



Leaders Among the People of God: *Staley Lecture Series*¹

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Lecture 1. Futures of Theological Education

The title of this lecture uses the plural, *futures*, in order to respect the fact that theological education has never been all of one piece. Diversity is more likely to increase than to decrease. The demands of this time and of the near future suggest that a greater variety of creative models of education is needed. What is appropriate in one situation or for one sector of the church has reason to be different from what is needed in another. This conclusion is underlined by the increasingly global consciousness of the church.

Mandates. Christianity is essentially the worship of the creator-God who has ordained a rationality and capability for understanding as cornerstone of worship. He is honored by his people's efforts to cognitively grasp his essence, his intentions, his footprints in the guidance of history and the meaning of his relationship to sinful humanity through the salvation provided in Jesus Christ. Education plays a part in the spiritual consciousness that is uniquely Christian. God has mandated a role for parents and for the whole community of faith in the educational development of his people. He has further specified that leadership persons have a responsibility for the equipping of the whole community for service and especially the identifying and nurturing of others who will also take responsibility as leaders. Theological education, at least in the generic sense, is the essential process of furthering the understandings of what God has said and how his Word applies to the circumstances of life in certain places at certain periods of time. The task of theological education thus holds together the constancy of the Word, on the one hand, and the changing realities of context and history, on the other.

Anxieties. Institutional survival seems to be the major concern. Will our school survive? How secure are our jobs as professors and administrators? Any answers must be tentative. Nobody can respond with certainty; but surely several more schools will be forced into radical change or closure. How many? Which ones?

Perhaps it would be less self-centered to ask: Is *theological education* coming to an end? The answer is certainly negative. Theological education in one form or another is as old as the Scriptures; it will surely continue. What is less likely to continue is the dominant form of the past hundred years or so.

Issues of Purpose. "Preparation for ministry" is a phrase likely to change. Perhaps part of the contemporary misfit between institutions and the churches relates to the antiquated notion that without schooling there is no preparation and without preparation there is no ministry. A faulty theological understanding of church and leadership within the church lies at the bottom of the

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problem. The church is the people of God and its proper leadership is a matter of shared servanthood. Ministering to and among God's people is to be a common task of all the saints. Notions to the contrary can be commonly traced to the traditions of the church's period of domination by hierarchical Roman Catholic polity, governance, and worship. The academic arrogance of presuming to "prepare" or to impose academic qualifications on those who are called to ministry is an extension of these errors.

The clergy-laity dichotomy is exacerbated by certain presumptions of theological education. While granting that responsible pastors need to be skilled in the handling of the Scriptures, their goal should be nothing less than helping the people of the church to develop this competency themselves. That most will not make the effort does not add to the stature of the pastor. Pastors who presume to be above the people tend to use their educated-ness as a badge of authority, thus adding to the relational distance between themselves and the leadership lying nascent within the congregation.

Academicism runs rampant among the ministry persons in many churches today. If it were an academicism of gracious warmth and spiritual meaning, perhaps it could avoid being offensive. But instead it often is sophomoric in its arrogance and pomposity. People resent being "talked down to." Pastors who identify more with academic values than with spiritual values are a hindrance to the spiritual development of God's people.

Issues of Scope. Theological education is increasingly caught between two extreme views: theological education is only for the clergy, on the one hand, and it is for everyone, on the other hand. This contrast is hard to reconcile. Instead we carve up the turf and fight. Some want to keep clerical education well separated from education for the laity. Others want all of God's people to have the same opportunities. The narrow view is hard to defend except among the most formal and liturgical fellowships. The latter position leads to a host of practical problems such as the obvious difficulty of providing such an expensive and time-consuming educational experience for everyone. The unresolved questions remain: Who needs how much education of what sort? The issue relating to the appropriate level of skill in the use of biblical languages is a particularly trying exemplar of these questions.

Issues of Form. Christians, as people of the Book, should have good answers to the following questions: Where is it written that theological education should be provided in a school? Where is it written that a three-year degree, enrolled full-time, after a four-year bachelor's degree is the ideal model? Where is it written that certain courses are essential and others are optional? Where is it written that ideally the student should live on a campus during this series of formal learning experiences? Where is it written that students must be given grades based upon their ability to recall bits of information and that these grades should be considered the basis for honor among the saints? Where indeed?

The church has been able to make fairly good use of the formal education model. It should not be abandoned simply because it is not spelled out in the Bible. (Jesus might have used the telephone, had it been available.) But to some extent the formal model of education *was* already in use by the time of Jesus' ministry, and he chose not to use it. Instead he surrounded himself with learners and struck off across the countryside, from village to village to city, teaching in the context of his ministry and involving his learners in action from the very beginning of their development as his disciples. Such an approach startled the more formally educated groups (John 4:1-2).

Today the formal model is defended almost as vigorously as the Gospel itself. Creative alternatives are rarely sought. When any changes are proposed they are either talked to death in one committee after another or they are given the cold shoulder premised on the assumption that if God had wanted things to be any different he would have made them that way from the beginning. The arrogance is profound. The sense of history is shallow. The social contrivances of the post-industrial era are blithely accepted as having a clear track back to the Apostles.

Is it heretical to ask if God might be on the threshold of revealing to the church some fundamentally different way or ways of accomplishing the vital task of leadership development? Surely a defense must be made against destruction of old forms before valid replacements are well attested in the mission of the Gospel, but we should not assume that God's immutability must be reflected in blind stubbornness in the church.

Alternative Scenarios

1. Minimal Change. Despite the readily available evidence of shrinking enrollments and financial instability in many theological schools, especially those without substantial endowments or well-developed ties to growing denominations, the leadership people in theological education seem largely committed to a wait-and-see attitude. Some are delaying the studies that might spell out a more viable future; some are simply taking as a matter of faith that God is so happy with the status quo that he will preserve the institutional forms and ultimately show that change is inappropriate.

A more critical reading of the "handwriting on the wall" suggests that these assumptions are very risky. Without substantial change, a significant number of institutions are likely to find themselves in irreversible difficulty very soon. The unaddressed problems include the following:

The changed and still changing nature of the students enrolled in theological education. They are older, more experienced, more commonly married, and often with children. They have greater financial burdens, they must continue employment, and thus they tend to be part-time students. They often are already engaged in substantial ministry in the churches. They are more diverse in their educational backgrounds. They are more able to discern the value of an educational task, and thus they are more inclined to resist and resent "Mickey Mouse" assignments and ineffectual or inappropriate tests.

The increasing costs of higher education. Formal education is forcing out the less well-supported students. In theological education the problem is compounded by the relatively poorly-paid positions into which graduates must move if they are to remain in salaried ministry. Academic debt is becoming less manageable.

The changing concerns and needs of churches. Churches and the communities in which they minister are confronted by circumstances hardly imaginable when the categories of the classical theological curriculum were laid down. By merely standing still, practical theology, for example, has become a virtual museum, reminding of a now-lost era when the largest single task of the minister was pulpit oratory. Today's pastors lose their jobs or choose to leave for substantially different reasons: incompetency in dealing with people and the complexities of their real world, ineffective management of church finances, incompetent development of lay leadership, lack of vision, and failure to understand the nature of adult learning and spiritual nurturance.

2. Two-Tier Survival. Theological education may well split into two major sectors, a more academic and higher order of substantially longer programs to satisfy the needs of churches that believe they need leaders with doctoral-level theological education, and a lower tier of institutions serving the vast majority of the churches through a more functionally-oriented and shorter education. The models for this bifurcation may already be in place, as many Bible colleges are returning to their roots, narrowing down to provide an undergraduate education that leads directly to employment in ministry, while the highly academic theological schools push further into an esoteric and scholarly elaboration of their fervently defended educational models.

3. Church-Based Forms. As churches, especially larger churches, become more assertive and more insightful about their own possibilities as educational centers, it seems likely that there will be a return to educational forms common to earlier centuries of leadership development in the church. Using the internship model, coupled to intensive small-group educational experiences, many a church will come to be its own source of leadership resources.

When this possibility is effectively fulfilled, it is likely to lead to new emphasis on outreach and missions, bringing about trends that will spell out a whole new order (or the end) for the established denominational and independent mission boards. The emergence of church-based theological education, if the seminaries and theological schools do not find effective ways to provide help and extension ministries, may spell the end of an era for the so-called “modern missionary movement” and its counterpart, domination of theological education by formal schools.

4. Responsive Resource Centers. Perhaps the schools of theology can find ways to respond to trends and to become hubs of shared resources. Serving churches has become a lower priority in so many cases, but God can turn this around. The seminaries and theological schools constitute substantial clusters of human and literary resources. These resources will still be needed in the cause of leadership development in the church regardless of other eventualities. Fervent prayer should be invested toward the end of effective dialogue and planning among the several sectors of the church and the agencies which were originally conceived as resources for the church.

Lecture 2. Qualities of Christian Leadership

Where and how do the attributes, qualities, and skills of Christian leadership develop?

Guidelines from the Scripture

The Apostle Paul provided lists of qualities and characteristics which were to be used in the selection of leaders for the church. These lists include, by inference, matters of intellect and knowledge, but they are predominantly concerned with attributes of character, social-relational skills, and personality.

Being above reproach; having but one spouse; being temperate, self-controlled, respectable; being hospitable; being able to teach; not drunken, violent, quarrelsome; not being in love with money; being an effective manager of home and children; not being a recent convert or otherwise prone to conceit; having a good reputation even with those outside the fellowship of the faith; not inclined toward dishonesty in business relationships; keeping good hold on the truths of the faith, being of clear conscience; being tested through experience and thus

gaining a good standing and confidence in their faith in Jesus Christ. (1 Timothy 3:1-13, condensed)

Intellectual Competencies. The emphasis on intellectual development, knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures and similar matters which are given such a prominent place in theological education are in substantial contrast with the biblical guidelines for the selection of leadership in the church.

Much faith is placed in formal schooling. The church has long been among the vanguard in the promoting of formal education, and much good has come from it. But schooling is relatively ineffective in matters of spiritual development and character formation. The presupposition that “the good life” springs from a well-furnished mind is far more Hellenistic than it is Judeo-Christian. At peril, the church persists in its misguided over-confidence in the value of formal theological education.

Socio-Cultural Emphasis. Regardless of the perspective from the academic environment, the leader in the church must learn the perspective of the people of the church. The increasingly complex cultural mix in today’s typical church makes necessary the qualities of leadership that were characteristic of the days of the apostles. The lists in 1 Timothy still have validity.

Interpersonal Relational Qualities. The major shortcomings that cause the pastor to leave the ministry relate to rudimentary problems of interpersonal relationships. The qualities of leadership in adequately equipped people today necessarily includes substantial skills in this important matter.

Skills of Leading People. Leaders of God’s people must first of all be followers of God. But then they need the respect that comes from treating people well and providing encouragement and nurture. The skills of leadership that matter most are an interaction of appropriate skills manifest within the gifts of personality and wisdom that enables leaders to avoid the many pitfalls of egoism and control-seeking.

The Not-so-well Hidden Curriculum of Theological Education. Professional educators, and especially those who are concerned with curriculum, curriculum theory, and curriculum research often make note of unannounced and unclaimed meanings and messages in an educational experience. These are identified as “hidden curriculum.” The term is based on the not unreasonable idea that often we are teaching toward purposes that are not quite openly confessed or claimed. The outcomes of the “hidden curriculum” are often tacitly accepted by those who operate the educational enterprise although they are not quite willing to admit it. In other cases, the outcomes are even “hidden” from the educators themselves—a kind of self-deception in which something undesirable is happening as a byproduct of all sorts of good intentions. For example, consider the following two outcomes of formal theological education. Who intends that these ideas be taught?

Leading is knowing. Living with a constant emphasis on academic learning influences persons more than is commonly recognized. One’s world becomes defined by the values which regulate one’s life. One goes to school in order to become able to lead; the emphasis in school is on knowing. Thus it is easy to come to the conclusion, perhaps consciously, but surely sub-consciously, that these matters of “important to know” are somehow the stuff of competency. So easily then, the person who spends many years in the academic environment in the anticipation of leadership in ministry comes to equate the capacity to lead with the extent of knowing.

Ministry relationships are like formal schooling. Being a student is similar to being a child, especially in that both these situations stimulate the longing to be different—to escape the subordinate role, or better yet, to reverse it. The student role is essentially responsive; the teacher role is usually dominant. Many a seminary graduate moves from the seminary to the church by seizing the chalk and the stick, the symbols of authority in the classroom, and moves them into the church. Pedantic leadership is not apt to be well accepted in the church. The pastor cannot pose as a schoolteacher. The people cannot be expected to sit quietly in neat rows.

These misguided learnings are easy to criticize; what a wonder that they have so long been accepted with minimal challenge in the church. The early influences of Greco-Roman school architecture and authoritarian hierarchies of leadership have left a profound mark of syncretism.

A Place for Spiritual Development. Leading that serves God and his people begins with following God. Academic concerns in theological education are typically given priority over spiritual concerns. A partial explanation lies in the ancient lore among students:

Students give more attention to things that they believe will be on the test.

Even among people whose judgment has matured and whose wisdom has become manifest, the insidious effect of the academic environment leads toward systems of priorities which virtually deny the most basic things of the Gospel. Evidence is piling up to warn theological schools that churches are very often disappointed with the quality of spiritual leadership offered by the recent seminary graduate.

A further comment on the real world of theological education is found in the following observation from educational research:

Teachers tend to teach what is easiest to test.

Since spirituality is not easily tested, its importance in the academic scheme hardly seems worthy. Instead, all sorts of informational and textual materials related to spirituality are included. Obviously, this accumulation of information does not add up to true spirituality.

In reference to the development of leadership for the church, certain ways of organizing learning are more appropriate than others. The most promising ways and means are those that provide the following characteristics:

Learning that is *experiential*.

Learning that involves *functional responsibility*.

Engagement with others in contexts and circumstances that *allow follow-through and long-term engagement*.

Learning within community. Where will these three characteristics be most readily available? Rather than in the solitary and highly individualistic situations so common in the conduct of formal education, the learning of spiritual ministries that is so profoundly needed will most predictably be

available within a community in which one can be engaged in service. Effective development of Christian ministry skills and attitudes is more apt to occur where there is continual interaction with a sector of the community of faith, at least in terms of an accountability relationship with a mentor, or better yet, a mentoring network within a larger circle of the Christian community. The learner needs relationships with others. In light of the scriptural evidences, God intends that learning of most matters and surely of the relational skills of leadership should be social experiences rather than individualized solitary encounters with information.

Leaders must develop in wisdom. The learning experiences gained in theological education should move the leader of the church in the direction of wisdom. The distinction between knowledge and wisdom in the biblical Wisdom Literature is well reflected in the scaling from knowledge (as memorized information) to capacity for judgment (evaluation) in the insightful *Taxonomy of Learning Outcomes* (1954) by the late Benjamin Bloom (Univ. of Chicago).

Bloom identifies six levels of the use of the human mind in cognitive operations. These six levels are best represented in a sequence of upward steps from the first to the sixth. The importance of each step is reflected in its being part of the enabling of the next step. Every level of learning has worth. The major point is that each step demands a more elegant use of the human capacity for complex thought. Thus it can be assumed that each level upward reflects development and more extensive utilization of potential mental ability. The well-educated and mature person should be able to operate appropriately at each of the six levels, utilizing all of the earlier levels in effective ways.

6. EVALUATION (the use of well-analyzed and appropriately synthesized ideas as the basis for a judgment--think wisdom)
5. SYNTHESIS (the mental task of combining one idea with a relatable other idea and thus making a more thorough third idea)
4. ANALYSIS (the mental task of taking an idea apart, sorting, classifying and examining its several parts)
3. APPLICATION (capability of putting understood information into action)
2. UNDERSTANDING (to the extent of being able to re-present INFORMATION in one's own words)
1. INFORMATION (in the sense of bits of data committed to memory)

A Synoptic View of Bloom's Taxonomy of Cognitive Processes

Sadly, evidence from the sorts of tests and assignments made in theological education shows a great emphasis on the first and the second of the levels. Especially when large classes are involved, the tendency is to keep the level of learning very low, partly because of the difficulty of testing at higher levels.

Lecture 3. The Church as a Learning Context

Development of leadership, for the church and for the godly influencing of the larger society, is one of the defining characteristics of the church. An integrated or holistic view of human spirituality leads to a view of the church as being concerned with the whole of human development. Detached souls are not the object of God's redemptive activity.

Seeing the church as a learning context is important for other reasons. The church is a network of communities of God's people. Within these communities people who are born into the kingdom of God through the salvific work of Jesus Christ enter into relationships intended to provide nurturance and appropriate stimulus for spiritual development. The Christian is not born full-grown spiritually; a central mission of the church is to provide the context and the resources for the development of God's people.

Historically, the local churches have delegated away certain aspects of their functions and have chosen, sometimes wisely, to establish institutions for the furtherance of specific aspects of their mission. Such institutions are assumed to lead to increased effectiveness through economies of scale. The resulting institutions are often highly regarded as examples of Christian cooperation and inter-congregational unity. Hospitals, schools, colleges, seminaries, and mission boards are the major categories of institutions thus established.

Unfortunately, two negative consequences tend to appear over time: the church can lose its intimate involvement with the delegated parts of its mission, and the institution can take on a deterministic life of its own, with steadily decreasing concern for accountability to the church. The first of these consequences leads to dis-involvement and ultimately to the removal of the delegated mission from the consciousness of the people in the local congregations. The remoteness of the schools of theological education provides one clear example. The training of pastors and other employed leaders in the church is somebody else's responsibility; the church may make direct or indirect contributions, but the level of influential involvement is often less than the church has over its lawn-maintenance service.

The second consequence, the tendency of institutions to take on a life of their own, is clearly seen in the degeneration of colleges and universities, both denominational and independent. Ironically, many such institutions are carried (in the form of fractions and pittance) on the budgets of individual churches. Consider the denominationally founded schools that originated as expressions of church unity. Having lost the essence of their mission, they go their own ways with minimal value and very little accountability to the churches.

The story is not so grim with theological schools. But here a different concern can be raised. Especially among the more aggressive theological schools in the evangelical tradition, the syncretistic cultural theme of independence and autonomy with which Christianity in North America is deeply infected, has led to the easy acceptance of seminaries and Bible colleges which have no clear linkage and accountability to the churches. This matter is rarely discussed, in part because such institutions have proven to be among the more stable and effective in the development of Bible-centered leaders for the church. But they have also played a conspicuous part in the weakening of denominational unity and in the rampant spawning of even more organizations and institutions with minimal accountability to the church.

Limited images of the church as a learning center. The assertion that the local church itself is a learning center usually calls to mind the programmed educational activities of the church: Sunday school, youth ministries, and Bible study groups, for example. Such programs are maintained by the local church partly because school is the controlling image of teaching and learning. For the people of the church, as for most people in the western world, the school is the efficient place of learning—the learning factory. This imagery accounts for the prominent place given to Sunday *school*, the Vacation

Bible *school*, Sunday School Teachers' Training *school*, and for the occasional conference being called a *School* of prophecy, for example.

The schooling image is the mental starting point for much of the programmed activity of the church. The attendant assumptions fall pathetically short of the functional potentialities of the church as a learning center. Few people stop to consider that far less is learned in school than in the socialization processes of society. The most notable example of the power of socialization processes is the learning of one's first language. Clearly this learning is the most complex and typically well-learned of all life's cognitive and psychomotor tasks, and yet it is well on its way to accomplishment by the age of three to five years. What a feat! And almost everyone succeeds. School never comes close to such an accomplishment.

Socialization into the community of the people of God: Clues from Deuteronomy 6. This passage depicts God at work informing the community of faith of its continuing responsibility for building a particular sort of society in which the young and the newcomers will be socialized into a God-consciousness and an awareness of the behavioral dimensions of their responsibilities as godly persons. The Deuteronomy 6 text is commonly offered as proof of the importance of Christian education. But in this text, as in all other biblical texts on teaching and learning, there is not even a hint about the schooling model. The concern is altogether focused on the nature of a family and a community in which the young will learn their God-consciousness as naturally and persistently as they learn their first language.

The dominance of formal education. Any conversation or writing about the church's role in education must deal with the fact that fuzzy words tend to confuse the issues. *Educating*, *teaching*, *learning*, and *development* are each important words, but they tend to run together in overlapping and sometimes contradictory ways. One clear example is the heated arguments that rage over the word *training*: for sensitive educators, training is what is done to animals; humans are to be *educated*, not *trained*.

When one's thinking about education starts and stops with images and procedures of formal education, the possibilities are sharply limited. School-like relationships, environments, assignments, and cognitive outcomes are assumed to be appropriate. The walking-talking-doing activities in deliberate learning through experience are overlooked or downgraded as valid learning. Thus Jesus' example is denigrated. The result is unnecessarily tedious and bookish teaching, abstracted from realities of life.

Defining Learning. For John Dewey, learning was "reorganization of experience." Dewey was especially concerned that learning should be understood as an active process within the learner. To learn is not simply to receive information. He also talked of learning as a "representing of experience." (Dewey emphasized it as "re-presenting," referring to the verbal presenting of things conceptualized in the mind.)

For Jean Piaget, as well, learning is the "modification of experience by behavior. We learn by doing things—by re-sorting and rearranging the elements of the environment." Those who study learning in the context of actual human experience agree on several points: the meaning of an idea depends heavily on the mental material available from previous experiences and perceptual images. Further, the process of learning is an active meaning-making activity in which the learner's worldview, biases,

personality, and significant others constitute a set of powerful filters through which the new encounter with evidence or idea will be interpreted.

Defining the three socio-cultural contexts of education. Analysts of education generally differentiate three sorts of educational events, ranging from the highly formalized to the “natural” and ordinary events of living within a culture. The following taxonomy is useful for Christian educators especially as a reminder that the intent of Christian education is to develop the church as a particular kind of environment for whole-person development (socialization), and the mode represented most clearly by the activity of Jesus and by most of the church-community educating down through the church era is *nonformal education*.

Socialization. The ordinary teaching and learning that occurs through interactions with a social context. Learning “at mother’s knee,” “on the streets,” “from the gang,” and so forth.

Formal Education (Schooling). Teaching and learning that is carried out through the ordained or decreed and formalized institutions of society, usually schools, and always linked in some clearly defined way to the structured ladder-like chain of academic accomplishments which earn recognition, status, credentialing, and usually greater wealth.

Nonformal Education. Deliberate teaching and learning, not casual or merely circumstantial, but not linked tightly to the formal social ladder of schooling. Methodologically, nonformal education usually uses procedures of teaching and learning drawn from the lore and practices of formal education, but it does so with greater flexibility and freedom, generally using experiential learning in preference to classrooms and lectures.

Nonformal education about socialization. Deuteronomy 6 is one of the most specific illustrations of a view of education generally used in the Scriptures. Nonformal education is used to guide and inform in matters of the sort of family and worship contexts through which God intends humanity to be shaped into communities and nations which honor him. In these passages it becomes clear how adults are to conduct themselves in order that younger people will be brought into full participation in the community of faith.

Moving theological education to the streets. Among the most promising possibilities for theological education in the future is the growing awareness that the development of ministry skills and gifts demands extensive participation with many sorts of people within the contexts of their ordinary worlds. Thus nonformal education that emulates many of the characteristics of the coming-and-going of Jesus as teacher is becoming more valued. Theological education of the future very likely will include expansions upon the rudiments of a structured nonformal education as practiced in the BILD idea (Biblical Institute for Leadership Development, Ames, Iowa) and in the important innovations of the Seminary of the East (Dresher, Pennsylvania).

Learning the social skills of the Gospel. Certain learnings are of special concern to the Christian community. These concerns are not unique to the church; indeed the church does not always appear to invest them with greater value than does general humankind. But for the Christian they are the epitome of social skills that need to be developed in response to the Gospel: compassion, nurture, reconciliation, and hospitality.

Incarnation of the Word—Learning to walk the Word. The evident epistemology of Hebrew thought demands that *knowing*, *wisdom*, and other such terms denoting mental process be understood to imply acting upon, behaving in, and demonstrating obedience to the truth as the very essence of knowing. Thus a community of experiencing and sharing persons is the requisite for theological education. It is not enough to *know about* God and the things of God—one must actually *know God*. And to truly know God is to *walk* with God. Thus the line between academic functions (the intellectual processes of learning God’s Word) and the nurture of spiritual development must virtually vanish.

Lecture 4. A Basis for Lifelong Learning

The Christian community has done as well as almost any of the major subdivisions of the American society in the matter of lifelong learning. The Christian church has long embraced a lifelong encounter with exposition and application through regular exposure to sermons. Christians assume that there is always more to know; in recent years there seems to be an increasing valuing of the knowing of the things of God.

A foundation for continuing education. Substantial theological evidence supports the premise of lifelong development. The cultural context of the Bible, Old Testament and New Testament, assumes that the progression toward wisdom is a function of maturing across life.

Teaching for foundation-building. Whether or not learning is an end in itself is a major concern even within theological education. Two contrasting positions are commonly taken by teachers: some assume that anything that they person will ever need to know should be at least represented and given attention in the formal curriculum. Others assume that trying to anticipate and deal with every learning and information within the scope of even three or four years of formal education is futile. Teachers holding the second position are more inclined to find ways to introduce channels of inquiry and to teach the means and procedures by which the student can begin a process of lifelong learning. By contrast, those holding the first position tend to organize and deliver great quantities of information, often overwhelming the students and leading them toward frustration and resentment.

Within schools of theological education it is not unusual for the faculty members to be so thoroughly informed in matters of the content of their specialties that little mental energy or professional time is left to come to any sort of professional understanding of the learning processes and the art and science of teaching. Thus the inadequacy of the “cover-everything” approach is not addressed. When such professors are in the majority within a department, they often control the departmental examining process. Their examinations often sound like the format for a theological “trivia” game. Students in their sections will likely perform better than the students of the second type of professor. Thus the students who are more likely to continue their learning from the foundation which has been provided in seminary are not the holders of the best grade records. Follow-up studies of alumni have attested to this whole process. The bottom line is that the professors who give more attention to the laying of a sound foundation of learning skills and put substantial trust in the students’ prospects for continuing education are more often the ones whose graduated students later attest to continuing to learn.

Sustainable habits. Academic jumping of hoops is futile. If learners strain and stretch in unnatural ways, they may achieve good grades but they often end such a course with a sigh of relief and a murmur of “never again.” Graduate education in an applied discipline such as theology is a professional development experience; thus it must meet the tests of applicability and functionality. For the leader in the community of faith nothing is more practical than the skill and habit of reasoning theologically. People who cannot or will not think in God-centered abstractions and theoretical constructs are seriously under-educated. Tragically, it is possible to hold three-year and four-year theology degrees without having built the habits of thinking theologically. Academic theology, whatever its form, should be held accountable for helping theology students develop sustainable habits of reasoning and thought, not just demonstrating on some Olympian field of memory and verbiage that they have all the right answers to a set of rather predictable questions.

Reading. The ways to use books and other print media will continue to be an important part of leadership education. Reading is a highly efficient and fairly precise way to get in touch with what the experiences of others have taught them. Reading also provides one of the important avenues through which one’s perspectives are broadened. If academic reading is altogether guided by and ultimately limited by a formal bibliography, the habits of inquiry will, at best, be only partially formed.

Dialogue. The very word *dialogue* frightens some Christians. It suggests to them an openness and willingness to get in touch with people who hold different views. And so it should. Among Christians, dialogue—processes of systematic and focused conversation and explication of mental paradigms—is an enriching and fulfilling part of the learning process. Through dialogue we not only hear other ways of expressing ideas and gain insights through others’ perceptions, but we gain facility and confidence in the organizing and expressing of our own understandings. One of the best arguments that can be made in support of residential study is the deeper quality of dialogue that it can encourage—assuming that the academic environment is used for that purpose.

Further, even as the Apostle Paul demonstrated in several new situations, notably Athens, dialogue concerning people’s culture, religious presuppositions, and worldview is a basic necessity for effective evangelization.

Language Learning. Differing views of the extent and level of accomplishment in Greek and Hebrew are likely to persist. One might well predict that the argument will not become more heated; it couldn’t. Surely all those who lead in the house of God can benefit from some degree of familiarity with the ways one can grasp underlying premises, parallels, and contrasts of meaning and other such competencies necessary to test for consistency of doctrine. But to argue the absolute necessity of this competency for everyone who accepts responsibility for some aspect of leadership within the church seems unrealistic and quite possibly unnecessary.

But just as surely, it seems reasonable to argue that multi-year advanced degrees should give substantial attention to the biblical languages and becoming bilingual in some second major world-class language as well. Ministry in the years ahead is surely going to be more rewarding for those who can help to bridge the linguistic gaps that are becoming ever more problematic in the modernized world. And the threats of syncretism, quasi-Christian cults, and universalism are apt to demand responsible Biblical exegesis to a greater extent than ever.

Culture learning. The major international need in this post-ideological world is for intercultural and especially interethnic reconciliation. Leadership persons in the church carry an

increasing challenge of helping the people of God learn within the church the rudiments of intercultural reconciliation. The model in Acts 6 is more important with every passing year. Leaders must be good culture learners and effective teachers of culture learning.

Relating gifts and ministry. Across one's life God provides more gifts as needed for the ministry of the church. The leader must continually reassess the needs of the ministry, prayerfully seek the intervention and blessing of God for appropriate response, accept the need for developing in new ways, and moving forward as the servant of the creative God.

The skills of self-assessment and planning. Leadership education should be strong in the development of self-understanding and planning. Systematic and dedicated self-assessment should be a mark of the responsible leader. Many of these skills are appropriately developed within the context of planning. The leader should continue across life to gain skill in thorough self-assessment and the interlocking of understandings thus derived with the ongoing planning of ministry tasks and functions.

The crucial rudiment: Lifelong spiritual development. All else in life takes on importance as it supports and nurtures spiritual development. For Christians, nothing is more important than the spiritual essence or center core of human personhood. From this spiritual core of the person the ministries of the Spirit of God are transmuted into social action. The spirituality of a person is both receiver and fountain: receiver, in the sense that the New Birth activates the human spirituality otherwise dead in sin, and also receiver in that the Word, God's spirit indwelling, and the myriad ministries within the community of faith all come to reside in one's spiritual reality. But a person's spirituality is also a fountain, a source fulfilling the intentions and realities of its own sources. Spirituality is reflected in worship, a fountain of responsiveness to God's holiness; it is reflected in the humility of a Christ-like walk of life, extending into the good works of life as the evidences of faith (as emphasized in James).

The lifelong nurture and continuing maturation of faith. From an educational viewpoint, spirituality, and especially the experiences, activities, meditations, and studies that nurture spiritual essence of human life can be conceptualized as a three-sided space. Every Christian, at a given moment of life, is positioned somewhere within that triangular field, closer to one corner or another, or perhaps located in the exact center. With every passing day, and according to the seasons of life, one moves about in this space, thus emphasizing or drawing upon the set of three nurturing processes in a refreshing and renewing way—or else clings stubbornly to one corner in preference to the others.

The three corners represent three venerable nurturant processes in the demonstration and maturing of spirituality:

1. **Learning from the Book.** Lewis Sperry Chafer, in *He That Is Spiritual*, exemplifies and thoroughly exposit the strength and vitality of this "corner" of the triangular space. Major emphasis is on the knowing of what God has said about the spiritual life and the ways in which Christian spirituality is nurtured by the Word and by God's Spirit. Because of the emphasis on scholastic rationalism among evangelicals, this form of spiritual nurture has broadest acceptance and is least vulnerable to criticism.

2. **Developing through meditation upon the Person and Work of Christ.** Thomas à Kempis, in *The Imitation of Christ*, exemplifies that sort of spiritual meditation and discipline that fulfills

the mystical identification with the person of Jesus Christ. Although many people in the evangelical tradition associate the images of spiritual mysticism with the pre-Reformation Roman church, the literature of Christian meditation has always been appreciated by those who see the importance of prayer and fasting. This focus on the person of Christ and the majesty of God has its place in spiritual nurturance, especially among those who value a regular devotional schedule.

3. Manifesting and nurturing spirituality through the works of godly justice. Donal Dorr, in *Spirituality and Justice*, focuses the most controversial of the three corners of the triangle. By no means is this book alone, but its effectiveness in connecting the biblical materials to the ministries of Christian help and witness in an unjust world is exemplary. For many evangelicals the re-discovery of the Epistle of James and the awakening of social consciousness has led to the recognition of the powerful effect that applied ministry and the works of the Gospel have in the life of the spiritually maturing believer.

The leader among the people of God must be committed to a lifelong spiritual development in which some sort of appropriate relationship among these three nurturant experiences is discovered and maintained.

Stewardship of life. Continuing education and lifelong learning are nothing short of the ways and means by which a godly leader keeps sharp and fit. At the bottom line, such stewardship of life, its spirituality, mission, and resources is an appropriate response to the grace of God shown through the Lord Jesus Christ.