

2. "We've had our shot at parenting. Now, as grandparents, we become a support to our children as they attempt the confusing and demanding task of parenting". That's so true. I guess I'll find that there are times when I am tempted to interfere in my new grand-daughter's upbringing. But my new role is to affirm and cheer on her parents.

3. "We need to restore the values, loyalties and security of family life to provide an environment in which children can grow up safe and healthy to become what God intended them to be". Yes, indeed. We live in a world where many families break down, where many grandchildren are confused and hurt and often filled with anger, resentment, and perhaps even guilt as a result of their parents' divorce. In such situations grandparents have a special stabilizing role to play.

4. "We can't change society. But what we can do, as grandparents, is to provide for our grandchildren a solid moral framework, based on biblical principles, to help them establish their own moral standards". True again. We can't control what our grandchildren see and hear and experience. We can, however, listen, empathize with their struggles, and offer them guidelines.

5. "We cannot spare them most of the struggles and failures of life. We can, however, demonstrate that after a long life filled with battles and victories, we can come out on the other side and do so with grace". Even more true. Grandchildren aren't impressed with grandparents who are forever moralising - what really counts is to see and hear how they have coped in the tough times, how their faith in God has enabled them to come through with a thankful and loving spirit.

On reflection, perhaps a course would not be necessary. Perhaps just an evening once a year to which new grandparents could be invited. What do you think?

TRAINING MINISTERIAL STUDENTS IN SPIRITUALITY

Paul Goodliff

The Hind Report on theological education has re-envisioned ministerial formation with an emphasis upon the competencies

required for effective ministry. In theory these competencies are assessed, but how does one evaluate competency in developing and sustaining a personal spiritual life and appropriate disciplines? Spiritual vitality is more than just one competency amongst others, but can it be evaluated in those terms, alongside, for instance, the ability to communicate in public settings, lead in public acts of worship or engage in effective and safe pastoral care?

Among the various aspects of ministerial formation comprising the contemporary training for those seeking ordination, the development of spiritual disciplines for the personal growth of the student minister or ordinand can be minimised or even absent altogether. Allied to this is a suspicion among some ordinary churchgoers that theological education destroys a person's spiritual life, and some are deterred from pursuing this because of a fear that a simple and real faith will be compromised by the process.

It is clear that in the course of a thoroughgoing process of education and training for the clergy there is a proper place for the kind of questioning of simplistic assumptions about the Christian faith and the development of a healthy scepticism (if not cynicism) about some aspects of faith. For instance, it is important to question both theology and praxis if the problem of human suffering is to be wrestled with in some depth, a vital ability in the experience of all ministers in pastoral roles if they are to avoid either the kind of simple, and even damaging, answers that minimise the reality of suffering or too quickly seek to 'explain it away,' or allow a slow erosion of the minister's own faith in the face of human suffering that ultimately robs the minister of the ability to give any kind of account of a good God who is personally and intentionally present (that is, the God of Theism that is usually presented as the God described in the historic Christian faith). These questions are questions of spirituality and faith that are existential in the ordinand as much as theoretical. They are also the kind of questions that some churchgoers would prefer the young adult Christians in their congregation to avoid, lest they 'lose their faith.' Better to just read the Bible and believe it, as if it were that easy.

However, these questions, and the spiritual disciplines that inform and undergird them, are precisely the kind of questions that are frequent in the tasks of apologetics and evangelism. In a post-

Christendom culture, it is precisely those tasks that increase in importance, and the supposed threat to the individual's faith that arises from the study of theological questions must be faced if both the laity and the clergy are to be equipped to give a good account of the hope that is in them (1Pet 3:15).⁶⁸ If fear of the questions that a theological education raises obscures the spiritual development of ministerial students, then others, perhaps, see that development as incidental to the educative process, something that is more caught than taught. Here there is an intentional separation of personal faith development from academic questions, in part driven by the values of the secular academy, and an indifference to the mechanics of an existential appropriation of aspects of Christian discipleship and spirituality that is rooted in pietism, holiness theology (and its modern offspring, pentecostalism) and an anti-intellectualism of an earlier generation of evangelicals.

Spirituality

We need to define what we mean by this slippery category, 'spirituality'. John Hull defines it thus: "Spirituality refers to the achievement of true humanness, and religions are the instruments for doing this in the presence of the ultimate. Faith is the positive response to the issues raised by spirituality or religion. In the larger sense, in which faith is a human potential for response, we may speak of faith without religion, but not of religion without faith. When faith is understood in the larger sense, faith is the attitude of acceptance directed toward the transcendence of the human, and faith in the narrow sense of religious faith would be directed towards the symbols of ultimacy." ⁶⁹ And "We must not forget that there are forms of the spiritual which are not religious..... When we speak in this way, we refer to the way in which art, literature, music and science contribute to the lifting of our human being above the merely biological. We must distinguish that which extends our humanity from that which transcends it." ⁷⁰ Chris Ellis defines spirituality as "the interaction of theology, prayer and practical Christianity - what Christians think in

⁶⁸ Stuart Murray, *Post-Christendom* (Paternoster, Carlisle, 2004)

⁶⁹ John Hull, 'Spiritual development: interpretations & applications', *British Journal of Religious Education* 24.3, 176

⁷⁰ John Hull, 'Spiritual development', 173.⁷¹ Christopher Ellis, *A Theology and Spirituality of Worship in Free Church Tradition* (SCM, London 2004) 14.

respect of God, how and what they pray, and how they act as Christians." ⁷¹ In particular we are referring to those aspects of the minister's life that have to do with a personal faith, a living appropriation of the Christian story and practice that nourishes and sustains the work and witness of the minister, including a personal rule of prayer, and the regular reading of Scripture.

Broader Educational Philosophy

The secular theories of education might broadly be categorised into those whose purpose is the pursuit of knowledge (knowledge-centred), ⁷² those which see the purpose of education as an induction into adult society (society-centred), ⁷³ and those which emphasise personal growth and development (child-centred). ⁷⁴

How might spirituality be conceived within these categories? In a knowledge-centred approach, the purpose would be to learn about the study of spirituality, its history and its theology. In a society-centred approach, the purpose of training in spiritual development would be to equip student-ministers for their role in the church, giving them skills to fulfil appropriate professional tasks, or to ensure competence in this area of ministry. In a child/person-centred approach, the purpose of spiritual development would be to see the minister grow personally in spiritual maturity.

The historical context for spiritual formation in training

⁷¹ Christopher Ellis, *A Theology and Spirituality of Worship in Free Church Tradition* (SCM, London 2004) 14.

⁷² The prevailing philosophy in British education. Its purpose is to impart the knowledge that the state deems important and appropriate, according to a national curriculum. The Cartesian revolution owes something to this view of education as the pursuit of knowledge: see Matthew Arnold, *Culture & Anarchy* (1869), John Henry Newman, *Idea of a University* (1854); and Paul Hirst, *Knowledge & the Curriculum* (1974).

⁷³ Plato sees education as the training of those who will guard the state, building not only intelligence, but also character. Locke also sees the moral quality of education of greater significance than the intellectual or scientific: its purpose is to development men & women who can take their place as good citizens economically productive (*Thoughts concerning Education*, 1693).

⁷⁴ Pre-eminently Rousseau, whose Romantic notions of inherent goodness in the child, saw education as social construction as something to be avoided (*Emile*, 1792). The child's uneducated nature is beneficent, as opposed to the Christian tradition of sinful, or Plat's as incapable of wisdom. The child-centred revolution in educational practice in the 1960s is perhaps the high point of this view, as seen in Froebel and Piaget.

Andrew Louth demonstrates how the origins of what we now call higher education, with universities at its heart (and the sector in which most ministerial education takes place), lay in the education of monks. ⁷⁵ The purpose was to provide them with the tools they needed to sing the divine office, which involved reading Latin. The vocation of a monk was to come to know God through contemplation, *contemplatio*. The goal of knowing God was achieved through: four steps, *lectio, meditatio, oratio* and *contemplatio*, (reading Scripture; meditation on what one had read, most commonly Scripture; prayer and contemplation). The contemplation of God was not thought of as some form of achievement, the religious equivalent of a level four qualification, so much as the gift of God received as the monk prepared himself in the place of quiet and reflective prayer to be open to such a gift. In other words, the goal of the learning that monks underwent was primarily the development of their spiritual life.

Louth argues that the distinction between the active life and the contemplative life arises earlier even than Aristotle and Plato. The active life is concerned with doing, with business, commerce and politics, while the contemplative life is concerned with beholding things, a 'sort of intellectual seeing.' ⁷⁶ These two kinds of life correspond to two ways of understanding: problem solving, calculating and reasoning, (Latin *ratio*), and reason as reception of the truth (*intellectus*). Augustine reclassified this into knowledge achieved by *ratio* and *sapientia*, and received by *intellectus*. The former enables us to do things; the latter is simply beholding, contemplation, knowing reality for what it is, and especially, knowing God.

We might note how much ministerial training is problem solving, the exercise of *ratio*, reason. The Scriptures are studied to enable the faith to be taught, and especially the Scriptures expounded and preached. The cure of souls requires a working knowledge of those technological disciplines of sociology and psychology, social services and benefit provision, while the management of the institution of the local church requires administrative and human relationship skills, such as conflict management, goal setting and the communication of vision. Even in those areas where

⁷⁵ Andrew Louth, 'Theology, contemplation & the university', *Studies in Christian Ethics* 17.1 (2004).

⁷⁶ Louth, 71.

spirituality is taught, the suspicion is that it is done to give the minister the skills she or he needs to become an adequate spiritual director and guide in the spiritual life.

The medieval university was a place where the liberal arts were studied to understand the world God had created and in order to make possible a life of contemplation. In more recent history that changed, and Louth cites Kant as one culprit of the change, although probably he was a symptom of wider social and intellectual changes rather than their cause. In place of the quiet reception of the knowledge of things (a quasi-revelatory experience), Kant speaks of reason "constraining nature to give answers to questions of reason's own determining."⁷⁷ The sense that one wrests the truth from nature in accordance with one's own pre-determined categories contrasts with the notion of contemplating what 'is', according to its own criteria.

Another transforming process lies with Marxism, argues Louth, which sought to understand the world to change it. The process of revolutionary struggle requires all knowledge to be useful, and all to work to bring about that end of history, the classless utopia. He notes how Scottish theological colleges privilege the saleable courses, the financially viable subjects, and the utilitarian disciplines, producing education that is consumed by students and their employers! The critique of a modern university that Louth produces need not detain us, except in this regard. If theological education as a mode of ministerial formation mimics the values of the modern university, then we should not be surprised that the products of that system are equipped to do ministry, with a list of competencies attached, but ill-equipped to be ministers, which requires character and contemplation.

To develop contemplation requires time free from 'work' (in the terminology of students, free from essay writing or the placement duties of pastoral care, sermon writing and mission). It requires 'leisure', a stillness from activity, that is rare in our theological colleges today. The English translation of Ps 46:10 is rendered 'Be still and know that I am God,' but the Septuagint translates this as 'Have leisure and know that I am God.' If the contemplation of God, or at least, giving the minister the tools to do so, is a priority

⁷⁷ Louth, citing Immanuel Kant's preface to the *Critique of Pure Reason* (2nd ed.) trans. Norman Kemp Smith (Macmillan, London 1963) 20.

in ministerial formation, then either the time devoted to other, technological aspects of the work of the minister needs to be replaced with this leisure, or else the period of time required for the formation of the minister will need to be extended from its current three or four years, familiar in the education of most ministers, to six or seven.

The current provision in Baptist theological colleges

To illustrate, let me turn to my own tradition. There are five theological colleges in relationship to the Baptist Union of Great Britain: Bristol Baptist College team teaches with Trinity College, Bristol, an Anglican institution; ⁷⁸ Northern Baptist College based in Manchester is wholly in an ecumenical context; ⁷⁹ Regents Park College, Oxford, is part of the group of theological colleges within

⁷⁸ Only denominational elements are taught separately. whereas Trinity emphasises spiritual growth, the Baptists use language of discipleship and emphasise the missionary priority of making disciples. In a submission to the Bishops' Inspection, the question 'what is the process & content of ministerial education & formation' is answered in the context of knowledge, skills and character/spirituality. 'The community expects that somebody engaged in ministry' will know the Scriptures & the Christian tradition, will be 'competent in the various activities that ministry involves' and will undertake their responsibilities in such a way that the way of Christ might be displayed rather than contradicted'. There is a weekly 'spirituality strand' introducing different forms of prayer and to classic writers. First year students study *The Spirituality Workbook*, and different patterns of prayer & journaling, together with an introduction to Myers Briggs. In the last two years students study Richard Foster's *Celebration of Discipline*, engage in *lectio divina*, meditation & corporate prayer; and study devotional classics.

⁷⁹ NBC is part of the Northern Federation for Training in Ministry composed of Anglicans, Baptists, Methodists, URC, & Unitarians. It teaches two courses, one at level 1 & the other at level 2. *Introduction to Spirituality*, a level 1 course, develops awareness of various forms of Christian spirituality, and engages with the practical development of spirituality in personal & communal life. *Sources for Spirituality*, a level 3 elective, explores various traditions of Christian spirituality. Texts include *The Rule of St Benedict*, Bonhoeffer's *Life Together*, Gerard Hughes' *God of Surprises*, Julian of Norwich's *Revelations of Divine Love*, Thomas a Kempis' *The Imitation of Christ*, and Jean Vanier's *Community and Growth*.

the university;⁸⁰ Spurgeon's College, London;⁸¹ and the South Wales Baptist College, Cardiff.⁸²

For contrast, Trinity Bristol has a more fully developed programme of spiritual formation, and sees the heart of its task to form men and women of spiritual ability to serve as Church of England clergy. There is a combination of courses and seminars, and space for personal prayer, and reading built into the timetable.⁸³

Conclusions

It becomes readily apparent that the Baptist emphasis is upon teaching courses on spirituality through a two-stranded approach: the various disciplines, such as prayer & direction, and a study of

⁸⁰ Regent's places spirituality as one of the five strands of the pastoral studies programme. Each term includes a Quiet Day. First year students have a 24 course on sustaining life in ministry. Vacation reading includes: Year 1 Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor*, Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy*, Peterson, *Working the Angels*, Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*; Year 2 Gerard Hughes, *The God of Surprises*, Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, Thomas a Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*; Year 3 Vanstone, *Love's Endeavour*, *Love's Expense*, Ken Leech, *Soul Friend & True Prayer*.

⁸¹ Spurgeon's has the strongest evangelical tradition. It views its training through the structure of three over-lapping circles: knowledge, character/spirituality, and skills. A course is taught on spirituality; and in theory, part of the ministry development tutorials is about spirituality.

⁸² SWBC teaches a course on spirituality, and includes the spiritual development of ordinands as one of its aims.

⁸³ *Level 1 Introduction to spirituality* explores personal growth in relation to a variety of spiritual traditions. It operates within the context of the chapel programme, using lectures & discussion groups. It ranges from input from specific traditions (Desert Fathers, Ignatian, Russian, Teresan, Evangelical, Pentecostal, Celtic) to themes (holiness, confession, intercession, silence, discipline) and personal formation (spiritual direction, stages of growth, sexuality & spirituality). It is compulsory but non-assessed. *Spirituality II* is non-assessed, but compulsory, integrating spiritual formation and the ministries of spiritual counsel with the rest of college learning. The content covers theology of prayer, the Bible in theology & devotion, spiritual direction, darkness, doubt & anger, political spirituality, dreams, confession, & creativity. Trinity says: "True maturity is found in retaining that simplicity of a child within the midst of the growing depth and sophistication which is part of the process of formation for leadership and ordination". The focus of this priority is the weekly silent period from chapel to coffee, "a symbolic corporate witness to the centrality of space for God in all that we do".

the history of spirituality, such as lectures and reading on Julian of Norwich or Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Little time is given to establish the disciplines and there are no strongly structured approaches to personal direction, oversight or tuition in personal devotional habits. The assumption is made that these are 'personal' and 'caught'.

Returning to the section on wider educational philosophy, we see that the emphasis has been a Hirstian acquisition of knowledge about spirituality, related to a university curriculum that has traditionally tested the understanding of a subject area.⁸⁴ All the Baptist Colleges are connected to one or other British university and all award degrees from Bachelors through to Doctorates. It is not surprising that this educational philosophy remains dominant.

In the context of ministerial formation it is not so much knowledge about spirituality that is required as the development of habits of spirituality and the skills and disciplines to nurture and develop those skills personally, and to offer direction and training to others in the congregation and beyond. In other words, a society-centred approach that seeks to provide the churches with men and women resourced with character and discipline to sustain a demanding pastoral ministry, and a child (or person) centred approach that seeks to nurture the 'heart' of the student minister through their spiritual development. These require modes of training other than the acquisition of knowledge, and include the formation of habits of prayer, Scripture reading and worship, that are more akin to an apprenticeship; the ability to offer spiritual direction and the living of a sustained spiritual life as 'an example to the flock,' that also benefits from working alongside a 'master craftsman.'

This is a lengthier process than a semester's course and needs to run throughout the six/ seven years of initial ministerial education [IME]: phase one in college; phase two in initial pastorate. It requires assessment, but not through examination or coursework. It would benefit from the requirement that a rhythm of prayer and life be adopted, scheduled and monitored. For instance, a compulsory period each day or at least once a week, when all teaching activity ceases and the expectation is that personal spiritual development and discipline would be practiced, ideally in

⁸⁴ Paul Hirst, *Knowledge & the Curriculum*.

a college-wide time of silence, as at Trinity Bristol. All ministerial students would be expected to take time for a retreat each year, and the current 'retreats', often a day a term of corporate activity, be replaced by a day for personal prayer and spiritual reading.

There is a need for the best practice from each tradition to be invested in a collaborative endeavour that provides a model of spiritual formation that could be adopted by all, monitored by the departments and divisions of ministry on behalf of the churches of the various denominations, who ultimately are the bodies that are strengthened by ministry that is spiritually sustained, or weakened, harmed even, by ministry that lacks spiritual depth, consistency or development. By these means over six or seven years it might be expected that a habit of life would have sufficiently developed in most trainee ministers that its continuance as a voluntary set of practices and habits after the completion of IME could reasonably be assumed.

Only by a deliberate re-prioritising of spiritual formation to the heart of the educational process that forms ministers of word and sacrament can the central task of that process be accomplished: to enable men and women to be so shaped in habits of personal spiritual discipline and equipped with the resources of understanding of the faith (its Scriptures, theology and history) and development of skills and competence in the various practices of ministry (preaching, apologetics, pastoral care, administration), that the churches can be confident that they will receive ministers of depth and ability to meet the challenge of pastoral leadership in a cure that is both postmodern and post Christendom.

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Paul Goodliff is Head of Ministry at the Baptist Union of Great Britain

HOW I PRAY

Roy Williamson

My immediate response is, "With some difficulty"! Over the years my study has been littered with failed systems of how to pray better. I have time and again convinced myself that the 'Holy Grail' is there to be found, if only I can get the proper formula.

I have read the right books, sat at the feet of the right gurus, gained new insights from places like Taizé and Iona, benefited greatly from traditions other than my own, and returned, unashamedly, again and again to my evangelical roots. At the end of it all, I can only echo the words of Paul, in another context, "My friends, I do not reckon myself to have got hold of it yet. All I can say is this: forgetting what is behind me, and reaching out for what lies ahead, I press towards the goal" (Phil 3.12-14).

Part of that 'pressing on' has been a realism about my prayer life. Like my journey through life it has its highs and lows, times of boredom and times of excitement, periods when God seems near and periods when he seems far away. I have found it helpful, while retaining the discipline of a regular prayer time each day, to vary the method. This has included the use of Scripture as a base, but also making use of hymns, Christian symbols, silence and meditation and, of course, the Daily Offices of the Church.

A constant source of encouragement and inspiration is the image of the great orchestra with its variety of instruments all responding to the one conductor and, together, producing an