caused, in part at least, by the growth in objectivity in the realm of the knowledge of God stimulated by the triumph of the scholarly approach to theology¹⁵³. So,

"This seems a right and important historical moment for overcoming the schizophrenia present at least since the Middle Ages in our approaches to the knowledge of God and maturation of the Christian life."¹⁵⁴.

The two basic areas of concern laid down by the National Advisory Committee for the Consultation were, "The nature of spirituality and its relation to theology and other fields" and "resolution of the split between intellectual affective and intuitive approaches to religious knowledge"¹⁵⁵. This was echoed in papers read to the final conference for instance by Alan Jones who denied that there was a real tension between the two and asserted that they require each other¹⁵⁶. This deep concern to

147 Ibid. pp. 21-23

148 Ibid. p.14

149 Ibid. p.14

150 Ibid. p. 15

151 Ibid. p.17

152 Ibid. p.16.

153 Ibid. p.21

154 Ibid. p.20

155 Ibid. pp. 12 & 13

156 Ibid. p. 13

integrate spiritual formation with other dimensions of theological education was also recorded as a special concern of the participants in the regional conferences¹⁵⁷.

Just how the participants and report writers tackled the problem cannot be found in one section of what is a long and fragmented report. Their struggle with the issue can be summarised under seven headings.

1. The coming to terms with the pietist legacy in North America. While the evangelical schools generally looked on the pietist legacy with its emphasis on the personal interior life as positive, they were themselves, as they developed a more academic and intellectual approach to theological study, questioning the sense of a dichotomy between learning and being. The liberal schools have a history of reaction against pietism in that they see it as in opposition to theological analysis and social action. There is a growing understanding that the concept "pietistic" is a stereo-type and that historical pietism does not necessarily reject scholarship or involvement in the world but the prevailing negative memory of pietism among academics has contributed to the split between academic theology and spirituality by setting them in opposition to each other.

2. The report contains many practical suggestions for promoting spirituality in the schools not directly related to academics. In other words, part of the relationship between academics and spirituality is the creation of a balance between the two. Small group work, spiritual life days or weeks, retreats, joint worship, the use of meals, evaluation and formal academic courses on spirituality are all mentioned positively¹⁵⁸. The role of the faculty in the whole process is asserted and in particular the need for the training of spiritual advisers or directors. A lengthy section in the report is devoted to the experience of the Shalem Institute in the training of spiritual directors¹⁵⁹. An interesting warning is sounded by Dr Krister Stendahl of Harvard Divinity School that it would be easy in this situation to adopt a functional approach to the subject of spiritual formation, that we do it because it makes the professional more professional, it is important for the job. Dr Stendahl is more concerned with de-professionalising the spiritual life and "giving up the greedy attitude of getting something out of Scripture or other sources for sermons or something else"¹⁶⁰.

3. A "holistic" approach to the student, to the faculty's own task and even the world in general requires us to integrate theology and spirituality. You cannot "teach theology and not deal with the whole person"¹⁶¹. This, of course, comes into conflict with the necessary specialism of the faculty. Some will doubtless specialise in Old Testament, others will specialise in spirituality courses, but none can fragment their own personal lives or their intentions to promote the holistic growth of the student.

4. Urban T. Holmes of the School of Theology, the University of the South rejects the polarity between academic theology and spiritual theology as fundamentally unproductive. For him the bond between excellence of spirit and the

157 Ibid. p. 15

158 Ibid. pp. 28-31

159 Ibid. pp. 38-41

160 Ibid. p. 35

161 Ibid. p. 32

mind is that they authenticate one another. He uses Jean Gerson, the 15th century theologian, to state that every experience of the love of God transforms our imagination and our mind and the mind's knowledge of God helps us to live for transcendent values. It is the theologian who wishes to live in a purely academic cocoon, enjoying the "security of footnotes, bibliography and equivocation" who is fundamentally sick¹⁶².

5. Grace rather than work must be asserted. We do not create spiritual transformation in students by courses, supervision, or even scheduling of worship. Only God has transforming power¹⁶³. This point will be picked up later by Lindbeck in the Conference of 1987.

6. We need to develop the "mediating discipline" of spiritual theology. This is more than courses in Christian Spirituality without a disciplined critical dimension. It has to be developed by people who have first hand experience of God and spiritual formation which can be passed on in concrete forms of words and images, but also the ability to guide students critically through a broad range of spiritual disciplines and their historical expression¹⁶⁴.

7. Lastly, spiritual formation can be seen as an integrating factor for the whole of theological education¹⁶⁵. In particular it becomes an integrating factor in the way in which the student is formed as an authentic person of God who wishes to serve the God that he or she knows. Once again this insight will be taken up more extensively in the late 80's and 90's.

The Basic Issues Seminar 1987

In July 1987 the ATS convened a summer seminar on "Theological education as the formation of character"¹⁶⁶. By then, spiritual formation had become a major universal concern in the seminaries. Meye in his address speaks of "a very strong, essentially universal interest on the part of the member schools of ATS in spiritual formation which has developed into a major movement in our midst within the past two decades"¹⁶⁷. The seminar's concern is, to a great extent, with theory and methodology, the analysis of assumptions. Most subjects seem to develop in this way historically, with the discussion of prolegomena coming well after a universal, broadly based discussion.

The three most seminal papers were by George Lindbeck of Yale, David Tracy of Chicago and Douglas John Hall of Montreal and we will look at each in turn.

George Lindbeck

162 Ibid. p.36.

163 Ibid. p.37.

164 Ibid. p.44.

165 This is briefly mentioned on p.22

166 Ibid. Theological Education 1988, Supplement 1.

167 Ibid. p. 96

Lindbeck states his purpose in the first sentence, "This essay is an attempt to think through the relation of spiritual formation to preparation for ministry."¹⁶⁸ For Lindbeck, spiritual formation is an internalising of a communal religious tradition, a committed appropriation of a world view¹⁶⁹ .. It is moving on from the moment of conversion. Interestingly, he therefore swims against the stream in dis-associating it from human and emotional maturity. "Neurotics can be saints" - and often are¹⁷⁰. In Christianity, the criteria for spiritual maturity are the biblical ones, not that the Bible provides the precise vocabulary, rather that it provides the spiritual grammar, leaving room for diversity. To thus see spiritual formation as a learning of the rules of the language enables him to say that specific programmes to learn spirituality are only needed when the ordinary way of growing up in the culture fails. For Lindbeck, this is a good description of the situation of his day amongst seminary students with the break up of the traditional spiritual disciplines associated with denominational practices and commitment. But, as we shall see later, he does not believe that the programmatic solution is the best.

Lindbeck then turns his attention to the relationship between spirituality and theology. Scholarly theology is second order reflection on what a religion is. Its primary subject matter is the first order activities of that religion. It is performed on behalf of the faith community so that it can function as a normative, critical corrective to that community - answering the question, "How should the community believe and behave?". Once again, while the vocabulary of theology may vary from situation in culture to situation in culture, the basic grammar remains much the same. If all this is so, then the relationship between theology and spirituality is A-symmetrical. Spiritual maturity is more important for good theology than good theology is for spiritual maturity, and it is the spiritually mature, all other things being equal, who make the best theologians. There are plenty of simple saints who know the grammar instinctively well. Indeed, for the first part of Christian history, theology and spirituality were not distinguished and theological writers were, on the whole, a subset of the spiritual ones¹⁷¹.

The gap between spirituality and theology developed with the rise of scholasticism and the universities. Theology soon became the business of a small core of specialists. The coming of intellectual objectivity into theology with rationalism and the enlightenment led to a further polarisation to the extent that spirituality is now usually seen as having no place today in academic theology except as a historic phenomenon to be studied objectively and historically like the rest of Christian thought. When the seminaries became more professional, then ministerial skills began to resemble salesmanship, administration and therapy which were seen to work regardless of interior spirituality and so spiritual formation was further marginalised¹⁷². This situation is now breaking down, with major shifts away from crude ideas of objectivity improving science. The emphasis now is on "consensus building communities of open enquiry" as the location of truth. No single denomination is

168 "Spiritual Formation and theological Education, Ibid. P. 10.

169 Ibid. p.17 & 12

170 Ibid. p.13

171 Ibid. p.21

172 Ibid. p. 23.

able to create this in theology and so theology cannot be done in our historical ghettos¹⁷³.

What then of programmes aimed as spiritual formation in the seminaries? Lindbeck reluctantly allows them because of the present situation but makes a number of qualifying points. Firstly, they do not relate directly to social or political practice, they must be aimed at internalising the faith. Secondly they will include scholarly attention to spirituality. Thirdly they should not be seen as creating better witnesses or Christian workers because of the principle of grace found in both the Hebrew and Greek scriptures, that God uses his people despite themselves. Fourthly they must concentrate on the general means of grace available to all Christians because of the dangers of clerical elitism. Fifthly, Lindbeck is encouraged that, with the change in the regnant view of science, we have a better chance than before to break down the historical barriers between theology and spirituality, an opportunity we must grasp¹⁷⁴.

Lindbeck's linguistic analogy which has already proved so fruitful in theology¹⁷⁵ seems to bring significant clarity into the area of spiritual formation. His emphasis on grace is also welcome in a mechanistic world which assumes that if you do something the right way, you will get the right results - even in Christian ministry. His view that spiritual formation does not relate directly to social and political practice, but is rather an internalising of the faith of the community does not seem to follow. Internalising in such a situation surely must mean making real for yourself and can as much apply to the outward forms of discipleship in one's life as to the inward orientation to God. It may be that Lindbeck would include this in his 'internalising' where a person was seeking to do this task in relating to a community which had a strong sense of social mission. It would be good to see Lindbeck develop his ideas of how the location of truth away from objectivity towards the plausibility structures of self-critical communities gives us an opportunity to re-interpret the relationship between theology and spirituality.

David Tracy

David Tracy asks us to seek answers to our problems in this area by looking at the "western journey of education as a training of the soul in Socrates and Plato"¹⁷⁶, where the term soul "is a direct analogue of what a modern like Volkman or Ogden means by existential self-understanding or a post-modern like Kristeva means by "subjective process"¹⁷⁷.

Tracy makes a number of important points. Among them are:

1. For Plato and Socrates, "commitment and action not open to enquiry is blind; enquiry not open to commitment and action is empty. Enquiry and action like education and the soul, rise and fall together"¹⁷⁸.

173 Ibid. p. 27.

174 Ibid. pp28f.

175 See his seminal book *The Nature of Doctrine, Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1984*

176 "Can Virtue be Taught? Education, Character and the Soul;" Ibid. p. 36

177 Ibid. p.40.

178 Ibid. p. 46.

2. For Plato especially, "myth" is a genuine aid to the soul with all its "traces" and "ciphers" of the transcendent¹⁷⁹.

It follows that we need a theological education acknowledging that the life of the mind cannot live alone without the life of faith, nor can the life of faith live alone without the life of the mind. And that these needs are best met by a theological education grounded in continuous searching of the Christian classics especially the Bible.

Douglas John Hall

Douglas Hall was the first in the seminar to respond to Lindbeck and Tracy. He spends very little time answering their specific points but instead, in a seminal way, opens up the subject based on two fundamental criticisms of the way that the discussion on spiritual formation has developed so far. Hall sees the present discussion dictated by a sense of lack which we perceive as a lack or diminution of spirituality in our seminarians¹⁸⁰. What we cannot do is move from this to say that theological education should be tailored to the restoration of that missing quality. That would be self-defeating. Character formation is not a proper goal of an educational philosophy that faithfully reflects the basic tenets of the Christian tradition. This is for two related reasons.

Firstly, Hall picks up Lindbeck's hint that "God uses his people despite themselves to testify to his purposes among the nations"¹⁸¹. The Christian tradition is centred on grace, not works, God's love is efficacious independently of human worthiness and He creates out of nothing. The self finds itself, that is achieves some measure of spiritual maturity, only as it "loses itself" in the contemplation and service of others. Personal character-formation as a goal of spirituality is fundamentally non-Christian¹⁸².

Secondly, such a solution (asking theological education to supply the missing quality of spirituality) is an unfortunate echo of the false assumptions of modern education which today is so strongly student-centred. Hall acknowledges that the previous attitude where the learner is simply treated as an empty vessel into which you pour eternally valid truths was entirely inadequate but now the pendulum has swung too far in the other direction and the learner is the point of convergence of the entire educational process. This in fact has to a great extent created the emptiness that concerns us here and it is certainly no part of the solution which lies more with the forgetting of the self. "The theological student (at whatever level!) who desires to possess such spiritual qualities and pursues them as ends is comparable to the insomniac who keeps telling himself that he must get to sleep."¹⁸³ We will not remedy the lack of spirituality by focusing attention all the more on the self and its formation¹⁸⁴.

179 Ibid. p. 42, 43 & 44.

180 "Theological Education as Character Formation" Ibid. p.55.

181 Ibid. pp.54f.

182 Ibid. pp. 54, 55, 56.

183 Ibid. p. 65.

184 Ibid. p. 58.

Hall's response to this situation is first of all to redefine the terms. He prefers Christian discipleship to spiritual character formation as something that looks outward rather than inward. He then seeks to answer the question as to how far theological education can and should facilitate Christian discipleship. He makes five points.

1. It will be important to maintain the priority of what is studied over its effect on those who study it. Our orientation is therefore towards God.
2. We will then re-establish the relational basis of theological education, that will be the relation of the disciple to his teacher or Lord who is Jesus Christ and that helps us to maintain a continuity between the spiritual life of theological students and that of the ordinary church member, breaking down the destructive professional paradigm.
3. This attitude will hopefully define the end of theological education as something beyond the actual teaching and learning processes.
4. It will help to ground the educational process in the "here and now". Discipleship becomes something which stresses more the aim of relating to the world culture and times than the aim of selfish individual development.
5. This new language helps theological education to link closer with the life of the church¹⁸⁵.

What then are the "qualities of spirit" that come from this attitude to theological education as Christian discipleship?

The first is commitment, not just to the faith tradition which needs to be appropriated and assimilated as Lindbeck suggests, but to God, a presence, a "thou" to whom the student has entrusted him or her self. Commitment is personal and therefore relational if it is a part of Christian discipleship and any personal character is secondary and consequential to that¹⁸⁶.

Secondly, there is a disciplined attempt at discernment, a training of the mind which is a component of discipleship and this attitude helps to integrate academic theology and spirituality¹⁸⁷.

Thirdly, there is a growing sense of apostolic responsibility. Jesus Christ is committed to the world and so is the Christian disciple. It is part of the discipleship itself, not a second commitment. This commitment to the world will be a commitment to the promulgation of the Good News or a concern for "the fate of the earth"¹⁸⁸ and it will be this, rather than a whole series of new disciplines and programmes in the practice of ministry which will prove fruitful¹⁸⁹.

185 Ibid. pp58-60.

186 Ibid. pp. 62f.

187 Ibid. pp.65ff.

188 Ibid. p. 69.

189 Ibid. p. 71.

I confess to finding Hall's re-emphasis of grace, his warning against an entirely student oriented education and his re-stating of the question in terms of personal discipleship immensely fruitful. It is unfortunate that historically when discipleship has been used, it has usually emphasised the individual and has had difficulty in giving adequate place to the liturgy (except to say that the individual must attend for the good of his soul) or to a corporate sense of apostolic responsibility to the world. In its origins in the community of the twelve within a semitic culture, the model of discipleship was better protected against the individualising tendency than it is today in the late 20th C. West.

Spiritual Formation as unifying factor

Ever since Farley wrote his influential book¹⁹⁰, the "El Dorado" of theological education has been the unifying factor which makes sense of a fragmented discipline. From the late 80s onwards, spiritual formation has been touted a number of times as just that factor.

In 1985 George Schnier wrote "Formation is an activity which pervades the whole of the process of Divinity School education and which can be named as to its rules and recognised in each discreet part of the process"¹⁹¹.

Schnier believes that we are in the problem of opposition between academic theology and spirituality for two main reasons. Firstly as academic theology has developed in its enlightenment form, it has crossed denominational boundaries and become more of a universal scientific enterprise. This has led seminaries and churches to separate formation from academic education in order to allow the particularity of the specific denominational traditions and its inner demands to be safeguarded in the face of the growing universal nature of academic theology.

Secondly the functional nature of our society is to apply "technological" answers to existing problems. Is there a certain "dry and arid quality to the life of contemporary men and women?". Is there a perceived lack of subjective experience of God in the seminaries? Then the answer encouraged by our culture is to develop the learning process into this area by the acquisition of skills and techniques. In so far as the new interest in spiritual formation seeks to do that in the seminaries, it is symptomatic of the ills of contemporary society, perpetuates the unnecessary dichotomy between academic and spiritual, and does not solve the problem for the student¹⁹².

The answer is rather to be found in using formation as a foundation for all the activities of a theological school (which Schnier describes in the traditional three-fold model of academic, spiritual and practical/ministry) so that they all operate under the same basic rules. For him this means first of all, seeing formation as the one "profound purpose" of theological education and therefore formation (and theology in its wider sense) is really the construction of a grammar for the "self-world-God relations"¹⁹³. The language of the Trinity provides the basic rules of this grammar.

190 Edward Farley *Theologia : The Fragmentation and unity of Theological Education* Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1983.

191 "Formation as a unifying concept of theological education" George P. Schnier, *Theological Education*, Spring, 1985 pp.94-113.

192 Ibid. pp. 95, 96 & 100.

193 Ibid. pp.100ff.

His lengthy explication of theology in linguistic terms owes much to Lindbeck's work in the area of the nature of theology.

Eleven years later Gordon T. Smith of the Canadian Theological Seminary provided a much less theoretical and more practical explication of spiritual formation as a unifying model for theological education¹⁹⁴. Smith begins by echoing Schnier that the best response to the growing recognition of the need for character formation is not necessarily to put in new programmes to encourage it. What we need is a model for understanding the place and role of spiritual development within the school. In this respect he makes eight points:

1. Spiritual maturity is only one element in the goal and purpose of theological education, so cannot be used to unify all the factors by providing a common purpose. This may be true of the church but not of a theological school.
2. Formal classroom education is a means to the end of spiritual maturity and spiritual formation therefore includes academic study.
3. However not all classroom learning is conducive to spiritual formation. Only that which has a fundamental commitment to God and his cause and the truth, only that which is informed by prayer and worship and only that which is moulded by reflection on the student's personal vocation and apostolic responsibility in the world is truly formative. This means that purely objective scientific enquiry into theology that rejects a confessional stance and a personal commitment to God is not in itself formative. It is unclear here whether Smith is referring to the student or the lecturer. Ideally both should be united in the task of theology as a personal commitment to God but there is plenty of evidence that despite a lecturing attitude which is purely objectively enlightenment in character, an individual student with a commitment to God can benefit spiritually in that situation.
4. Spiritual formation only happens when those activities designed specifically to that end complement the formal academic programme and affirm it. We need practical ministry opportunities, retreats and much else that are integrated with the classroom situation.
5. Public worship (liturgy) and classroom need especially to be integrated so liturgy enables us to study as worshippers and conversely the worship of the academy is an event of substance.
6. It is the job of the seminary to enable people to learn the disciplines of the spiritual life - not with an emphasis on the techniques so much as on the grace sought through the techniques.
7. Picking up the previous thought, the best atmosphere for spiritual development is within a particular spiritual heritage or tradition because within that school there is a consensus on the goal and means of spiritual formation. Denominational schools have a clear advantage here.

¹⁹⁴ "Spiritual formation in the academy: a unifying model", Gordon T. Smith, *Theological Education*, Vol. 33 No. 1 (1996), pp. 83-91.

8 Finally, we should not regard the job of spiritual formation as residing entirely in the academy. The local church is a vital part of the process and all the theological school can do is provide opportunities at a particular point in someone's life for the student to respond to divine grace¹⁹⁵.

In all of this we have to remember that character formation is a significant part of spiritual formation. Students need to grow emotionally, develop in personal ideals, understand issues of gender, sexuality and marriage and become clearer about their vocation¹⁹⁶. Smith ends with a plea for the two great factors of preaching of the Scriptures and the life and example and exhortation of the faculty to be developed as the core means of spiritual formation in seminaries¹⁹⁷.

Smith's presentation is a delightfully, jargon-free, practical call to what must be for the seminary a vital, yet necessarily limited, task.

It is interesting to note that both Schnier and Smith see the denominational school as better set up for the promotion of spiritual formation. This can surely only be admitted in a limited practical sense. Ideally, the inter-denominational school will provide a more open atmosphere in which spirituality can be pursued free from the claustrophobia of one historical expression, provided sufficient guidance is given. To say otherwise would be also to affirm that theology is always best done from a confessional point of view because then it does not needlessly confuse the student !

Neither Schnier nor Smith satisfactorily establish the role of spiritual formation as the key unifying factor for theological education. Possibly the aim described in terms of student growth can fulfill this role (so this applies also to the other two traditional student growth aims of academic excellence and ministerial competence). Possibly we will need to look outside of ourselves to such issues as the community's desire and ability to glorify God and bring in his kingdom for one issue to unify the whole.

Henri Nouwen

In connection with North American attitudes to spirituality in Theological Education, mention must briefly be made of Henri Nouwen.

Nouwen spent some years in the first half of the 1970s at Yale Divinity School where he conducted a seminar on Christian Spirituality. He was influential not just in the lives of his students, but his influence extended to his fellow faculty members such as George Lindbeck¹⁹⁸ and to a wider public through the book he wrote a few years later consciously arising out of that time¹⁹⁹.

As a Catholic priest operating in an ecumenical scholarly environment, Nouwen combined a classical approach to the subject²⁰⁰ with a special interest in psychological insights. His greatest contribution to the concept of spiritual formation

195 Ibid. pp.84-88.

196 Ibid. p.89.

197 Ibid. pp.90f.

198 Ibid. p17

199 *Reaching out*, Glasgow, Collins, 1976, acknowledgements.

200 See his *Way of the Heart*, - *Desert Spirituality and Contemporary Ministry*, San Francisco, Harper/Collins, 1991.

in theological schools was his analogy of hospitality²⁰¹. Hospitality is creating a safe free and friendly space for students. It is not to change people but to ‘offer them space where change can take place’²⁰². This is hard work because creating an ‘emptiness’ today is hard. This attitude contrasts vividly with the present ‘ridiculous’ situation in theological education where ‘instead of spending a number of free years searching for the value and meaning of our human existence with the help of others who expressed their own experiences in word and writing, most students are trying to “earn” credits, degrees and awards, willing to sacrifice even their own growth’²⁰³. Solutions are offered in the lecture room without the existence of a question in the students’ minds or hearts. Love, hope, fear, joy, become a set of notes. Teachers and students fear rejection and so hide behind the academic process²⁰⁴.

The faculty must create a free and fearless space where mental, emotional and spiritual development can take place rather than being caught up with the need to impress and control. They must become good hosts, receivers as well as givers, who believe that the guest contains ‘a promise he wants to reveal to anyone who shows genuine interest’ p81. Their job is to reveal and affirm that in the student. So, doctrine must not be seen as alien formulae that must be adhered to but rather as ‘the documentation of profound human experiences which, transcending time and space, are handed over from generation to generation as a light in our darkness’²⁰⁵. Training for ministry must not be seen as simply acquiring the tools of the trade but a painful process of self-emptying and recognition of weakness²⁰⁶.

Nouwen’s ideas are the epitome of the student oriented approach of the 70s that Hall rebels against so strongly, but they provide a model for a servant attitude among the faculty which is both an endearing and hopefully enduring contribution to theological education theory.

201 (Interestingly, this was taken up by Margaret Guenther in her book on spiritual direction - Margaret Guenther *Holy Listening*, London, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1992, pp6-41.

202 Ibid. p69.

203 Ibid. p79

204

205 Ibid. p83.

206 Ibid. p100.