VISION AND THEOLOGICAL COMMITMENTS

Vision

The vision of the Messianic Jewish Theological Academy is to see Jewish people being reached for Christ everywhere in Germany and to see the messianic movement being strengthened into a great testimony of Jesus in German society, thereby contributing to the overarching goal of the *missio dei*.

The following eight statements describe the beliefs and values for theological education that has served as the foundation for original designing of Messianic Jewish Theological Academy (MJTA).

1. The unifying rationale of theological education ought to be connected to the overarching purpose of the church, which is the accomplishment of the *missio dei*, namely to make God's glory and His Gospel known to the whole world so that "all people might truly know God the Creator, love Him with all their heart, and live with Him in eternal happiness for His praise and glory"[1].

Ever since Edward Farley initiated the current debate about theological education, one of the basic criticisms was that it lacks a unifying rationale and thus a final sense of purpose. David Kelsey and Barbara Wheeler have ably summarized the argument, stating that "the widely observed incoherence of theological education is the result…of a profound confusion about ends"[2]. Too long has theological education been characterized by a fragmentation into several disciplines with a basic lack of interaction and integration and no sense of how these disciplines contribute to the whole enterprise. We therefore agree that "we will only get beyond the fragmentation of theological education if the whole curriculum is oriented to some unified overarching goal"[3].

In our view the essential purpose of theological education ought to be a *fundamentally theological* one, having God, the Creator, as its starting point.[4] God created the world in order to fill it with his glory (Num. 14:21, Ps. 57:6, Hab. 2:14).[5] This ultimate will of God was culminated in the creation of man,

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[1] This is adapted from the sixth article of the Heidelberg Catechism referring to the ultimate purpose for the creation of mankind from *The Heidelberg Catechism with Scripture Texts* (Grand Rapids: Board of Publications of the Christian Reformed Church, 1981), 17.

[2] David H. Kelsey and Barbara G. Wheeler, "New Ground: The Foundations and Future of the Theological Education Debate" in *Theology and the Interhuman: Essays in Honor of Edward Farley*, ed. Robert R. Williams (Trinity Press, 1995), 182.

[3] Robert Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education: Exploring a Missional Alternative to Current Models* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 58.

[4] For a more extensive treatment of the following redemption-historical outline cf. Joel R. White, "Gottes grosses Ziel für die Gemeinde" in *Mission der Gemeinde* (BAO, 2000), 75-84.

[5] Cf. Jonathan Edwards essay "Dissertation on the End for which God Created the World" in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, reprint 1976), 94-121. Cf. also John Piper, "Appendix 1: The

whom He created in His own image (Gen. 1:27). The anthropological concept of the *imago dei* may be (at least partly) understood in terms of man reflecting God's glory, as the high anthropology of Ps. 8 seems to indicate.[6] From this we can conclude that God's plan to fill the earth with his images expressed in his commission in Gen. 1:28 may be understood as a means to achieve His ultimate purpose in creation, namely the filling of the world with His glory. This "mission of God" or *missio dei* (i.e., God's intended action so that all people may worship Him) has thus been basically manifested in His creative activity, but was immediately distorted by the fall of mankind (Gen. 3:1-19). The consequence was that the *imago dei* was significantly corrupted and man began to worship and glorify the creation rather than the Creator (Rom 1:23, 25). The rest of the Old Testament now basically describes the resumption of the initial plan of God through His chosen people. From the beginning on, the Abrahamic Covenant had a universal scope affirming that Israel may be a blessing for all nations and thus would function as a mediator of God's glory (Gen. 12:1-3)[7]. But Israel failed in their role as a glorifying witness to the world and thus again God's initial plan has not been accomplished until Yeshua (Jesus) has arrived. As a perfect representative of Israel he has fulfilled the role on behalf of the Jewish people.

On the basis of this redemption-historical background we believe that the Body of the Messiah, the Messianic Community, what in Christian terminology is called the "church" (for convenience of readers we are going to use this word in this document), consisting Jewish and Gentile disciples of Jesus, has become the means to accomplish God's original purpose with mankind. In other words, through the church God resumes His own mission to infiltrate all people with knowledge of Him. "Why didn't God take us into glory the moment we believed?"[8] The answer to this question as well as the purpose of the church's continued existence on earth is a missiological one. "The purpose of our continued presence on earth must be to testify to His glory and to the gospel of His grace among those who do not know Him."[9] The overarching purpose of the church is thus theologically grounded in God's primary goal in the creation and is at the same time missiologically oriented as far as the accomplishment of God's grand purpose still awaits fulfillment.

Now, if the rationale of the church is defined in missiological terms, all its activities and ministries have to serve the *missio dei* and must therefore be subordinated under this overarching purpose. This has finally three basic implications for theological education, understood as an educational enterprise within the church.[10] First, the meaning of theological education consists in its contribution to establish a true knowledge and genuine worship of God among all people and thereby helps the church to live its mission.

Goal of God in Redemptive History" in *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist* (Portland: Multnomah Press, 1986), 227-238.

[6] Cf. Meredith Klines, *Images of the Spirit* (South Hamilton: Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary Press, 1986), 30.

[7] This is further elaborated in the motif of the nations coming to Jerusalem: Isa. 2:2-5; 11:9-10; 14:1; 19:19-25; Zeph. 3,9-10 *et al*.

[8] Mark Young, "Theological Approaches to Some Perpetual Problems in Theological Education," *Christian Education Journal* 2 (1998): 86.

[9] Ibid., 86.

[10] These conclusions are mostly drawn from Young, "Theological Approaches to Some Perpetual Problems in Theological Education,": 85-87, but cf. Michael Griffiths, "Theological Education Need Not Be Irrelevant,": 15-16.

Second, theological education (i.e., its program, curriculum, mode, method, governance structure, etc.) has to be steadily evaluated in terms of its usefulness to accomplish this task. Finally, theological education may overcome its current fragmentation by subordinating all its disciplines under a greater, unifying goal which is—as we have already stated—both theologically grounded and missiologically oriented.

2. Theological education ought to understand the nature of theology not only as a set of theological propositions, but also as an interpretive, evaluative and change-oriented grid of human experience.

One of the major weaknesses of current models of theological education is experienced as a dichotomy between theory and practice. In an environment where most educational institutions still tend to consider theology as a mainly academic enterprise, theological education faces the danger of reducing its teaching content to a set of theological assumptions that may be learned, rationally discussed and scientifically investigated. What is thereby pursued is an understanding of theological education, that may be distinctively named as *theology-as-science* and which draws its right of existence out of itself.[11] But this not only runs counter to our conviction that theological education should serve a purpose greater than itself (cf. statement 1) but also contradicts the holistic dimension of the process of theological education. As long as theological education is not seen as a multi-faceted venture, but only addresses an intellectual (i.e., theoretical) level of knowledge, the long-experienced gap between theory and practice may only be broadened.

While we maintain that Christian theology must be essentially based on a centered set of core doctrines (cognitive dimension), we likewise affirm that there is an affective and a conative side of the educational process that may only be overlooked to the detriment of the educational task as a whole. Instead of seeking and teaching truth only in academic abstraction, theological education has to "reassert the biblical primacy of truth *in life*"[12] in order to create knowledge that is more than an academic lip service. Scripture itself assumes that any separation of the cognitive, affective and conative dimension of truth will inevitably erode genuine worship (cf. Isa. 1:11-17; 29:13; Mk. 7:6ff; Jas. 1.22-27 and with a different emphasis Rom. 10:2-3).

Therefore, theological education should be "a holistic enterprise that integrally touches all aspects of the faith-directed life."[13] This is to say that theological education has to make sure that its cognitive core values are integrated into a dynamic belief system that not only encourages people to learn theology, but

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[11] Cf. Robert W. Ferris, "The Role of Theology in Theological Education" in *With an Eye on the Future: Development and Mission in the 21st Century*, eds. D. H. Elmer and L. McKinney (Monrovia: MARC, 1996), 102-03. Although Ferris (following Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 49) might at times overstate his case, he rightly criticizes that theology has been fragmented into several scientific disciplines that exist as a *perpetuum mobile* (i.e., they are only focused on a more and more specialized inquiry of their subject, while every new avenue of research only serves the scholarly guild).
[12] Ibid., 104.
[13] Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education*, 59.

to *do*, *think* and *live* it. Thus, if we say that theology ought to be an interpretive, evaluative and change-oriented grid of human experience, this may be understood in two ways.

First, on a personal level, the learner ought to be encouraged to apply "the biblically-considered categories of truth" and to interpret and evaluate both "his [inner] thinking, feeling, moral reasoning and valuing"[14] as well as his outer behavior in order to change it according to his biblical convictions. Viewing theology as such a reflective and change-oriented engagement, the focus of theological education will shift from the task of teaching a professional discipline to the adventure of shaping both the world-view and the lifestyle of a future leading participant in the universal mission of the church (cf. statement 1).

This leads us to the second, social and ministerial dimension of our understanding of theology. If theological education is understood as engaging the student to reflect and think in new, creative, but nevertheless biblical ways rather than to "regurgitate"[15] what former generations of theologians have taught, this should also include a theological analysis of the student's experience in both his social environment and his ministry context. We therefore suggest that theological education may provide room for theological reflection that develops an analytic grid for evaluating his environment, but then goes on to sharpen this theoretical framework in the light of practical experience. This is to say that the answer to the experienced dichotomy between theory and practice is not an educational one-way-street that simply includes an application of theoretical truth to some kind of ministerial practice. On the contrary, theological education should create an "educational spiral" that has basic theological assumptions as its starting point. These core values develop their full impetus under the reciprocal/mutual influence of theoretical reflection and reflected experience and finally produce a steadily increasing and—even more important—*holistic* theological knowledge.[16] When theological education accomplishes to help the student gain this sort of "theological acuity" which is authentically reflected in his lifestyle (i.e., in the cognitive, affective and conative dimensions of his *personal/spiritual* life), then "its effectiveness will be greatly enhanced and its contribution to the church made more significant"[17], as the student is prepared to

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[14] Young, "Theological Approaches to Some Perpetual Problems in Theological Education,": 80.

[15] This kind of criticism comes from Walter L. Liefeld and Linda M. Cannell, "The Contemporary Context of Theological Education: A Consideration of the Multiple Demands on Theological Educators," *Crux* 27, no. 4 (1991): 23, who state that "there is a problem, however, in that some faculty fail to understand that quantity of information does not mean a quality learning. How much more true theology students would learn—and continue to learn over a lifetime—if we taught them how to reflect rather than to regurgitate."

[16] These ideas are influenced by Joseph C. Hough and John B. Cobb Jr., *Christian Identity and Theological Education* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985), 90-91 who state, that church leaders ought to be "practical thinkers" and "reflective practitioners", that is thinking about practice and thinking in practice (cf. Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education*, 35). However, our second statement of the manifesto tries to come to terms with the criticism of Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education*, 44, who saw a deficiency in Hough's and Cobb's model both regarding moral and spiritual formation and the lack of appropriate inclusion of the missional goal of theological education. While the latter may be overcome by linking what we said in our second statement with what we already expressed about the missiological character of theological education in statement one, the former criticism is faced by our attempt to include the personal and spiritual formation into our approach of a holistic educational program (cf. statement 8).

[17] Young, "Theological Approaches to Some Perpetual Problems in Theological Education,": 80.

impact his particular social environment and ministry context with a dynamic (cf. statement 3)[18] and holistic world-view based on firm theological truth drawn from Scripture.

3. Theological education ought to be culturally relevant in its given context, rather than a means to create a Christian subculture totally separated from its social environment.

Another major criticism of theological education that arose in recent times is its obvious lack of relevance when it is related "to the real world of ministry"[19]. Yet, if theological education ought to play a vital part in the church's purpose to establish God's kingdom worldwide, then it faces the challenge to be culturally relevant in any given context. This has often been neglected, while the *missio dei* was at the same time narrowly understood as basically an establishment of separated Christian colonies cut off from their social environment. Therefore, theological education was often times only concerned in preparing students to preserve these Christian bulwarks from the harmful influences of the world around them. It is now our conviction that this defensive approach has to be taken over by an active involvement in God's redemptive purposes for the world. This includes the responsibility to impact every part of human experience with the Gospel and to claim every part of the human life for Christ.

Our understanding of theology as an interpretive, evaluative and change-oriented grid of human experience has already prepared the framework of our argument here. Since the widely held view of culture as only evil has to be overcome, theological education ought to make sure that future leaders of the church are able to analyze their cultural experience so that the church may use culture to transmit their message and to transform their social environment instead of strictly separating from it.[20] Two theological arguments are crucial here. First, we would argue anthropologically, that mankind—and therefore also culture as the social expression of humanity—may not be exclusively defined as sinful. Rather, passages like Gen. 9:6; Ps. 8:5-8 or Jas. 3:9 show that every human being is an image-bearer of God even after the fall.[21] While we admit that sin has corrupted human culture in general it may thus still be defined as the expression of the image of God in humanity. Such a balanced view will help us to recognize that culture is the channel through which God interacts with His people. "From the moment God began to reveal himself to humans through humans, he validated culture as an adequate medium of revelation."[22] If theological education fails in enabling students to interact with their cultural surrounding in a relevant way and to contextualize their theological knowledge, then the church will steadily give up their basic—if

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[18] We also believe, that our proposed understanding of the nature of theology will foster the kind of lifelong educational process that Liefeld and Cannell demand (cf. footnote 15 above).
[19] Young, "Theological Approaches to Some Perpetual Problems in Theological Education,": 82.
[20] The claim that evangelicals ought to change their view of culture has been theologically defended by Young, "Theological Approaches to Some Perpetual Problems in Theological Education,": 83-84 (our own theological argumentation for a more balanced and change-oriented view is basically influenced by him). The need for a transforming process of culture is expressed in S. Lingenfelter, *Transforming Culture: A Challenge for Christian Mission*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992).
[21] Systematic Theologians have called this the "*imago generaliter*".
[22] Young, "Theological Approaches to Some Perpetual Problems in Theological Education,": 84.

not their only—means to bring God's revelation to humanity.[23] Second, we would argue that if evangelical theology confesses Jesus as the "Lord of all" (Col 1: 15-20), this would include all cultural institutions (i.e., the whole creation in general). Therefore, theological education ought to provide the resources and skills to interact with any given culture in a relevant but critical way, so that the redemptive message of Christ may not only transform personal lives but shape the surrounding culture in general in order to uphold the claims of Christ in every part of human experience.

4. Theological education ought to partner with the local congregations and churches, orienting itself toward their needs and expectations.

We believe that every Christian is unavoidably included by the Holy Spirit in the invisible universal church, where each member is important in his relationship with others and serves others with his gifts (cf. 1 Cor. 12; 1 Pet. 4:10). A local church can be considered a small limited visible model of the universal one. The participation of a Christian in the local church is the expression of belonging to the universal one. The church is essential for the personal sanctification of believers. The Bible clearly indicates that the community of believers is necessary for spiritual growth (Eph. 4:1-17; Heb. 10:24-25). Taking care of others, practicing love and exercising spiritual gifts requires the existence of a Christian community (1 Cor. 12; Rom. 12:6; 1 Thess. 3:12). Only in community is it possible to practice "one another" commands, which is the essential call of all believers (e.g. John 14:34; 1 Thess. 5:11). In the community Christians can be edified through the gifts of others and through their own service to the community (Rom. 12:6). Spiritual gifts are given for the edification of the Body of Christ and believers need all of them. If a believer lives without the church, he is not able to practice his love to other believers, thereby keeping his gifts unused for the "body." In this case he is also not able to receive the ministry of others, which is essential for his spiritual growth. Thus the progress of sanctification suffers tremendously (if it is possible at all) in the case of an isolated believer.

Based on these considerations, separation of theological education from the church, the community that the students are going to serve in, is unacceptable. For theological education, distance from the church means contradiction to the way God designed Christianity. The people involved in theological education unavoidably are members of the universal church. The church needs their gifts and they need the ministry of other members of the church. Thus, the church and theological education need each other. Therefore, theological education must maintain partnerships and working relationships with churches in order to prepare ministers "well furnished" for ministry.[24] In this partnership, theological education (even in the case of independent governance) ought to orient itself toward the church. In order to raise good ministers for the church, at every level of its design and operation, theological education has to be determined by

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[23] This is underscored by Young, "Theological Approaches to Some Perpetual Problems in Theological Education,": 84, saying that "we have no choice but to use indigenous cultural forms and understandings in the way we conceptualize and communicate the truth of Scripture, otherwise the marvelous truths of the gospel make no sense to the hearer."

[24] D. G. Hart and R. Albert Mohler, *Theological Education in the Evangelical Tradition* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1996), 280.

the needs and expectations of the church.[25] This partnership with the church includes respect for existing churches and pastors.[26]

Churches are also a good place for students to be actively involved in the ministry and to gain necessary skills. Here, due to the current denominational fragmentation in the universal church[27] and the tendency of every denomination to have ministers and leaders belonging to the denomination, it is strongly recommended that theological education be confessional in character. This will contribute to effective partnership between churches and theological education.

5. Theological education ought to only admit potential Christian servant-leaders for the church who are willing to learn to minister according to their gifts and calling, while not being taken out of real life and ministry.

We believe that the Holy Spirit, indwelling believers, gives to them a number of spiritual gifts. These gifts are defined as the service and work that believers should do (1 Cor. 12:4-12). Thus we can assume that spiritual gifts are special and necessary manifestations of the Spirit to enable Christians for any kind of ministry or service in the church. 1 Corinthians 12 is clear on the point that gifts are given for the common good of the church and not for individual benefit. All gifts are different, all of them are important and all Christians are gifted (for more biblical support cf. discussion in statement 4). Gifts are essentially important for the worship of God, for the believers' edification and for evangelism. The correct use of gifts is to minister with them.

Therefore, students in theological education ought to be future paid (and in certain instances also unpaid) Christian ministers and leaders with evident callings and gifts for the ministry they are willing to be equipped for.[28] This "gift-oriented" institution of theological education ought to seek the gifted and called students rather than anybody who is willing to pay tuition.[29]

Although every Christian is gifted and all gifts are important, it is not possible to provide theological education for everyone. Therefore, theological education ought to prepare leaders for ministry in the church who are able to equip others to use their gifts.[30] It automatically requires the students' willingness to be leaders in the church. Here it is important to remember that the ideal biblical leader is a servant-leader (cf. Matt. 20:25-28).

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[25] Liefeld & Cannell, "The Contemporary Context of the Theological Education,": 24.
[26] M.J. Murdock-Charitable-Trust, "A 21st Century Seminary Faculty Model,": 11.
[27] Although the denominational fragmentation is not corresponding to the ideal of church unity as God desires it (John 17:20-23; Gal 3:28), we need to consider the reality of this fragmentation.
[28] Griffiths, "Theological Education Need Not Be Irrelevant,": 10-11.
[29] Morgan, "Re-Engineering the Seminary,": 74.
[30] Ferris, "The Role of Theology in Theological Education,": 107-8.

Additionally, due to human limitations and the continuous process of sanctification, students ought to understand that they are involved in a lifelong educational process and to be ready for that, accepting the fact that theological education will not answer all their questions.

Finally, we affirm that leadership development should occur on a daily basis[31] and that ongoing ministry is essential for personal sanctification and spiritual growth (cf. statement 4). Therefore, students are to serve in ministry during their studies in order to relate to real people and their conflicts, thereby staying humble and ministry-oriented.[32] In such a missional model where ministering and studying occurs at the same time, students will receive both skills and knowledge that will better prepare them for future ministry.[33]

6. Teachers in theological education ought to serve as proper models to emulate while maintaining personal teacher-student relationships, thereby enabling genuine learning.

Environmental factors are very influential on human behavior. It is especially obvious in the issue of sin that is biologically inherited and supported by the environment (cf. Rom. 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:33). Therefore, theological education ought to provide an environment for the Christian servant-leaders' development. This task is dependent on the faculty of theological education because students, who are in need of role models and mentors,[34] will follow their example. Students want to emulate those teachers they most respect.[35] It leads to five faculty requirements that correspond to the goals for students and theological education.

First, theological knowledge as we can see it in the Bible is given for living it as we discussed in statement 2. All theoretical instruction has to have a practical outcome, contributing to God's ongoing purposes. Thus, teaching is "sharing life" as well as "knowledge."[36] Therefore, professors ought to maintain personal integrity and Christian character, living on a daily basis the biblical "knowledge" that they are teaching to their students (cf. 1 Tim 4:12; Tit 2:7). They are to be living examples of a holistic approach to ministry formation thereby demonstrating a lifelong commitment to piety, learning, and church leadership. Thus, a professor is the person who accepts the responsibilities of being a role model in scholarship, Christian relationships, and church leadership.[37] This also means that professors ought to stand fast in their theological convictions, avoiding the temptation of the "liberalization" in order to fit the modern "academia" (cf. 2 Tim 1:13).[38]

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[31] Murdock-Charitable-Trust, "A 21st Century Seminary Faculty Model,": 13.
[32] Liefeld & Cannell, "The Contemporary Context of the Theological Education,": 21.
[33] Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education*, 162-3.
[34] Morgan, "Re-Engineering the Seminary,": 74.
[35] Young, "Theological Approaches to Some Perpetual Problems in Theological Education,": 81.
[36] Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education*, 171.
[37] Murdock-Charitable-Trust, "A 21st Century Seminary Faculty Model,": 17.
[38] Griffiths, "Theological Education Need Not Be Irrelevant,": 8-9.

Second, building personal relationships is central for any ministry and for successful communication.[39] Therefore, personal professor-student relationships have to be developed. This will provide genuine learning that is the most satisfying and effective learning experience.[40] Thus, professors ought to be ready and willing to maintain personal and deep relationships with students.

Third, it is essential for professors to rely on God more than on themselves and to believe in His sovereignty (cf. Phil. 4:6; 1 Pet. 4:7; Matt. 10:12; John 14:26). Only when professors are able to see God's presence in the area of their expertise will they be able to communicate it in a life-changing way. This will give professors the passion needed to successfully influence the minds and lives of students.[41]

Fourth, professors ought to be "aware of adult educational principles" in order to be good communicators.[42] Maintaining cultural and social awareness, along with a readiness to make corresponding adjustments, will help make the teaching understandable and practical (cf. statement 2). In order to achieve that, it is essential to be connected to the people (i.e., to be "one of them") and to understand the people's needs, language, culture, etc. Therefore, professors are expected to serve in the church. In this case, professors will add necessary experience to their knowledge and give a good example of the church-connection for the students to model.[43] Otherwise, the only leadership patterns that students learn are the ones from class, being distant from the real world. Because the church is constantly changing, the lack of constant involvement contributes to the gap between teaching content and real life ministry. It would be even more helpful if professors were involved in ministry with their students.[44] Promoting partnership of theological education with the church, professors ought to avoid any sort of arrogance toward existing churches and pastors, maintaining humility.

Fifth, professors ought to work as a team with others on the faculty. Even if they have areas of their particular expertise, they have to see it as the part of the overall picture of God's purposes and dealings (cf. statement 1).[45]

7. Theological education ought to have an integrated curriculum that helps to accomplish the *missio dei* while equipping students for future ministry based on their unique gifts and calling.

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[39] Sherwood G. Lingenfelter and Marvin Keene Mayers, *Ministering Cross-Culturally* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1986), 84-5.

[40] Young, "Theological Approaches to Some Perpetual Problems in Theological Education,": 82.

[41] Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education*, 174-5.

[42] Liefeld&Cannell, "The Contemporary Context of the Theological Education,": 24.

[43] Griffiths, "Theological Education Need Not Be Irrelevant,": 11-2.

[44] Liefeld & Cannell, "The Contemporary Context of the Theological Education,": 24.

[45] Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education*, 175.

Since theological education should contribute to the establishment of the true knowledge and genuine worship of God among all people and thereby help the church accomplish its mission (cf. statement 1), we believe that students will be better served with an integrated curriculum designed to accomplish that goal. Effective theological education should "ensure that students preparing for specialized vocations other than the pastorate (e.g., religious education, church music, social work, counseling) receive a broad grounding in biblical and theological studies."[46] At the same time, theological education should also offer courses that will equip students for future ministry based on their unique gifts and calling. Overall, every course in the curriculum should be evaluated on the basis of its contribution to the accomplishment of the *missio dei*.

One criticism of theological education is that traditional subjects are each taught separately with a "minimum amount of integration and cross-fertilization."[47] Since teachers fail to integrate their courses, struggling students are required to build the bridges and make connections by themselves between different departments. We agree with Wood that "theological education is the cultivation of theological judgment."[48] This judgment is formed not by increasing the number of required systematic theology courses or somehow enhancing their prestige. Instead, theological education must understand the entire curriculum as a theological curriculum (i.e., as a body of resources intended to cultivate in students an aptitude for theological inquiry).[49]

An integrated curriculum ought to concentrate on urgent issues both in church and in contemporary life. Learning to apply Scripture in meaningful concrete, real-life situations is a skill that students will need to use over and over in future ministry. Focusing on issues in society will force students to apply Scripture instead of "merely analyzing it in a vacuum."[50] As discussed earlier, theological education should create an "educational spiral" that has basic theological assumptions as its starting point (cf. statement 2).

The proper response to the dichotomy between theory and practice, or seminary and church, as well as to the loss of direction and unity in theological education is to concentrate on the structure of the curriculum. Theological education should develop a biblically based hermeneutic that returns to the fourfold pattern of studies and orients this in a way that reflects and serves the life and goal of the church.[51]

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[46] Russell H. Dilday, "Theological Education at the Edge of a New Century," *Theological Education* 36, no. 2 (2000): 42.
[47] Griffiths, "Theological Education Need Not Be Irrelevant,": 13.
[48] Charles M. Wood, *Vision and Discernment* (Decatur, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1985), 86-87.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Griffiths, "Theological Education Need Not Be Irrelevant,": 17.
[51] Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education*, 65.

8. Theological education ought to train students to be effective spiritual leaders through spiritual formation, which challenges them to deal with heart and character issues.

We believe that conscious effort must be given to spiritual formation.[52] Theological education should be training which enables students to be effective spiritual leaders and not just effective professional religious leaders.[53] Sadly, "moral stumbling among pastors and other church leaders is becoming epidemic."[54] As a result, faith development, character development, and spiritual formation must be an essential part of theological education. Unfortunately, spiritual formation continues to have a lower priority than academic excellence and professional development.[55] Current theological education is "much better at producing scholars than producing saints."[56] Cracks in the moral foundation (i.e., heart and character issues) that fail to be addressed lead to the destruction of future ministry leaders' marriages and ministries. Character counts.

Theological education should balance both the inward and outward elements of spiritual formation since it occurs neither exclusively in public nor exclusively in private. In order for the character of Christ to most fully develop, Christians must have "an inner, private intimacy with God; an active, working love for others; and a pursuit of Christlike integrity."[57]

We believe that a particular context of authentic community where students come to trust each other is essential to the spiritual formation process. Although we value the spiritual disciplines, we view them as means to an end (i.e., the complete transformation of a Christian's inner and outer life). Believers need to see obstacles to their spiritual wellbeing or potential blind spots and begin to deal with the source or root of their areas of struggle that we believe occurs in the context of genuine community.[58]

Spiritual formation is the process God uses to form Christ's character in Christians by the Holy Spirit's ministry, in the context of community and in accordance with the biblical text. The spiritual formation process transforms the whole human being in actions, thoughts and styles of relating to God and others. The process results in a life of witness for Christ and service to others.[59]

One concern is that theological education is training leaders professionally but not spiritually. Theological education today is under the influence of Western behavioral sciences and has given up

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[52] Liefeld & Cannell, "The Contemporary Context of the Theological Education,": 24.
[53] Mary Kate Morse, "Henri J. Nouwen: A Pastoral Voice for Re-Formation of Theological Education," *Faculty Dialogue* 23 (1995): 34.
[54] Dilday, "Theological Education at the Edge of a New Century,": 39.
[55] Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education*, 200.
[56] Griffiths, "Theological Education Need Not Be Irrelevant,": 14.
[57] Center for Christian Leadership, *Transforming Life Series* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2004), 12.
[58] Ibid., 11.
[59] Ibid.

the routines of spiritual exercises. Because of a lack of attention to spiritual formation, students often do not have the spiritual resources needed to sustain energy and creative vitality when they begin the multifaceted work of ministry. "Fatigue and depression are the results."[60]

Another concern is that leaders who have only been trained professionally tend to use their "skillful diagnostic eye…for distant and detailed analysis"[61] rather than for compassionate partnership with the suffering of those to whom they minister. As a result, spiritual leaders are often aloof and judgmental because they have the training and the skills as well as the answers and the judgments, but not the passion for care. Only when spiritual leaders are aware of their own spiritual poverty are they able to appreciate and care for the spiritual poverty of others. "This type of knowledge is not found in a textbook but in the exploration of one's spiritual heart."[62]

We agree with Nouwen that the goal of theological education is to bring students closer to God. Theological education must lead students into an ever-growing communion with God, with each other, and with their fellow human beings. "Theological education is meant to form our whole person toward an increasing conformity with the mind of Christ so that our way of praying and our way of thinking will be one."[63]

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[60] Morse, "Henri J. Nouwen: A Pastoral Voice for Re-Formation of Theological Education,": 36.
[61] Henri Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society* (New York: Doubleday, 1972), 42.
[62] Morse, "Henri J. Nouwen: A Pastoral Voice for Re-Formation of Theological Education,": 37.
[63] Henri Nouwen, *The Way of the Heart* (New York: Harper Collins, 1981), 47.