



Public pastoral leaders: The purpose of theological training¹

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Abstract

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This article is a follow-up of an article in which I attempted to gain insight into the corporate nature of being called to ministry. The mentioned article was also aimed at discerning the specifics of the ministry of the “public pastoral leader”. While the question is even asked whether theological training is necessary at all, I accept, as point of departure, the critical need for such training. What is of more importance is the discernment of what I call in this article the “teleological core” of theological education. I purposefully chose to explore the contributions of a number of well-known scholars who devoted much of their research to this field: Schnier, Farley, Wood, Hough and Cobb, Heitink, Van der Ven and a few others. The ultimate finding is that some consensus about the telos of theological education does exist. The nature of the telos is phrased differently, but the different dimensions identified are indeed complementary. Concepts like “vision and discernment”, “critical reflection” “reflective practitioner”, “hermeneutical-communicative competence” and others are discussed as they relate to the core research problem. Attention is also given to the necessity of training a “basic pastor” as well as to the importance of “limited specialisation” in theological training.

1 The content of this article is a revised and edited version of a small part of a larger research project done on this topic.

Opsomming

Openbare pastorale leiers: die doel van teologiese opleiding

Hierdie artikel is 'n opvolgbydrae van 'n vorige artikel waarin ek gepoog het om insig te verkry in die korporatiewe aard van die situasie om tot die bediening geroep te word. Die doel van genoemde artikel was ook om die spesifieke bedieningsaspekte van die openbare pastorale leier te onderskei. Terwyl die vraag selfs soms vandag gevra word of teologiese opleiding hoegenaamd nodig is, aanvaar ek as vertrekpunt dat daar 'n kritiese behoefte is aan sulke opleiding. Wat meer belangrik is, is dit wat ek in hierdie artikel die onderskeiding van die "teleologiese kern" van teologiese opleiding noem. Ek het doelbewus gekies om die bydraes van 'n aantal bekende wetenskaplikes wat baie van hulle navorsing aan hierdie veld gewy het te verken: Schnier, Farley, Wood, Hough en Cobb, Heitink, Van der Ven en nog 'n paar ander. Die uiteindelijke bevinding is dat daar tog 'n mate van konsensus bestaan oor die telos van teologiese onderrig. Die aard van die telos word verskillend geformuleer, maar die verskillende dimensies wat onderskei word, is inderdaad aanvullend tot mekaar. Konsepte soos byvoorbeeld "visie en onderskeiding", "kritiese nadenke", "nadenkende praktisyn", "hermeneuties-kommunikatiewe vaardigheid" en ander word bespreek in hulle verband tot die kernnavorsingsprobleem. Aandag word ook gegee aan die noodsaaklikheid om 'n "basiese pastor" op te lei asook aan die belangrikheid van "beperkte spesialisering" in teologiese opleiding.

1. Introduction

The office of the *pastor* is, for more than one reason, under pressure. This professional group is seemingly in need (cf. Böhmer & Spangenberg, 2001:6-14; Van Nijen, 1993:42-56; Barna, 1998:29; Roux, 2000:52-53). The professional character of the profession as such, as well as of those who are in the profession, is often called into question. Rein Brouwer's (1995) dissertation with the title *Pastor tussen macht en onmacht* ("Pastor between power and powerlessness" – 1995:379) (freely translated – MN) serves in this regard as a "reference" to a world-wide discussion. To speak of a crisis in the theological profession has almost become commonplace.

Observation leads me to think and even suggest that this prolonged crisis has intensified and reached a new level – this situation has given rise to a new question: is theological training necessary at all? Do people not lose their enthusiasm for the Kingdom by being drawn into a lengthy period and process of academic study and

questioning of their faith? However much this calls for an independent study, it is not my intention to do so in this article. It is nevertheless important to refer shortly to how this question is related to my research purpose in this article. Dean's (2004) research on the adolescent's serious urge for passion and a passionate church, puts this issue on the agenda in another way. Her reference to "the church's invitation to oddity" (Dean, 2004:35) and to worship hours as often "the most wasted hour of the week" (Dean, 2004:41) is critical of our theme. These remarks cannot be discussed in their full context in one article, but the reference to public leadership in churches is self-evident. Have public pastoral leaders become part of a culture of "mediocrity" (rather than "oddity") to such an extent that Berger's comment (1961:10) is relevant?

It is a regrettable fact of our cultural situation that capitulation to permanent dishonesty is often interpreted as a sign of 'maturity'. Adulthood becomes a more or less comfortable settling down with the half-truths or even the organized delusions which are embodied in the various social institutions.

In Dean's (2004:35) reflection on the necessity of passion in the church, she is, to my opinion, close to the painful nerve of confusing calling to ministry with an invitation to cultural "mediocrity".

It is probably high time for somebody to rethink theological training as such. Like in other research previously undertaken (inter alia Nel, 2002:151-167; 2004:584-618) I accept the necessity of such training. The purpose of this article is more to participate in the *rethinking of the purpose of theological training*. What kind of public pastoral leader do faculties of theology and seminaries want to train? What are the expected outcomes for churches for whom such leaders are trained? A very specific objective of this article is to, in some way, make the contributions of five authors accessible and rely on their expertise to establish the implications of the purpose of theological training.

2. Public pastoral leaders

I do not want to re-argue a name for this office in this article. I have tried to reflect on this issue in another and much broader research article (Nel, 2004:584-618) It is, however, necessary to summarise in some way what my argument was then. The summarised line of argumentation of the previous article is vital for understanding the essence of this article, that is, the purpose of theological training and how it relates to recruitment and screening of potential candidates.

2.1 Congregation and God's intentions for the world

It is my conviction that one cannot and should not separate the concepts *office*, *congregation*, and *identity* in any way and that one should even be very careful – even cautious – in distinguishing among them. The core issue eventually is to determine who the congregation is and what its business in this world entails. The central issue relates to the participation of the congregation in that which God is already doing in his world. Eventually it should be determined whether and in what way “we” are incorporated by God in his activity of healing and recreation. Our understanding of calling has everything to do with this view of being incorporated in God's activity. The big issue for us (being the representatives of the church) is to gauge to which extent and in what way we are helping Christians/disciples of Christ fulfil their calling in God's world. Are we really helping them participate in that which God is busy with? The calling of a church is to help disciples to participate with a new understanding of God and themselves, to remain in the world, or return to it and be God's representatives where-ever that may be.

In theology the above-mentioned issue is often referred to as the “ground model of the laity” (*laïcale grondmodel*). Heitink (2001:190) refers to a report of the Reformed churches in the Netherlands as follows: “From the perspective of the diversity and the gifts of God to the congregation and all its members we will have to view the congregation as the bearer of the intentions of God” (freely translated – MN). Within this understanding of the congregation being the primary bearer of the intentions of God, office bearers can be viewed as the protectors of this purpose of the church (cf. Firet, 1987). This approach is often called the missional approach (cf. Guder, 2000; Barrett, 2004:33-58).

Every believer is a part of this ministerial reality. By our baptism we are ordained to ministry. Every pastor is first of all, by his or her baptism, ordained to ministry. All members of the community of believers actually form part of the ministering body of Christ. Whatever the real content of the office, this aspect of ministry is non-negotiable for all of us. The question then is what the “extra” in the office of the pastor entails? We need to determine the nature of this extra in order to know what the purpose of a pastor's training implies.

2.2 It is also in the name

Certainly the “extra” does not only imply pastors' “full-time” ministry. Every Christian believer is actually called to be involved in ministry

on a full-time basis! My conviction is that the more *official public character* distinguishes pastors' ministry from that of most other believers (cf. Wood, 1994:12-13). Some believers' witnessing influence are indeed more "public, they have greater platforms, but not all these Christian believers have been officially asked, permissioned and commissioned by the congregation to do so. Wood (1994:13) defines this kind of ministry as "ecclesially commissioned, typically full-time, and normally exercised in relation to a congregation or local Christian community". Of course more issues are at stake in this respect, but this distinction is important for the argument in this article and more so for my choice of the name *public pastoral leader*. (For the choice of the term *pastor* over *teacher* or even *preacher* and other related names and for the rest of the argument I refer the reader to, among other, Nel (2004:584-618), Kalthoff (1998:143) and Heitink (2001:257-261).) In particular, I refer to Nel (2004:610) and the relevant paragraph on "Leadership as pastoral ministry".

3. The purpose of theological training

As stated in the introduction, it is my objective to make some of the writings of five authors in this regard accessible to the reader. This approach is, like all reading, a perspective by and from another reader, the researcher. In this sense this approach and attempt to make the findings of researchers accessible is indeed interpreted access – an interpretation through my eyes. The interpretation is, however, not purposefully coloured.

3.1 G.P. Schner

Schner (1993:xii; also cf. 1985) states that the purpose of his book is "to discover theological issues about theological education". He opts not to focus on the more common categories like the academic (university), classical, intellectual, ecclesial character of training. Instead, he states, "I have presumed that the proper understanding of how those characteristics are realized within ministry is to be found in discovering what it means for minister or priest to be professional, practical and devoted" (Schner, 1993:18-19). In this regard Schner discusses the works of Farley (1983; 1988), Hough and Cobb (1985), and Wood (1985). In all three cases his discussion in a sense entails a reaction to the traditional model of theological training. In Wood's view of theological training (Wood, 1985) the heart of the training is depicted as more systematic in nature and focused on the development of the relationship with God. The shortcoming previously was the "informational" character of

such training. Students did not sufficiently (or not at all) learn “to think theologically in their ministry, integrating that theological knowledge with Biblical, historical, and pastoral learning” (Schner, 1993:19).

Schner (1993:52-72) also includes another aspect in the discussion, by asking: “Are they devoted?” It is his conviction that the liturgical experiences of students must be enriched. In my own understanding of the importance of the identity of local faith communities I believe that this viewpoint of Schner is important. I am convinced that one can expect local churches with a rich culture of worship to “produce” future pastors who are devoted to their calling. Devotedness is a vital element of Biblical discipleship – in the words of Hall (1988:53-79) devotedness implies a discipleship characterised by “covenantal commitment, discerning discipline, and apostolic responsibility”. These three characteristics remind us of the radical priority of God’s activity which makes discipleship possible: To quote Schner (1993:63; cf. also 1985:33-34) again

covenantal commitment does capture in a phrase what spiritual formation is: appropriation, assimilation, and internalization of the faith tradition which makes possible and nourishes personal commitment and the realization of particular God-given gifts and vocation.

An identity shaped by the mentioned three characteristics is rational. As O’Meara (1990:79-103) contends, it is not the identity of a romanticised ministry. Identity is something I have, even before I fully realise it “and yet something I never really know or possess until I die, for I am always in the process of inventing it. Identity is something I am rather than have, and yet it is essentially a socially constructed reality” (Schner, 1993:84).

In the context of this article it is important to mention that this identity, and the accompanying devoted commitment, is covenantal/relational in nature. Every human being, and also a public pastoral leaders, experiences and demonstrates identity in the way you relate to God, yourself and the reality about yourself. Only when a certain permanent congruence and consistency is present in this relatedness one can say that devotedness and “self reliant spiritual functioning” exist (Firet, 1977:236). When persons, normally during adolescence, do not succeed in finding identity, they may pay the price at a later stage of life (cf. Nel, 2001). The purpose of finding and identifying one’s identity implies “the realization of true self, God’s image individualized” (Freeman, 1986:17).

The point of departure of discipleship in theology is critical in developing an identity that is relationally shaped if not determined. In relationship with the Living One the follower is learning and the learner (disciple) is following (cf. Schnier, 1985:94-113; Lindbeck, 1988:10-32; Tracy, 1988:33-52). This stance has consequences for screening: "I will consider ministerial identity as a determination of Christian identity, and that will require consideration of the notions of discipleship, charism, and ordination" (Schnier, 1993:92).

Farley's (1983:87-88) concern that "theology is too much focussed on the personal and ecclesial life of the Christian, and not directed to the world" will not be discussed in detail in this article. Farley's understanding is more classical in nature and in reaction against the "clerical paradigm" as the unifying model or (as) the "teleological' understanding of the unity of theological studies" (Farley, 1983:87-88). I do agree with the critique that, while theology should be scientific and academically credible, Farley's approach is too abstract (cf. Schnier, 1993:26; Hough & Cobb, 1985:4). Farley's approach does not allow enough for the reformation of theological training in the light of the challenges of the time and context. This point of criticism, however, does not mean that Farley's approach does not take personal development serious. He has received credit for setting the "agenda for consideration of moral formation in seminaries" (Banks, 1999:24-28; Strege, 1999:113). Schnier (1993:26) is convinced that, while Farley (1988:177) did respond to some aspects of the critique on his approach, he maintained that theology should not become the development of "pastoral skills".

Schnier (1993:23, 24) uses a question as his starting point: is the public pastor (or as I call him or her, the public pastoral leader) *professional, practical and devoted*. He prefers the word *practical* rather than *pastoral* to avoid the debate on *pastoral* and *academic*. It is in this regard that he discusses the intention of Hough and Cobb, that is "the clarification of Christian identity as the basis for Christian practice" (cf. Hough & Cobb, 1985:18).

3.2 J.C. Hough and J.B. Cobb

Hough and Cobb (1985:5-18) react against the development in the USA (and probably internationally) of an elite culture where the congregation is not determining the character of the pastoral leader but the community at large. Heitink (2001:192-193) refers in passing to the same issue when he mentions the difference in the Netherlands between the understanding of *office* in the "Hervormde Kerk" as church of the state and the "Gereformeerde Kerke" as

confessional churches. According to Hough and Cobb (1985:5-18) this issue has led to the development of an understanding of the pastor as the “learned figure”, the figure of the “master” who has been trained to “know it all”. With the growing influence of other professions (like engineering) this kind of understanding has changed and has been applied to theological training in that pastors have been described as so-called *builders*. Pastors thus need basic knowledge but must be able to build. The implications are that certain techniques should also be mastered. Builders need plans to build and thus the concept of *pastoral director* also developed. Pastoral director thus implies someone who builds with a purpose. In this regard Niebuhr (1956:48, 79) plays an important role – the term *pastoral director* is his brainchild. He hoped for consensus in purpose and the way in which this plan should come about. As Hough and Cobb (1985:15) remark, such a vision of unity, however, has not been established. What resulted instead was an increasing sense of diversity:

... confusion about the ministry has increased. Reeling under the impact of post-Neo-orthodox theological criticism and the resulting cacophony of theological voices, and working in congregations with vastly differing expectations, it is little wonder that ministers find no authoritative basis for their profession.

What followed was the coming about of the image of the pastor as *manager* and *therapist* (Hough & Cobb, 1985:26). The authors agree with Farley in that *theologia* has to be rediscovered. For them this means the “clarification of Christian identity as the basis for Christian practice”. This identity is thus described by them (Hugh & Cobb, 1985:18) as

... the internal history or memory by which Christians live individually and corporatively. The church is defined by its commitment to keep that memory alive and to express it in present practice. *The concern of the seminary must be to help prepare persons who will be able to keep this memory alive and to lead the church to become more of what its memory now calls it to be* (emphases in italics – MN).

The authors view the church as “being the community whose history has been determined by the memory of Jesus Christ” (Hough & Cobb, 1985:76). In this regard the following question comes to mind: What kind of pastoral leader will help the local church to remain faithful to their identity as the people who have to keep this memory alive in their society? Hough and Cobb (1985:100) regard the

consequences of this question as the dawning of the *new professional*. The task of theological training is seen as the development of *pathfinders* who will *envision* the purpose of the congregation in local context but with sensitivity for the global context. For all the aspects of this process and practice the church needs *practical Christian thinkers* and *reflective practitioners*. Hough and Cobb call this person a *practical theologian*.² It is to be understood that in their case the implied meaning of *theologia* is strongly historical in nature. Within their understanding of identity, theology is also understood as missional in nature. Leaders are encouraged to think globally and Christlike, across the spectrum of theology, and in all other theological disciplines. Hough and Cobb add an important remark, namely that when new theological courses are implemented, the focus should be on Christian discipleship rather than on spirituality. In my opinion they are correct in stating that when spirituality is separated from the context of discipleship it may very well lead to a too narrow understanding of spirituality (Hough & Cobb, 1985:115-116; also cf. Banks, 1999:73-128). This narrowed understanding cannot be afforded by any church.

In summary these authors' views on the character of theological education imply the training of persons who are able to reflect on the *praxis*. According to them, ministry, in more than one sense, implies theological reflection on the *praxis*. Pastoral leaders should accept for themselves the paradigm of *reflective practitioner* – a concept Hough and Cobb adapted from Schoen (1983). Furthermore they indicate that it is not necessary to become involved in a rather futile argument whether Practical Theology is the most important subject in Theology.³ This aspect is not discussed in this article and is not my conviction either. What is important is to emphasise that pastoral leaders should be capable not only to reflect *on* and *about* the practice but also to reflect *in* practice (cf. Hough & Cobb, 1985:84-85). This ability is sometimes called “theological wisdom” (Banks, 1999:19). To reflect with wisdom about practice and reality should indeed be true for all Christians. The difference as regards *public pastoral leaders* is that they reflect about and in practice primarily in and for the church. Their understanding is therefore critical. They

2 Browning, Polk and Evison (1989) are the editors of a book in response to this view – *The education of the Practical Theologian*.

3 It is true that this is the methodological “own” of the discipline Practical Theology. The point in argument is, however, of more importance than the methodology of one of the theological disciplines (however important that in itself might be, and is – cf. Pieterse, 1993; Heitink, 1993 & 1999). For Hough and Cobb's understanding of the concept of “The Practical Theologian” cf. Hough and Cobb (1985:90-94).

should be capable to help fellow Christians to understand and develop their Christian identity “so that together they may act in a Christian way” (Hough & Cobb, 1985:84).

3.3 C.M. Wood

Wood (1985:21-35; cf also Wood, 1994) argues that theology implies “critical inquiry”. According to Wood (1985:15) theological training is a process by which

... persons acquire an aptitude for theology. An aptitude for Christian theology is a capacity and disposition to engage in critical reflection upon the Christian witness (which means, upon what is conveyed by everything that Christians are, say, and do as Christians, singly and together).

He views *theoria* as the old partner of *vision*. Coupled with *vision* goes *discernment*: “If vision sees the totality, discernment is the grasp of the individual; the interpretation of differences; discrimination, rather than synthesis” (Wood, 1985:67-68). In theological training both elements are critical. *Vision* has to do with the comprehensive, “the quest for a coherent understanding of the Christian witness as a whole”. In general this coherence is often referred to as theoretical thinking. *Discernment* is the theological attempt “to grasp and assess the character of a particular instance in Christian witness – past, present, or prospective. Discernment probes the actual logic of witness, to discover how, in fact, its concepts and assertions do function” (Wood, 1985:73, 74).

Later in his work he calls the idea that theological training should equip students with a “body of objective knowledge” a “powerful half-truth”. His point (Wood, 1985:82) is not that this body of objective knowledge is not important but that it is incomplete:

It is not the mere possession of ‘a theology’ that is the measure of a theological education; it is rather one’s ability to form, revise, and employ theological judgements that counts. Vision and discernment are exhibited in practice.

His argument is valid: theological training does not only ask for (and does not have only this as purpose) the formation of judgement or spiritual formation. These requirements are important, but are not enough. He argues for something that will bring all these aspects in relation within a larger whole of “vision and discernment”. This encompassing whole is what he calls *critical thinking* and *critical inquiry*. He points out how “Christian formation” and “critical inquiry”

often, within the Catholic and Evangelical traditions, have been seen as irreconcilable. “Critical inquiry” was considered as clashing with piety and modesty. He argues that this view is not valid. It may be true in other sciences that a critical distance is required for studying subject content. In the study of theology this is not true: “in theology, at least, understanding follows commitment” (Wood, 1985:84-85). His quote from a translation of the work of Anselmus is not only elegantly phrased but is also fitting in this regard: “For I do not seek to understand that I may believe, but I believe in order to understand. For this also I believe – that unless I believed, I should not understand (Wood, 1985:85). Wood (1985:85) in turn adds: “The route to theological understanding, it is said, is not criticism, but faith.”

At the end of his work Wood (1985:93) returns to the fact that theological training is more than to, eventually, perform certain tasks in a professional way.

Theological education is not necessarily professional education for ministry, but the heart of proper professional education for ministry *is* theological education – meaning by ‘theological education’ an education in theological inquiry. One may properly seek and obtain a theological education without any intention of preparing for church leadership of any sort; *but one may not properly prepare for church leadership without acquiring theological competence* (emphases – MN).

Farley probably hits the target in stating that the more the performing of certain tasks become the focus and *telos* of theological training “the less the minister becomes qualified to carry them out” (Farley, 1983:128).

In summary Wood’s argument boils down to the development of vision and discernment. Both aspects ask for “intelligence, sensitivity, imagination, and a readiness to deal with the unforeseen” (Wood, 1985:94), or to phrase it in accordance with Hough and Cobb (1985:89; also c.f Schoen 1985:235, 236, 328) “reflective action is always open for surprise”. Wood (1994:36) refers to an article by Kant (as quoted by Friedrich, 1949:132) in which he describes the childishness into which we “languish” as “the incapacity to use one’s intelligence without the guidance of another”. However we formulate this, writes Wood (1994:28) the “most crucial to the overall function of leadership is the leader’s capacity to think with and on behalf of the tradition”. This capacity to think with and on behalf of the tradition implies that such a leader must have studied (known/mastered) the tradition of Christian witness well and, on the

other hand, must have developed the ability to keep a critical distance towards the tradition. Openness certainly is related to a strong sense of identity (cf. Hess, 1991:104-214).

3.4 G. Heitink

The research done by Heitink (2001) on the biography of the “dominee” is in more than one way relevant to the topic of this article. The element I want to single out in particular is what he calls “the changing (*agogisering*) of the pastoral profession” as long as it is in service of the “equipping of the members, increasingly so focused on changing (*om te bouwen*) of the functions of the office into functions of the congregation” (Heitink, 2001:269, 273)⁴ This insight is critical. Whoever supports my point of departure (stated in 2.1 above) realises that the congregation is the bearer of the intentions of God. The congregation is incorporated in God’s acts of recreation and healing in this world. It is to the congregation that God gives people to equip his people for ministry (cf. Eph. 4). In accordance with Heitink’s words (with reference to Firet and Berkof) the offices are given “in order to safeguard the identity of the local church” (Heitink, 2001:273). When this understanding of the congregation is well rooted, the role of the “learning individual” in a “learning church” changes radically (cf. Hendriks & Jonker, 2000: 135-156; Heitink, 2000:223-230).

Heitink (2001:270-271) argues for what he calls integration of the “three in one form” of pastoral leadership that is being trustworthy, willing to serve and respected (*hoogwaardig*). We need to organise this profession differently with more attention to “specialisation, differentiation, teamwork and career development”. It is in this regard that he argues for an “open church” where issues like helping people to find new meaning, information, new rituals and diaconal needs are at stake (Heitink, 2001:280).

In his argument for a limited and certain specialisation (*gematigde spesialisatie*) he argues for what he calls a core knowledge-ability or expertise (*kerndeskundigheid*) of the pastoral leader (cf. also Heitink, 1999:256-257). He describes this core knowledge and ability as a “hermeneutical-communicative competency”. Later in the book he states:

This emphasises the relationship knowledge, insight, competencies (*vaardigheden*) and attitudes ... This in relation to

4 I will freely translate the Dutch in which the book is written.

one another equips the pastoral leader in person, office and profession to act as an interpreter in the communication process in which the leader is involved

(Heitink, 2001:284; also cf. Van der Ven, 1998:153).

This relation among knowledge, insight, competencies and attitudes consequently becomes nonnegotiable in the training of a core pastor (*basispastor*). Limited and certain specialisation means that in the office a core exists that should saturate every element of specialisation (like water saturates a sponge – MN). Building on this view he argues that specialisation should take place in three areas: the pastoral, the “educative”, and in edification (*opbouwkundige*) (Heitink, 2001:284).

As to career development he points in the direction of development in team ministry. Without oversimplifying it, team ministry implies moving from a position of “junior-pastorship”, to that of “shared task function” (co-pastor) to “senior pastor”, to “regional office bearer” (*bovenplaatselijk ambtsdrager*) in the role of *pastor pastorum*, a trusted person and team leader (Heitink, 2001:288).

3.5 J.A. van der Ven

Van der Ven’s (1998) contribution as to training for “reflective ministry” is important with regard to the topic under discussion. His “port of entry” is, similar to that of others, the complex nature of religion in society. He refers to “differential secularization, in the sense that religion can be observed to exert a variety of influences within the various societal systems. ... which sometimes reinforce and at other times contradict each other” (Van der Ven, 1998:43). This complex nature of religion and the church on micro, meso and macro levels asks for new reflection on the matter. According to Van der Ven (1998:82-83) it seems that certain discernible “patterns” that have been obvious in theological schools of thinking are no longer adequate and meeting the needs of our times – in this regard the *kerugmatic* and *ecclesial* models serve as examples. Because of research in the social sciences, as well as the advancement in empirical research, these models have been replaced, or at least supplemented, with what he calls the “therapeutic model and the managerial model”. His conviction is that we should look for something that will take the management approach into account but then goes beyond this model. To be a pastoral leader in this complex world asks for “general competent reflection in ministry” as well as “special competent reflection in ministry” (Van der Ven, 1998:156-157). In this regard he also refers to the role that “the

epistemology of technical rationality” plays in the management model. According to Carroll (1986:17) this is part of the weakness of what he calls the professional model. This rationality is not central in the reflective ministry model:

Rather, the central focus is on the idea of practical, rationality-based self-responsibility and self-direction ... What the pastor must learn, and what the education for ministry program must lay the foundation for, is to develop the professional competence to deal adequately with problematic situations, to discover, formulate and analyze the religious problems contained therein, to use the basic tools to consider and weigh alternative solutions, to arrive at judgements while experimenting, and to reach decisions while acting.

The above focus and requirements for a ministry programme should be kept in mind while realising that there will always be new situations asking for new reflection. For any such reflection knowledge of previous problems and their solutions, in cooperation with other professional people and members, are necessary (Van der Ven, 1998:85). In developing such a framework for understanding the extent of such a reflective ministry he then also emphasises the importance of understanding identity. He (Van der Ven, 1998:100-116) describes the importance of identity under three headings as being

- the vision of the church in its identity “as the people of God”;
- the mission of the church “as the movement of Jesus”; and
- the “imagination” of the church” as a community of the Spirit”.

What then, in view of the complex nature of society, the role of religion in this society, and the new challenges for ministry in this society, is needed to train a generally competent pastor (*basispastor* – Heitink)? Van der Ven believes that “hermeneutic communication functions as the common denominator of the seven special functions” (Van der Ven, 1998:123; cf. Heitink, 2001:284). Competent pastoral leaders need knowledge, insight, skills (competencies) and attitudes. Shortly summarised Van der Ven (1998:152-160) sees the following competencies as relevant and necessary for pastoral leaders:

- *Knowledge* referring to the ability “to reproduce narratively and conceptually structured information”.
- *Insight* referring to the ability “to produce narratively and conceptually structured information” (*Knowledge* has to do with

the reproduction of information and *insight* with the production of information).

- *Skills* referring to the ability “to appropriately use social methods and techniques which apply to specific aspects of concrete situations in which the professional performs his work”.
- *Attitude* implying “the affective-evaluative orientations which the professional has at his or her disposal in order to perform his or her work in an appropriate way.
- *Orientation* referring to the particular style or manner in which a person relates to persons or things. In these orientations emotion plays a role and therefore the concept “affective”.

Within these components of competency pastoral leaders should develop general and specific reflection skills (competencies). In my own words I would say that a pastoral leader should be able to reflect on ministry as to *knowledge, insight, skills (competencies) and attitudes* with reference to *what* I do, *why* I do it, *how* I do it and in *what attitude* I do it.

A remark by Petersen (2002:1-12) is important in this respect: theology is the conscience of the church. All members are called to obtain a certain level of theological literacy. What is asked of the pastoral leader is to lead the faith community to such literacy. For this theological literacy we need that what is described by Van der Ven and briefly explained above.

Tracy (2002:13-22) adds an important perspective in saying that of every faith community can be expected to be “a community of inquiry” (or a reflective community). This is the unique contribution of theology because in theology “action and thought, academy and church, faith and reason, the community of inquiry and the community of commitment and faith are most explicitly and systematically brought together” (Tracy, 2002:15). His thinking is along the same lines as the arguments of Van der Ven. He is convinced that Western culture is poorer by separating the three “greats” that drive our lives, namely our ideals, our hope and our love. These three “fatal separations” Tracy (2002:15) calls:

- the separation of feeling and thought;
- the separation of form and content;
- the separation of theory and practice.

4. In summary

For the purpose of this article the following remarks are important.

- Theology is more than information about the theological disciplines developed in the course of history. It is more than testable and tested knowledge of subjects. There should be more than just unity in content. The new situation asks for a teleological principle of unity. This teleological point of integration is among other the ministry of the pastoral leader. To repeat, once more in agreement with Wood (1985:119):

One may properly seek and obtain a theological education without any intention of preparing for church leadership of any sort; *but one may not properly prepare for church leadership without acquiring theological competence* (emphases – MN; also cf. MacInnis, 2002:382-391).

Training for the public ministry of pastoral leaders requires theology, teleologically understood.

- The development of the ability to reflect, theologically, on theory and praxis, is critical in theological training. This kind of reflection is a *cognitive ability*. Critical thinking, as explained above, is important for the functioning of as well as for the participation of the congregation in the creative and healing activity of God in this world. The identity of the local faith community requires pastoral leaders who are caring for this identity in a competent and creative way (Heitink, 2001:273). I am not saying that all theological students should measure high in IQ tests. It is, however, an inescapable truth that cognitive abilities and development relates to intelligence. This article is not the place to argue this case. From subject-related literature quoted in this article it is, however, easy to deduct that theological training that takes the challenges for ministry in this complex world, seriously requires a high level of cognitive abilities. Exactly at this point lies a sensitive problem. What is often only whispered in church circles is worded by Katarina Schuth (1999:80) – views she obtained from an empirical study, including some 550 individual interviews:

Compared with ten years ago, most faculties report that they are teaching about the same small number of excellent students and the broad middle range of students also remains steady. The difference appears at the lower end of the spectrum: many faculties believe that the least gifted students are weaker now than ever before.

The study eventually distinguishes three groups of students: most highly qualified, relatively qualified and insufficiently qualified students. Even in the case of a relatively well-qualified group Schuth (1999:81-82) found that

... even the brighter ones tend not to be readers, and they lack the broad cultural foundation afforded by study of the classics. Their appreciation of language and the imagination necessary to enter into the world of theology is underdeveloped, while they also lack the historical consciousness required for understanding the evolving church. Faculties are faced with the task of inspiring these students to acquire a thirst for knowledge, to be more inquisitive and creative.

Schuth is correct in her remark that the intellectual requirements for the ministry today are extremely high. A better educated and trained membership requires a so much better trained public pastoral leader (Schuth, 1999:79). Intellect is certainly not all that is required, but it is true that someone who struggles intellectually might look for other ways to cope. For some the only way out might be aggression and an authoritarian attitude. When this is the case it will impact in more than one way on relational abilities, which is so critical for any public pastoral leader (cf. Schuth, 1999:87). In a very thorough report of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (1995:9) it is unequivocally stated: “the applicant should possess intellectual ability for critical and reflective thinking”. Hunt, Hinkle and Malony (1990:13) state that “fitness for preparation and engagement in the practice of effective professional ministry” requires

... potential to become an effective minister. Potential includes all dimensions that contribute to this outcome, such as intellectual ability, personal structure, interpersonal styles, accuracy and appropriateness of self-image, interests, motivation, and uses of social support networks.

- Theological reflection requires hermeneutical-communicative abilities. The pastoral leader is indeed a ferry boat paddler (*pont roeier* – Heitink, 2001:284) paddling between the Christian tradition and the “present”, between group and group, individual and individual. In the language of Van der Ven (1998:130) the pastoral leader always functions on a macro (community), meso (congregational) and micro (individual) level. The pastoral leader is a communicator. For this ability to communicate efficiently he or she needs hermeneutical abilities. Anyone who cannot communicate with the past, who cannot read and interpret the

text of the Bible as well as the second text of society, congregation and individuals, cannot be a public pastoral leader.

- Directly connected with the above-mentioned is the ability to think holistically and to discern “vision and discernment” (Wood, 1985) – an ability that has everything to do with the understanding of the *telos* of training and the calling to the work of a public pastoral leader. Already in 1979 Costas (1979:75) wrote that the ultimate test for a missional understanding of the church is “not whether we proclaim, make disciples, or engage in social, economic and political liberation but whether we are capable of integrating all three in comprehension, dynamic *and consistent* witness” (emphases – MN).
- *Core expertise*, training and cultivating a *basispastor* (Heitink), is not negotiable. Such is focused and differentiated specialisation, or as Heitink calls it, limited specialisation (*gematigde specialisering*). The congregation needs these competencies for its training and edification to realise God’s intention in this complex and diverse world.
- Pastoral leadership should simultaneously be professional, practical and devoted (cf. again Schnier, 1993:xiii) – *professional* in the sense of being competent to fulfil this public ministry with pride and gracefully so; *practical* in the sense of being able to reflect theologically with “doctrinal clarity, as well as historical accuracy and contextual inventiveness” (Schnier, 1993:23-51; cf. again Van der Ven, 1998:85). Furthermore theological leadership should be *devoted* in the sense of being spiritually formed. To achieve the last mentioned predisposition, discipleship and the making of disciples should be the approach taken. This *core concept* is related to issues like the *core expertise (knowledge)* and *core ability* of the pastoral leader on all levels of ministry. This line of thought once again brings to the fore the focus on the *didache* (cf. Luck, 1999:63).
- A rediscovery of *who “we” are*, is critical and urgent. A new attitude as pastoral leader and a new understanding of identity is needed. Heitink (2001:255) even says that in this postmodern culture the expectation is that the pastor of the future is the one who stops being a pastor. Peterson (quoted in Dawn & Peterson, 2000:1-20) argues a case for being “the unnecessary pastor”. Pastors who understand themselves as being “servants” know and realise this. To my mind this mindset asks for a radical conversion in attitude: from rendering services, while regarding

yourself as very important and needed, to being a servant (and experience yourself as such) whose service (ministry) happens to be public pastoral leadership.

- Continuing theological education is not negotiable and is indeed critically necessary. Every trained pastor needs to stay competent. Reasons why it is so critical are, among others
 - the increasing and continuing changes in society;
 - the contextual nature of theology in theory as well as in praxis and the related importance of “learning in context”;
 - the fact that theological training does not end with formal training in faculties of theology; and
 - the fact that it is not only theological professors who train people for public pastoral leadership.

This training is even more important within the first years in ministry. The purposes of the training are inter alia to help

- with the transition;
- with contextualisation;
- with theological reflection and integration of the theological disciplines in ministry.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (1995:29) sets out this aim as follows:

Because of the changing, diverse context of our mission, it is necessary that leaders continually grow in faith, expand their skills and increase knowledge through continuing education ... While it is expected of all pastors ... it is certainly needed during the early, formative years of ministry in a specific context ... The church must encourage and provide resources for its leaders to continually develop and renew their gifts for ministry through disciplined patterns of life-long learning.

Van Nijen (1995:229; cf. also Heitink, 2001:226) summarises the findings of his research (through interviews) by stating that a competent leader integrates in him or herself five dimensions of competence:

- individual dimension – personality and ability;
- academic dimension – expertise and competency;
- technical dimension – skilfulness and ability;

- spiritual dimension – sincerity and involvement;
- clerical dimension – competency and responsibility.

Set against the background of all these summarised views, it is more than clear that the teleological core of theological training should be clearly pinpointed and constantly reflected on. A changing world and changing needs require of pastors to reflect on the nature of their calling, to discern *what* they do, *why* they do it, *how* they do it and in *what attitude* they respond to their calling. Critical inquiry is instrumental in the pastor's acquiring theological competence and theological "wisdom". Reflecting *on* and *in* practice is essential elements in the pastor's ministry while he simultaneously fully realises that his ministry is incorporated in God's activity in this word.

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