

THE HISTORY OF SEMINARY EDUCATION AND THEOLOGICAL ACCREDITATION

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June 10, 1999

I. The Reformation (16th century)—God Brings Revival in a Scholastic, Academic Framework

A. The revival God sent in the Reformation was born in an academic setting.

The initial base of the Reformation was a university, and one of its first fruits was a curricular revision, increasing the emphasis on Greek and Hebrew in the curriculum.

George M. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 36.

The Evangelical reformers [Luther, Melancthon, Zwingli, Calvin] formed their new doctrines in the give and take of academic debate, and the classroom lecture was the first medium they used to spread their message. . . . If people would only read the Word, preferably in the original languages, they might learn the truth.

Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*, p. 13.

B. Scholarship and technical knowledge of biblical languages and the biblical text were key to pastoral authority in the Reformation.

Protestantism promoted a well-educated clergy, which quickly became the backbone of the international revolutionary movement. . . . In villages throughout Protestant lands for centuries to come, the clergyman would be the best educated citizen and education would be a key to his authority. . . . The claims of the Reformers hinged on the interpretation of texts and on a science of textual interpretation sufficient to challenge church authority.

Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*, pp. 37-38.

C. Harvard College was the first seminary prototype founded in North America in 1636, and it continued Reformation patterns. (Though it was a college and technically not a seminary, Harvard was founded to educate clergy.) Obviously, Harvard's pattern of training and educating pastors had enormous influence on the educational philosophy and the spiritual strongholds found in all subsequent seminaries, universities, and accrediting associations in North America.

1636 was the year . . . of the legislation establishing Harvard College. . . . The primary purpose of Harvard College was . . . the training of clergy.

Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*, p. 41.

1. The goal of Puritan theological education at Harvard was to produce pastor-theologians or "a learned clergy,"¹ and so was the goal of all seminaries founded after Harvard to this day.

The Puritans called it a "learned ministry" and brought to New England an English educational approach centered in colleges designed to produce public servants. Once Harvard and Yale were established, students gained enough theology to serve as public leaders, but technical study of theology and preparation for the ministry were left for the

¹ S. E. Morison, *The Founding of Harvard College* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1935), p. 45.

years after graduation. Ministers had to pick up their theological studies by apprenticing themselves to an experienced pastor.

Bruce Shelley, "The Seminaries' Identity Crisis," *Christianity Today*, May 17, 1993, p. 43.

2. After the Unitarians got control of Harvard in 1805, more orthodox Congregationalists organized the first American seminary in 1808—Andover Theological Seminary—establishing a pattern of theological education that would influence all seminaries to this day.

As pioneers in seminary education, Andover's founders fashioned the essentials of the seminary experience for the next two centuries, right up to our own time. They stressed adequate funds, scholarly study of Christian theology, a professional, specialized faculty, and a sizable library. The three-year curriculum focused on three areas of study: Bible, church history, and theology. Four years later [1809], Presbyterians in New Jersey established Princeton Seminary.

Shelley, *Christianity Today*, May 17, 1993, p. 43.

II. The Scholastic Framework Becomes a Scholastic *Bottleneck* for Ministry Training

- A. The Scholastic Focus of the Seminaries. Unfortunately, the scholastic, academic framework that God used to bring revival to the Church in the Reformation became a scholastic bottleneck that choked the life of God from seminaries and seminarians. Seminary leaders became enamored with scholarship more than practical ministry training.

Ministers were to be not only theologians and preachers; they were to be "learned gentlemen." . . . Although seminary leaders issued frequent rhetorical appeals for more ministers, they showed scant interest in the average minister or in pastoral practice. . . . The scholarly aspects of theology fascinated the founders of theological schools. . . . The purpose of the seminary's residence requirement was to train students to be "gentlemen theologians."

Glenn T. Miller, *Piety and Intellect: The Aims and Purposes of Ante-Bellum Theological Education* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1990), p. 26-27.

The image of the pastor-theologian is the ideal for most theological faculties.

Shelley, *Christianity Today*, May 17, 1993, p. 42.

1. The Murdock Report investigated graduate theological education in seminaries of the Pacific Northwest against the background of seminaries across the U.S. The Murdock Report cited the scholastic, academic focus of seminary faculty and seminary programs as one of the chief factors that cripples the seminaries' ability to train seminarians to be effective pastors and church leaders.

Seminaries . . . give their graduates skills to study the Bible and theology but not skills to lead the modern church. . . . The seminaries . . . continue to emphasize academics. . . . Pastors believe seminary professors do not understand their need for ministry skills or mentors. Professors often view pastors and the church as "anti-intellectual." Seminaries often turn a deaf ear to the needs of the local church and arrogantly defend scholarly education.

John Woodyard, Program Officer, *The M .J. Murdock Charitable Trust Review of Graduate Theological Education in the Pacific Northwest*, "Executive Report."

Dr. Kenneth Meyers, President of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, IL, underscores the problem of the scholastic focus in seminaries:

The curriculum has called for professionals of the academy, rather than professionals of the church. The truth is, students will model their professors. In our [seminary] some 75% of

faculty have never pastored a church longer than an intern[ship] during graduate studies. Is it no wonder that graduates come out “heady” and lacking ministry skills?

Dr. Kenneth Meyers in *The M. J. Murdock Charitable Trust Review of Graduate Theological Education in the Pacific Northwest*, p. 63.

Dr. Edward Farley, former professor of theology at Vanderbilt University Divinity School, describes the relentless pursuit of academic scholasticism in seminaries:

Alumni and their affiliated denominations . . . tend to criticize the schools for being “too academic,” straying too far from the canons of denominational belief, or being insufficiently practical. But despite these recurring complaints, theological schools have more and more tended to make academic quality the central element in their reputations. Accordingly, faculty members are required to have earned the Ph.D. degree, and to be promising scholars who contribute to their fields and meet high standards for tenure and promotion. This commitment to having a first-rate academic faculty draws schools into the ethos of American higher education.

E. Farley, “Why Seminaries Don’t Change: A Reflection on Faculty Specialization,” *The Christian Century*, Feb. 5-12, 1997, p. 133-143.

2. This narrow focus on scholasticism in seminary education left no room for the Holy Spirit to move or guide the learning process. From the very beginning at Harvard there was explicit rejection of the Holy Spirit’s power and guidance as something foreign to the structure of theological education and the related authority of Puritan clergy.
 - a. When the Great Awakening revivalist, George Whitefield, criticized Harvard and Yale for their spiritual decline in 1740, the leaders of Harvard and Yale criticized Whitefield and rejected Whitefield’s position that the Holy Spirit could directly guide and empower God’s people without the mediation of theologically trained clergy.

The awakeners were claiming that New England’s colleges were already hopelessly secularized. . . . The most notorious accusations came from George Whitefield. In 1740 the Grand Itinerant had been warmly welcomed both at Harvard and at Yale. . . . Whitefield characterized the schools as “not far superior to our Universities in piety.” This was a scathing insult, especially since in the same journal Whitefield wrote that Oxford and Cambridge were “sunk into mere Seminaries of Paganism. Christ or Christianity is scarce so much as named among them.” . . . His former hosts at the New England schools were in a rage. . . .

In 1744, when Whitefield was back in New England, the Harvard faculty replied indignantly, characterizing Whitefield as “an uncharitable, censorious and slanderous Man,” and, worst of all, an “*Enthusiast*,” meaning he claimed direct guidance from the Spirit of God. . . . Harvard professors and their clerical supporters correctly perceived that Whitefield was a threat to their whole system of social authority.

Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*, p. 55.

- b. The Puritan founders of Harvard and the Massachusetts Bay Colony also rejected the authority of the Holy Spirit directly guiding and empowering God’s people without the mediation of theologically trained clergy in the case of Anne Hutchinson, the daughter of an Anglican priest.

1636 was the year not only of the legislation establishing Harvard College but also of the turmoil over the Anne Hutchinson case. These two famous events were related since they dealt with two sides of the question of authority. . . . Anne Hutchinson . . . addressed theological issues (accusing most of the clergy of preaching works rather than grace) and thus defied the principle that formal university education . . . was the normal prerequisite for exercising theological authority. . . . Most alarming to the authorities, Hutchinson was what we would today call a charismatic Christian who appealed to the direct voice of the Holy Spirit. . . . Had Hutchinson's appeal to a direct voice from God been allowed to stand, the whole Puritan system of hierarchical authority would have collapsed. Anyone, male or female, however unqualified they otherwise might be, would be able to challenge the biblical and theological principles on which the society was being built.

Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*, p. 41.

- c. The scholastic focus of the Reformation became a strangle-hold allowing God to speak only to and through those who had "adequate" theological training to interpret the text of Scripture "properly."

The Word might be perspicuous in Protestant eyes, but it also took a sound logical training to be qualified to interpret it.

Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*, p. 42.

- d. The Puritan founders of Harvard seem to have substituted adherence to "biblical principles" for the Holy Spirit's guidance.

The way in which to glorify God in all things, the Puritans argued, was to strictly follow biblical principles.

Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*, p. 42.

- e. Much like they Pharisees, they substituted the study of the text of Scripture for the living voice of God's Spirit: They uprooted the Tree of Life and planted the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form, nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent. You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.

John 5:37-40

3. But Revival and the move of God's Spirit to glorify Jesus set the focus of seminaries back on the Great Commission and showed the right place of scholarship in God's Kingdom—to support and serve what God was already doing and **INTENTIONALLY TO PRODUCE CHURCH-PLANTERS, MISSIONARIES, AND EVANGELISTS.**

Most American college builders, however, were heirs to the Great Awakening as well as to classicism, Enlightenment moralism, and formal Christian practice. In the New Light tradition [of the Great Awakening] colleges were also part of a larger missionary and evangelistic enterprise. . . . College revivals were crucial to producing and motivating educated leaders for the missionary enterprise. Conversion of young men was in fact, one of the common rationales for promoting and sustaining colleges.

Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*, p. 29.

Revivalism demoted the ideal of the learned pastor. Although some sophisticated advocates of the revival used well-developed theological arguments, especially in New England, doctrine was not the mainstay of the awakening. The revivalist moved the heart, not the head, and inspired action, not reflection.

Miller, *Piety and Intellect*, p. 29.

- a. In the 1790s and later, the Second Great Awakening revival led to the founding of colleges and seminaries and to the organization of mission societies.² Clearly revival in the Great Awakening and the Second Great Awakening focused the Church and theological education for a season on the right target—producing leaders for missions, church-planting, and fulfilling the Great Commission.

B. There Have Been Four Consequences to the Scholastic, Academic Focus of Seminaries:
 1) The Separation of Head from Heart; 2) The Separation of Theological Education from Church Life and Ministry; 3) The Seminary has Come to Be Viewed as a Poor Investment for Ministry Preparation; and 4) Entrenched Traditionalism Has Led to Seminaries Being Structurally Irreformable.

- 1. Separation of Head from Heart. The scholastic focus of seminaries had separated the head from the heart in theological education and ministry preparation.

Pastors commented that “Seminary does not facilitate spiritual growth; it frequently lacks a deep spiritual base.”

The M .J. Murdock Charitable Trust Review of Graduate Theological Education in the Pacific Northwest, p. 19.

Dr. Kenneth Meyer, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School: “Faculty must be chosen for ‘heart’ as well as ‘head.’ . . . Advancement must be evaluated on more than another monograph or book published.”

The M .J. Murdock Charitable Trust Review of Graduate Theological Education in the Pacific Northwest, p. 63.

In a recent search to fill a position in New Testament, the search committee at my seminary had difficulty finding candidates who could integrate learning with faith. Of the more than 140 candidates considered, few had served full time in ministry, however broadly defined. . . . We asked the candidate who many of us believed had the most impressive curriculum vitae to speak about her involvement in the church. The candidate replied: “My scholarship is my church.” . . . Training and forming future faculty is more than an academic enterprise. We have more and more seminary faculty who have never had full-time experience in ministry.

Ronald C. White, *The Christian Century*, June 17 1998, p. 616f.

- 2. Separation of Theological Education from Church Life and Ministry. The scholastic focus of seminaries had separated theological education from the life and ministry of the Church.

- a. This started in North America at Harvard College in 1636.

Harvard College was created by the civil government and governed by a board of overseers, or trustees, made up equally of clergy and magistrates. . . . [This followed the] Reformation model, which was one step more secular in the sense of being less directly under church control. The Reformers . . . depended on the princes for their success. . . .

Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*, p. 40.

- b. The dichotomy between theological education and Church life and ministry continued in pre-Civil War seminaries.

² *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), vol. 5, p. 441.

Seminary founders . . . assumed that the day-by-day skills needed by the clergy would be learned in the give and take of [local church] community life. Nineteenth-century seminaries were the houses that theology built.

Miller, *Piety and Intellect*, p. 3.

- c. The division has only grown deeper in today’s seminaries. Seminaries tend to take potential church leaders away from the life and concerns of the local church, in which they are supposed to serve, and places them in an academic environment of abstract scholasticism—much of which has no real bearing upon their pastoral responsibilities.

Pastors surveyed by the Murdock Report felt that “many professors [in the seminaries] are not servants of the church.”

The M. J. Murdock Charitable Trust Review of Graduate Theological Education in the Pacific Northwest, p. 19.

There is a gap between the education provided and the pastors’ duties as performed. The churches expect the seminaries to send them well-rounded graduates who can fulfill these responsibilities successfully. Seminaries expect their graduates to learn administrative, leadership and nurturing skills in the church.

The M. J. Murdock Charitable Trust Review of Graduate Theological Education in the Pacific Northwest, p. 24.

“The seminary faculty do not have a good understanding of the needs of [local churches] or the culture,” Woodyard [Program Officer of the M. J. Murdock Charitable Trust] says.

T. C. Morgan and T. S. Giles, “Re-engineering the Seminary,” *Christianity Today*, Oct. 24, 1994, cover story.

[There is an] overemphasis [in seminaries] on academic and theological training and classroom performance standards divorced from the real world of ministry.

The M. J. Murdock Charitable Trust Review of Graduate Theological Education in the Pacific Northwest, p. 7.

Modern training is primarily intellectual; New Testament training is primarily spiritual and practical. Modern training emphasizes the classroom; New Testament training emphasizes life and experience.

Clay Sterrett, *Myths of “the Ministry”* (Staunton, VA: CFC Literature, 1990), p. 18.

To separate those who are to be trained for ministry from normal church life and activity and from the conditions in which their ministry is to be carried on is a serious mistake. One preparing for the ministry of evangelism and church planting needs the church and the evangelistic field just as the medical student needs the Hospital and the clinic.

Alexander R. Hay, *The New Testament Order for Church and Missionary* (New Testament Missionary Union, 1947), p. 488.

Schools which are separated from the local church are very apt also to be separated from that real world where the future minister must labor. The cloistered school is no place for the training of the future pastor, unless that future pastor plans to remain cloistered in his study while the world goes to hell.

E. W. Johnson, “Extra-Biblical Ecclesiastical Systems,” *Baptist Reformation Review* 7/2 (1978), p. 16.

- 3. Seminary is Viewed as a Poor Investment for Ministry Preparation. The imbalance of the scholastic bottle-neck in most seminary programs and curricula

has caused many pastors and church leaders to view seminary education as a poor investment—as inadequate to prepare leaders for real-world, real-time ministry in the local church.

According to the ATS (the Association of Theological Schools, which accredits most seminaries in North America), evangelicals in the 1990s lay claim to 63 divinity schools and theological seminaries in North America, enrolling more than 30,000 students. . . . Ironically, at the very moment evangelical theological education appears to have come of age, some influential parachurch and megachurch leaders are questioning the whole idea of formal theological education. The observation is made that if men who never spent a day in seminary can build successful ministries like Prison Fellowship, Focus on the Family, and Willow Creek Community Church, why have seminaries at all? In fact, a seminary degree will actually disqualify a candidate from a staff position at some megachurches.

Robert W. Patterson, “Why Evangelicals Have the Biggest Seminaries, And Why They Are in Crisis,” *Christianity Today*, Jan. 12, 1998, p. 50.

Pastors are highly educated but generally feel poorly prepared for the job they hold.

The M. J. Murdock Charitable Trust Review of Graduate Theological Education in the Pacific Northwest, p. 7.

In the pastors forums those who were seminary graduates reported that they found 70% to 80% of their seminary education did not apply to the duties they were expected to perform in the churches they served as ministers.

The M. J. Murdock Charitable Trust Review of Graduate Theological Education in the Pacific Northwest, p. 24.

With 50% of seminary graduates leaving professional ministry, seminaries are not doing a good job of training. . . . Seminaries need more “practitioners” as teachers. Seminaries need more “field service” training. Professors need hands-on ministry experience. Seminaries must provide more mentoring for students.

The M. J. Murdock Charitable Trust Review of Graduate Theological Education in the Pacific Northwest, p. 19.

“Pastors are mad at the seminary,” says John Woodyard, program officer with the \$275 million Murdock Trust.

Morgan and Giles, “Re-engineering the Seminary,” *Christianity Today*, Oct. 24, 1994, cover story.

4. Entrenched Traditionalism Has Led to Seminaries Being Structurally Irreformable.

- a. The entrenched traditionalism in seminary programs and curricula relies heavily on the scholastic, academic focus of pastoral training, which first emerged in the Reformation.

In establishing the first seminaries, their founders established a tradition that bound many later people concerned with theological education. . . . In America . . . it did not take many years for the past to become precedent, for precedents to become settled convictions, and for settled convictions to become the way that we have always done things. Thus, the Andover trustees’ early decision to mandate a three-year program of studies . . . became definitive for later generations. Theological educators have consistently maintained the three-year program, and when they dared to deviate from it

(usually for financial reasons), they felt vaguely uncomfortable, as if they had on different colored socks.

Miller, *Piety and Intellect*, pp. 4-5.

The traditional curriculum is neither user nor church-friendly. We are in a morass of traditional curriculum with little concern for application, and the curriculum has not kept up with the needs of the church.

Dr. Kenneth Meyer (President of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School) in *The M. J. Murdock Charitable Trust Review of Graduate Theological Education in the Pacific Northwest*, p. 62.

Within the present paradigm professors—the faculty—have control of their courses, their classes, the curriculum, faculty hiring and tenure decisions. This existing structure is reinforced by tradition, the accrediting associations, and bureaucratic government structures. It cannot be changed by trustees, denominations, or administrators and donors. Yet, in many cases, what is needed is a realization by seminary boards, administration, and faculty that they will not survive if they continue to look to past successes and old paths rather than deal realistically with the changes needed to assure that their graduates will give leadership to the churches of the next century. . . .

Currently, major rewards for the seminary professor are research-based, academically and intellectually-based affirmations from published books and articles. Unless different spiritual, emotional, economic, and social rewards for the professor can be created, little or no change can be expected in seminary operations, relationships with the churches, or instruction for the students.

John M. Woodyard, “A 21st Century Seminary Faculty Model,” in *The M. J. Murdock Charitable Trust Review of Graduate Theological Education in the Pacific Northwest*, pp. 3, 7.

Has this intense scrutiny of theological education had any effect on the schools and their programs? My impression, confirmed by people who keep close tabs on the scene, is No. Despite all the studies and discussions, the schools are much the way they were 15 years ago. Schools have taken a close look at themselves. Many have conducted curricular reviews and added or subtracted this or that item. . . . But little or no genuine reform has taken place in either seminary or graduate degree programs. . . .

Are we to conclude, then, that seminaries cannot reform themselves? I am not sure that even a threat to institutional survival is powerful enough to offset a school’s structural resistance to reform. Given the way educational institutions conserve themselves, rapid and self-critical reform, accomplished within and by the faculty in cooperation with students and administration, does not seem possible.

E. Farley, “Why Seminaries Don’t Change: A Reflection on Faculty Specialization,” *The Christian Century*, Feb. 5-12, 1997, p. 133-143.

III. Theological Accreditation Reinforces the Scholastic, Academic Bottleneck in Seminaries

- A. The scholastic bottleneck and the structural irreformability of seminary programs, curricula, and faculty are reinforced by theological accreditation, which assumes all the values of traditional theological education.

[There is a] perception [in most seminaries] that seminary programs can not adapt existing programs and curriculum to fulfill the [need to teach] skills, abilities and

priorities pastors and church members need and expect without jeopardizing their accreditation by regional and Association of Theological Schools standards.

The M. J. Murdock Charitable Trust Review of Graduate Theological Education in the Pacific Northwest, p. 49.

1. More problematic for the Church, seminaries are accountable to accrediting associations, like the Association of Theological Schools, rather than to the churches for which they are educating leaders.

Authority for the seminary rests in the control of accreditation associations. Evaluation is built around the shrouds of academic freedom and tenure as defined by their peers in the accreditation process.

The M. J. Murdock Charitable Trust Review of Graduate Theological Education in the Pacific Northwest, p. 90.

- B. The beginning of the ATS (Association of Theological Schools) was largely concerned with raising and standardizing academic, scholastic standards in seminaries.

1. In 1924 the Conference of Theological Seminaries and Colleges in the United States and Canada met to discuss ways to improve theological education.³

After more than a decade of research, the Conference reorganized in 1936 as an accrediting agency, taking the name, the American Association of Theological Schools. The Association immediately established a set of Standards of Theological Education, which defined the ideal theological school. . . .

David B. Cable, "The Development of the Accrediting Function of the American Association of Theological Schools, 1918-1938" (Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Pittsburgh, 1970), p. 132.

2. Seminaries and theological schools of the late nineteenth century each had varying academic standards, a major concern of those who founded the Conference of Theological Seminaries and Colleges in the United States and Canada, which eventually became the ATS (Association of Theological Schools).

Disagreement concerning standards [among seminaries and ministry training colleges of the early twentieth century] was indicative of uncertainty regarding the nature and purposes of theological education. . . .

Standardization, as well as [academic] standards, was needed: a consensus among American theological seminaries and colleges as to what constituted the most adequate preparation for contemporary ministry.

Cable, "The Development of the Accrediting Function of the American Association of Theological Schools," p. 132.

3. Beginnings at Harvard. The Conference of Theological Seminaries was first formed at Harvard Divinity School, where in 1918 "more than a hundred representatives, from fifty-three institutions and fifteen denominations, were present."⁴

³ David B. Cable, "The Development of the Accrediting Function of the American Association of Theological Schools, 1918-1938" (Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Pittsburgh, 1970), p. 132.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

- a. One of the chief complaints by academic leaders at the conference was the “diverse academic standards existing among the institutions responsible for the education of American ministers.”⁵ The noose of the traditional scholastic, academic focus was about to be tightened around the neck of every seminary and ministry training college of the early twentieth century that wanted to be recognized by their peers and eventually accredited.

As the standards of the theological schools became less and less uniform, a number of academicians began to speak about the growing threat to the quality of theological education. In 1892, Charles Augustus Briggs, a Biblical scholar and subsequently the author of . . . *The History of the Study of Theology*, expressed his concern that the tendency of the theological seminaries and colleges to cater to denominational attitudes and values frequently worked at cross-purposes with intellectual interests. . . . Twenty years later, William Douglass Mackenzie, who was to become a leader in the movement toward cooperation among theological schools, called attention to the need for standards in theological education. . . .

Additional critiques of American theological education appeared during the first quarter of the twentieth century. Of these, the most detailed and influential was a study by Robert L. Kelly, published in 1924 as *Theological Education in America*. . . . Dr. Kelly intimated his hope that through standardization all institutions for the education and training of ministers would someday emulate the relatively few theological schools which were generally recognized for their academic excellence.

Cable, “The Development of the Accrediting Function of the American Association of Theological Schools,” pp. 9, 11.

- b. It was assumed that the “Bachelor of Divinity” degree for future pastors should represent a “standard of scholarship” not a standard of ministry effectiveness.⁶
- c. There was even open hostility in some of early ATS leaders to concerns for practical ministry training.

Macgregor’s [of Hartford Theological Seminary] second objection concerned the emphasis which was being placed on the practical, instead of on the intellectual, aims of theological education.

Cable, “The Development of the Accrediting Function of the American Association of Theological Schools,” pp. 9, 11.

- d. The earliest standards of the ATS saw the scholarly achievement as the “essential” characteristic of an acceptable member of a seminary faculty. A doctoral level degree is still required by ATS standards (standard number 6.1.1) for all seminary faculty of accredited seminaries, and this disqualifies seasoned ministry practitioners without doctoral level degrees from being regular faculty members of an accredited seminary.

In addition to the necessary moral and religious qualifications, competence as a scholar and a teacher . . . should in all cases be considered the essential characteristics of an acceptable member of the faculty.

⁵ Ibid., p. 23.

⁶ Ibid., p. 45.

Cable, "The Development of the Accrediting Function of the American Association of Theological Schools," p. 98.

IV. The New Testament Apostolic Pattern of Training Church Leaders

A. Apostolic teaching and training in the Early Church was brought to local church leaders, not the reverse. Local church leaders of the early church did not go to cloistered academies of theological training, as is the case with modern seminary education. They either received training and instruction from local church leaders, from apostolic teams traveling to their church, or from traveling with itinerant apostles and their apostolic teams (as Silas, Timothy, Priscilla and Aquila, Trophimus, Erastus, and others did: e.g., Acts 18:2, 5, 18; II Tim 4:20; many other passages could be cited).

1. In Acts 11, the Jerusalem church sent Barnabas to the new church-plant in Antioch to strengthen, encourage, teach, and train them along with Paul (Acts 11:22-26)

News of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord. Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.

Acts 11:22-26

2. Acts 13:1 shows that in addition to Paul and Barnabas there were more "prophets and teachers" who had been sent to Antioch, presumably to train leaders at the Antioch church.

In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

Acts 13:1-3

3. In Acts 14:21-23, Paul and Barnabas returned to the churches they had planted in Lystra, Iconium, and Pisidian Antioch, and they taught and strengthened the believers and appointed elders in each church.

Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said. Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.

Acts 14:21-23

4. Heb. 6:1-2 lists elementary teachings taught to new believers in the Early Church: repentance from acts that lead to death, faith in God, instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. These topics display a BALANCE between PRACTICAL and THEORETICAL teaching.
5. In Acts 19:8-10, Paul sets forth an important pattern for ministry training and theological education. Paul INVITED THE HOLY SPIRIT INTO THE

CLASSROOM—he taught the Word of God and demonstrated the Holy Spirit's power with healing and deliverance.

While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples and asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" They answered, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." So Paul asked, "Then what baptism did you receive?" "John's baptism," they replied. Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus." On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. There were about twelve men in all.

Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God. But some of them became obstinate; they refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way. So Paul left them. He took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord. God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them.

Acts 14:1-10

Conclusion #1: GOD WANTS BACK IN TO THE CLASSROOM AND THE TRAINING EVENT where His leaders are being trained! The Holy Spirit wants to lead His people into all truth again. He has been pushed out of the seminary classroom long enough!!

Conclusion #2: We must be INTENTIONAL ABOUT PRODUCING CHURCH-PLANTERS, PASTORS, EVANGELISTS, HEALERS, INTERCESSORS, PROPHETS, APOSTLES as well as TEACHERS. We must be VISION-DRIVEN in our curricula and programs—any course that does not contribute directly to producing the leaders mentioned above must be abandoned.

Seminaries are producing scholar/theologians. ACEA schools are producing LEADERS who will plant churches and bring in the Harvest!