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Distance Education with Special Reference to the Teaching of

Christan Theology in Sub Saharan Africa

Colin Hurford

Abstract

The Thesis begins by considering the situations of three 'ideal typical students learning theology through a Theological Education by Extension' programme which, in Africa, is the most common form of Distance Education in Christain Theology. Use of the 'ideal typical' device is justified and then a brief survey of Extension Schemes in Africa is made. This is followed by a consideration of the principles of Distance Education. The problems facing Africa at the present time are listed as these provide the background and context of the study of Theology. As Distance Education deals primarily with adults, adult learning is discussed in some depth followed by the learning of Christian Theology which has its own particular issues and problems. African Traditional Religion plays a part in forming the view of the African thought world and belief in God and the main aspects of this are considered alongside the teaching of Christian Theology. Schemes of Distance Learning in Theology currently or recently in use are then considered with references to texts. Finally conclusions are drawn to suggest ways forward for good Distance Learning in Christian Theology.

DISTANCE EDUCATION WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE TEACHING OF

CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY IN SUB SAHARAN AFRICA

Colin Osborne Hurford

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DISTANCE EDUCATION WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE  
TEACHING OF CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY IN SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

Preface

The title of the Thesis reflects both personal concerns and personal experience. As a Christian priest, I am deeply concerned about adult education. I very firmly believe that each Christian has a part to play in the life of the church and that for far too long, the church has been dominated by its professional leadership. The majority of these Christians have little academic background but much experience and have gifts which they would like to use in Christian service. As one member of the congregation put it, "I don't have enough confidence when I speak to people and long to learn more."

My second interest is in third world countries. I worked for some years in Malaysia and for some months in Tanzania. My experience in Africa teaching students at a theological college convinced me of the need of a simple handbook for Christian Ministers to help them teach adults and I thought that I might be able to fulfil this need. As work on the thesis progressed, I realised that I was being very presumptuous - there is much greater expertise in Africa than I had realised.

The interest in Distance Education arose partly from the

idea of writing the handbook described, but also because distance education is becoming a key method of learning. Traditional methods of teaching are expensive and can only cater for small numbers of students. To meet the demand for learning many churches are providing courses for study at home or in small groups. My own experience of trying to find suitable distance education courses in this country highlighted the problems. Twelve students enrolled for a particular course which seemed, on the surface, to meet their requirements. Within a comparatively short period of time, all twelve abandoned their studies. There are some good courses available but they are not easy to find.

So the threefold outline, Distance Education, the teaching of Christian Theology and Africa, became clear and as work proceeded I discovered that studying Theological education in a culture different from my own gave deeper insights into the cultural influences at work in this country.

One further point needs to be made clear. I am a Christian and write from within the traditions of the Christian faith. I believe in God and that God has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ. I try, so far as this is possible, to stand outside dogmatic or denominational controversy and to avoid extreme views about the nature

of the Bible or authority of the church. I do, however, believe that the Church, despite its many failings, is an effective sign of God's presence in the world. As an organisation of human beings, the church must have its structures, laws, discipline and body of teaching, but its structures are provisional and the church must be constantly developing. God is always greater, greater than the church. He is at work in all his creation and dwells within each one of us (Hughes 1985:32) As soon as I write this, I realise that I am taking up a liberal position and that some Christians would not agree. Nevertheless, this is my standpoint and I believe that I am remaining faithful to the basic principles of the Christian faith common to the best traditions of the mainline churches.

I would like to thank those who have given help and support in this project, particularly Dr. W. Williamson who encouraged me throughout the project; the Bishop of Durham and the College of St. Hild and St. Bede for financial support; and the staff and congregation of St. Aidan's parish, Billingham for their understanding and prayers, especially when, because of the work, I was unable to give the Parish as much attention as it needed. Above all, I would like to thank Margaret, my wife, for persuading me to undertake the task and encouraging me throughout the project.

## INTRODUCTION

### Three African Students

#### Matthew

It was early Saturday morning as Matthew cycled slowly along the road, an easy ride in the cool of the day. The potholes had all been filled in months ago after the last rainy season and still this year's rains had not come. Matthew looked anxiously at the clear sky. The gardens were in a bad state and if there was no rain soon, the harvest would be very poor. Some of the people were thinking of calling in a rainmaker. Most of the villagers including Matthew were Christians and Matthew knew that his church did not really approve of such traditional practices. But was it really wrong, thought Matthew. True, he led his congregation in prayer for rain each Sunday, but surely God would not mind if the people did something a little more specific. Matthew was the proud possessor of a small radio and on the news that morning there was something about the rains failing in the neighbouring country of Zimbabwe - a place where they had never failed before. The announcer had said that some scientists thought this had to do with the clearing of the forests and 'global warming' but Matthew could not understand this. The rains had always come at



this time of the year. Still, it meant that his ride to the small local town a few miles from his village was an easy one.

This was the second week in succession that he had cycled down the track to call on his brother. He normally only visited the town once a month to collect his salary and mail, but this time he was hoping for something different in the post. Many months ago, the parish priest, on his monthly visit to the church, had called to see Matthew. Matthew, in addition to being a teacher in the local primary school, was the catechist for his village. He was not paid for this, but led the service every Sunday in the small church the villagers had built. Also, together with three elders, he cared for the congregation of about fifty adults and instructed new families which had decided to become Christian. The parish priest had told him about a new training scheme which was being introduced by the Diocese, a scheme specially designed for catechists like Matthew. He would have to study for about three hours each week and the lessons would come by post to the local town. Every two weeks, he would cycle to the town to meet four others studying the same course to discuss what they had learnt. The priest explained that the Diocese would pay for the course, which would last for a year, providing Matthew was prepared to study and go to the meetings regularly. There would also be

some work to do which would be posted to the Diocesan headquarters for assessment. If Matthew completed the course successfully, he would get a certificate. Matthew knew something about this way of studying as, two years ago, many primary school teachers, including Matthew, had taken a course in teaching Mathematics. Matthew thought about this suggestion very carefully. Already his church work took up a great deal of his time and he had his wife and family to think of. He had discussed it with his congregation and they had agreed to support him by taking on some of the church duties. He had also asked the priest about others taking the taking the course and was pleased to learn that Ngugo from a neighbouring village whom he knew well, together with a Sunday School teacher from the town would probably be part of the group. So Matthew had decided to try it. He often found it hard to think of new things to say when preaching sermons and sometimes members of the congregation would ask questions he could not answer - for example, why didn't God send rain when they prayed so earnestly for it. As Matthew cycled along the road, he hoped that this week the new course would have arrived.

Matthew overtook many people on their way to the market, calling out greetings as he passed and sometimes stopping to talk to a friend. Occasionally a landrover would overtake him enveloping him in a cloud of dust. Then he

came to some houses on the outskirts of the town. The town had started as a small village like his own, but had grown when the Government decided to build a highway linking the capital city to that of a neighbouring country. The contractor had made the village one of the staging and supply posts and slowly people settled as those working on the road brought their families to join them. Later, lorries and buses used it as a stopping place and, in a surprisingly short time, it had grown large enough to have a post office, a government dispensary and a secondary school. There were buses to a much larger town some forty miles away and from there to the capital where Matthew had gone to teacher training college.

Matthew stopped at his brother's shop to ask if the letters had been collected and his brother gave him the key to the postbox shared by members of the family. At the post office, he was surrounded by a small group of children. They all looked carefully at each name on the envelopes trying to guess who had sent the letters. Then the postmaster saw Matthew. "I've got a parcel for you," he said, "it was too big to go in the box." Matthew took the parcel, read his name on the front, and looked at sender's name printed at the top, 'Theological Education by Extension College'. This was the parcel he had been waiting for! Accompanied by the group of

children he took the letters and parcel back to his brother's shop and carefully opened the envelope. It could, perhaps, be used again. He took out the two heavy booklets and a letter. Both men could read English well and together they studied the cover. There was a strange set of pictures with two letters Matthew did not understand. But the heading was clear "JESUS OF NAZARETH". He turned to the first page of print and there read the heading: "A GUIDE TO THE COURSE" followed by "1. WELCOME".

Matthew, the teacher, had become a student again!

### Elijah

Some thousand miles away on the west coast of Africa, Elijah sat at his desk in his very modern bungalow looking at the latest course material he had received on Christian Doctrine. Elijah was a wealthy businessman, well respected in his town. He had built up a local transport service running buses and landrovers to neighbouring towns and villages, was joint owner of the local hotel and owned a couple of shops. His father had been the minister of the chief church in the town, the one patronised by most of the leading dignitaries. Elijah himself had been to the mission school and had studied to form six, but instead of going to college and

becoming a minister like his father, he had decided to become involved in local business and had done well. But he was not doing well with the course he was studying.

Two years ago, the elders of the church had agreed that they needed more trained pastors and after a good deal of discussion had persuaded Elijah that he should be ordained as a non-stipendiary minister. This, they thought, would be a good step for Elijah to take. Had not his father been a very faithful and successful minister of the church? Elijah, however, was not willing to go to a college as he wished to look after his business interests and so the Superintendent of the group of churches suggested that Elijah should study at home using an extension programme. There were three other people studying to be ministers in this way and together they could form a group.

Elijah, a little reluctantly, had agreed but insisted he pay for the course himself. He had enjoyed the first year, studying the Old Testament and the lives of the heroes of Jewish history. It seemed that these stories had much in common with the African situation and the discussions they had with the course tutor, a young priest, had been full of interest. But now he was studying doctrine and this was a heavy task.

The meetings he attended once a month were also heavy. The new tutor was an elderly pastor who had been to college and preferred to read the notes he had made years ago. He did give the students an opportunity to ask questions, but no one could think of suitable ones after he had finished his lecturing. Perhaps, thought Elijah, he had made a mistake. Perhaps even the church was a mistake - he wanted something more African, less western, in tradition. Would this be too disloyal to his father who had died a year ago? He had talked privately to two of the other people on the course - there never seemed to be an opportunity to discuss these issues openly in the group. One of the two wanted to leave the group but was afraid to do so because the course fees were being paid by a local church community. The other seemed content to carry on for the few months longer, he simply copied down everything so that he would be able to pass the examination at the end. Elijah had suspicions that he was thinking more of a safe job within the church than the content of the course. As Elijah looked for the third time at the closely typed sheet he thought he really would have to make a decision soon.

### Sophie

In complete contrast to Elijah's despondency was Sophie's feeling of excitement. Sophie lived in a South African township. She was married with two children but her

husband worked in the mines and sent money home each month. Sophie supplemented this small income by selling a few goods to people who lived around her. There was not much profit in this as the people were very poor, but it brought in a little money. Sophie had been brought up as a Christian by her mother and loved her local church services which were full of music and dance and where she could forget the hot little house she lived in with the smelly drains and having to go daily to the water tap to queue for a couple of buckets of water. She could forget her fears about her brothers, members of the ANC, and her worries that they would get into fights with gangs of Incata youths who might at any time descend on the shanty town with their knives and spears.

Sophie was a born again Christian. Some years ago, she had attended a church rally led by a white man. He had spoken about the Holy Spirit and how, if you really wanted to follow Jesus with all your heart, you could ask the Holy Spirit to come into your life. Sophie had gone forward with a crowd of others and people had laid their hands on her head and prayed with her. She could still remember this vividly and how she had suddenly found herself speaking in a strange language and how God had become very real to her. For the first time, she had realised for herself that God really loved and valued her. And now, she had been chosen by her women's group

to study a course. Sophie laughed aloud at the thought: she, a simple woman in a shanty town who had left school at Primary four studying again!

The course would be a short one about evangelism, something Sophie longed to do more of. She loved talking about Jesus even to the hard Totsi boys who carried knives and thought nothing of using them. Some of them laughed at her, but some listened and she could think of quite a few who had turned to Jesus and become different people. Now her church wanted her to become an official evangelist and the women had put bits of money together to pay for her and another woman to take this course. She was a bit afraid - perhaps she wouldn't be a very good student, perhaps she would not be able to understand. But church said that the course was for people like herself who hadn't had much schooling. Anyway, she could only do her best and trust to Jesus to help her.

### Ideal Types

These three students, Matthew, Elijah and Sophie, together with their colleagues are representative of many thousands of students studying Christian theology by distance education schemes. This literary device has been chosen for three reasons.



The first is that it helps to ground educational theory in the practical situation. All education is concerned with individuals and the communities and situations in which they live. To be able to refer constantly to particular students clarifies the contextual factors - culture, resources, background and etc. - of those who are studying. So the problems people face when using distance education courses are raised in a concrete and vivid way. Some of these issues can already be seen in the stories of the three students.

The second reason is that the story form of teaching is used to great effect in Theology. Parables are used frequently both in Old and New testaments of the Bible. Much of theology is based on the real experience of people and of communities and it seems natural to carry this approach to learning into a thesis which examines theological learning.

The third reason is that Matthew, Elijah and Sophie can be described as 'personalised ideal types'. The 'ideal type' is a useful tool for study and given a permanent place in sociology by Max Weber. He used it, for example, in his work 'The Protestant Ethic' to construct ideal types of the capitalist spirit. "An ideal type is formed by the one-sided accentuation of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great many

diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent concrete individual phenomena, which are arranged according to those one-sidedly emphasised viewpoints into a unified, analytical construct. In its conceptual purity, this mental construct cannot be found anywhere in reality." (Martindale 1963:45 quoting Weber 1949:80). The value of the ideal typical is that it helps to give precision to research and is useful in raising important and relevant questions. There is a sense in which we all use the device whenever we think of a situation or certain class of people and is often the only way we can picture elements in research. For example, in thinking about a distance education system, most people would have in their minds a shadowy picture of a typical organisation. The picture may or may not be very accurate but it is there all the same.

The device needs to be treated with some caution in that it is all too easy to make generalisations based on the anecdotal. Weber is at pains to point out what the 'ideal typical' is not. He states it is not a hypothesis, a description of reality or a stereotype (Martindale 1963:44). Providing this caution is born in mind, the advantages of using representative students both to illustrate and clarify issues, to raise questions and to link theory to the practical outweigh any dangers. The characters, Matthew, Elijah and Sophie are drawn from

three sources, personal experience, characters depicted in African literature and autobiography, and sociological research by writers who have lived in Africa. This gives strong grounds for confidence that the images are authentic and do embody realities of experience.

### Methodology

There are many factors to be considered in a thesis with this title and considerable thought has been given to the method of presentation. As the major theme is Distance Education, the thesis will start with a survey of programmes in Africa and attempt both a definition and survey of the topic. Distance Education has its own bank of knowledge and research.

Distance Education must also take into account other factors. The first is the African background. Many parts of Africa are in deep turmoil and the whole of Africa faces change which is taking place at bewildering speed. These changes are of particular relevance to Theology as they affect the questions people ask of God and about God. For example, Matthew is naturally very worried about the drought and, as a Christian believing in prayer, how to pray about this. The context and the pressures placed on students need to be understood and incorporated into teaching programmes.

Distance Education programmes must be based on sound principles of adult education. While some issues are still not clear, for example, how adults learn and on this point considerable research is still being carried out, many principles of adult education are well established and distance education must incorporate these. So the third area of study must be Adult Education.

Within the field of adult education, the teaching of theology has its own special questions and problems which are unique to that particular subject. These can be summed up by the question, "How does a person know God?" a question which brings into consideration the relation between learning on the one hand and spiritual experience and revelation on the other. This area of study is of crucial importance and a separate section is devoted to it.

Two other major considerations must be included. The first is the past history of Africa, and in particular the influence of the missionaries and the colonial system. The relevance of these to education lies chiefly in the influence of the educational systems which they established. In view of this, it seemed appropriate to consider missionary and colonial influences in connection with the principles of adult education. The

second is the influence of African Traditional Religion, and this can naturally be examined, along with its interaction with the Christian faith as brought to Africa by the Missionary movement, in the section concerned with the learning of Christian theology.

After establishing a number of principles upon which which good systems of distance education should be based, actual learning systems and texts will to be examined to see how far these principles have been incorporated. Here a considerable difficulty has arisen in that it has proved almost impossible to obtain current texts. A few are available in this country but these may be outdated as there is great concern to improve programmes and texts used. The reasons for not being able to obtain texts are symptomatic of some of the problems. Staff are very hard pressed and have no time to deal with enquiries from abroad - there is more important work to be done. Postal services are not very reliable. There is a reluctance to answer letters. The original thesis was intended to be a survey of distance education systems with reference to the principles outlined above. Because few texts are available, the thesis concentrates on Theological Education by Extension programmes. This can be justified because the bulk of Christian Education is done through such programmes, with only a small amount through pure correspondence courses.

Finally, some attempt will be made to suggest ways in which distance education systems might develop in order to meet the needs both of the individual students and the churches and communities within which they are learning.

To summarise, the plan of the thesis is as follows:

(a) Distance Education

(i) A survey of distance education systems in Africa

(ii) The principles of distance education

(b) The African background.

(c) Adult Education

(i) How adults learn with a look at attitudes to learning resulting from African educational systems

(d) The particular issues raised by theological education with an examination of African traditional religion and its inter-action with Christianity.

(e) An examination of Distance education schemes and texts used.

(f) Evaluation and possible ways forward.

The three students and their friends will be referred to throughout the thesis in order to keep a constant thread running through the different sections, to ground theory in practical situations and to illustrate more vividly the issues involved.

## Chapter 1

### Distance Education

Distance Education systems in Africa have a short but very vigorous history. So far as theological education is concerned, the history began in 1963, not in Africa but in Guatemala. The Presbyterian church in that country was the first to meet the need for training church leaders in their own homes by extension methods. Leaders had, since 1938, been trained in a Seminary but many of those trained refused to return to rural life. One answer was to move the seminary to a rural area but the church was growing so quickly that this could not meet the need. It was found that genuine leaders of local churches could not spare the time to attend residential courses because of their jobs and family responsibilities. So an extension system was set up. Take home material was, at first, not very suitable as it was based on material used by full time students. But the faculty developed a series of workbooks geared to individual study and as time went on other elements such as programmed learning were incorporated into the scheme. The schemes were produced primarily with the object of training leaders of churches.

At first, there was a good deal of opposition to the courses. There was jealousy on the part of more

traditionally educated pastors some of whom regarded it as entry to the ministry through the back door. Also established, seminary educated pastors found themselves challenged by a more educated laity and some of them were not able to accept this challenge. Further, women, unable to attend residential courses because of family responsibilities, now had opportunities to study and so threatened the traditional, male dominated society (Mulholland in Kinsler 1983 pp34-41).

The situation throughout Africa was very similar to that in Guatemala. The church was experiencing phenomenal growth and the number of trained leaders was not keeping pace with this. The following table (in millions) demonstrates the problem:

	1900	1930	1950	1970	2000 (projected)
Catholic	1	6	14	45	175
Protestant	1	4	9	28	110
Orthodox & Copts	2	5	8	14	32
African Independent	0	1	3	9	34

The example of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church is typical. In 1961 there were 159 congregations ministered to by 31 Pastors. In 1979 there were 2126 congregations ministered to by 220 pastors. (Hogarth 1983 p.17)



One result of the crisis has been the very rapid expansion of the Theological Education by Extension programme. So much so, that in a survey carried out in 1980 to 1982, it was found that there were at least 100 extension programmes in 23 different countries. The total number of students amounted to 23,900 with 1,500 full or part time staff of whom 1,289 were nationals and 212 (16%) expatriates. 28 of the programmes were operated by existing residential colleges and the remainder were independent of residential institutions. Another statistic was that 15 schemes were administered interdenominationally while 88 restricted their programmes to their own denomination as a very much easier option.

Of these organisations, 30 were very small with 50 or less students, the lowest being 4 in the Anglican Diocese of Zanzibar and Tanga. 16 had over 1,000 students while the enrolment of the majority varied from 200 to 700. English was still the main language of instruction with about 20 courses in Swahili and 30 in other dialects. By far the majority of students (22,000) studied at the 'Award' level which was aimed at students with 8 or 9 years of education (i.e. up to third year in Secondary school). Over 1,000 were studying at the Certificate level corresponding to 11 or 12 years of Secondary education and nearly 600 students were studying for a

Diploma Course at the Tertiary level of education. From this it will be seen that while numbers of students are fairly small compared with secular institutions, there is a vigorous and developing movement in the study of Theology by Extension methods.

### Distance Education - General Considerations

It is interesting that this growth has paralleled the growth in the development of Distance Education as a method of education in its own right. Distance Education has quite a long history. Greville Rumble (1986 pp42-45) gives a brief account of the development of correspondence schools, the first in the U.K. started by Isaac Pitman in 1884. But it was not until the late 1950's and early 1960's that Distance Education came to be recognised as an important field of education in its own right, with its own body of expertise and research. In England, the great step forward came with the establishment of the Open University in 1966, and similar organisations were set up in other countries around the same time. A study of international distance education institutions by the FernUniversitaet of Germany listed, in 1986, around 1,500 (Holmberg 1989 p21) with 21 well known distance teaching Universities. This very rapid growth over a comparatively short period of time has resulted in a great deal of research being carried out, also in a short space of time, so that researchers

working in the 1960's are still making contributions to the field. The reasons for the rapid growth are in themselves of interest.

The most obvious factor has been the political pressure for the expansion of education. In industrialised countries with universal primary and secondary education, the pressure has been on higher education and increasing facilities for adults to extend their education. In third world countries, it has been to provide primary and secondary level education for all and to improve standards of education in schools. There has been very rapid expansion of school education with the real danger of a marked decline in standards because of lack of teachers. Distance education can help to increase the number of teachers on a large scale and upgrade existing teachers. In Tanzania, for example, there is an initial teacher training scheme using distance teaching methods, to provide enough teachers for the introduction of universal primary education. Another key concern in third world countries is the difficulty of reaching isolated villages through the traditional classroom methods of teaching. Distance teaching can reach into the homes of students through radio programmes, correspondence courses and self study booklets.

Two other factors have also contributed. The first is

that traditional classroom education has been criticised strongly on the grounds that it isolates students from the real world. The syllabuses have often been irrelevant to the lives the students live in the world. Distance teaching has been used in some traditional institutions themselves to try to bring about change as in Mauritius where the College of the Air introduced woodwork and agricultural science courses into secondary schools through multi-media programmes.

The second factor is that distance teaching is much more cost effective. Classroom teaching is expensive and rapid expansion of this type of education is too costly for many third world countries. The cost rises as the number of students increase. In a distance education system, once the teaching materials have been produced and the courses set up, the cost per student decreases as the number of student rise and additional students can be catered for at very low costs. Also distance teaching makes it possible for a few teachers to reach large numbers of students, does not require new schools and makes it possible for people to learn while still working in productive jobs. (Dodds 1983 p6)

Because of the need for education, and because distance education is cost effective, huge resources have been poured into this type of education by the World Bank and

UNESCO. Publishing Houses are showing considerable interest in the field as the potential for the sale of educational material increases. There are now very good handbooks on all aspects of distance education - how to set up systems, how to write courses, how to tutor etc. - which in themselves are models of distance education: techniques. Examples are books produced by the International Extension College (Jenkins 1985; Dodds 1986) and by the Open University (Lewis 1981 and 1984 and 1986)

Another very significant factor in the improvement of distance education has been the development of new methods of printing material. In the 1960's virtually the only method of printing materials cheaply and on the scale required was typewriter and duplicator. The great advances in technology now mean that attractive, illustrated booklets can be produced by even small organisations. In the audio-visual field, while the more sophisticated range of aids (television, videos and computer programmes) are available to some in large towns, it is possible for most students to supplement written courses with tape recordings.

All this has repercussions for the teaching of Theology by distance methods. Because the rapid expansion of distance education systems in Theology has paralleled

the equally rapid expansion of research into the field of distance education techniques there will be wide variation in courses and standards of tuition. It is possible that Sophie will be using attractive, well illustrated and simple texts based on well proven educational techniques by an international organisation. Alternatively, she could be using duplicated sheets produced by a small locally organised church. Matthew will probably use texts produced by a local extension college with adequate printing resources but a hard pressed staff. It would appear that Elijah has been unfortunate in being directed to a course that is still very traditional and produced with a mass of typewritten words in an A4 booklet by teachers, perhaps well qualified in the subject, but not in the art of communication. It is possible that the body producing the courses had actually updated its Old Testament section, but not the Doctrine. This subject is much more difficult to write about as changes from the accepted traditional teaching demand quite radical thinking. Elijah's situation does illustrate the great responsibility placed on course producers and writers to encourage motivation, a point which will be considered in greater detail later.

## Distance Education - Theory and Practice

It has already been made clear that distance education has produced its own body of research and expertise. This section will summarise those areas of research which have some bearing on the teaching of Theology.

The starting point is a working definition. This is needed to provide reasonable limits to research and also because in some cases laws and funding may be involved and distance education organisations need to know their limits. The best definition seems to be that of Holmberg (1977 p9) widely accepted and upheld by him some 13 years later (Holmberg 1990) which reads as follows: "The term 'Distance Education' covers the various forms of study at all levels which are not under the continuous, immediate supervision of tutors present with their students in lecture rooms or on the same premises, but which nevertheless benefit from the planning, guidance and tuition of a tutorial organisation."

Kegan (1986 ch.3) examines a number of definitions ending with his own which reads more like a description than a definition. It is made more complicated by the use of the word 'quasi' in order to cover all possible situations, but is helpful in that it lists the different elements:

Keegan's definition is:

1. The quasi-permanent separation of teacher and learner throughout the length of the learning process. (This distinguishes it from face-to-face education.
2. The influence of an educational organisation both in the planning and preparation of learning materials and in the provision of student support services. (This distinguishes it from private study and teach yourself programmes)
3. The use of technical media - print, audio, video or computer - to unite teacher and learner and carry the content of the course.
4. The provision of two-way communication so that the student may benefit from or even initiate dialogue. (This distinguishes it from other users of technology in education)
5. The quasi-permanent absence of the learning group throughout the length of the learning process so that people are usually taught as individuals and not in groups, with the possibility of occasional meetings for both didactic and socialization purposes.

Both definitions include correspondence schools as being



an important part of Distance education, providing there is some contact between student and teaching organisation, the most common contact being through submission of work and it being returned with comments and assessment. The second definition underplays contact with fellow students but many systems do try to work more closely with students and this is particularly true of Theological Education.

These definitions illustrate well the fundamental difference between distance education and classroom teaching - the lack of personal contact between instructor and instructed. This can result in obstacles to learning and much research has been devoted to overcoming difficulties created by this lack of contact.

The importance of student support was stressed originally by Wedemeyer of the University of Wisconsin and John Baath who worked at Malmo in Sweden. Wedemeyer was very concerned for the socially disadvantaged and geographically isolated student. He emphasised that the student had the greater part of the responsibility for learning but that success is very much the responsibility of the instructor who is motivator and monitor of the student's activities. Baath emphasised that the role of the tutor went very much beyond that of correcting and assessing the student's work, quoting William Harper who

wrote in 1880, "The correspondence teacher must be painstaking, sympathetic and alive; whatever a dead teacher may accomplish in the classroom, he can do nothing by correspondence" (Keegan 1990 p87). Borje Holmberg from Sweden and working at the Fernuniversitat in Hagen stresses the needs of the student. Learning by the individual is what distance education is concerned with and so administration, counselling, teaching and evaluation are only important in so far as they support the individual in his learning tasks. Free pacing and good tutorial relationships are essential.

This emphasis on student needs is very much in line with the change in emphasis in education generally from a 'teacher centred' system to a 'learner centred' system and is or should be a key aspect of Theological Education. A central part of Christian Theology is concerned with relationships and the importance of the individual within the community. Any education system organised by Christians should have the welfare of all concerned at heart and especially the student for whom the system is set up.

The term used for most distance systems of education in Theology is 'Theological Education by Extension' - education extending into people's homes and communities. All systems have student support at heart and so most are

based not just on the courses sent out by the teaching organisation but also on small groups meeting with local tutors. An example of this is the Diocese of Lesotho's extension course.

In Lesotho, the Anglican church set up a TEE scheme in 1977 with a view to providing training for candidates for self-supporting ministry, that is, men employed in teaching, business or farming who did not have the time or academic qualifications for residential college or full time ministry. Now the course serves a wider group of people, teachers, nuns, lay ministers and applicants for ordination. There are 30 people at present doing training: 23 Anglicans, 4 Roman Catholics, 2 Methodists and 1 from the Lesotho Evangelical Church. There is one TEE director who combines this work with other duties such as lecturing at the seminary and lay-training. The educational materials are sent from the Theological Education by Extension College, South Africa. These have programmed self-testing questions, periodic assignments to be sent to the college and final examinations taken locally. Self study is intended to be supplemented by small study groups meeting every week or two. This proves to be difficult, partly because there are few local tutors - parish priests are generally overworked and under-trained - and partly because of the isolation of the students. Consequently, national

tutorial groups are held quarterly and there are regional one day tutorial groups in three locations. Individual tutorials with the Director are held once a quarter.

Careful guidance is given before students start the course and fees are paid by the Diocese for candidates for ordination. The budget of the whole scheme is very tight - approximately £3,300 to cover fees, meetings, transport and library but the Director's fee is paid from outside the country. (Gay 1992)

This system is described at some length as it is typical of many. A number of systems insist on the student attending local tutorial groups partly for mutual support and partly to 'contextualise' the study, to make the study relevant to the student's own situation. Other organisations organise student groups led by a local tutor where this is possible. As with Lesotho, a serious problem is finding local tutors with sufficient knowledge and understanding of teaching methods to do the job competently and again, Elijah suffers in that respect. Where groups are not possible, the teaching organisation tries to find alternative methods of individual support.

#### A Distance Education Programme

Returning to the general field of Distance Education, another major area of research come from an examination

of the different parts of a distance education programme.

This can be very complex as the following table shows:

- |                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| 1. Educational Programme: | Aim of institution<br>Objectives of each course                                 |
| 2. Management:            | Personnel<br>Records,<br>Communications<br>Accommodation, Purchasing,<br>Stores |
| 3. Teaching Material      | Planning and preparation<br>Production  |
| 4. Student Service        | Information and Admission<br>Teaching<br>Counselling<br>Examining               |
| 5. Finance                | Budgeting, costing,<br>accounting<br>Revenue and expenditure                    |
| 6. Evaluation             | Assessment of instruction<br>Improvement and development                        |

Evaluation also includes research and appraisal of management systems and the use of revenue (Source: Erdos 1975b p11 quoted by Holmberg 1989 p31)

All of these aspects - Programme, Management, Teaching material, Student service, Finance and Evaluation - are needed even if the organisation is very small with only a

handful of students - in which case staff will either have to double up on different functions or use the services of another agency. It is easy to see how a small organisation with a limited budget might find itself stretched almost to breaking point. Often, in such situations, the first casualty is the evaluation section with resulting in long delays in updating courses.

### Organisation and Aims

While each section listed above is needed and can carry its own research and expertise, the whole can be grouped more conveniently under four headings:

1. Organisation, to include the three groupings  
Educational programme, Management and Finance.
2. Course Production.
3. Student support. Some consideration has already been given to this in describing TEE methods.
4. Evaluation.

In connection with organisation, Greville Rumble, planning officer at the Open University (1986 p89) gives a helpful outline of the planning process:

Market Research  
Identified Needs  
Mission Statement

Goals  
Objectives  
Budgets  
Implementation  
Evaluation

Most of these steps are self explanatory, but two need some clarification. These are 'Mission Statement' and 'Goals' corresponding to some extent with the 'Aims of the Institution' in the Erdos list. Rumble sees the 'Mission Statement' as referring to the general philosophy of the institution: whether it is predominantly institution centred, individual centred or society centred. This will very much affect the teaching strategy. Does the institution want to impart a body of knowledge? Does it want to help students to develop their own thinking? Does it want to train students to play a part in the development of the whole community? The answer to these questions will vitally affect the way in which teaching material is presented and also the selection of material.

An example of the setting up of an organisation on the basis of the principles listed by Rumble is the establishment of the Theological Education by Extension College South Africa, the college referred to in the description of the TEE scheme in Lesotho. This is of

particular interest in that it was the subject of an evaluation ten years after it was founded. The following account comes from a report by Kate Hughes (Hughes 1987).

In 1975, the Joint Board for the Diploma in Theology of Southern Africa appointed a small committee to investigate a Theological Education by Extension programme. The problem was that the existing residential institutions were expensive to operate, limited in numbers and created an elite so that the one trained in theology became the leader in his/her congregation. The situation in Africa could be summed up by

1. We are not training enough leaders.
2. We are not training the real leaders.
3. The cost of training is too high.
4. The traditional training in residential schools segregates prospective leaders so they become professionals.
5. We are training men in irrelevant contexts.

In this particular issue, needs were clearly identified. There was little market research required as the church could already identify a number of people who would want to take advantage of any courses. But most important was the mission statement and aims of the institution the committee hoped to set up. The committee did not regard the provision of TEE as a way of extending the resources of a residential college to non-residential students.



They began with a definition of theology which states that for a Christian (or those seeking an authentic Christian faith) theology is not a purely academic study, whose aim is to acquire knowledge. It is, in the literal meaning of the word, aimed at an understanding of God, a growing awareness of who God is, how he works in his world, in history, in society and in the person's own life which leads to a growing ability to interpret his will in particular situations. Teaching theology by extension also makes statements about leadership and ministry in the church, the importance of context and the right and duty of every Christian to participate in theologising. It follows that theological studies should not be restricted by barriers of race, sex, previous education, social standing and money, for to deprive any particular group from participation would be to detract from the basic aims. Further, if doing theology by extension is, in itself, teaching a theological message, then it must influence the form and content of the TEE medium: the lesson material, the seminar meeting and field experience.

So the College was set up in 1976 with a clear mission statement and in the light of this background, a statement of aims was made. These were:

1. The purpose of TEE training is training in Christian living, witness and service by extension methods on

- an ecumenical basis.
2. TEE is designed to help natural leaders in the church to equip themselves for more effective ministry.
  3. TEE is designed to meet the needs of churches for theological training for the following persons:
    - (a) those already in lay ministries, or preparing for them and needing further training
    - (b) Lay people who need to work out a theology which will enable them to work out a Christian response in their situation.
    - (c) those whom the church has already chosen for training for the ordained ministry outside the residential system.
  4. Because TEE must be contextual and because of the lack of experience in contextual education, an important function of the scheme is the training of local tutors in methods of contextual education. The scheme will also facilitate the provision of contextual materials.
  5. TEE should provide educational materials for as wide a range of educational levels as possible but that initially courses should be prepared at a basic level (Standards 5 to Junior Certificate) and also for students who could be awarded a Diploma in Theology.

So far as objectives are concerned, it was decided to produce three levels of materials:

Award level:                Students with 5-6 years education

Certificate level:        Students with Junior Certificate

Diploma level:             Students with minimum Standard 10

Syllabus and accreditation would be the responsibility of the college which would become a constituent member of the Joint Board for the Diploma in Theology (Southern Africa).

Budgeting to begin with was worked out by the constituent churches and a very small staff wrote material in modest offices. The total number of students to begin with was 372 and this peaked in 1981 with 1200 students. Because of the aim of providing materials at a cost within reach of all, fees were kept very low and there was constant pressure on finance which in turn affected administration. By 1983 there was a financial crisis. For a time, it seemed as though the work of the college would come to an end, but there was a reorganisation, a new director and the finances were put onto a much securer footing. In 1986, there were 17 full time workers and 6 part time together with 154 tutors and 8 regional coordinators. There were 703 students with 308 at Diploma level and 270 at certificate and 125 at award level.

The foundation of this college has been described at some

length both to illustrate the principles stated by Rumble and also to portray a TEE organisation in Africa which, though large compared with most, is typical of its kind. Most have the same kind of mission statement and aims. The college will be referred to again in a sections on course material and evaluation.

The account also illustrates the importance of proper budgeting. Regretably many churches are hard pressed for finance but adequate costings are essential for good schemes. Even though an organisation may begin with the highest aims, these cannot be achieved if there is not adequate finance.

### Costing

Costing is an extremely difficult process and much research has been carried out mainly in connection with large organisations sponsored by Governments. The International Extension College gives good guidance on working out costings (Dodds 1983) although examples given are now dated. Costs are generally made up of:

Salaries and Fees: Management and administrative  
Course writers, Course tutors

Printing and stationery

Books, instructional materials and equipment (?audio)

Rent, rates, office costs  
Transport and travel

Equipment

The cost of pilot schemes must also be taken into account.

Costs will vary according to the number of students but can be divided into three: fixed costs of the organisation, course production costs and individual student costs. It is impossible to generalise as salaries, exchange rates depend very much in countries and can vary enormously from year to year. The exchange rate in Tanzania in 1985 was 25 shillings to the pound. Now it is over 700! What is important to bear in mind is that it is easy to underestimate both costs and the time factor in producing and setting up courses. But, as Tony Dodds remarks in the chapter on costing, "Intelligent guesswork is better than struggling in the dark and hoping that costs will work out alright."

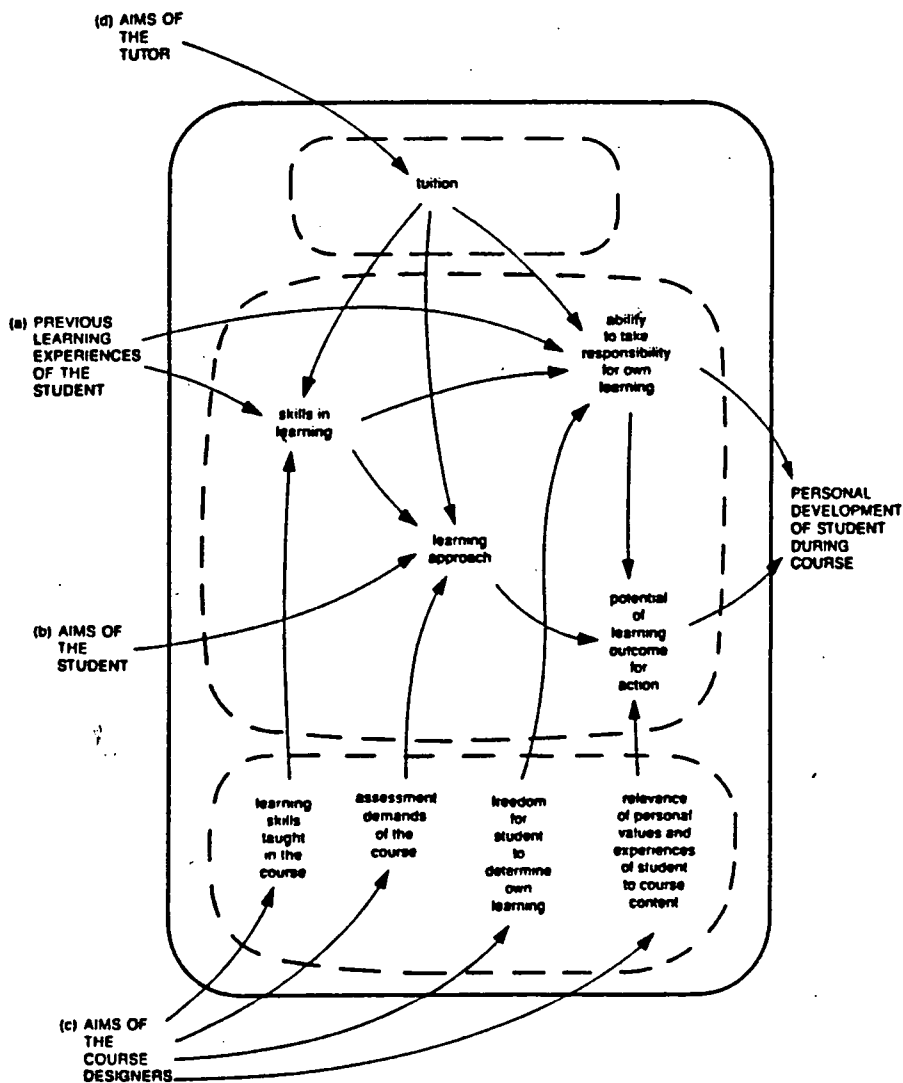
### Teaching Material

Returning again to the list from Erdos illustrating a system of distance education, after organisation comes Teaching Material. This can also be described as Course Production and is very closely linked with the fourth aspect, Student Services. Right at the heart of any distance teaching system is the course material and great care must be taken with both the writing and the design of the actual material which the student receives into his hands. Lack of care in this suggests lack of

interest in and enthusiasm for the subject the organisation is trying to teach.

The following diagram shows how closely Course Design and student needs are interwoven.

### The practice of distance education



System of distance education (Source Wright 1987 p5 quoted Holmberg 1989 p32)

This diagram has been used because it introduces many points which will be made later in connection with adult

learning. Considerations such as 'relating the material to the personal values and experiences of the student', 'freedom for student to determine own learning' and 'the previous learning experiences of the student' are common to any system of adult education. What course designers have to bear in mind is that the courses are fixed for all students. They cannot be negotiated as in a classroom situation face to face with a teacher. Consequently as much care as is possible must be taken to ensure that the course does cater for all.

The left hand side column describes three aims; those of the tutor, the student and the course designer. It does not mention the aim of the teaching organisation, perhaps assuming that the designers and organisation are the same. In large organisations, they will not be. The course writer may well be restricted by the over-all aims. If the organisation is bound to principles of programmed learning the course must be designed in this way. If the organisation wishes to encourage original thinking and adopts a problem solving approach, again this will be reflected in the course. If a basic aim is to make the study relevant to the life of the student, the text needs to contain questions and exercises which encourage the student to reflect on such issues.

It may be that, in small systems, the course tutor and designer are the same person but in large systems and in

systems which import material, this will not be the case. So the course designer needs to make clear the aims of the course, both for tutors and students. This is important in theology where there can be a wide variety of interpretation and opinion.

The writing of courses is not easy and requires two qualifications - a sound knowledge of the subject and an ability to communicate clearly. Often an expert in the field finds it difficult to set out on paper an attractive and stimulating course. Team work is helpful here with at least one member of the team skilled in presentation, but again, resources do not always permit this, particularly in small schemes for theological study. However, very good handbooks, backed by research, have been produced to guide both management and writers (Lewis 1981: Rowntree 1986: Jenkins 1985) and there seems no reason why course writers should not be able to produce at least adequate programmes with this help.

There are many aspects to the production of good course material. The following are of crucial importance: First the material, broken down into easily learnable stages, needs to be presented in an attractive and stimulating form. Students should be told clearly what is expected of them. Here the techniques of presentation



are important. The language must be simple and direct and the layout easy to follow - an important consideration in a third world country where often the language of instruction is the student's second language. This means short paragraphs with attention paid to typesetting, headlines, indentation and etc. Illustrations, if these are possible, are very helpful to keep interest, and the whole text should be assessed, perhaps through a pilot scheme to see if students find difficulties with any particular sections of the text.

Second, methods of assessment should be incorporated, both self-assessment exercises with specimen answers provided and exercises to be sent away for comment and assessment. The former are of value in reinforcing learning and engaging the student in practical activity while the latter are of value both to the student and the tutor of the course as they can highlight difficulties. They are also needed if continuous assessment methods are being used for certificates or diplomas. Giving students different kinds of task, both for assessment and reinforcement, can also make the material more interesting and break up a period of study, which, in general should not take more than an hour at a time.

## Student Service

The third aspect of distance education and the most fundamental is obviously the student. Again issues will be considered in greater detail in the section on adult education, but distance education has its own particular responsibilities so far as student support is concerned. In earlier times, it was thought sufficient simply to provide a tutor who would mark work and send it back to the student with comments. For subjects involving practical work, residential periods were incorporated, but generally this was not thought necessary for more academic study. Again as a result of much research, it has been realised that student support goes much further. One reason has been cost. It does not pay to have students dropping out of courses. Originally, when such a thing happened, it was thought to be the student's responsibility. The educational service provided a course and if the student could not complete it, that was the student's fault. It is now realised that learning is very much a partnership, and while there are clear responsibilities placed on the student, there are also responsibilities on the part of teaching organisation. It is a lonely task, studying by distance methods and many do need both encouragement and support. This can be given in a number of ways.

The first, and simplest, is in the way assignments from students are handled. It is important that such assignments are returned promptly and with helpful comments. Again, there are handbooks written for tutors explaining how to comment on work constructively and with encouragement. (Mauger & Boucherat 1991: Lewis 1984)

Another area where support is often needed is in methods of study. Many students are returning to study a long time after leaving school. Some may not have had any experience of study apart from primary education. So students need to be taught how to learn, how to tackle assignments and, depending on the course, how to write essays, a skill in itself. Above all they need to be given confidence that they can do the things the course requires of them. This can be done through the course by means of an introduction to the course, a separate student's handbook (but this requires extra reading) or in support groups discussed below. However it is done, helping a student to learn is an important part of student support.

Many organisations go further and provide separate counselling services. At the beginning it is important to ensure that the student is embarking on a right course. During the course a help line is useful so that a student, if he or she encounters problems, can contact

the teaching organisation. This is not easy in many third world countries partly because of the difficulty of communication and partly because of shortage of skilled staff.

Another way which does not exclude the above, is to use existing tutorial arrangements, whether this is small groups or short residential periods, for discussing difficulties and for counselling. In the small group, many problems, both social and connected with study, can be discussed and mutual support can be given. The key to this method of support is the tutor. To begin with, it was thought that someone skilled in the subject being studied would provide the leadership and additional tuition needed. This did not necessarily prove to be the case and now there is great concern to train tutors in the skills of leading small groups. This is an essential task in a system which depends on small group support for its learning programme.

The example given in the preface where all twelve members of a course dropped out illustrates graphically the importance of counselling before a course is undertaken. While there were extraneous factors in this particular case, the basic reason was that there had been no discussion with the individuals about the suitability of the course, their motivation and their ability to

devote sufficient time to study. The course was quite hard for the people concerned and estimates of time required printed in the course, were very misleading. Initial counselling would have saved both money and time.

In the case of the three African students, the initial counselling for Matthew seemed to be good and he had plenty of time to consider the implications and make appropriate arrangements. Sophie had very little counselling and needs some assurance that she can really cope with the course, but since it is a short one and she has great enthusiasm for the topic this probably does not matter too much. Elijah was pushed into undertaking a course of study. There was little discussion about its suitability or his real interest in it and, in the second course, no support by the local tutor. The result may well be that his church loses him altogether.

### Evaluation

Of the six factors outlined by Erdos in a distance education system, probably the most difficult to carry out, particularly in the theological field, is evaluation.

At one time, the only evaluation of a course was a final examination where a student passed or failed. If the student failed, it was not the fault of the course, but

the student - for not working hard enough or some similar reason. It is now realised that assessment and evaluation is as much for the organisation's benefit as the students. The student needs accreditation for successfully completing a course. The organisation needs to know whether it is being successful in achieving its aims, and further, whether the aims themselves need to be modified or changed. Good evaluation will also lead to development - the development of better courses, better tutor groups and better contextualisation if that is one of the objectives. The Erdos list makes it clear that all aspects of the organisational structure need evaluation, but the starting point is the student.

The first factor is the assessment of the students, either by the organisation itself or by an external body. If the majority graduate, then at least one aim of the course has been achieved. Assessment can be done either by examination or by continuous assessment of course work, or a combination of the two. These can be supplemented by local tutors' but if the local tutor is also partly counsellor, it is better to separate that person from the assessment process. An important consideration in evaluation of a particular course is also how many students drop out - a high rate in this indicates a poor or unsuitable course.

A second approach to evaluation is to ask those graduating to assess the course they have studied. This can be done at the end of each course section by means of a simple questionnaire and then at the end of the course itself. Care needs to be taken to keep administration to a minimum with straightforward questions. and the books on course production give guidance on this.

An even better indication, but difficult to administer is to ask graduates to assess the value of what they have learnt a year after completing the course, when they have had chance to put into practice what they have learnt. This can be done by a questionnaire given at some special event (postal response is usually poor) or by personal interview of a limited number. Another way would be to invite graduates to a conference to help in the planning of the next programme and incorporate their suggestions into the new teaching schemes.

A more radical suggestion, made by F.Ross Kinsler (1991) in a survey of Theological Education by Extension is that the community should also be involved in the assessment. In Matthew's case, it is he and his congregation who can judge best whether the training has been valuable and effective. Such an evaluation could only be carried out in a limited way because of the time involved, but it might be well worth trying. Western education tends to

be very person-centred and much of the training in Africa is for the benefit of the community as well as the individual. Evaluation differs from assessment in that it gives an overall view of the worth of a particular programme. So, in a programme for training for ministry, what is important is whether the course helped Matthew to be a better and more confident pastor. The people who can answer this question are Matthew and his congregation. The idea of community evaluation may seem a little strange and difficult to administer but it is the community which is on the receiving end.

Another more subtle aspect of evaluation is whether a course has encouraged the student to continue to learn. Learning is concerned with personal development which should not stop after the completion of a particular course. If a good number of students decide to take further courses, this is a clear indication that the first course did meet a need successfully. One object of introducing people to learning experiences is to encourage lifelong learning and a course which encourages this is very much worthwhile.

It will be seen from this that evaluation is a complex process which does take time and reflection. But it is an essential process if there is to be development and progress on the part of the teaching organisation.



## Chapter 2

### The African Scene

Any educational system must take into account the overall context in which students are trying to learn. Even a school cannot ignore external factors. In Malaysia, despite the general prosperity of the country, some children at the school where I taught, collapsed at the midmorning break simply because their parents were too poor to give them any breakfast. As the school wanted to ensure the children received an education, it had to meet this need. Distance education is even more affected by such considerations, as the students, studying at home, are subjected to enormous pressures and these cannot be ignored. In this section, some of those external pressures affecting particularly Matthew and Sophie will be examined and conclusions which affect distance education will be drawn.

#### Background of change: Urbanisation

Just as there is, on the whole, a common culture to sub-Saharan Africa, there is also a common background of radical and overwhelming change. Two influences for change are common to the whole of Africa and three others affect most, but not all countries.

One of the greatest areas of change is urbanisation. While the level of urban dwelling in Africa is low compared with other continents, the rate of growth is extremely high. At present approximately 30% of the population are urban dwellers. By the end of this century it will be 40%. In 1970, there were 7 cities with a million plus inhabitants. By the year 2000, there will be 95, five with more than five million people. The growth of smaller townships is equally rapid. In 1970 there were 137 towns with a population of 100,000 or more. It is estimated that there will be 692 such towns at the end of the century (Shorter 1991 p8 based on Zanotelli 1988). African countries are poor and so these high growth rates mean a high concentration of poverty in the towns.

There are different reasons for the growth of cities. Some have been in existence from before colonial times, especially in the Yoruba areas of Nigeria, but towns were reasonably compact with relatively small populations. Kano had between 20,000 and 40,000 in 1825 (Bascomb in Friedle 1975 p245). In East Africa, Mombasa grew because of Islamic culture which is substantially urban. Nairobi came into existence in 1899 as a transport depot for the construction of the Ugandan railway and is very much of European origin along with cities such as Johannesburg and Lusaka. The growth of the town to which Matthew

cycled is paralleled by that of Magu in Tanzania which, in 1970 was simply a stopping place along the Mwanza - Musoma road with a few kiosks and stalls. By 1970 it had grown to a town of 10,000 with a cotton factory. Then the Government made it the headquarters of a new district so by 1990 the population had risen to nearly 20,000. Growth of cities and towns can be attributed to diverse sets of reasons but in the main are caused by the big city putting out tentacles. Opportunities for trade and income generation develop along lines of communication and towns multiply which are stepping stones for better and more secure employment in a bigger city (Shorter 1991 p35).

However, because the process has been so swift, many city dwellers still retain deep roots in rural areas and frequently return to their own tribal villages. Even with well established city people, there can be strong ties with the village. In a celebrated case in 1986, a prominent Nairobi lawyer, Otieno, died intestate and his wife proposed to bury him on his own land on the outskirts of Nairobi. Members of his paternal family, the Unira Kager clan, also made arrangements for burial - in the remote vilage Nyalgunga. Injunctions and counter injunctions were served; the case went to trial and then to the appeal court. Otieno was finally buried in his rural homeland. The widow's lawyers had great difficulty

in finding precedents to show that it was right to bury Otieno in Nairobi. This indicates the close bond between urban and rural areas which not even the elite can evade. Shorter, who has done much research into urban communities in Africa and who has spent years in Kampala and Nairobi, stresses this connection. It may well be that as urbanisation proceeds, people will begin to lose their rural roots but for the present generation, the rural ties exercise a deep influence. This conclusion is also born out by a detailed survey of families of the Xhosa people living in East London. Although a return to the village of origin is no longer possible for political reasons, traditional rural beliefs retain their force. (Pauw 1973 p15) People hold to beliefs in witchcraft and sorcery, consult diviners, pray at graves of parents and immediate ancestors and, in the case of "Red blanket people", hold to traditional dress. Initiation ceremonies especially for boys are still carried out.

There is considerable communication between recent urban dwellers and village communities. In the case of short distance migrants, the connection will be frequent while long distance migrants will return on special occasions but the visit is likely to be longer. Thus rural areas are increasingly influenced by urban development, especially in the case of those near enough to a city to

supply produce while urban dwellers retain deep roots in the country and in the traditional culture.

Urbanisation does have its effect in different ways on different groups of people. Generally young people and more often young men migrate to the cities and this can produce breakdown in existing family structures with consequent breakdown in moral standards. Teenagers and young adults make up around fifty per cent of the town population (Shorter 1991 p115). This leads to all the traditional city problems - prostitution, drugs, disease especially AIDS, violence and vandalism.

Because Africa is poor many urban dwellers are poor. Each city has its shanty towns and when survival is of the essence, culture takes a back seat. Cities with their seemingly intractable problems of sanitation and overcrowding would seem to be poor places to live but they do have positive things to offer. The market is not just for goods and labour, important though these may be. Generally, except for the very poor, health care, income, and standards of living generally are better than in the country, at least at present. The city can also be a place for the production of ideas and new opportunities. They are centres of communication - particularly important in so far as distance education is concerned. Of relevance to Christian Theology is that cities are

places where the influence of the West and Western ideas is strongest and such ideas are spread to all areas of the country.

The younger generation is being constantly exposed to the materialism of Western Society and this is already having an impact, and is one of the major reasons for the influx to cities where, it is hoped, there are better prospects of employment and the consequent increase in standard of living. It also means that people are increasingly exposed to Western world views and to scientific development which inevitably will lead in time to greater questioning. There is little sign as yet that the secular views of the west are gaining much ground but the exposure to different world views and ways of thinking does lead to confusion and has to be taken into account by any system of education. A case can be made that urbanisation contributes to a kind of universal anti-culture, undermining traditional cultures by impoverishing them and devaluing symbols (Shorter 91 p26). The issue of urbanisation has been dealt with at some length because it affects almost all students personally - Sophie lives in a city, Matthew may well have children studying in the city or attracted to it while Elijah has a business network based on the intercommunication between town, city and village. The influx of new ideas through radio, press, television and

personal contact may or may not affect an individual but can be quite bewildering especially to someone who is prepared to think deeply.

### Population increase

Urbanisation is a symptom of the second great problem facing the whole of Africa and that is population increase. The present population is 647.5 million but it is estimated that this will increase to 1,581 million by the year 2025 with a growth rate of 3%. This growth rate is the fastest in human history. Latin America and Asia have rates of 1.4% and 1.8% while Europe and North America have 0.2% and 0.7% respectively. As a result of this explosive growth, by 2025, 6 countries, Ruanda, Somalia, Kenya, Burundi, Lesotho and Malawi will be able to feed less than half their populations. With the population growth comes a fall in income per capita averaging 0.7% in the years 1986 to 1990 and 0.9% in 1991. Despite an overall increase in the GNP of 2.3%, the numbers below the poverty line amount to 300 million and unemployment is rising. (Augustine Oyowe in The Courier: July 1992)

### Conflict, disease and famine

The three other major problems affecting Africa may well be likened to the four horsemen of the Apocalypse. They

are conflict, disease and famine. .

Almost every country in Africa has been affected by war and conflict in recent times. It is highly likely that members of Sophie's family have had confrontations with the South African police and perhaps imprisoned (in the past because of Pass Laws). If not, she will have friends whose families have been affected. Those to whom she is wanting to reach out will have experienced violence either in their own lives or those of their friends and will probably have taken part in violence. Although the numbers involved in the recent massacres are small, in one sense the whole community is involved and these are only part of an ongoing cycle of violence over many years.

War at present affects Mozambique, Somalia, the Sudan and other countries. Nigeria, the Congo, Zaire, Angola, Uganda have all experienced bitter conflict and some of these countries are still suffering from the aftermath of war; Tanzania's economy is weak for a variety of reasons, but one reason is that it is still suffering from the after-effects of the war with Uganda. Nigeria has experienced civil war in the past and Kenya, the conflict for independence. Violence is not far from the surface in almost all other countries. It is true that there are few countries in the world have escaped war but



conflict in Africa is still very recent and ongoing.

The second horseman is disease. Although infant mortality is still very high, and illnesses such as Malaria, dysentery, sleeping sickness major hazards, for a time, with improved medical facilities, it seemed that slowly the battle against disease was beginning to be won. But the onset of Aids is now a very serious problem. Of the 3 million females in the world infected, 82% are in Africa and of the 5 million males, 51%. (Courier Jan. 92 p49) In one or two countries especially Uganda and Kenya, few families have not been affected in some way. A further factor is that it is a young persons' illness affecting most of all the 15 to 44 age range with the result that even now a large number of children are orphans. This is a major and well known threat.

The third horseman and even more alarming is drought. For long this has affected countries such as Chad, the Sudan and others just below the Sahara. Attempts were made many years ago to provide wells, but the desert has advanced, silting up many of the wells that were sunk. A further factor has been the destruction of forests both for fuel by the local population and by western countries and Japan for timber. The drought in Somalia is well known because of Television appeals, but there is now drought in parts of South Africa, in Zimbabwe which last

year only had 25% of its normal rainfall and in Zambia as well as parts of Kenya which have from time to time been affected. The Limpopo river has virtually dried up and it does seem, though it is too early to be certain, that there may be climatic changes taking place with possible overwhelming consequences for peoples living in certain parts of Africa.

#### Consequences for education

These affect Christian education in two ways. The first and obvious way is that where war or poverty predominates, there can be no education. Communications break down and if basic needs are not being met and people are simply struggling to survive, there is no energy left for study. This may, sadly, already be having an effect on distance education programmes in countries like Zimbabwe where there is a serious drought. Also disease, Malaria for example, can sap a person's energy and make it difficult to concentrate and consideration must be given to such issues when assessing work.

The second effect is that when such problems are on the doorstep, then in a system of education dealing with spiritual and moral issues, at least some attempt must be made in the educational material to consider the issues even though they may not, at first, seem relevant to the

actual texts being studied. Looking at the text of St. Matthew's Gospel, for example, may not appear to raise questions about war, but as soon as the teaching of the Sermon the Mount is reached, then issues like "Blessed are the peacemakers", "Turn the other cheek" have an immediate significance. To ignore that significance makes the object of study completely unreal. Academic study must be closely involved with the practical situation

Two possible consequences of all these difficulties facing Africa today are first that there may be a strong return to tribalism, (as has happened in the past and as is happening in South Africa) or that Governments may become destabilised. With very limited financial resources it is difficult for Governments to keep hold the confidence of the people and there is civil unrest. In Zambia, there have been 'food riots' because of the shortage of supplies. If there is a breakdown in government infra-structure then distance education becomes difficult, if not impossible.

#### Inequalities in world society

Perhaps the hardest fact to face is the apparent hopelessness of the situation. At the same time as Africans are looking to Western ways to bring about improvement in standards of living and a more equal

society, the very structures of western capitalism are militating against such improvements. Capital investment in third world countries generally speaking enriches the western world at the expense of the poor. The net flow of capital is outward from the third world (Roxborough 1979 p58) partly because of debt repayments and partly because local capital is not invested in local small businesses with low returns but in multinational companies. Further, Western investment is usually in technology which is labour saving rather than labour intensive. Also, it is well established that world trade is predominantly in the hands of the wealthy west and third world countries have to produce more and more local products to buy less and less western commodities such as oil and machinery. The possibilities for change and improvement are decreasing rather than increasing and the possibilities for independence and control, despite newly gained independence are lessening because of economic factors. Africa is becoming more of a dependent society than less.

Another consideration, particularly of concern to Christians is that in the face of all these problems, people seek something that is stable, that does not change, and often religion is seen to be permanent, stable and unchanging. The Christian church in England suffers from this view. Amid a rapidly changing society, some people want the church to remain constant and

unchanging to provide an element of security in their lives. An alternative to the church is to cling to some particular aspect of the faith, for example, a fundamentalist belief in the Bible as the unchanging word of God. While there are unchanging aspects of Christian teaching, theological education should avoid retreat into a safe system of belief and ensure that Christianity is seen as a living and progressive faith involved in the problems of the time and not retreating from them.

Although the problems do seem overwhelming, the situation is not all gloomy. There is great vitality and enthusiasm in many areas of Africa. There are educational schemes which are making people aware of their situations and helping them to take responsibility for change. Paradoxically deprivation can provide immense opportunities for the development of sensitive, well planned Distance Education schemes. Theology is concerned with change and development and people in such circumstances long for change. If courses can be made relevant to the issues facing people and enable people to make changes to their situations, then Distance education can thrive. Jesus was deeply concerned with the poor and theology should share that concern.

## Chapter 3

### Adult Learning

Sophie, Matthew and Elijah are adults attempting to learn. The processes by which adults learn are still a long way from being understood, but some principles are now well established. In distance learning as in face to face learning, there are two parties, the student and the teaching organisation. This section will first look at some general principles relating to adult education from the point of view of the student and then from that of the teaching organisation. Second, the more specialised aspects of the question 'How adults learn' will be considered.

#### The person

It is axiomatic that adult learning starts with a person. If learning is carried out in groups, members of the group may influence and help one another, but the learning is done by an individual. The individual brings to the learning a whole variety of experience and knowledge, some of which may be relevant, in a positive or negative way, to the subject being studied. One way of representing the learning process is as follows:

<u>The person</u>	<u>Learning</u>	<u>Reflection</u>	<u>Light</u>
	<u>Experience</u>		<u>Dawns</u>

Factors influencing the learning process:

Personality	Teaching		
Heredity	programme		
Culture	or other	Paralleled	Added to
Social	experience	or	store of
Previous knowledge	of	associated	knowledge
Emotions	significance	with	and
Preconceived ideas	involving	previous	experience
Previous	one or more	experience	
educational	of intellect,		
experience	emotions,		
Curiosity	action		
Motivation			

How many of the factors on the right are involved depends on the nature of the new knowledge. In some circumstances, very little; in others almost the whole personality. For example, learning that the Amazon is one of the world's longest rivers may involve some geographical knowledge and a little curiosity but learning why the river which flows through the village is drying up will involve many other factors. These will be added to if there is a tradition that the river harbours some god or spirit. Another important consideration is that the new learning may not fit in with any factors in the first column and so be completely rejected. Or traditional beliefs may be so strong that they overcome intellect and new knowledge is rejected. Some Malays in Sabah, Malaysia, flatly rejected the information that a man had landed on the moon even when confronted with pictures. They argued that a man could not open the door

which led to the front of the moon - an argument which was as incomprehensible to the Westerners who heard it as landing on the moon was to the Malays who saw it. A Tanzanian student, whose mind was filled with ideas of spirits and demons, simply could not accept that a young woman who had given birth was suffering from a severe post-natal depression compounded by family rejection. There were, at that time, no parallels in his experience into which to fit teaching about post-natal depression. Even after careful explanation, he still kept muttering, "The demons have to be cast out."

The importance of this in teaching Christian Theology is that often in the past, theology has been taught as an academic subject. The knowledge has 'sat on the top of' of a person's mind and has never become part of the person. Elijah has encountered this difficulty in his study of Christian doctrine. In his study, there has been nothing to engage him as a person and so the knowledge has not been incorporated into his experience. Sophie, on the other hand, has had direct experience of what she is to learn, and so the learning will engage almost her whole person and be of deep relevance to her.

Another principle in adult education is that adults generally like to be in control. Except where there is compulsion from Government or employer, adults make their



own choices about what to learn, which course to follow. Distance education has advantages here in that the time and length of study periods can be determined by the student. Many schemes try to be flexible in pacing so the student can determine whether he/she spends a short or long time on a course. On the other hand, the provision of standard course materials means a lack of flexibility and choice. Although it is difficult, distance schemes are now trying to incorporate some element of choice into the courses. This can be done by giving a variety of assignments and allowing the student to choose, or providing opportunity for the student to decide on an area of research. An element of choice does give status to the student. This principle must be treated with caution in Africa as students are accustomed to being told what to learn and choice may be new and threatening.

Perhaps the most important factor in adult learning is motivation. The stronger the motivation, the more likely is the adult to persevere and anything that encourages motivation is helpful. Adults embark on courses for different reasons: to advance career prospects, to pursue a particular interest, for enjoyment or in response to a need. The course itself should foster and encourage the motivation. Elijah's motivation was weak, not springing from within himself but undertaken at the request of

others and out of an obscure guilt feeling about his father. It is unlikely that he will persevere in the face of difficulty. His companion, who wishes to improve his career prospects, has very strong motivation and will probably keep going however hard the going. Sophie's motivation is very strong indeed and with a simple, lively course she will have no difficulty in completion despite her lack of schooling. Matthew has good motivation, but it could be that village and family pressures will make it hard to study and his motivation will need strengthening if crisis points arise.

These four points: the whole person, fitting new knowledge into existing patterns, giving the adult a measure of control over the study and encouraging motivation are all important. The best way of expressing this is to say that adult education must 'go with the grain' of the adult.

#### Obstacles to learning

There are also factors which militate against adult learning, two of these being anxiety and, strangely, previous school experience.

Anxiety is a very much underestimated force in the minds of teachers. Sometimes it can amount to actual fear: fear of failing, fear of making a fool of oneself by

asking elementary questions or not understanding, fear of producing work which is not up to standard and fear of criticism. There is another, more subtle fear and that is of having firm beliefs or opinions challenged and undermined. Many graduates in theology in the U.K. have faced this when firmly held beliefs about the integrity of the Bible or New testament have been challenged by critical examination of texts.

So Matthew, as a teacher, has a nagging anxiety that if he goes through with the course but fails, this will undermine his credibility as a teacher and source of knowledge in the community. Elijah's fears may have more to do with his own self esteem and sense of worth. He has succeeded in business, but will he succeed in this new venture? Sophie, despite her enthusiasm, could be anxious about wasting other people's money. If she fails, she will have wasted fees contributed painstakingly by her church community. All three students will experience anxiety when new teaching conflicts with deeply held views, perhaps about traditional beliefs. A few students may go through their courses with no particular anxieties, but the majority worry, from time to time, about their progress. The teaching organisation needs to recognise these fears and find ways of alleviating them.

The most important method is proper counselling at the beginning of a course with good explanations of what standard of work is expected, how assessment is made, reassurance that the student can succeed - if he is not likely to, this should be talked about frankly and alternatives suggested. Also, in counselling, clear guidance should be given about possible avenues of help if the student does encounter difficulties. The overall impression given, should be that embarking on a course of study by distance education methods is a joint venture. An important object of the teaching organisation is to help the student succeed but without lowering standards. A major problem in Africa in connection with this is lack of resources. It is easy to decide that counselling should be given, but there are few trained counsellors to help effectively. This point will be emphasised again and again and a key objective must be to train more local tutors.

The second major obstacle is the student's previous experience of schooling. This seems a strange thing to say for if the student had not been to school, there would be no chance of taking a course in theology. The point needs exploration.

The behaviourist approach to learning, to be considered in more detail later, emphasises conditioning and

reinforcement as the primary way by which people learn. But conditioning is a most powerful process which can have effect in hidden ways. One such way is through early experiences of education. If a person is subjected to a particular style of education for 6 to 11 years, he will perceive education as 'that which he has experienced'.

So what kind of early education will Elijah and Matthew have experienced when they attended school in the 1970's? The Phelps-Stokes reports on education in Africa produced in 1921 and 1924 were a classic survey of the whole educational system and found that Western organisations, Missionary Societies and colonial officers had simply transferred western systems of education to Africa. Various recommendations were made but the fact that the report was reprinted in 1962 because little progress had been made (L.J.Lewis 1962) showed that the situation was still much the same. With some notable but occasional exceptions, the pattern of school education is in the main the "chalk and talk" pattern. Examinations, reinforced by innumerable tests govern the curriculum and teachers and schools are judged by the number of passes they get in state examinations. Students, in the main, copy down notes from the blackboard and learn these by rote. There are grave shortages of text-books and visual aids. In Nigeria, a survey showed that for two thirds of

the observable time, teachers simply lectured the class. In much of the remaining time, students sat alone on the floor or at desks, working at assignments.

(Anderson 1989). Or again, in Botswana, "The teacher typically opens the class period by presenting new material. The class is then assigned an exercise that is performed silently by each pupil. The process involves a good deal of off-task time as the teacher writes lengthy material on the chalkboard. Pupils finish exercises at various points and may wait while the teacher walks round the class to check .... Much time is spent preparing pupils for the national examination including the constant drilling of students on factual bits of knowledge" (Fuller and Snyder 1991). To be fair, there are reports detailing more inter-action between pupil and teacher, but with examinations pervading everything this is not easy to achieve.

It is small wonder that a person accustomed to sitting at a desk taking notes to learn by heart will not find it easy to sit in a circle discussing issues with a tutor. Or that the same student will feel, perhaps subconsciously, that the education they are receiving in such a way is not the real thing. Two other effects of traditional systems of education must be noted. The first is that such a system instils the idea of failure into all except the brightest pupils. Of those who

traditional secondary school timetabling divides learning into a number of different subjects each teacher having an expertise in his or her own field. While it is necessary to break down learning into manageable and to some extent compartmentalised components the effect of three or five years of learning of individual subjects is a deep rooted feeling that subjects have a mystery of their own which is not connected with that of other subjects. Knowledge is compartmentalised each compartment having a specialist guru figure. This can lead to a sense of unreality, especially in Theology. There is Doctrine, Liturgical studies, Biblical studies all with their own mysteries and with little connection between them, none of them really related to the business of living. In actual fact, all are intimately related and have everything to do with living, but the indoctrination of dividing knowledge into separate specialist compartments makes this difficult to accept.

#### The teaching organisation

Everyone who teaches or professes to teach has a theory of learning which may be explicit or reflected in the approach to teaching (Bigge 1982 p3). So Charles Dicken's Thomas Gradgrind sees the children as vessels to be filled with facts. "Now what I want is Facts ... You can only form the minds of reasoning animals on Facts. Nothing

else can be of any service to them." And Mr. M'Choakumchild, the teacher, carries out his teaching with this principle in mind, anticipating Paolo Freire's banking theory of knowledge by nearly 100 years. (Hard Times ch2) In complete contrast is what Kneller (1958 p134) defines as the socratic method which implies that the teacher has no knowledge, or at least professes to impart no information; instead, he seeks to draw the information from his students by means of skilfully directed questions (Bigge 1982 p24) Another theory of learning is that learning is a training of the mind, a mental discipline - hence the emphasis on a classical education which, it was thought, helped students to think logically. Learning theory is also linked up with "Aims" and Herbart, the distinguished educator of the early 19th century thought that the supreme objective of education was morality. He wanted to make children good. This is reflected in the Victorian idea that if only everyone was properly educated, the world would be a much better place to live in.

It is doubtful whether any educational theory can be independent of the presuppositions and outlook of the society in which they are formed and an example of this is Paolo Freire's ideas about conscientization. Freire, working as an educator in Latin America, came to the conclusion that no education is ever neutral. It is



designed either to maintain the existing situation, imposing on people the values and culture of the dominant class (i.e. domesticating people, as one tames an animal to obey its master's will) or to liberate people, helping them to become critical, creative, free, active and responsible members of society. The aim of the true educator is to help learners identify problems, find the root causes of these problems and work out practical ways in which they can set about changing the situation. The whole of education and development is seen as a common search for solutions to problems. Even when it would appear that education is simply to instil facts, for example in a literacy programme where people are being taught how to read and write, the primary aim is not being able to read and write, but to know what to do with the knowledge when it is acquired. If the person remains in the same situation as before, the education will have been profitless. A literacy teaching programme designed by SWAPO, Namibia, makes extremely effective use of this suggestion. The students are encouraged to think about a practical situation affecting their lives. A key word is then introduced summing up the situation and this word is broken down and used as the basis for teaching how to write other words. Further, the whole method of instructions is designed to be a cooperative undertaking, so that people are encouraged to work together by the methods used for studying (SWAPO 1986). The difference

between the two systems of education described by Freire can be summarised:

Banking Approach

Problem posing approach

Teacher seen as possessing all essential knowledge.

Pupils seen as empty vessels needing to be filled with knowledge.

Teacher talks.

Pupils absorb passively

Animator provides a framework for thinking, creative, active participants to consider a common problem and find solutions.

Animator raises questions: why, how, who?

Participants are active, describing, analysing, suggesting, deciding, planning.

(Hope 1984:1 p9 based on Freire 1972 ch2)

Freire goes on to point out how difficult it is for a person of the dominant class, even though sympathetic to the plight of the poor, really to trust the poor. They bring their prejudices with them as they move to the side of the oppressed and though they truly desire to transform an unjust order, they believe they must be executors of the transformation.

This last point has profound implications for teachers and especially teachers of theology and the churches within which they operate. To be able to trust students... All through history, the church hierarchy has imposed what they believed best. This contrasts with the examples of both Jesus and St. Paul in trusting

converts to get on with the job themselves.

Alan Rogers also develops new ground in teaching theory distinguishing between 'input-development' and 'Social action-development'. This model is so important that it is worth printing out in full (Rogers 1992 p115).

INPUT-DEVELOPMENT

SOCIAL-ACTION DEVELOPMENT

Based on view

That target group is  
deprived, needy and  
helpless

That participant group  
is potentially rich and  
powerful but oppressed

Process

Outsider-led inputs

Insider-led action  
programmes

Results

Dependency  
Maintains structural  
gap  
Neo-colonialism

Increased self-reliance  
liberation  
Reduced structural gap  
Greater equality

Assumptions

Resources are finite  
Only aid-receiver  
needs to change

Resources are finite  
Both participant group  
and change-agent need  
to change

Problems and inputs  
are technical

Problems and action  
needed are social

Take-up will be  
automatic

Take-up depends on  
attitude change

Areas of life excluded  
from development

No areas of life  
excluded from  
development

Development is terminal

Development is  
continuous

The indigenous is not  
valuable

Development is based on  
the indigenous

Evaluation

By objective-achievement

By outcomes

The implications of this for distance teaching organisations are clear. While there is an accepted body of knowledge which needs to be taught (the plain text of the New Testament for example), it is how the knowledge is applied that is open for mutual debate and mutual learning. A teaching organisation in a capital city, or in the West, cannot fully appreciate how a village African should work out his faith in the village situation. Rogers also makes another key point. The educational philosophy behind most Western initiatives is still that of 'coming in'. In the last resort, it is the student who takes the initiative. Despite all incentives and 'open door' policies, the central institution expects the learners to take the first steps, to come and meet the teachers, rather than the reverse. If a teaching organisation really believes in its work, surely it will take steps to go out, to use resources in encouraging participation. And he quotes as an example, the Netherlands Council of Europe Experimental Project which chose for its programmes specific target groups: women, immigrant workers and the families, young unemployed, the illiterate (Rogers 1992:197). Such a course of action is probably beyond the resources of most theological teaching agencies, but not beyond their aspirations and planning. Again, the implementation of some of these ideals depends very much on leaders of the small study groups, and in looking at actual distance systems, this

point will be considered more fully.

All this seems to have come a long way from the theories of Mr. Gradgrind, but is consistent with the more liberal climate of thought among educationalists. There are still, however, many, many institutions in the theological field, which regard their primary purpose as imparting the facts of the Christian faith, as they see them, and the students as vessels into which these facts can be poured. There is a danger that Matthew, with all his enthusiasm, ability and experience, will be treated in this way and the lessons he receives will simply pour in processed knowledge, without any attempt to make use of Matthew's own unique experience of the Christian faith

#### Adult Education - specific considerations

The question, "How does learning take place?" is a complex one and learning processes are still not understood to any great degree. What exactly happens when Elijah sits down at his desk and studies, with the aid of a lesson programme, the life of, say, an Old Testament prophet?

The question can be approached from a number of different angles which help to throw light on the subject but which still leave the central core, 'cognitive theory' or, what is meant by 'understanding' a mystery. Consequently,

cognition will be dealt with briefly and from a practical point of view and then those angles which have relevance to the study and practice of distance education will be considered. These are conditioning, the learning cycle, learning styles, learning domains and conation.

### Cognitive Process

The cognitive process is connected with questions such as:

What does to 'know' something mean? How does a person come to know something? What are the processes by which he comes to know something not already known? What factors aid knowing? What factors prevent knowing? All these questions are difficult, the first two more than the last two. They are linked with other concepts such as 'understanding' and 'learning'

Knowing is a complex process and seems to some degree part of life itself. Many living creatures have an instinct to explore boundaries, and exploring seems to be part of our make up as human beings. There is a delight in finding out new things. It has to do with many different strands: facts, skills, ideas - concrete and abstract, theories and concepts, processes and problem solving. It would appear that acquiring knowledge happens in at least two ways. The first is by fitting new thought patterns into existing patterns, which, in

turn have links with other patterns in the human mind, a step by step approach. But there are times when the mind, perhaps because of these other links, takes leaps or jumps into new areas of thought and experience. There are two common sense conclusions from this. The first is that in teaching, new knowledge must be programmed so that it fits into knowledge already acquired. Often Distance Education fails in this in that it presents students too quickly with new ideas and concepts, plunging them in at the deep end, so to speak. The course writer fails to understand where the students are when they start a new learning process. The second conclusion is that while jumps in knowledge cannot be programmed, they can be expected and encouraged, helping the student to have confidence in his own ideas and to be prepared to test these out.

Knowing and understanding are closely connected with learning. which is not necessarily the same as education as learning can occur in many different ways. Rogers (1992:9) defines learning as 'making changes - in our knowing, thinking, feeling and doing. Some of these changes are permanent, others are for a time only.' Education is a planned process of purposeful learning (Rogers *ibid*:20). There are skills in learning which can be acquired and it is important that students be helped to develop these skills. One student organisation

found that drop outs were more common among students who had not studied at college for two years or more and so had lost learning skills.

Many distance education schemes contain notes about how to study, some encouraging and helpful, others too detailed and demanding. Some course guidance may place so many demands on the student at the start that the student probably ignores the guidance, or tries it for a week or two and then, like new year resolutions, gives it up. The kind of instruction which urges students at the end of every lesson to "write down your summaries of the lesson in your own words. After you have written your summary, check it again with the lesson." is simply indulging in wishful thinking and will probably discourage students. On the other hand, instruction which is given in short bursts can help students to acquire good study habits. e.g. "HOLD IT! In this course the answer to each question (called feedback) can be found on the last page of each unit. Turn now to the feedback sheet for this lesson at the back of this unit and check your first answer. If you make a mistake, be certain to correct it in the lesson itself." (SEAN Course 1 pA3)

Another way of improving learning techniques is to incorporate guidance into the text at appropriate points. For example, an essay is required. Many students will



not be skilled in writing, so the first assignments of this sort should be short and simple with instructions given at the time about how to go about the task. Then progressively harder work can be attempted. Again, to help with memory, various devices can be included as part of the text. e.g. 'Matthew, Mark, Luke and John: Acts and Romans follow on.'

To sum up, the main point of this section is that while the processes of 'knowing' and 'understanding' are still a long way from being understood, the learning process can be encouraged. Learning skills can be taught through simple guidance to students at the beginning of a course and, better still techniques introduced and described at various points in the course where they apply.

### Conditioning

A set of theories centred round 'conditioning' which may loosely be termed the 'behaviourist school' of theories originate in work by John Watson (1928), Pavlov with his now famous experiments with dogs and Skinner (1938) and his experiments with pigeons. Skinner argued that organisms emit responses which are gradually shaped by their consequences. At the heart of behaviourists methods of learning is the breaking down of the subject into small stages, each logically following the previous one and reinforcing (by a reward of praise,

for example) the times when the learner gets the stage right. So learning can be 'stage-managed' to a desired outcome. From this, it follows that each lesson must be planned with objectives in mind, objectives which are concrete and can be measured (Bloom 1956 pp 117-120).

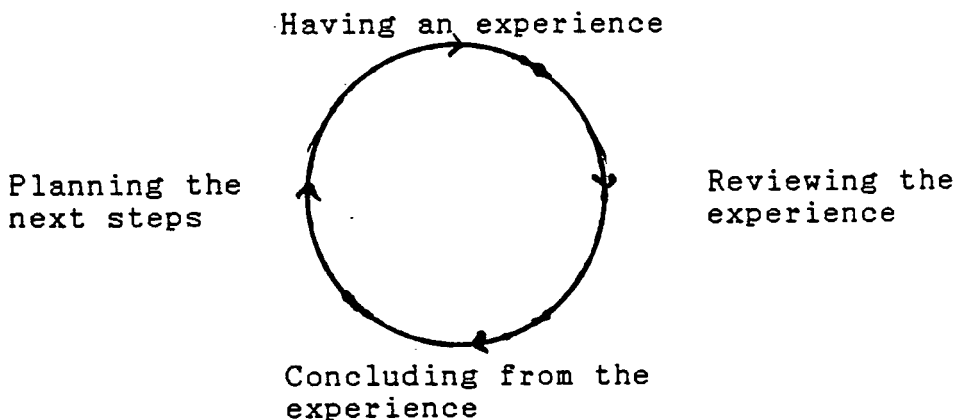
It is not sufficient to ask that a person 'knows' or 'understands' something because that is too vague to measure. If the learning outcome is that the student can 'list' three items of information or 'describe' an experiment, these objectives can be tested if necessary and so are valid objectives. All this sounds very mechanical, but programmed learning is the basis of much learning used in distance education. One very successful organisation, as will be seen, bases its strategy on this method.

Tenant (1988: 111) gives a careful critique of behaviourist theory pointing out that there are many aspects of learning which do not fit a 'conditioning' explanation particularly where skills are used in a highly flexible way as in the use of language. But there is no doubt that programmed learning is a very useful tool, particularly when facts have to be mastered. It is important, however, that the student realises that this particular method is being used and agrees to the contract. It is so easy to use the method to

indoctrinate, rather than teach.

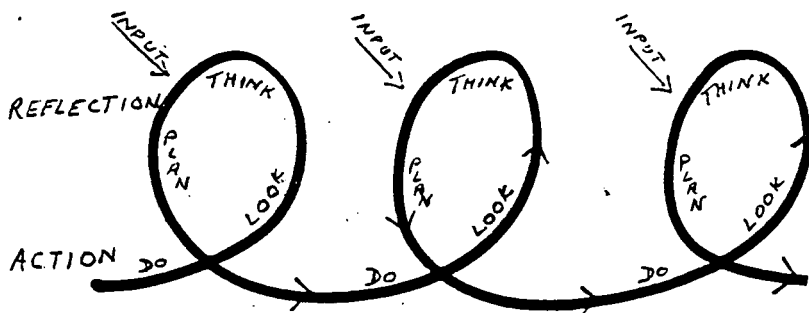
### The learning cycle

Many writers have used what can be termed 'the learning cycle' as a basis for their learning theory. The simplest, based on a more complicated cycle suggested by Kolb and Fry (Cooper 1975 p33) is suggested by Honey and Mumford in an article about learning styles.



(Honey 1982)

Hope, in an excellent handbook for animators called Training for Transformation, suggests a similar approach. The cycle is used as learning is never static.



(Hope 1984 Bk1 p11)

It is clear from this that learning involves active reflection and then doing if it is to be effective

learning. So, when Sophie studies her course on evangelism, if real learning is to take place, she must be encouraged to think about the learning material and also act upon it in ways determined by herself and companions. This is a fairly obvious conclusion and has been used for centuries. A person learns something and does an exercise. The difference here is that the person is involved in designing the exercise, probably with help from the teaching agency but it is a shared process.

### Learning styles

Honey and Mumford go on to show that there are different learning styles connected with the four stages of the learning cycle. It is an attractive area of study because it focuses on students' strengths and weaknesses so that they can be seen as 'different' rather than 'bad', 'average' or 'good' learners. (Tenant 1988:89) The first major study of learning styles was that of Witkin (1977) who concluded that there were two categories of learners, 'Field Dependent' and 'Field Independent'. Field independents prefer to study in isolation, are more analytical and cerebral, while Field dependents take feelings into account and learn better in community. Much of Western educational tradition has been based on the Field independent approach. Witkin suggests that teachers need to adapt their teaching strategies to the needs of both types of students and that for balanced

learning, students need to be aware of, and subject to both approaches. A little research has been done with African students by Dorothy and Earle Bowen (1988) which suggests that the majority of Africans fall into the Field dependent category. This was done with the teaching of theology in mind and the researchers suggest that much Western Theological teaching is quite unsuitable for the African student who learns best in community with much structure and directions and a clearer overall view of course outlines.

Honey and Mumford have researched more deeply into learning styles and come up with four categories to fit rather neatly, perhaps too neatly, into their learning cycle. These classes are:

The activist - I'll try anything once

The reflector - I'd like time to think about this

The theorist - How does this fit with that

The Pragmatist - How can I apply this in practice

While no one falls completely into one category, it is possible, by use of a carefully designed questionnaire, to discover which learning style is best for a student and also become more adept with other learning styles. Their work has been much used in industrial circles. No research has been done yet for African students and it may be that they have different learning styles. But, by the time adults come to their educational experience,

whatever their culture, they will have developed learning strategies of their own (Rogers 1992 p23). Possible lessons for distance education are that:

- More emphasis should be put on group working
- Teaching methods and exercises should be varied, if possible, in recognition that learning takes place in different ways. This will ensure that each student finds some work that really appeals and suits his learning capabilities. It may also be possible to help students become aware that people learn in different ways and that if they find particular exercises difficult it does not necessarily mean they are bad students.

#### Learning domains

Bloom (1956) gives a number of learning domains, but these can be simplified. Rogers lists five - knowledge, skills, understanding, attitudes and behaviour. (Rogers 1992 p12) Most traditional education is concerned with the first two and teaching methods have been worked out for increasing knowledge and developing skills. More recently the importance of the other three have been realised, particularly the formation or changing of attitudes. Changing of attitudes is difficult even in face to face teaching and the relevance of this for distance education is that teaching methods need to be varied in order to bring about learning in each domain. Straight study of text with exercises will do little to

change attitudes or give real insights. Attitudes can, with difficulty, be changed by discussion, role play and project work.

None of these teaching methods fit easily into distance education unless good use is made of small tutor groups. But it is possible to formulate imaginative assignments which encourage the student to put himself in place of another person - a character in a Gospel story, a member of another tribe, a young person looking for work and so on. It is possible to incorporate teaching strategies which involve problem solving, group discussions, seeing another's point of view.

So the implications for distance education is that a variety of teaching methods should be chosen which are appropriate to the aim of the particular lesson or module. Also careful use must be made of the small groups. If Sophie, Matthew and Elijah, are to receive good all round education, much depends on the local tutors.

### Conation

The final consideration in this summary of approaches to ways by which adults learn is that of conation.

McDougall (1932) writes, "If we say we are trying, striving, endeavouring, paying keen attention, making an

effort, working hard, doing our utmost, exerting ourselves, concentrating all our energies: in technical terms we are manifesting conation." So conation has to do with motivation, but goes further and includes perseverance. Atman (1982) further links it with a 'joyous sense of mastery', the satisfaction which comes from mastering a task or recognising for oneself a new truth after hard thought. This aspect of learning - the delight of working at something until a sense of achievement is reached - is easy to overlook but is a part of study and perhaps more common than expected in students. There is a delight in learning and understanding something new.

A dramatic example is given by Polanyi (1958 p6).

Kepler described his astronomic discovery about the planets as ecstatic communion. "at last I have brought it to light and recognised its truth beyond all my hopes .... so now since 18 months ago the dawn, three months ago the proper light of day and indeed a very few days ago the pure sun, itself of the most marvellous contemplation, has shone forth - nothing holds me, I will indulge my sacred fury".

The classroom teacher can foster conation in two ways: by staying with the student in times of difficulty and by a shared delight in a pupil's achievement. In distance



education, this is not quite possible, but the sense of achievement and delight in it can be fostered by encouragement and praise when assignments are returned, particularly those which show the student has given a great deal of thought and care to the assignment. The actual texts themselves can also convey some sense of delight in and enthusiasm for learning by the presentation of the subject, the layout of pages and the choice of interesting and challenging examples.

Learning can give very great satisfaction, but often it is not an easy task. As William Harper wrote so many years ago, the correspondence teacher must be sympathetic and alive. In all aspects of Adult Education, both teacher and teaching organisation must value and have real enthusiasm for the subjects they are seeking to teach and a deep desire to help students find satisfaction in their work.

## Chapter 4

### Christian Theological Learning

Elijah drove back home after his evening session with the group with whom he was studying with his mind in a turmoil. The group had at last had a very lively discussion but not about the topic they had been studying - the Chalcedonian definition of the nature of Christ. Benson, the member who was hoping to pass the examination at the end of the course and become a full time minister was full of indignation. Someone had told him that the course they were taking was not as good as a college course and that the church authorities insisted on a college education for full time clergy. He had asked what was the point of studying so hard if, at the end, he would be regarded as a second class priest. He had asked the tutor if the way they were studying was as good as going to college and the tutor had clearly indicated that, while the course was good and useful, college was better. It was the traditional well tried way.

One of the group, perhaps remembering the previous discussions they had with the young priest when they were doing Old Testament studies, had dared to ask, "Was the course really useful?" What was the point of studying and learning all about the Greek church and the Chalcedonian definition of the nature of Jesus Christ!

The tutor pointed out that they had to know about these things because they ensured a church had sound doctrine and understood how the Christian Creeds had developed. They wouldn't like, for example, to be as the Aladura church which had broken away from other churches and believed in many strange things. At that, a very heated discussion broke out. One member said that his church never used the creeds anyway, so what was the point of learning about them. Another asked what was wrong with the Aladura church. Their members believed in Jesus, were as good living as members of other churches and also believed in healing and the power of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps some of the other churches were wrong.

Elijah, encouraged by the discussion, summoned up enough courage to ask if there was any point in studying what the Greeks thought about God and Jesus when Africans thought in a completely different way. And wasn't the Aladura church really more African than his own church - they used African hymns and dances in their worship which his own church never did. "Ah," said the tutor, "but that is going back to the tribal religions. The Western ways are better because they have centuries of Christian tradition behind them and know better than the Africans what is the right way to worship God."

"But they don't all know the best way to worship God,"

replied Achebe. "My brother went to England and there were very few people in the church he went to and they were very rude Christians. Hardly anyone welcomed him or spoke to him." So the discussion went on and when the tutor, who clearly didn't like what was being said, tried to get the group back to talking about how Jesus could be both God and Man, no one felt like joining in.

Elijah was very surprised to discover that almost all the members had been thinking the same kind of things as he had. What he hadn't told the group, as he felt ashamed of it, was that he had talked to one of his managers who belonged to the Aladura church and was seriously thinking of joining it. He still felt he was being disloyal to his father, but maybe now was the right time to make a break.

Behind this discussion lie some very serious and deep issues. The principle issues are:

1. Is Theological Education by Extension as good as traditional college education?
2. What constitutes good Theological education?
3. How far can and should Christianity accommodate traditional African thought forms and customs? Where are the boundaries?
4. Is it any longer possible for there to be a truly African Christianity?

The first two questions are closely linked and the starting point has to be the question, "What is Theology?"

### Definition of Christian Theology

The Theological Dictionary gives the following definition: "Theology is essentially the conscious effort of the Christian to hearken to the actual verbal revelation which God has promulgated in history, and to acquire a knowledge of it by the methods of scholarship and to reflect upon its implications." The Catholic Encyclopaedia has "Theology is a branch of learning which a Christian, using his reason enlightened by divine faith, seeks to understand the mysteries of God revealed in and throughout history."

These definitions have, for Elijah three implications. The first is that Theology is essentially an academic task - "...by methods of scholarship .." and "...branch of learning.." The Catholic Encyclopaedia does not emphasise this as much as the Theological Dictionary but it is still implicit: "That branch of learning".

The second implication is that Theology is based on revelation, on something given. Now this is true in many other branches of study. Science or Archeology are branches of learning which study something given. But in

Theology, what is given is given by God, is revealed by a power outside ourselves. It is not something material and concrete, but something apprehended by faith. Revelation, for the Christian, comes through individuals (the prophets), the history of the Jews and ultimately in Jesus Christ. There is discussion whether revelation is also given through creation and the world (Natural theology) and this is an important issue in considering African Traditional Religion. There is also discussion whether revelation ended with the coming of Jesus, but in the main, revelation in the Christian tradition is confined to Jewish history and Jesus. It follows that real study of Christian Theology can only be undertaken by a person of faith, faith that God is and that God has shown Himself in the world.

Two other definitions from the academic field raise further issues. Paul Tillich (1951 p3) writes this: "Theology is the methodological explanation of the contents of the Christian Faith. This definition is valid for all theological discipline." This suggests boundaries and a policing of boundaries. The Christian faith is something laid down and any new ideas must fit within the context of what is already given, into an orderly, step by step process of explanation. This is, to some extent, implicit in the title of his book. John Macquarrie (1966 p1) gives a wider definition.

"Theology may be described as the study which through participation in and reflection upon a religious faith seeks to express this faith in the clearest and most coherent language available." There is again, emphasis on participation but other faiths are included.

The most interesting feature of this definition is that it very much reflects the philosophical concerns of the time - concerns of language and the meaning of terms. Another point is that the use of the word "reflection" anticipates an emphasis of the present day. "Reflection" has almost become a jargon word in both Theology and Education.

In contrast to these are two definitions of the 1980's which reflect the climate of thought of that decade. The first is from Margaret Kane who, for many years worked as an industrial chaplain in the north of England.

"Christian Theology is that process of reflection by which people come to terms with the meaning of their experience in the light of belief in God as he has revealed himself in Jesus Christ. This involves consideration of their experience in its secular context, consideration of God's revelation of Himself in Jesus Christ as this has been lived and understood throughout Christian history and the implications this carries for their lives as they respond in their particular



circumstances. It is a lifelong process in which we discover ever new depths in God" (Kane 1986 p18).

This rather involved definition centres Theology first on God and Jesus and then on the individual and the individual's experience of life. It opens up the subject to anyone while not ruling out the academic - "lived and understood throughout history" - in so far as people can grasp it. It also suggests that theology is dynamic, in that it expects God to make himself known in new ways in a changing world (Kane 1986 p82)

A much wider definition is that of the present Bishop of Salisbury who wrote in an article in the Church Times (August 1991), "Any man, woman or child who thinks or talks about God is doing theology". He added that it is the task of theological educators to ensure that it is good theology - raising the question of whether academics are the best judges! But the definition opens the field to anyone and perhaps does reflect the root meaning of the word 'Theology' which is 'knowledge of God'.

The difference in the definitions reflect one of the basic problems in the study of theology. Anyone, of whatever age or learning can come to 'know' God in some way. It is not necessary for a person to study or become some kind of academic in order to work out ideas or learn



about God. Knowledge of God is something which is revealed or given to a person, and something a person finds out for himself, particularly, in the Christian tradition, through reading of the scriptures.

But it is not just an individual work. It is knowledge in Community. There is a great corpus of knowledge and experience built up through scriptures and church history which also constitutes Christian Theology and the two have to be brought together. This is contained in Margaret Kane's definition. The individual needs to learn from the experience and knowledge of the church, but the experience and knowledge of the church is of little use unless it is worked out in the lives of individuals. When the two are separated, the result can be the fragmentation of the church as individuals pursue their own insights, as has happened in many of the African new religious movements. Or it can result in a detached, irrelevant discipline which does not engage the heart and faith of the person. So Elijah finds his study of doctrine almost meaningless because it does not relate in any way to his real life situation.

It is interesting that in the Catholic Church, a very traditional church, some writers are emphasising the necessity of reconciling the two basic approaches to theology. Segundo (1983) states in the preface to his

book, "...today, more than ever before, we can see clearly the much wider difference between a theological discipline divided into many branches and dominated by scholarly experts on the one hand and another theology rooted in faith-in-crisis. Obviously there is no divorce between the two. But it is equally obvious that the former could never serve as the theology of the common run of mortals." He goes on to say, "a theology situated on the level of the Christian's real life questions, starts with and takes into account the world in which our contemporaries live and work. It works in close collaboration with its specialised sister Theology, (we do not call her 'big sister') but it retains its proper and inalienable personality in the task of transmitting the faith."

The reasons for the change in attitudes to theology are complex and have a great deal to do with sociological issues. One of the greatest impacts on theological thought has been scientific discovery. At its simplest level, the clash between theories of evolution and the Genesis stories of creation has led to a new way of looking at the scripture. The process has taken over a century and the new approach, regarding the scriptures not so much as a law book containing every ultimate truth but as a record of God's revelation, written by fallible human beings but in some way inspired by God has been

strenuously resisted by a significant section of the church and this is reflected in the Distance Education schemes produced by organisations with a fundamentalist approach to the scriptures. But a realisation that the writers of the scripture were themselves ordinary human beings wrestling, often within communities with their experience and understanding of God and Jesus, has opened up many new avenues of thought.

In the field of Church History and Doctrine, new understandings in historical study has led to the challenging of assumptions about the received transmissions of the faith - creeds, council pronouncements and the tacit assumption that long standing historical tradition must, simply because it is longstanding, indicate the stamp of God's approval.

Another factor has been the increasing western emphasis on the individual, the individual's freedom, and the value of the individual's personality and experience of life. This has sometimes been emphasised at the expense of community. Together with this has come a questioning of expertise and authority. Some of this questioning is healthy and good as experts themselves are more prepared to recognise the limitations of human knowledge and understanding. Sometimes the rejection of expert opinion has been based more on cynicism and over-critical

attitudes. But on the whole, the emphasis on the value of an individual's understanding of God and that all can 'do theology' is good.

Perhaps the greatest pressure for change in the last 40 years has come simply from Christians living in intolerable situations - intolerable to deep rooted principles of the Christian faith about the value of the person, the necessity of loving the neighbour, the importance of caring and so on. To these situations, traditional theology said little or nothing. Examples are the experience of priests working among the poor in South America or the Philippines which has produced "Liberation Theology"; the racial conflict in South Africa and the situation of black people, resulting in "Black Theology" and the position of women in society producing a "Feminist" theology.

The basic question, "What good is Christian theology if it does not speak to our situation?" has led to a determination to work out what the Christian faith has to say to those situations resulting in what might loosely be termed 'new Theologies'. In this one important factor has been the greater ease in the production of literature. Books have been produced for centuries, but in the last 50 years, it has become much easier for someone with something to say to publish their ideas.

## The Boundaries

Despite what has been written above, the study of Theology is still very much on traditional lines and it is hard to see that there can be much change in the sources. The change is rather in the way the topics are studied. Traditionally the study has been divided into the various branches: Biblical, Dogmatic, Ascetic and mystical, Moral, Liturgical, Apologetics, Comparative and Church History. In the past, these have been compartmentalised to a greater or lesser degree.

The sources have, in general, been

The scriptures and associated writings

The writings of the Fathers, other key figures in Christian history, mystics and documents of the Councils of the Church

Christian liturgies and formularies (creeds etc)

Writings of theologians and Christian experts in other fields

Philosophical writings

In this century, there has been much study of other fields of learning partly because Christians have become more aware of applying their faith to everyday life and partly because of the growing realisation that God is in every branch of learning. For at least a century, the boundaries for theological studies have been policed by Universities and Colleges, particularly those training the ministry, and by the hierarchy of the church.

Generally speaking, the academic world has decided what should be the content of theological training and syllabuses drawn up in that ethos have determined limits. There have been, in the past, notable efforts to break through those limits and some churches, basing all training on the scriptures, have never recognised the more formal tradition of theological training. But in the last 100 years or so, most mainline churches have relied on University and Theological College training for their leaders and these institutions have determined the boundaries of Theology by their syllabuses and examinations. Consequently changes have been hard to make. Any new approaches to theology have tended to be incorporated into the existing system and for publications to be accepted by the leadership, they have, in general, to conform to the academic model. So "liberation theology" is taught as a legitimate part of theology but put in a box and treated as an addendum to the serious core of study. Traditional African Religion has been treated in the same way. Students will study traditional theology and then a module on African religion will be added as an option to the main business. This approach is not the way by which Theology was originally built up. Insights into the nature of God and Jesus Christ started with very practical situations and reflection on these.

This is as much true of Old Testament theology as of New but can easily be illustrated by reference to St. Paul. Much, if not all of his theology is based on facing practical situations and working out through his own experience of God and the risen Christ what this meant for him and his fellow Christians. The well known and, for many Christians, key doctrine of 'Justification by Faith' was hammered out partly from St. Paul's own deep religious experience on the Damascus road and mainly from the controversy about whether Gentiles could be admitted to the Christian Church without first obeying the tenets of the Jewish Law and, in particular, being circumcised. Paul was prepared to put his ideas to the test in three ways: by argument, generally based on scriptures (the Old Testament); by submitting his views to the church community; and by acceptance on the part of those churches to which he wrote of his ideas and reasoning.

The teaching methods of Jesus himself are pertinent at this point. A problem in looking at this is to know how far the Gospels, and particularly the Gospel of St. John, accurately reflect his teaching. However, few would dispute that Jesus was a great teacher and the overall picture given by the Gospel record seems consistent.

An examination of Jesus as teacher will show that he used story, proverbs, easily remembered and sometimes

paradoxical sayings, questions and practical situations to convey teaching about God and the Kingdom of God, the central theme of synoptic teaching. He started with people where they were and often refused to give direct answers to questions, preferring that people work out implications themselves - the parables are supreme examples. He used illustrations which people would immediately recognise. Above all he taught by example and by plunging his disciples into practical experiences. The greatest teaching of all, that of God's love for us, is learnt chiefly from the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. (Partly based on a hand-out from Jeff Astley).

The Johannine tradition is rather different as John is concerned with the inner meaning of Jesus' life and work but still the same methods are used although the teaching is lengthier and more involved. A miracle gives rise to teaching about the bread of life, or a festival about the light of the world. John's Gospel does suggest that Jesus did give lengthier sections of teaching to his closest disciples although it is not easy to determine how much originates from Jesus.

The conclusion from both the example of Jesus and Paul is that the Scriptures would support definitions of theology which are related to the experience of the individual and community. Thinking and analysis are essential but arise



out of experience.

### Traditional Theological Education in Africa

At first the Christian Church in Africa relied very heavily on expatriate staff although the importance of training an indigenous ministry was realised at an early stage. The training of such a ministry was haphazard at the start - local pastors simply worked alongside an expatriate missionary. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the church grew so quickly that there was an urgent need for more locally trained pastors. Not unnaturally, the missionaries looked at their own countries for models of what would be the best kind of training. After many setbacks, Theological Colleges and Seminaries, based on Western European patterns were established in a number of countries.

The earliest colleges date from 1910. Life at such colleges was highly regimented. At Bishop Tucker College, opened 1913, the programme was: prayer drill, communal work. Then breakfast and study from 8.30 am to 12.30 and 2.00 to 4.00 followed by communal work and football with Evening prayer at 6.15. After supper there would be prep and lights out at 10.00 pm (Kevin Ward 1987 p7). One problem was recruitment. Because priests were very poorly paid compared with civil servants, the standard of those applying was very low. This meant that

for a long period of time, training and syllabuses were entirely in the hands of expatriates and so a tradition of what constitutes proper theological training was firmly established - a tradition rooted not in Africa but in the west. There were only a few sources of dissent, the most notable being that of Roland Allen whose book, published in 1927 entitled "Missionary Methods, St. Paul's or Ours?" was quite startling in its insights and was based on Paul's methods of evangelism and teaching.

A very clear overall picture was given by a survey produced in 1950 under the guidance of Bishop Stephen Neill. This was confined to Protestant institutions but made some reference to the Roman Catholic Church. Recommendations were made for different areas, some of which were acted upon. The main picture was of very small institutions, often inadequately staffed with one or two people trying to teach all aspects of the curriculum to small numbers of ordinands. One sad feature of the survey is the lack of coordination and working together of the different denominations.

So far as teaching methods are concerned, the 1950 report is of great interest and states "the most noticeable weakness is frequent surrender to the idea that those present cannot and will not think for themselves: and that tedious writing on the blackboard of

full notes and still more tedious copying by the students is the most effective way of teaching and learning. These evils arise naturally, of course, where the previous general education of the student has been slight and where books are not in hand. But they endure longer than is necessary and they must be overcome. A significant proportion of class time should go into the raising and answering of questions. Is a third approach possible, perhaps one arising from African situations and needs ..." (Neill 1950)

In recent years, missionaries and African teachers called to open or reopen theological colleges have spent a great deal of time working out syllabuses and courses. What is remarkable is that in spite of the time and honest labour spent expended upon them, they all emerge very much the same and characteristically western. In a sense, this is inevitable, since the basis of theological study remains the same in every age and in every part of the world, but the Westernness of all the methods is all too plain.

At a conference of West African Association of Theological Institutions in Ibadan in 1976, it was clear that Theological Education had progressed enormously and opportunities were much greater, but at the same time, the basic problems of providing a training suitable to the African situation remain. In an account of guidelines

for priestly formation in Ghana, Raphael Esteban makes the statement: "Always presupposed is the fundamental human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral formation. The most urgent tasks of the Major Seminary in Ghana are the Africanisation of its style of life, its teaching and its staff, an intense training, both theoretical and practical, for the ministry of the word in all its forms, the formation of candidates for teamwork and real community life." (Esteban 1976 p41) The last two represent particular tasks for the Roman Catholic ministry with its emphasis on the sacramental nature of the church and authority of the priest. But the first, the 'Africanisation' might well refer to all theological training and shows the tasks formulated in earlier years have still not been satisfactorily dealt with. When the actual curriculum is examined, there is little room for any Africanisation and the emphasis is still on Western academic training e.g. 6 periods systematic course of introduction to philosophy

A further serious criticism is made in a critique by James Downey (1976 p.52) who states that training has been institutionalised in the Seminary and training for the priesthood has become identified with seminary training. It is consequently assumed that such training cannot be found outside the Seminary. Downey points out that the Seminary training has been a necessary corrective to

abuses but again says that the curriculum remains which must be covered by the candidate for the priesthood. The more successful student is likely to be the one who has the facility for retaining facts and figures, who is something of a name dropper in the matter of accepted theological giants and who combines a measure of articulateness and a nodding acquaintance with accepted ideas! He criticises the degree system and suggests that all students be granted a BD on entering the Seminary so that they can then hope to get down to the work of becoming serious theologians. This is severe criticism but three conclusions are fair. The first is that inevitably students are divided into two classes, those who are capable of a degree and those who are not; the second that those who might be expected to reform the situation are themselves unwillingly committed to its perpetuation. This point will be considered again when the provision of tutors for small groups studying by distance education methods is examined. His third conclusion is to find an alternative method of training based primarily on experience, de-institutionalising the training and cutting down the curriculum.

These criticisms were echoed in a rather different way by Bishop Kauma of Uganda who stated in 1974, "It is more than clear that in Africa many of our theological schools are outmoded. What is taught is answering questions that

Africa is not asking." My own experience of teaching at a theological college in Tanzania also reinforced this conclusion. Much of what was taught was quite irrelevant to the African situation and consequently was simply not learnt by the students, with the exception of those who were bright enough to learn, parrot fashion in order to produce model answers in examinations.

It is clear from this that like traditional African schooling, the traditional way of teaching Theology in Africa conditions theological students. Despite all the deficiencies of college education, what the African knows of theological education is that:

- (a) It is necessary to go to college to be a proper priest/pastor
- (b) It is good to get a degree or diploma - this shows you have real knowledge
- (c) The Western approach to theology is the right approach for the study to be sound and academically acceptable. An African approach will be second rate.
- (d) That lecturing, note-taking and the passing of examinations is the right way to learn.

Students participating in Distance Education will feel that they are opting for the 'second best', they will not immediately see that the way of study could well be superior to that of the college; that the qualifications

they get as a result of distance education could be more suitable for the job they have to do than if they had gone to college.

The lesson for Distance Teaching institutions is that time must be devoted to showing that the way the students are learning is a good and fruitful way. Students need to be convinced that although the methods used are different from those used in school or theological colleges, they are good and well tried methods. They need to be taught both the disadvantages and the considerable advantages of studying by Distance Education.

#### The Teaching of Theology

So far, definitions of theology have been given and some of the implications of these examined. The sources and boundaries have been considered and traditional ways of teaching particularly in Africa have been surveyed.

While all these considerations are important, they still do not address the essential difference between the teaching of Christian Theology and the teaching of other subjects. The study of Theology has an 'otherness' about it in that it assumes the existence of God and that God can, in some way, be known by the individual and by the community. The contents of the Bible can be studied in

the same way as a 'set' book, or a 'historical narrative'. But the Christian starts with the presupposition that God is at work both in the development of the texts studied and in the lives of those who are studying. Further, the Christian believes that the biblical texts have an eternal significance for all time. So they have relevance to the lives of people of the present time and to the situations of the present time. Theology could be studied in the same way as an anthropologist would study the beliefs of a particular race or tribe, with a detached approach. But the Christian cannot do this, he studies within the faith he is studying and as a member of the community of faith, a community which reaches back into time and is a part of his life and experience.

The problem can be seen clearly if the different learning domains are considered: memory, cognitive, psychomotor, attitude. To what domain does the understanding and knowledge of God belong? Or again, where does Religious experience fit into the learning cycle?

A further difficulty is that Christians who testify to a sense of the presence of God find it hard to describe such an experience or to fit it into known categories of human knowledge. St. Paul illustrates this, "I know a certain Christian man who fourteen years ago was snatched



up into the highest heaven (I do not know whether this actually happened or whether it was a vision - only God knows) ... and there he heard things which cannot be put into words, things that human lips may not speak." (2 Corinthians 12,2). This is paralleled by modern day experience: "There was the occasional blinding glimpse of the divine love which brought me to tears and perplexity of mind and heart unable to explain or communicate its interior meaning to myself or others", writes Brother Ramon (1987:191). A poem from Africa illustrates this sense of mystery, in this case of the crucifixion:

"And yet for us it is when He is on the cross  
This Jesus of Nazareth, with holed hands and  
open side, like a beast at the sacrifice.  
When He is stripped, naked like us  
Browned and sweating water and blood in the  
heat of the sun:  
Yet silent  
That we cannot resist Him.

(Gabriel Setiloane: 'I am an African' in Dickson 1984)

Many Christians have experienced something of the same kind of feeling involving emotion, intellect, the whole personality and yet in a mysterious way beyond the personality and to an extent, inaccessible. This sense of the mystery of God can be experienced in many different ways. It is possible to look up from the study

of the lexicon and see the face of God. For the Christian, the implications so far as education are concerned are both very simple and at the same time profound. The simple is that there is another area of human experience by which God can be apprehended. The learning domains need to be extended to include a domain "the Spiritual" for want of a better term.

The inaccessible side is to try and define or discover what exactly this is. There are pointers in the field of secular education. What is it that gives us our appreciation of beauty and our understanding of what is beautiful and what is not? What is it in us that gives us delight and satisfaction in learning something new? What is it that gives us what Polanyi describes as a sense of rightness about a particular conclusion in a learning area even when we cannot be sure from the plain facts - "self authenticating knowledge"? These are pointers to a domain of learning not yet explored. But the Christian learner has to be more emphatic than that and state clearly that there is a part of our personality beyond those accepted by the secular world which enable us in some small way, to apprehend God. Further, this extra domain or dimension to learning is found in the study of other disciplines apart from theology for God is involved in everything and any investigation into the truth, into what is real, is bound to be a small part of

one. A fifth is that of the Liberation educationalists would focus on action, done reflectively, but primarily concerned with 'doing the faith'. A final approach is the interpretation approach which relies on connecting the individual's vision or story with that of the Christian tradition and starts with people where they are. (Astley 1985 p6 summarising Seymour 1982)

Complicated though all this might be, it can be seen that a truly embracing education must include some of all these approaches and none are exclusive. The content of the faith can be taught, and in the main must be taught using the best educational techniques. Then, individuals need to appropriate this knowledge for themselves and develop and grow in it, but grow within the faith community to which they also make a contribution.

Spiritual development, growing in the knowledge of God goes hand in hand with growing in knowledge and when the two are divorced, then study becomes barren and dry.

The approach which seeks to connect the story of the individual student and that of his community with stories in the Christian tradition and see how these illuminate each other and lead to deeper knowledge and action also draws together the spiritual and the secular. Finally, if the education does not encourage people, concerned with both finding God in the world and cooperating with God in his work in the world, to change and work for change it is not fulfilling its purpose.

An approach which includes all these different aspects is to be found in the new thinking about religious education among the Jesuits, an order particularly concerned with Christian education. The characteristics of Jesuit education include the following statements, "that it is world affirming, assists in the total formation of each individual within the human community, that it includes a religious dimension that permeates the entire education. It insists on individual care and concern for each person and emphasises the lifelong activity of the student encouraging openness to growth. It proposes Christ as the model for human life and seeks to form men and women for others, preparing students for active participation in the church and local community for the service of others" (Characteristics of Jesuit education 1990 pp76f).

But in addition to the ideal of educating people for others, lies the fundamental purpose of educating people for God. "Today, our prime educational objective must be to form men-for others; men who will live not for themselves but for God and his Christ.." (Kolvenach 1973). God wills that each person should come to maturity: "until we all reach unity of the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ." (Ephesians 4, 12f)

These approaches taken together reinforce conclusions already drawn in the section about adult education. Ideally, in theological education, it is the whole person who is being educated, for God touches people at every point in their lives. People can put their faith into a separate compartment and many do, but the very definition of Christianity is that it is something which transforms the whole person and so in education, the whole person must be involved.

How is this integration to be achieved? There are so many different factors to hold together that the task seems overwhelming. The answer to this question will be considered in the next chapter when T.E.E. programmes are examined and in the final chapter when conclusions are drawn. Before that can be done, the question of African spirituality need to be surveyed, starting with an examination of its roots, African Traditional Religion.

#### African Traditional Religion

Matthew cycled home from his Saturday morning seminar quite excited. The topic for study had been part of the Sermon on the Mount, the 6th Chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel. They group had been looking at the words of Jesus, "Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink or what you will wear..." The group leader had asked them if they had any particular worries. One of

the group was worried about his son who had gone off to the city and he had not heard from him, another about a family feud which was getting out of hand. "And you, Matthew, do you have any worries?" the tutor asked. Matthew blurted out his worry about the failure of the rains and was quite relieved to find the others too were getting anxious. Then Matthew said that the villagers were thinking of calling in a rainmaker - and there was a startled exclamation from Dominic, "But you can't agree to that, its a pagan custom." "But its African custom," retorted Matthew, "why is it wrong?" There had followed a very lively discussion which the leader had encouraged opening up the whole question of what a Christian should do about some of the traditional African rituals. Dominic got into trouble because the group discovered he was carrying a charm given to him by his mother. "If you really believed that Jesus protects you," Matthew had told him, "You would throw it away." He hadn't really meant this and the discussion had been very good humoured, but it had raised some hard questions. Do we really believe Jesus when he says if we seek his kingdom we will have enough to eat and drink? Do we believe he will protect us from witchcraft and spells? Matthew knew many of his Christian congregation did go to the local medicine man. Some medicine men were Christian, but Matthew knew this one was not.

Like the discussion Elijah had with his friends, there are very real and important issues involved.

"I visit shrines, I consult witchdoctors and diviners but I do not forsake the church of God," said a member of St. Augustine's congregation at Hippo, North Africa, in the 4th Century. This remark could be made by almost any member of the congregation in Africa today (Hastings 1989 p16). The two sides may be kept separate in a person's mind or may be integrated into a wholeness which would not be approved by official church teaching. The wholeness could be a kind of pantheism, or could be an authentic expression of the Christian faith. The case of Bishop Malingo who practised healing in Tanzania and was recalled to Rome by the authorities to reflect on his ways is typical. The Bishop now practices his healing ministry in Rome!

This situation raises the issue, faced by all missionaries, of what has been described by a number of writers as continuity or discontinuity ((eg Hastings 1989 p5). To put this in simple terms, when a person converts to Christianity, how much of his/her original beliefs and practices can be kept and how many must be discarded? Is it possible for the new Christian to continue to believe much of what was believed before or should that person turn his back on all previous experience? In theological terms, this is an on going

question. If the heart of Christian belief is the cross and the salvation of mankind, then the tendency will be to break with the past and start something new. "If any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold the new has come." (2Corinthians 5,17). But if the emphasis is more on the incarnation - that God is continually at work in the world and affirms the world, then there will be a building on what is already there: "not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life (2Corinthians 5,4).

Or again, St. Luke records a speech of St. Paul addressing the Athenians, "...that they should seek God, in the hope that they should feel after him and find him. Yet he is not far from each one of us, for 'In him we live and move and have our being' .." (Acts 17,27) As with a number of Christian teachings, there is a paradox here and both concepts have to be held together, neither excluding the other.

Many of the early Christian missionaries saw the situation in very simplistic terms. Some went so far as to state that "All African Traditional religion is of the devil and is evil." There were grounds for saying this in that some religious practices, however explainable, were abhorrent to the early missionaries - human



sacrifice, the killing of the attendants of a king so that he would have servants in the after life, witchcraft practices. Some were abhorrent because of culture differences: polygamy, a misunderstanding of and opposition to bride price are examples. Early African converts were also aware of the problems. In 1886, the newly baptised Princess Nalumansi, sister to the king of Buganda not only married against custom but also made a bonfire of all the charms in the house of the custodian of the tomb of Kabaka Jjunju. Then, when her mother presented her with her umbilical cord which she was supposed to keep with great reverence, she cut it in pieces and threw it into a hole. It is not surprising that a couple of weeks later, the bodies of Christian converts were burning. Yet surely, the Princess, who knew her traditional lore and culture, was right. (Hastings 1989).

#### Five periods in recent African History

The question of continuity and discontinuity is further complicated by the fact that both present day African Christianity and present day African Traditional religion have been affected by recent historical events so that there has been a good deal of inter-action and influence on both. It is would be unusual to find a pure form of traditional African religion just as it would be difficult to find a 'pure' African Christianity.

Adrian Hastings (1989:21) suggests that there are five periods in the saga of the interaction of the African culture and Christianity. The first, if it really existed, and then only for a very limited period of time, was the meeting of African Culture and the Christian Gospel, (it too with its Western cultural trappings) in a pre-colonial situation, that is one in which African political, economic and cultural structures were dominant. This did not happen in coastal areas where a secular colonial presence was always in evidence. It did in such places as Ashanti (Ivory Coast) and Buganda. When the of Buganda ordered Christians to be killed, there was no appeal.

During the second period, while African custom still existed as a whole except for political power, Christian missionaries enjoyed the protection of the colonial powers.

The third period was one of settled white supremacy, the classic colonial era from 1910 to about 1950 in most areas. By this time, Christianity was a part of African society and the catechist an accepted local leader. The missionary was authoritative and confident.

In the early 60's the fourth period was the age of decolonisation, political, organisational and mental.

Black leadership took over the state, the church and the educational system. So there was great enthusiasm in the religious field for rediscovering African traditions and emphasising the necessity of African theology.

Now the Africa of christian influence is in its fifth stage. Colonial domination has come and gone and Christianity is indigenous.

So far as ideas and thinking are concerned, each age has its own characteristics. In the first stage, the missionaries who came were completely ignorant of African religion and culture. They shared European insensibility to African ways. They were, for the most part, intolerant, coming from narrow minded sections of the church although some had much wider theological learning. These missionaries, even though they came from a society which had much in it that was thoroughly unchristian, had a vision of creating a perfect Christian society in Africa. Yet they had in themselves an attitude which condemned other Christian groups. In Africa, the tradition was much more holistic and religion pervaded all areas of living.

Sadly, the converts the missionaries made had, in a sense, an even more exclusive attitude. They had to make a clear break with the old in order to survive. They had

not the assurance or peace of mind to embrace parts of the tradition they had left behind while rejecting what was clearly against Christian teaching.

In the third period, there was a change both in Western ways of thinking and also in the more established and settled African church. There was a greater tolerance and a liberal wing of the church was coming into being. So, for example, polygamous Christians began to be accepted, reluctantly but pragmatically. Belief in witches and ancestor worship rooted in African tradition, were also rooted in the church. Also in the third period, a great number of prophetic movements came into being in an endeavour to accommodate Christianity and traditional beliefs. A further influence was the new translations of the Bible which, to an extent, allowed ordinary people to discover Christian truths for themselves.

The fourth period was very different. It lasted about 20 years and was the cultural and intellectual counterpart of the coming of political independence. The traditional missionary attitude, like that of the colonial attitude came under very fierce attack and many western Christians welcomed this. After so much white domination, Africans were determined to write their own theology and writers such as John Mbiti, Boligi Idowa, Setiloane and others were to the fore, culture preoccupied and optimistic.

Helping in this period were generous grants for conferences and the like from overseas which enabled African scholars to meet. But sadly this has been short lived. A main reason is that African universities are short of funds, short of books and short of their best scholars either exiled abroad or tempted abroad where opportunities are much greater. African students cannot easily travel overseas. In general, the outlook in many African countries is not very hopeful both on the political front where inefficiency and corruption are rife and on the economic front where terms of world trade penalise all developing countries. So there has not been much development from within Africa and writers such as John Mbiti have not lived in Africa for years.

#### The Translation of the Bible

Another key factor of influence in African thinking about Christianity has been the translation of the Bible. The growth of translation work has been impressive. In 1900 there were 113 translations of parts of the Bible, 40 of the New Testament and 14 of the complete Bible. In 1980, there were 526 translations of excerpts, 253 of the complete New Testament and 99 of the whole Bible. Work is in progress on 93 other languages and revisions for 164 existing translations. However, this still means that only 28% of Africans can read the Bible in their own language. Often, before a translation can be made, the

language has to be written and extracts from the Bible are the first major publication in that language. With increasing education, access to the Bible is increasing but often the official language of the country may be a foreign language to the reader. Deep religious truths do, generally need to be worked out in a person's own language if they are to become part of the that person.

There is no doubt that the impact of the Bible has been enormous in encouraging Christians to work out the implications of their faith for themselves. Not least has been the change in attitude to missionary teaching. Before the scriptures were translated, missionaries had absolute control over them and their interpretation was final. But after translation, it became possible to differentiate between missions and scripture. There is, as in many cultures, a unique trust and value placed on statements written in books. Add to that the reverence for the scriptures as 'the word of God', Africans could perceive that God was speaking to them in their own language, a language which often missionaries on the ground had not mastered and which some of them could not speak. The vernacular scriptures provided an independent source to Christian teaching.. So, in Nigeria, Ayandale (1966 p176) writes: "Unrestricted access to the Bible with its notions of equality, justice and non-racialism, provided early converts with a valid weapon wkich they

were not reluctant to employ against the missionaries who brushed these ideals aside in Church administration and in their relations with converts. In the scriptures, African Christians frequently discovered a basic discrepancy between missions and scriptures on what were, for them, major points of conflict. Two examples of importance are polygamy, and vitality in the practice of religion. Africans discovered that in the Old Testament, polygamy was practised - why then did the missionaries insist on monogamy. They also discovered in the New Testament much about miracles, demon possession, a spirit filled church. Barrett (1968 p130) shows that a key factor in the growth of independent churches was the translation of scriptures into the vernacular.

A further and very deep rooted influence of Bible translation was that it provided a Christian vocabulary for people in their own indigenous language but using words derived from that language and with connotations of the past. This can easily be understood by considering how to translate the word 'God' into an African language. In all cases traditional words were found but each word had references to African traditional beliefs and the Christian church had to put its own interpretation on the meaning. Hastings (1989) gives an interesting account of problems facing translators. This is no new problem as many christian doctrines were forged through

the interaction of Greek and Jewish cultures, but educators must take into consideration the traditions behind the use of African words when African students discuss Christian insights. Generally, theologians are aware of the limitations of the language they use to convey religious truths but course writers and tutors need constantly to bear this point in mind.

### African Traditional Religion

The above account indicates that Matthew's contact with African traditional religion will be much different from the contact of African Christians who lived nearer the beginning of the century. But it will be very real and there are indications of a growth in the popularity of traditional practices and serious study of Africa's past religious heritage by African scholars, possibly to establish some form of truly African religion as against Islam and Christianity. The most important points of contact can be listed as follows:

1. A spirituality common to all
2. Belief in some form of high God.
3. The existence of mediators: lesser gods and spirits.
4. Veneration of ancestors and rites for the departed.
5. Widespread contact with cultic leaders: medicine men, diviners, witches and sorcerers and holy places.
6. The use of charms.
7. Festivals which may involve veneration of local gods.



There are other practices and beliefs associated with initiation, marriage and childbirth but these are more community affairs possibly involving religious rites and use of charms but not quite as much in conflict with Christian beliefs as burial rites could be.

### Spirituality and the nature of God

John Mbiti, a leading African Theologian, claims that all African people believe in God and take this belief for granted. He backs this claim by a meticulous study of nearly 300 peoples in every part of Africa outside the traditionally Christian and Muslim communities and states that without exception people have a notion of God as a supreme being. (Mbiti 1969 p29) In traditional life, there are no atheists and the Ashanti proverb (Ivory Coast), "No one shows a child the supreme being" implies that almost everyone knows of God's existence almost by instinct. There are some beautiful poems about God, but it is not easy to determine whether there has been a cross fertilisation of ideas. The pygmy hymn contains some statements a Christian could happily endorse:

In the beginning was God  
Today is God  
Tomorrow will be God  
Who can make an image of God  
He has no body  
He is as the word which comes out of your mouth  
That word! It is no more  
It is past and still it lives  
And so is God (Mbiti 1969 p34 quoting T.C.Young 1937)

Mbiti's view that all Africans believe in God has been challenged by C.V.Ubah (Africa 1982:52) who shows that among the people of Igboland, Nigeria, there is only a vague belief in a supreme being. It is local dignitaries which are major forces determining the future of men. He points out that it is gods to which people pay real attention through worship, prayer and sacrifices which are important principles in people's lives.

### Intermediaries

Belief in local deities introduces another key aspect of African religion - the intermediaries. Many African's do feel that it is wrong to go directly to God - just as it would be wrong to approach a king or chief directly. The approach must be made through intermediaries which can be lesser gods or divinities or they can be ancestors. Ancestors are closer to God or the gods because they are living in the spirit world and yet they still care for the living who are their descendants. The cult of the living dead is deeply rooted in African life. Different peoples have different views about mediators and there is no clear overall picture. Shorter (1975 pp11-13) gives a very clear picture of the variety of ways to approach God in a series of diagrams. The solid line indicates formal worship and the dotted line informal.

FIGURE 1  
*Strict theism*

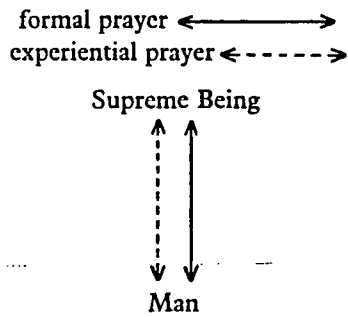


FIGURE 2  
*Relative theism*

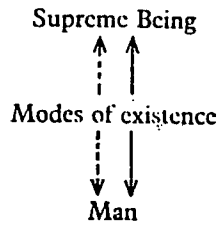


FIGURE 3  
*Symmetrical mediation*

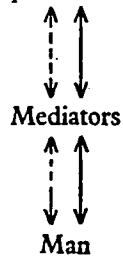


FIGURE 4  
*Asymmetrical mediation*

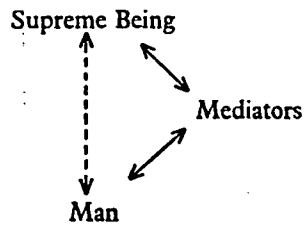


FIGURE 5  
*Strict deism*

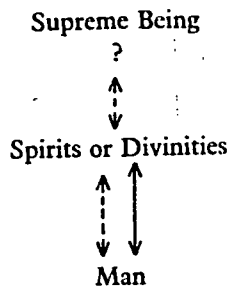
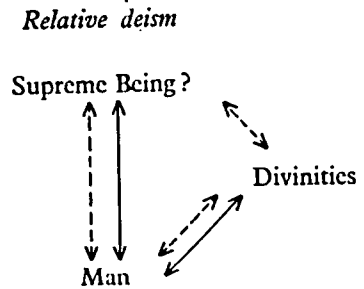


FIGURE 6



The number of intermediaries varies considerably. They may be people of prominence in the tribe or family: the chief, the medicine man or rainmaker or a famous ancestor. They can be contacted by the individual or by the whole community acting together. In many societies, approach to God is regarded very much as a corporate act of both the living and the departed.

Sometimes, the intermediary, if it is a lesser God, will assume such prominence that God becomes almost unreal. Belief in intermediaries varies considerably but is quite significant for the Christian tradition. A tribe which emphasises a high God will concentrate on God the Father while one that has a strong tradition of intermediaries may well be drawn more to Jesus.

### The Departed

Perhaps the most controversial aspects of Traditional African religion is the veneration of the departed. This is to a greater or less degree a part of all cultures but Africans have a lively sense of the presence of immediate family after they have died. One of the main aims of a funeral is to ensure that the departed will be content in the world to come and not return as a dissatisfied ghost to plague the family. In many areas, a person is buried in their own home or compound with food or weapons although a few tribes throw the body into the bushes to

be eaten by wild animals. There is the hope that the dead person will become a new guardian spirit for the home and family. In the past, missionaries frowned upon many aspects of funeral rites but it is now realised that quite a number of elements are not in conflict with the Christian faith which believes in the communion of the Saints. Matthew will need help to guide him in what is acceptable and what is not.

Three other factors in African thought need to be considered.

A. The African world view.

The African man is a deeply religious being living in a religious universe. The universe is made up of:

1. God as the ultimate explanation, cause and sustenance of man and of all things.
2. Spirits, who are both superhuman beings and the spirits of men who died a long time ago.
3. Man, including human beings who are alive, those who died recently and those about to be born.
4. Animals and plants - the remainder of biological life.
5. Phenomena and objects without biological life.

A balance must be maintained between these and over all there is a force or permeating whole. God is the source and ultimate controller of the force; the spirits have

access to it and a few human beings such as medicine men, witches, priests and rain makers can also tap and manipulate this force.

#### B. The African concept of time

John Mbiti (1969) argues forcibly that the African concept of time is radically different from that of the West. In African eyes, time has two aspects - a long past and a present which also includes the immediate past. There is no long term future. The linear conception of time in Western thought - indefinite past, present and indefinite future - is virtually foreign to the African way of thinking. The future is virtually absent because events have not taken place. Time has to be experienced in order to make sense and become real. Mbiti illustrates the point by referring to the tenses of East African languages which have no concrete words or expressions to describe the distant future. He distinguishes between two kinds of time of Africa by using two Swahili words, 'Sasa' and 'Zamani'. 'Sasa' covers the present, the short term past and the short term future. Sasa events must be about to occur, be in the process of happening, or recently experienced. It is not numerically constant, for the older a person gets, the longer is his Sasa time. A community also has its own sasa time. 'Zamani' time also has its own past, present and, to a limited extent, future. But before

events can be incorporated into Zamani time, they must have been realised or actualised in Sasa time. Zamani time, however, is much bigger than Sasa time and in a sense absorbs all Sasa time and embraces all that has taken place. Sasa, or 'micro' time binds individuals and their immediate environment together - it is the period of conscious living. Zamani time is the period of myth giving a sense of foundation or security to Sasa time. It binds together all created things so that all is embraced in the 'macro' or Zamani time.

If this theory is true - and it has been developed by an African - it has significance for planners and educators, particularly when theological education deals so much with the past, and a significant section, Eschatology, with the future. In my own experience in Africa, I found it difficult, and at times exasperating, to understand why Africans simply would not plan for the future. They would incur debts, with little hope of repaying, with a shrug of the shoulders and the attitude, "That's tomorrow, why worry." Another aspect of seeing time differently was the way in which Africans, in general, would wait patiently for what was for Europeans, an incredible length of time, and treat time schedules with great flexibility.

Perhaps one reason for the different approach to time has

been the lack of written literature and written historical record except in Muslim areas - and even here literacy was only accessible to a few. With increasing contact with the West and the development of planning for the future and Five Year plans, African views of time may well be slowly eroded. But Mbiti's accounts do need to be reckoned with. The important lesson is again, that it must not be taken for granted that Western thought forms apply to the African scene.

#### C. The sense of community.

The Africans have a much greater sense of Community than the Western world. This is slowly being eroded by urbanisation with the resultant breakdown in family life, but is still a very strong force. The community is generally the African's own extended family and tribe and does not usually extend to other tribes, but the individualism of the west is not part of the African's way of thinking.

The implications of the points made in this section for TEE systems are a little daunting. Is it possible to take into account all these considerations in a distance education course, or even in a series of courses? If only the course content is considered, then probably the answer is no, but if the student is engaged in dialogue with himself and with others as a result of studying then



many of the issues can be raised and at least thought about. If emphasis is placed on the students' own starting points, along with that of the community from which they come, then any course to do with the Bible, doctrine, worship or Christian conduct will inevitably introduce many of the issues. Some issues will need specific prompting, such as conditioned attitudes to what constitutes good theological education. Here the tutor of a group will need training for it is all too likely that such a tutor will have been to college with its traditional western ethos. Some issues, particularly those concerned with traditional beliefs and African concepts of God will be very much to the forefront in students minds. What is important, and this will be considered again in the final assessment, is that distance educators are aware of the beliefs and attitudes of students and make an attempt to cater for them within the courses that are produced.

## Chapter 5

### Examination of schemes and texts

Elijah had valiantly struggled through the text on Christian Doctrine. He had read about the early church fathers and their letters and about scholars like Origen who had a great zeal for Jesus. He liked the accounts of the way they lived and some of the dangers they had to face as Christians, but he struggled with many of the intricacies about points of belief. He was intelligent enough to realise that it was useful to know how the Christian creeds had developed, although they did not use the creeds much in his own church, but was it really necessary to go into such detail? He tried again to read the text:

"Arius' mistake was to build his doctrine upon one of two biblical texts, e.g. Prov. 8,22 and John 14,28 instead of trying to integrate these texts with the rest of Scripture."

He knew the first one was about wisdom, and looking up the second recognised it again as a well known saying ... 'the Father is greater than I ..' and read on:

"I hope you saw that Christ has always been the eternal Word, one with his father in divinity. When he humbled himself to become man (Phil. 2,5-11) He

did not lay aside His eternal nature. He only limited some of His divine powers. For example, as man He was only in one place at a time. It was only in his role as Son of Man that He was less than the Father." (TEE: Kenya, Doctrine p48)

This really was hard going. He glanced down the page. There were some short phrases near the bottom - perhaps they would be easier. He read on:

Those who say: 'There was a time when he was not'  
and: 'Before he was begotten, He was not'  
and: 'He came into being from nothing',  
Or those who pretend that the Son of God is 'Of  
another substance or essence,'  
or 'Created'  
or 'Alterable'  
or 'Mutable'  
the catholic and apostolic church places under a  
curse."

The telephone rang with a message to say that one of his new buses had got bogged down and the repair crew had not been able to tow it free. With a great sigh of relief, Elijah packed up his work, knowing in himself that he would not come back to it. Strange what a sense of freedom it gave him as he set off to see what could be done about the new bus.

The text Elijah was studying is produced by the Anglican

church in Kenya. The aims of the course of study are set out in the introduction to all the courses of this level.

They are:

"- To provide basic theological training for Christian lay leaders who are able to benefit from this educational level (11 years formal education - "O" and "A" level students and possibly first year University students). It aims to help them to apply the teaching of the Bible to their own lives, to their ministry in the congregations .. and to their ministry in the world.

- To provide the basic Biblical and Theological 'core' courses for training teachers of R.E. in Primary and Secondary schools and for chaplains in secondary schools.

- To provide 'in-service' training to ordained ministers...

- To provide practical experience of 'learning at a distance' for those who may be involved with organising and leading Lay Leadership by Extension programmes ..."

The educational level is based on the 'Certificate in Religious Studies' of Nairobi University and is equivalent to a principal pass at 'A' level although the course is wider than that.

Admittedly, Christian doctrine is probably the hardest

subject to study in the theological field, but the course on the Old and New Testaments is not a great deal easier. The scholarship is very sound but the wording difficult, e.g. on the authorship of Luke's Gospel:

"The implications of the NT evidence that Luke the Physician wrote the third Gospel are confirmed by the unanimous tradition of the early church. Note the following quotations and approximate dates when they were written..(ibid Old and New Testament p138)

The course on African Traditional Religion is in a slightly easier style but the same format. All have boxed questions to recapitulate the subject matter and also in some cases to apply what has been learnt to the African situation. e.g.

5. a. Do you think that traditional African magic is influencing the Christian Church in Africa today? If not, give your reasons.
- b. If yes, give examples of where such influence is at work and why.
- c. What do you think that the church ought to be doing about it?

At the end of each text, there are specimen examination questions. These are typical of a Western College examination. Some do relate to the African situation but most treat the topic as though the student was studying for a university degree.

"4. Describe the background, history and effect upon the church of ONE of the following heresies or schisms:

Gnosticism Montanism Arianism Pelagianism  
Donatism

6. Describe the rise of Islam and its effect upon the church in Egypt and in North Africa. Why did the church disappear in North Africa but not in Egypt?" (ibid Church History and Theology p237)

The whole course is designed to be completed in about 3 years. There are five books of 25 week units in each so each book takes about six months to complete. Each lesson has at least one practical question designed to be discussed in small tutor groups and occasionally the course may ask for a practical lesson (e.g. preparing a sermon or lesson on the topic) so the relevance to the world and the local church can be thought out.

Students just beginning are strongly advised to take an introductory course of six units which gives advice on how to study at home, how to approach the Bible, how to study the Bible and how to prepare sermons. It also introduces the question of authority in religious studies. Some of the problems of learning are considered including student fears, lack of confidence, not doing well, failing, finance and lasting the three years. It emphasises the importance of the desire to learn.

The advice on how to study deals with time, place, discipline and the approach to lessons and also urges the student to pray before studying. It then suggests that the student, "Survey the material, think up Questions about what you read - why does the author divide the material up in this way - Recall after each section and Review by testing the accuracy of the notes." The method is summed up by the letters SQRR.

Evaluation is not easy as it can only be based on the contents of the course books. On the positive side, the texts are based on sound scholarship and have an unbiased approach, not adopting any extreme doctrinal standpoint. They encourage the student to think critically and for themselves and do relate some of the subject matter to the African situation.

On the negative side, they deal with the subject matter very much from the scholastic and academic point of view. The basic assumption is that if the student is provided with sound academic learning, then other considerations, like the application of what is learnt, will fall into place. The starting point for learning is not so much the student's situation and experience but the historical processes which have helped scholars to reach the conclusions now held in the academic world. There is little attempt to vary teaching methods - the questions

are all at the same level and make no attempt to cater for different learning styles. There is not a great deal to encourage enthusiasm for the subject or any kind of excitement that these are truths about the very nature of the living God and have great and practical significance for those who believe.

The charge could be levelled that the texts are trying to answer questions Africa is not asking. It is not surprising that Elijah could not find much relevance in what he was learning.

#### The Extension College of South Africa

The texts of this institution had a similar format to those of the Province of Kenya, but are now being revised and produced in a format that is easier to handle than the A4 booklet. Each course starts with a welcome and a paragraph saying what the student can expect to learn from the course. There are suggestions about how to study, the length of lessons, assignments, a note about the examination and finally an address to write to for help. The suggestions about how to study are not easy to carry out. There are seven points:

1. Begin with prayer
2. Get a general picture of what you are going to study
3. Ask yourself questions about what you are studying



4. Think and do not only try to memorise
5. Summarize in your own words what you have learnt
6. Test yourself from memory
7. Review what you have studied after each lesson and before starting another lesson.

Section 3 suggests the student asks questions like 'Now what on earth is he saying that for?' or 'I wonder what conclusions he is going to draw from this?' or 'I do not agree with that; why can't he put it this way?' This is a difficult task for students with an intermediate certificate of education (Form 3)

The text for the certificate is reasonably easy to read with short sentences and, on the whole, a simple vocabulary. There are exercises for each section and the questions are fairly straightforward on the text that has gone before. But some of the concepts are very difficult.

"If God made everything out of nothing, then not only spirit, but also matter, not only our souls but also our bodies are good. If both come from nothing, then everything they have is from God; And everything God made is good. Christians have often looked on matter, especially our bodies, as being not so good .." (Theological Education by Extension College, South Africa: Course 241 Lesson 5)

"Here the King of Israel, the Messiah or anointed one, is seen as the adopted son of God. The evil

spirits wanted to destroy Jesus' ministry by alleging that his work as the long awaited Messiah was to free the Jews by military means from the political oppression of the Romans." (ibid Course 221 Lesson 27)

The South Africa texts are rather disappointing in view of the very high aims set out by the college. There is, in fact, little attempt within the texts to contextualise the study and the approach to study is again very academic with little variation in teaching methods or accommodation to different learning styles. The same criticisms seem to apply to these courses as the more advanced Province of Kenya courses. But the College is very much aware of this and, despite limited staffing resources and great pressure from the number of students catered for, is updating texts as quickly as possible.

#### Theological Education by Extension Zambia

Matthew was very much enjoying the course he was studying. At first sight, he was rather disappointed by booklets. The printing was not very good and there were no diagrams. He thought of the glossy books produced in the government scheme. But when he raised this point at the group meeting, the leader pointed out that many of the students were very poor and the churches they came from were poor, so the lesson material was produced as cheaply as possible.

Matthew found that the language was very simple and easy to read. The questions he had to answer both made him think and also were very practical. He already had prepared a sermon to preach in his church on the Holy Spirit using material he had learnt from the course book and had helped members of the group to prepare for the leading of a discussion group on the work of the Holy Spirit in the church. He was looking forward to his next assignment. He also, rather to his surprise, found he was able to help the tutor of the group. Apparently the course was designed to help tutors learn how to teach and part of the tutor's course book contained instruction in teaching methods. Matthew knew how to prepare lesson plans with aims and objectives and so the two had quite a lively discussion after one of the meetings. One or two members of the group had listened in, so the whole group had decided to spend some time learning, with the tutor and Matthew about teaching methods, for children, young people and adults. They found this very helpful as all of the group had to teach in some way.

Theological Training by Extension Zambia (TEEZ) was founded in 1979. In the notes for local tutors (Revised 1983) the aim is made clear.

"TEE is a way of training Christians for doing their Christian work. In every aspect of life, people learn best by doing what they are to learn. It is

the same with Christian leadership; the best way to learn about Christian leadership is by doing some job of Christian leadership.

But there are some things about our Christian faith which we can find out only by reading and listening. TEE combines these two ways of learning." (TEEZ 1983)

There are two kinds of courses produced, basic and standard. There is no student's book for the basic course and the instruction is given in small groups by a tutor. An ordinary meeting is divided into two parts. In the first part, the students take the lead. They have been assigned a task - it might be a teaching lesson, a worship assignment, a counselling interview. One student is asked to present what he has done and the others discuss it. There is also time for teaching on that skill. The second part is presenting new material on the topic for the day and this is done by the tutor although in each lesson there are places for group participation.

In the standard lessons, designed for lay preachers, elders and non stipendiary ministers, again there are two parts. The first part is devoted to a skill - a sermon, lesson, case study etc... The second is devoted to the workbook lesson and the tutor is compared with a choir

conductor - helping everyone to sing well! There is great emphasis on the tutor as enabler and he has a parallel study book in which teaching methods and theory are set out, to be practised in the following lesson.

TEEZ has had great success. In 1983 there were 54 students studying one course at basic level, 11 students taking one standard course and 69 students taking other courses (Text Africa). At the end of 1988, there were 1693 students taking 5 basic courses, 255 students in 65 groups taking standard courses and 48 students taking other more advanced courses. 700 tutors had been trained during the 8 year period to 1988 and about two thirds of the students in 1987 qualified for a certificate.

The Acting Director's report of 1988, the tenth anniversary, highlighted several problems. The first was staffing and in that year, there were four members of staff. The second was finance. The courses are very much subsidised and it is only because of the generosity of overseas donors that there was a healthy bank balance at the end of the year. It is probable that students will have to pay more for the courses. The third is that courses are becoming older and some are put of date. Only 2 were revised in 1988 and new courses were a long way from completion. It was hoped that all courses would be available in the four major languages of Zambia, but

at that time translation work was being done on a voluntary basis with expenses and a small honorarium the only cost. The fifth drawback was that out of the four sponsoring churches, the United Reform church had by far the most students, 1875 with the Anglicans at 83 coming second. There is drive to encourage other churches to play a greater part. But one positive factor was that more rural groups were being formed. (Burgess 1989)

Evaluation again is not easy. The basic aim and concept seem very sound and the great strength of the scheme lies in the training of tutors. Texts could be improved, but TEEZ is well aware of this and has to balance costs against presentation. The popularity of the courses shows that students think they are worth while and meeting their needs. The content and language seem to be about the right standard and clearly care has been taken to ensure this. Some feedback is requested and groups are asked to comment on things that are wrong in the text and on material they find difficult. On the whole, TEEZ is a brave and forward looking attempt to train leaders in right attitudes with very limited resources.

### SEAN Courses

In her suburb in South Africa, Sophie was really enjoying her study period. She had thought that studying would be

hard and difficult work, but to her great joy found it easy. Even she could answer the questions set. She looked again at the front page of her booklet and the smiling face that greeted her:

"Hello! I'm your tutor. Here are a few guidelines to help you on your course.

1. Read the question carefully
2. Write the correct answers in the spaces provided.
3. After you've written your answer, see if you've got it right by looking at the answer sheet at the back of this book.
4. IF YOU HAVE ANY DIFFIULTIES TALK THEM OVER WITH YOUR COUNSELLOR.

NOW, make a start." (SEAN Abundant Life: 1)

She was on lesson three and had already been to three group meetings. There were six people in the group plus Simon, the tutor. Two came from her own church. The others belonged to different churches but it was good to find that they all had a lot in common.

Sophie looked at the third question.

"What does the name Jesus mean? Look again at the angel's message in No.2; the word underlined will give you a clue.

a) Carpenter [ ]    b) Saviour [ ]    c) Angel [ ]"

She knew the answer to that already and ticked 'Saviour'.  
Then she read on:

"Read the angel's message again:

Mary's baby was to be called Jesus, which means  
Saviour, because he was going to save us from our

\_\_\_\_\_ "

It was so easy! She went on a bit further. Well,  
perhaps not quite so easy! This part would take a bit of  
thinking about. The text was asking her to think about  
some of her own sins - "How many times have you done wild  
things in your youth?"

Well, she'd done a few things she was ashamed of - in  
fact, they still worried her occasionally. She looked at  
the next question:

"How many of these sins has God forgiven through  
Jesus?"

- a) None of them [ ]
- b) All of them [ ]
- c) Only some of them [ ]

She wasn't sure that God had really forgiven her  
everything. Better tick c) to be sure.

A few streets away, Simon, the leader of Sophie's tutor  
group, was preparing for the group meeting. He had read  
through lesson 3 carefully. Even though he had done the  
course already as a student, his Tutor's manual told him  
always to study the lesson first. Then he turned to the



section in his manual on lesson three. He read the main teaching, and plan for the meeting and then the four aims.

"AIM 'A' That the person can explain why he is really certain that all his sins are forgiven now and that he is God's child." (ibid Counsellor's manual p14)

Simon wondered how the group would go. When he was a student on the course, there had been a heated discussion because one of the members refused to believe that God could ever forgive a member of the security forces who had shot her brother. The tutor had been wise and let them discuss it, African fashion, right through. Simon wondered if he could encourage full discussion, but at the same time, keep control of the group.

Sophie's programme of learning is produced by Seminary by Extension for All Nations or SEAN. SEAN began in Argentina with the South American Missionary Society, an Evangelical group within the Anglican Communion. There was a clear need, in a growing church, for training local pastors who could not afford to attend college. The programme started with a few students in 1972. The movement has grown to such an extent that at present courses are available in over 50 countries and in 45 languages.

SEAN believes that the success of the organisation is due to their Mission Statement, clearly stated in its literature. The organisation's motto comes from on the New Testament, 2Timothy 2,2:

"What you have heard from me ... trust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."

"SEAN has a world-wide ministry dedicated to the preparation of materials for training leaders where they are - in their own social and geographical context regardless of previous educational attainments or lack of them.

SEAN Methodology: SEAN uses TEE. The special characteristics which make materials so effective are the following: (A practical solution to pastoral training)

1. The student is guided through a carefully developed and tested programmed course, using a simple method of progression and reinforcement. He studies in his own home and at his own pace.
2. Each lesson has clear objectives which aid the student in his evaluation.
3. In weekly group meetings with other students and tutor, work is corrected and queries and problems are dealt with in a mutually supportive way.
4. Then, under the guidance of the tutor, the principles learned in the lessons are applied in the student's daily life situation - in his home, work, church and community."

Two other principles are basic to SEAN's work. The first is that the Bible itself is in some sense 'the inspired word of God'. "What you have heard from me (Paul) ..trust to faithful men" It is assumed that courses must be based completely on the Bible. The second is that the training of tutors for groups is an essential part of the teaching programme. The tutor learns on the job, so to speak and is a key figure in the learning process. He does not have to be a specialist educator. The course itself provides the training. It also encourages the tutor, after about half a course of example, to write his own objectives and work out his own lessons.

SEAN is careful to explain and justify its methods. It claims that the programmed approach used ensures that anyone can use the course regardless of academic ability. Feedbacks from all continents from those who have used the material show that students are able to remember as much as 80% or 90% of what they have learnt, even after several years.

The brochure goes on to justify use of courses even with sophisticated students. It states:

"At first sight SEAN courses may seem too simple and repetitive so a word of explanation is needed. One of the objects of the courses is to equip Christians to share their faith with others and so the

sophisticated student will benefit by seeing how to communicate with the ordinary man. It may be helpful to explain this to a sophisticated group. The courses are based on the latest research in educational technology, and what may seem excessive repetition is, in fact, scientifically graded reinforcement. Courses can be used in every kind of area - rural, suburban, inner city... We have field-tested them in industrial areas and high income situations in highly technological, developed countries and with numerous groups within the Third World. (ibid: 2)

Evaluation again is not easy. There is no doubt that SEAN's methods work and that they fulfil many requirements of a good distance education system. The course books are most attractively produced and are stimulating and encouraging especially to the student with a poor educational background. They give confidence in a person's ability to learn. They train tutors. They encourage students to put into practice what they learn. They lead to a sound knowledge of the text which is the basic building block of theology. And they also claim that courses lead on to encourage independent thinking. Course tutors are helped to formulate their own objectives and plan sessions.

But programmed learning taken to the extreme does lead to indoctrination and SEAN texts do contain very black and white views. For example, from 'The life of Jesus Christ' Unit J p2)

God could communicate his plans to the prophets because:

- a) he didn't know what he was going to do himself
- b) he hadn't yet decided how to act
- c) he had the absolute power to put his will into effect
- d) he was going to try to carry out his purpose if at all possible.

God has the power to carry out his will because he is SOVEREIGN. SOVEREIGN means:

- a) having absolute control over everything.
- b) having certain control over some things.
- c) having no control at all.

This does conflict with the growing theological awareness of God who is vulnerable because he is love.

Or again, from the same unit, a section which refers to a quotation in Deuteronomy forbidding the practice of divination: (Deut. 18, 10f)

"Those who use spells or charms seek by magical powers, evil spirits, demons, Satan and the like to enslave others by fear. Our superstitions and use of charms etc.

reveal this same basic fear of the unknown.

Which of the following therefore, are condemned in Deuteronomy 18,10-11? Witches, wizards, Touching wood, casting spells, the evil eye, Wearing a wrist watch, Faith in lucky charms, Witch doctors." (This list is tabulated for ticking ibid p8)

While it is possible to be in agreement with the principal, there is a sense of unease about condemning all witch doctors as being of the devil.

Another organisation which uses the same method but to a much lesser extent is the TEXT-AFRICA. This is published by the Evangelical section of the church and Africans have been very much involved. The language is very simple and direct. The text is divided into short paragraphs, each ending with a question with a space for the answer. The question is answered in the next paragraph. It is a simple and easy way to study the content of the Gospel. But again, like the SEAN texts, the outlook is very dogmatic. For example, after looking at the text John 3,16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life", the text continues:

Some people do not believe in Jesus. From this verse, will they have eternal life? \_\_\_\_\_

Next paragraph: "They will not have eternal life."

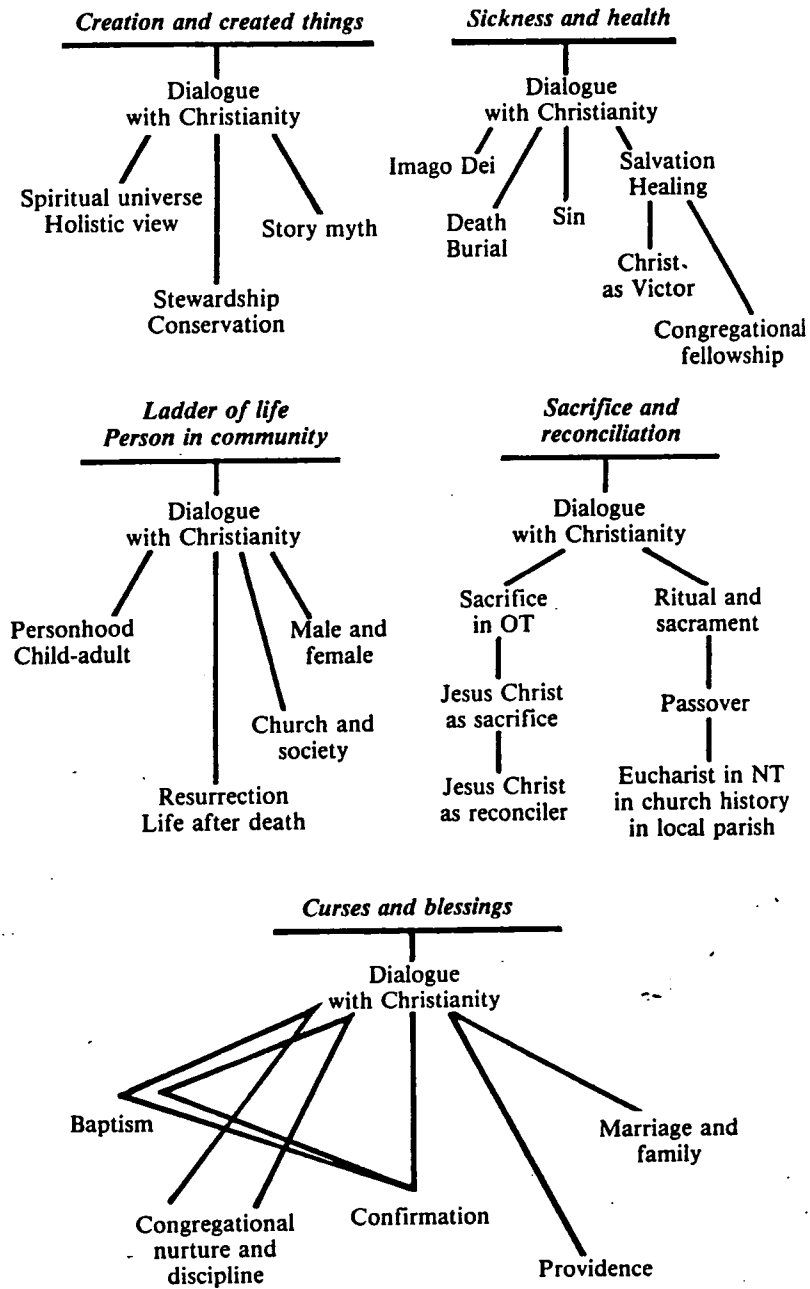
And then three paragraphs later, the question:

"But what will happen to those who do not believe in Christ?"

Next paragraph: "They will die."

This is repeated three times so the student can be in no doubt about the fate of those who do not believe! (Text Africa: Life of Christ 1977 p96)

So far, of the texts examined, only TEEZ has really tried to get to grips with African situations. There are others which make their starting point the African situation and then see what Christianity has to contribute to the understanding. One very interesting attempt comes from a training programme for clergy, but after they have studied Christian doctrine for some time. It starts with African concepts and leads to a deeper understanding of situations people face. It uses five topics familiar to Africans. Each of these topics is then looked at from a Christian point of view with practical implications to follow. The fact that such a course is added to a more traditional introduction to Christian Doctrine shows how difficult it is to escape from traditional methods of teaching. It would be quite possible build up a sound knowledge of doctrine using the topics as the starting point. The scheme is represented diagrammatically:



(Bumija Mshana and Dean Peterson in Kinsler 1983:130)



Another course used in Kenya was produced by women for women and is concerned with marriage and family problems. The course deals with very practical problems. Each unit starts with a Bible verse or short passage. There is an introduction:

"This unit will describe some of the problems and issues in family life in the frames listed below:

1. Dowry and free-union
2. Separation and divorce
3. Polygamy, widowhood and inheritance ...
4. Communication, decision-making, division of labour and development.
5. The extended family and mother-in-law
6. Review

The aim of the unit: "This unit is written so that the reader will get acquainted with some existing family life issues."

Then follows a Bible reading from Ephesians, a section on the first title, dowry etc. After this comes a simple question - with one answer to tick - about the meaning of dowry which make the reader think. Finally questions are suggested for group discussion which are open ended.

(Dr. Rosario Battle Ed. Course on Family Issues 1992)

The language is simple and it is possible for people who cannot read to participate in that the sections are short enough to be read aloud. The brief tests, both for self evaluation and marking by the organisation, can be

completed with help from the tutor or a friend. Great care has been taken to ensure that the people for whom the course is aimed can really participate with enthusiasm and the knowledge that their opinions and thoughts are valued.

The Organisation of African Independent Churches have produced, under the leadership of Augustin and Rosario Batlle, a number of texts which are now circulated widely in seven different regions throughout Africa. Of particular interest is a course on how Jesus sees women which is designed to encourage students to think about the status of women and differentiate between "culture assigned" status and "Christ assigned" tasks. One question suggested for discussion is "Would you change the traditional relationships between men and women of your Christian Community? Why?" (Batlle 1987 p17)

Dr. Batlle gives a detailed justification of the approach of these texts in a paper published in Kenya (Batlle 1991) which considers questions such as:

Who is TEE for?

The learners and their contexts.

Curriculum as a pursuit of generating themes, the themes resulting from dialogue with participants,

Learning through discussion,

The facilitating of critical thinking.

The enabling and evaluation of learning with a discussion on the kind of transformation sought. "We must enable them (learners) to create their own vision of responsibility, to decide what is negotiable and non-negotiable in the transformation process." (Batlle 1991 p12)

These texts are a step forward in producing learning schemes which are designed by Africans for Africans and their popularity indicates that they are dealing with questions Africa is asking in a way that Africans find helpful.

## Chapter 6

### Conclusions

This brief survey taken in conjunction with the outline of the number of schemes operating in Subsaharan Africa given in chapter 2 indicates something of the diversity of TEE in Africa. On the positive side there is a tremendous vitality and enthusiasm for education through TEE and a commitment of the church to exploring best ways of training leaders despite very limited resources available.

On the other hand the limited resources make it difficult for those engaged in TEE to take on board the very clearly defined principles laid down, for example, by the South Africa College at its founding. There is still far too much reliance on Western Tradition and emphasis on academic learning and qualifications. There is also, in some schemes, an importation of Western ideas about authority and the infallibility of the scriptures, allowing Western organisations to transplant such ideas into Africa. These pressures even when understood and perceived are hard to resist.

This final chapter will sum up what needs to be included in a good theological course and examine the

possibilities of including these in a TEE scheme. This will give some indication of how TEE might develop further in Africa and also in other parts of the world. Many of the conclusions will apply to distance education systems operating in other countries including Europe, particularly programmes serving students who have not strong academic backgrounds. Cultures will be different in different countries, but the principles of learning are similar.

#### Aims of TEE schemes

The three students illustrate three different aims. Elijah set out to train for ministry as a semi-professional ordained person. He is able to study at Diploma level having completed sixth form education and would have been directed to the advanced level of courses, receiving, in the main, the same standard of education as a person attending college would receive. It would be an insult to Elijah's capabilities to suggest he studied at any lower level.

Matthew is a catechist and intends to remain as such. He has, at present, no intention of being ordained. Although he has attended teacher-training college, he may well study at Secondary III level, rather than diploma level, the diploma level being too demanding on his time. Sophie, although literate, needs a simple course at an

elementary level to improve her skills as an evangelist. In order to decide what programme of study will be most helpful, it is first necessary to look at the job the students will have to do. This is best done within the community, but remembering that the community will have limited ideas of what to expect from the pastor. To western eyes, the main content of the job for both Matthew and Elijah will be:

1. Leading worship and preaching
2. Conducting occasional offices - funerals, etc.
3. Enabling congregation to use their gifts of pastoral care, evangelism, healing, childrens'/youth work, administration etc. This will include discovering, with the church community, who has such gifts.
4. Teaching, especially preparation for baptism / full membership, parish bible study / training groups.
5. Develop his own particular skills.
6. As an enabler, have some knowledge of other skills and any local resources - training courses etc. to develop these.

It may be the local church will add other skills, for example arbitration in family disputes - if these are valid areas of ministry, they will need to be taken into account.

At the heart of the job for both Matthew and Elijah are:

Prayer - both need to be men of prayer and this is something that can, to some extent be learnt. Knowledge of the Bible and being able to apply that knowledge. This does involve academic knowledge. Knowledge of Christian doctrine. Knowledge of doctrine, in a parish situation, has to be an applied knowledge worked out from the way people think and feel. Questions like, "Why do people suffer?" "Is Jesus God?" "What does the Holy Spirit do and who or what is the Holy Spirit?" are key theological questions but have to be answered from the starting point of those who ask them and in terms they can understand. Allied to this point is the importance of starting where people are when it comes to studying of specific subjects. So, for example, in looking at Doctrines of the nature of God, the starting point is what the students and their communities already believe about God and not what the ancient Greeks believed. This is in line with the Biblical approach to doctrine. The students' own experience can then be developed in the light of Biblical teaching and, if necessary Church History. So far as the historical side is concerned, questions would be approached from the point of view, "A community living at such and such a time had a similar problem and this is how they tackled it."

While learning about prayer, worship and ethics can all

be approached in this way, the teaching of scripture has to be approached from a different angle. In a systematic study of the scriptures, the text will come first and then lessons applied to the context in which the students live.

The skills Sophie will need will be rather different. As one who is helping beginners in the Christian faith to learn about their faith and what it involves in personal life, she will need to know this herself in a reasonably organised way, have some skills in group work and teaching methods, and be a pastor to those she is instructing. She too needs to be a person of prayer. But the best people to judge what is needed will be the group to which Sophie belongs and even beginners should have some part in deciding the curriculum.

In addition to the job requirements, schemes of learning have to take into account the background against which the three students are studying. Elijah, if he went ahead with his training, could well be concerned with increasing urbanisation as more people flock to the towns, a decreasing standard of living which will not only affect his own prosperity but the life of the church, either in its concern for the poor or its own finances and ability to pay its way. He will find issues of corruption are raised by study of Christian values and



will have to decide whether to take a stand on this or go along with the crowd. He may find people still suffering from the aftermath of civil war.

In Matthew's case, the background will be possible drought conditions, perhaps political unrest because of shortages and refugee problems. There may be difficulties in communication - receiving courses, sending work and receiving assessments.

Sophie will face all the problems of living in an area of urban deprivation with its constant background of violence, petty crime, police attitudes and the unceasing struggle of finding enough resources to survive.

All three will live under a perpetual threat of civil strife and have to cope with change at a bewildering speed.

Both Matthew and Elijah will have contact with African Traditional religion and with New Religious Movements with syncretism to a greater or less degree of African and Christian traditions. Sophie will live in a world where there is an undercurrent of traditional beliefs, changed by westernisation. The outward form may well be beliefs in the efficacy of charms, magic and spells, consulting local cultic figures and still a strong belief

in the presence of the 'living dead'.

So far as ideas about education are concerned both Matthew and Elijah will have preconceived ideas of what education means. Even though Matthew has already taken one course by distance education methods, the subject was the teaching of Mathematics. While it may have introduced Matthew to new ideas about learning, it is more likely to have been a highly structured course, reinforcing some of the principles learnt by school education of who holds expert knowledge, who is the student, who the teacher and so on. It is just possible it has introduced Matthew to new ways of learning and new ideas about the relationship between teacher and student, but in the very traditional standards of African school teaching, this is not likely. So both Matthew and Elijah need to be given confidence in the new approach to learning.

They will also need to be taught that knowledge is not necessarily something which can be put into compartments. Too much of both secular and theological teaching has tended to fragment knowledge. Part of the reason has been simply that, in order to learn, knowledge has to be broken down into stages and compartments and the sheer amount of learning does demand that people specialise in certain fields. But it is all too easy to divorce

doctrine from ethics or worship and to regard some aspects of theology as the province of experts in that particular field.

Sophie may well not have experienced enough schooling to have been conditioned to such ideas, but will have this deep sense of inferiority and doubts about her ability to 'be a good student'.

All three will need confidence in their ability to learn and encouragement in their motivation. Personal backgrounds must be taken into account in determining demands on time, difficulty of home study and learning styles. Also it must be realised that none will have access to many books and books they do have access to may well have been written in the west and be difficult.

On the educational side, because the students are so vulnerable, distance education schemes should try to incorporate the best principles of that discipline. In particular, texts should be user friendly, well set out and, if possible, illustrated. Student support and encouragement must be a priority.

Distance education schemes must also take into account principles of Adult Education. The most important of these are:

1. Instruction in how to learn
2. Principles of learning - whether to use programmed learning, discovery methods etc. or a combination. Connected is the need to develop original thought, initially with safe limits but later with training in a policing of limits by the students themselves.
4. Catering for different learning styles
5. Taking account of learning domains and using teaching methods suitable to the predominant domain in any particular module.
6. Encouraging conation, as already suggested in the brief note about motivation.

Most important of all, considering the three students, Matthew, Elijah and Sophie and in particular the experience Elijah went through as a result of taking the course, the responsibility of the Educational organisation to the students must be recognised. There are obligations on the part of the student but these have always been acknowledged. What has not been recognised is the almost awesome responsibility of the teaching organisation in helping an individual to embark on a learning process with all the difficulties, struggles and wonders and possibilities involved. Too often, there is a 'take it or leave it' attitude and if a student fails it is because he/she is just a poor student.

Is it really possible for a distance education course to combine all these features?

While the ideal may be impossible, at least steps can be taken in this direction and already have been in some of the schemes examined. But progress does depend on three key factors. These are the aims of the teaching organisation; the course writers; and the local tutors.

### Aims

The aims of the organisation are fundamental but equally so is the implementation of these. As has been seen, the aims of of the South African College were well thought out and far in advance of their time. The implementation was not very successful as Western ideas of what constituted Theological Education predominated and were difficult to get away from. If the aim is to contextualise Theology, then this must be at the heart of the teaching programme. If the aim is to produce local leaders, courses must be geared to this. If the aim is to train local tutors, material must be included either in the student texts or in tutor's handbooks. An organisation can well have a number of aims, some of equal importance. The statement of aims is crucial and should be clear, not implicit.

Returning again to the TEE College of South Africa, the five aims, training in Christian living and service,

equipping natural leaders, planning for specific types of students, contextualisation with training of local tutors and specifying the range of educational materials provide a good start. But they are not enough to provide guidance for course tutors and should include many of the principles already outlined such as giving students confidence in TEE methods, catering for different learning styles, encouraging conation and so on. It is important that they be stated in order that course writers have a clear idea of what expected.

#### Course writers and tutors

At first sight, given such a list of requirements, course writing would seem to be a formidable task, but on reflection this is not so. A considerable amount of time goes into the production of course materials and to incorporate the extra dimensions required although demanding some extra time, needs more a different approach to the task. There will be some radical changes in material if instruction is to be student centred and this will involve new thinking.

Of first importance is the incorporation of the well established expertise concerning the production of Distance Education materials - simple, lively texts illustrated if possible and easily readable. But, more subtly, different learning styles can be catered for by

varying the practical exercises. These can consist of surveys, preparing sermons, lessons for adults or children on the topic, designing good worship on a theme, writing essays, leading discussions or debates or using role play techniques. Considerable variety can be used. With this can be incorporated advice on how to carry out the exercise. For example, if an essay is set, at the time of setting, instruction can be given about planning an essay. The first time this would be quite detailed, the second less so. Learning techniques are probably better set out in the course of instruction rather than right at the beginning of the course when they tend to be forgotten or appear too formidable to master. It should also be remembered that such helps should be given in as attractive and well illustrated way as the actual course material. All too often, guidance on study methods is given in ways not easy to assimilate.

Another way of combining aims is through assessment and evaluation exercises. The purpose of the assessment questions can be explained so the student understands what the assessment is for - not just to give pass or fail marks to students but to help the course design. Also of very great importance is the way in which students' work is marked - friendly and with encouragement and this again can be used to teach how to teach. A programme which sets out to teach, can have

the dual role of both teaching the actual subject and helping the student to understand good educational principles.

An important part of the production of course materials is the use of pilot groups and often, because of the great shortage of resources and finance, this has been difficult. Much more attention should be paid to this, to try out materials on students and get back comments, before embarking on full scale programmes. There may be some delay but production of a good and user friendly course will far outway some delays in doing this. Also inexperienced course writers will learn a great deal from the process. There is a danger in producing unsuitable material in that the material will help to shape students' ideas and knoweldge and the wrong sort of knowledge is extremely difficult to 'unteach'. Elijah will have a lasting impression that Christian Doctrine is irrelevant, boring and Western. Elijah's experience will make it very dificult to counter such an impression. Far better to 'get it as right as possible' at the start rather than rush into unsatisfactory courses.

Perhaps the greatest responsibility rests with the tutors of the small local groups and there is an urgent need both to recruit and train good tutors. Both the Zambian scheme and the SEAN courses show that it is possible to increase the number of tutors and provide training and



these initiatives need to be strengthened and developed. Training can either be done as a separate course, or perhaps more effectively, through existing courses but by providing much clearer handbooks - often the tutor's handbook is wordy and difficult compared with that of the students. As much care needs to be devoted to tutor's handbooks as to the students so that they, too, are attractive and user friendly.

One problem with separate handbooks is that it again separates teacher from students - the tutor has this mysterious resource which makes him a much more powerful figure. On the other hand, to incorporate guidance for tutors within one handbook common to students and tutors, might well inhibit initiative and encourage criticism of the tutor 'he is not following the book...' Probably the best approach is to have a separate handbook, and the tutor to be trained to have sufficient confidence to share the insights of the handbook with the students so there is no mystique attached to it. A key factor in giving confidence would seem to be recognition, in some way, of the status of tutor. This would encourage more to come forward and be trained. Encouragement could be given by a small implementation to salary for taking on extra work and/or by certificate. That it is possible to provide excellent training for tutors, or enablers, is shown by the production of the course 'Training for

Transformation' (Hope:1984). This is more concerned with development than theology but as the two are closely allied, the principles used could easily be adapted to the teaching of theology.

Another way in which tutors could be trained would be to incorporate principles of education into the Theological college syllabuses, not as an optional extra but as an integral part of the courses. The minister's task is very much concerned with teaching and this aspect of work sadly neglected by theological colleges and seminaries. Along with this could be included an evaluation of educational methods and the importance of TEE, which may help dispel some of the thinking that TEE is not as good as residential training. This reform would be comparatively easy to make.

Concentrating on these three factors would strengthen the process of improvement and innovation already apparent in African systems of TEE and also help to draw away from the constraints of the traditional ideas and practices in educational methods. But there is a further consideration. What happens to Matthew when he has completed his course? Will he be left to just get on with the job or will there be further contact and support? It is true that he will, as will Sophie, derive a great deal of strength from the local

congregations, but leadership is a lonely responsibility and some further help is needed, especially if some of his ideas are resisted, as inevitably they will be, by those in the congregations opposed to or frightened of change and challenge to deeper thinking.

Matthew, faced with rapidity of change, and a bewildering life world, needs further support and possibly opportunities for further learning. A good distance education scheme must also include devices for self help and support after courses are completed. This could be done by a periodic newsletter, by the continuation, at less frequent intervals, of tutor groups and by suggestions for further learning.

Also, Matthew, having undergone a course, will have positive ideas of how such courses can be improved and can make some return to the teaching organisation by his suggestions and ideas. This again will help to give status and involvement. The more forward looking schemes incorporate this aspect.

It is likely that Matthew, having learnt something of the learning process, and being involved in education and leadership, will wish to learn more. This again is at the heart of theological learning, for God is concerned with development, improvement and change. Theological education is concerned with how God is at work in the

individual, the community and in His world, a world of constant change and transformation. The central message of the cross is transformation and it follows that theological learning, in its many forms, is about change, change in self perspective and change in community understandings. A comparison of the sections on adult learning and theological learning shows how close the best principles of both are to each other. Theological learning adds the very strong dimension of the spiritual but also emphasises that encountering God is not encountering a being who is static, but one who is supremely involved in the development of the individual, the community and the world. Sadly some theological institutions try to encapsulate knowledge in a time constraint.

The best Distance Education cannot do everything, but it can make a very positive contribution in the process of change and help people like Matthew, Elijah and Sophie to understand and take part in the processes of change which can appear so bewildering. Above all theological education is about the development and transformation of the individual and the community, physically, mentally and spiritually, reaching out to God who has revealed himself in Jesus. For that is what God is about in His world.

Appendix 1

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General Survey of Christian Doctrine Course 241 1983

Prospectus 1992

Theological Education by Extension Zambia

Christian Ministry

Christian Doctrine (now updated)

Acting Director's Report 1989

Notes for TEEZ Tutors

LUMKO Institute

(Texts produced by the Roman Catholic Church for  
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Appendix 3

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