

Church-Based Ministry Training Which Is Truly Church Based

By Jeff Reed ©

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What makes a training program truly church based, rather than institutionally or organizationally based? This is a very complex issue. What makes anything truly church based? Is not the idea arrogant in its very assumption? When Steve Kemp¹ gave me this topic, for this audience, I realized I would be in a very difficult position. For I am standing in one paradigm and I am responsible for communicating a radically different idea to a group of professionals in another paradigm, professionals who are already very innovative. Are not schools and Christian organizations made up of gifted leaders given to the church? Is there not freedom of form in the Scriptures, which would allow for us to create enterprises in the name of the Church that are carriers of the mission of the church, and are not those enterprises then legitimately considered truly church based? How can we say that organizations and training institutions that seek to train leaders for churches are not church based? It is at the heart of their mission to train men and women for ministry in churches. They are serving churches. How can we say that any training program designed by a Christian organization or institution is not truly church based? To understand these questions, and therefore my answer, we must begin with an understanding of a very important concept—*paradigms*.

*Paradigm:
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What exactly is a paradigm? According to Thomas Kuhn, in his classic book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, a *paradigm* is “an entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on, shared by the members of a given community.”² A paradigm is far more than just a model. It is a whole set of ideas clustered together, and everyone knows the rules—the boundaries of success if you will.³ There can be many models

Thomas Kuhn

¹ Steve Kemp is currently Vice President and Dean of External Studies at Moody Bible Institute.

² *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* by Thomas S. Kuhn (Chicago: Chicago Press, 1970), p. 175.

³ I owe a lot of my practical use of the concept of paradigms to Joel Barker, who has produced a very powerful and very expensive set of videos: *The Business of Paradigms*; *Paradigm Pioneers* (Charthouse International Learning Corporation); and *Paradigm Mastery Series: A Video Retreat* (Star Thrower, Saint Paul). *Paradigm Mastery Series* is a five-session retreat with personnel of major companies who are exploring the key ideas of paradigms in the 21st century.

within one general paradigm. Hans Kung, in his work *Theology for a New Millennium: An Ecumenical View*, introduces three types of paradigms: macro, meso, and micro.⁴ *Macro paradigms* refer to large constellations of beliefs that cover major ideas and eras of history, such as the Reformation.⁵ *Meso paradigms* refer to major constellations of beliefs, but are sort of medium-range solutions to major problems within macro paradigms, such as Reformed Theology, the Brethren movement, formal theological education, and the modern missionary enterprise. *Micro paradigms* address specific problems and their solutions within macro and micro paradigms, such as baptism, distance education, or even an enterprise such as TEE, though these last two might also be considered subsets of the meso paradigms of formal theological education and the Western missionary enterprise.

One of my central theses is this: Over the last three decades, almost all the creative attempts of Western formal educational institutions to extend their training—TEE, field education, middler years, distance education,⁶ etc.—have, in one form or another, been an extension of the formal theological education

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paradigm and its enterprises. In addition, almost all the attempts by churches to assume major responsibility for training their own leaders have been dominated or overshadowed by the formal theological education paradigm. The formal theological education paradigm has a lot of value in some cultures but it is an inadequate paradigm to contain the “entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques and so on,” contained in the biblical truths, images, and models to be imitated throughout the Scriptures. Herein lies the

problem. The problem is not that formal education structures exist but that they drive the leadership development enterprise of the church today. Formal theological education today is a meso paradigm. It is a constellation of beliefs filled with rules about professors, students, courses, classrooms, testing, degrees, and the very powerful accrediting associations. The core biblical values—faithfulness in service, entrusting in ministry contexts, discipleship, spiritual disciplines, and character development—are marginalized when taken out of their natural context of ministry and community life and institutionalized. The key issue is not the existence of formal theological education but is its power and its all pervasiveness in driving the entire upper level leadership development

⁴ *Theology for the Third Millennium: An Ecumenical View*, by Hans Kung (New York: Doubleday, 1988), p. 134.

⁵ We are in one of those eras now as we shift from an industrial to a technological society, a modern to a postmodern culture, an Enlightenment to a post-Enlightenment era, which are shifting paradigms of 200 years, 100 years, and 400 years respectively. For discussions on these shifts see *Post-Capitalist Society* by Peter Drucker (New York: HarperBusiness, 1993) for the 200 year shift; see *The American Century: Varieties of Culture in Modern Times* by Norman F. Cantor (New York: Harper Collins, 1997) for the 100 year shift; and see the recent *From Dawn to Decadence: 500 years of Western Cultural Life* by Jacques Barzun (New York: Harper Collins, 2000) for 400 years plus. For a sense of how these shifts play out in church history and missions, see two ground breaking works: *Christianity: Essence, History and Future* by Hans Kung (New York: Continuum, 1998) and *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* by David J. Bosch (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1992). Both deal with paradigms down through the centuries, majoring on the current shift of which we are a part. One should also not forget two classic trilogies: *Future Shock* (1970), *The Third Wave* (1980), and *PowerShift* (1990) by Alvin Toffler (New York: Bantam) and *The Information Age, Volumes I, II, and III*, by Manuel Castels (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).

⁶ An excellent treatment of the most recent trend in extension education can be found in Linda Cannell’s “A Review of the Literature on Distance Education,” in *Theological Education*, Volume 36, Number 1, Autumn, 1999. The entire issue is titled: *Educational Technology and Distance Education: Issues and Implications for Theological Education*.

enterprise for the church today or, for that matter, all serious ministry preparation. Today's enterprise is institutionally driven, not ecclesiological driven. It is the thesis of this paper that this fact needs to be reversed in a very significant manner, at a paradigm level. The leadership charges in the New Testament letters to the churches demand that the needs of the churches drive the churches' leadership development enterprise, not the Western formal schooling paradigm.⁷

Let's begin by defining three contemporary approaches to ministry training for the church today. I have entitled these approaches *institutionally driven*, *organizationally driven*, and *ecclesiological driven*.⁸ Three additional terms that aid us in understanding the contemporary scene are *formal*, *nonformal* and *informal*. Using these terms, let me try to put together the scene of American evangelical ministry preparation over the last forty years. Note the chart on the next page entitled, "Theological Education Continuum." Across the top are both of these sets of words. By *driven*, I am referring to the fact that the bottom line concerns revolve around the survival and success of the entity that is in the driver's seat. The concerns of the institution drive formal educational institutions; concerns of the organization drive Western training organizations; and matters of the churches drive the churches. In almost all cases today in Western culture, this is reality. I believe it is possible for institutions and organizations to be driven by matters of the churches, even to the point of being put out of business when a church or movement of churches matures to a certain point, but this is rarely the case.

The second idea revolves around the terms *formal*, *nonformal*, and *informal*. In education today, *formal education* usually refers to a Western form of education, adopted throughout much of the world, which is shaped by the ideas of a schooling model: professors, curriculum, libraries, grades, degrees, and accrediting associations. *Informal education* is education without much structure and little serious ordered learning over a multi-year process. It is flexible, done almost completely in context, and shaped according to the need of the moment. Examples of this are the training of children in natural daily settings (Deuteronomy 6:6), Jesus' training of the Twelve (the Gospels), and Paul's training in the context of many witnesses (2 Timothy 2:2). *Nonformal education* is a relatively new term, which actually grew out of a world crisis in education. It arose from the failure of Western formal education systems to substantially deal with the low literacy rate in developing countries.⁹ Nonformal refers to an ordered, systematic educational process that lies outside the formal educational system. It shares similarities with both formal and informal but is truly neither in its essence. It was created to address radically new cultural ways of educating. It is what Edward de Bono refers to as *lateral thinking*.¹⁰

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⁷ One needs only examine the Pastoral Epistles to realize that the matters of churches dominated Paul's entire leadership development paradigm.

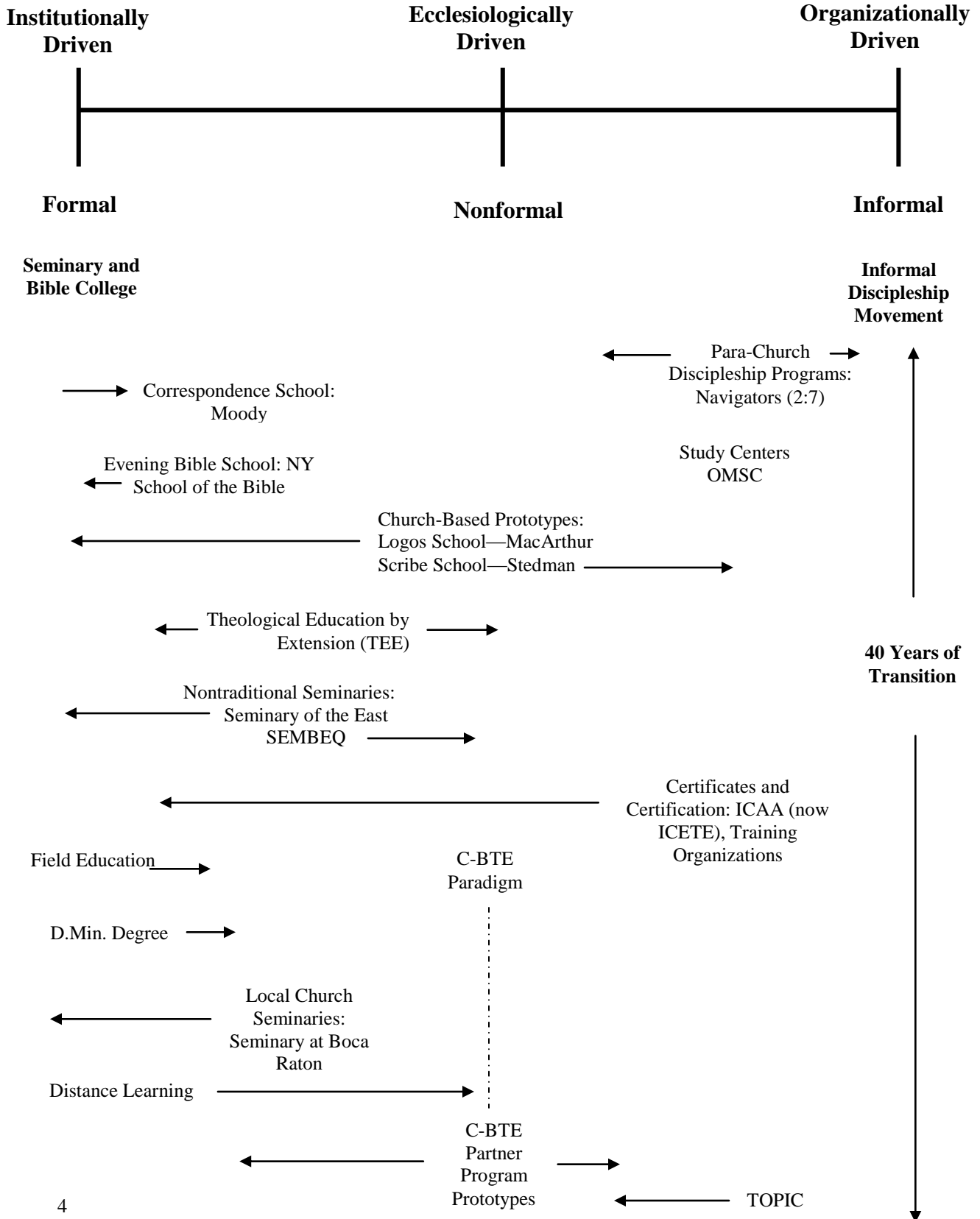
⁸ I first began using this phrase a few years back after one of those ah-ha conversations with Ted Ward. We had both begun to recognize that the term *church based* was becoming problematic. It had become overused and had begun to take on multiple meanings. He made an observation that has stuck with me ever since. He said, "The uniqueness of your approach to ministry preparation lies in the fact that it grows out of local church life—it is ecclesiological driven."

⁹ *The World Crisis in Education: The View from the Eighties*, by Philip H. Combs (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985). Especially note chapter one, "A New Look at an Old Crisis."

¹⁰ *Lateral Thinking: Creativity Step by Step*, by Edward de Bono (New York: Harper and Row, 1973).

Theological Education Continuum

(Illustrating Shifts in American Evangelical Ministry Preparation Over the Last 40 Years)



An example of a nonformal education approach that is fundamentally outside the formal educational system is the system designed by Paulo Freire.¹¹ Freire's basic idea is that everyone needs to be educated to a level of *critical consciousness*. Critical consciousness is the ability to reason about issues beyond the boundaries of one's own limited cultural frame of reference. In much of the world, he reasons, this will not happen through the *banking method* of the formal education system (making deposits of information) but rather by using a *problem posing* approach beginning from the current literacy level of the individual and progressing orderly but naturally. This could lead to a radically different organized approach to education—an approach outside the formal system, thus nonformal.

With this backdrop of these two key ideas, each explained by a set of three words, let's examine the shifts in ministry preparation over the last forty years and see if we can begin a basic categorization of approaches to the task. I am suggesting that three basic approaches exist, and that they are each fundamentally different. They are all useful and can complement one another. Yet, I will argue that ultimately the ecclesiological driven approach needs to be in the driver's seat, at a paradigmatic level, and the institutionally driven and organizationally driven approaches need to take on supplementary and complementary roles.

Three paradigms now exist. One is 150 years old—the formal theological education system; one grew up as a movement in the late 40's, 50's, and 60's; and one has been struggling to be birthed over the last thirty years. Though this survey is a bit cursory, I have personally been involved with all but one of the above examples or models over the last thirty years.

The dominant model, and the one that carries much of the discussion and controls most of the arrows on the chart, is the formal or institutionally driven model. This is what has been traditionally known as seminary or Bible college. This model has dominated ministry training for the American evangelical church all through this century. It is the standard by which all ministry preparation is assessed or compared. It is rare for anyone to be ordained and be in vocational ministry without a formal degree of some sort. Yet over the last forty years, the entire system of formal education for ministry preparation has been in the throes of major change. Part of this change is related to the needs of the church and mission that are not met by the formal system. Part of it is related to the change in our culture as we move from an industrial (factories, institutional facilities) to a technological (networks, virtual offices and campuses) society. We are moving to whole new forms of society's management of learning.¹² Learning organizations are forming and either radically changing or replacing training institutions.¹³ Yet during this forty years, the institutionally driven formal paradigm has continued to follow the basic rules of its paradigm but has extended them out to the church in ways that more individuals could benefit. It took the form of correspondence schools and evening schools, then field education to add more experience to the program, adding D.Min. programs for serious continuing education, and finally regional campuses and distance learning to begin accommodating the emerging technological society.

¹¹ Paulo Freire's two most seminal works are *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1984) and *Education for Critical Consciousness* (New York: Continuum, 1994).

¹² For an excellent treatment of the emergence of new forms of societal learning management see *Beyond Education: A New Perspective on Society's Management of Learning*, by Alan M. Thomas (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991).

¹³ See *Corporate Quality Universities: Lessons in Building a World-Class Work Force*, by Jeanne C. Meister (New York: IRWIN, 1994), an ASTD publication.

The second paradigm of training for ministry, which includes preparation for vocational ministry, is informal and organizationally driven. Its greatest modern example is the discipleship movement. The movement arose in the 40's, 50's, and 60's in the wake of an evangelical church that was mostly fundamentalist, in an attempt to bring a sense of training to the average believer. When the question began to be raised concerning the fact that many of these organizations eventually began replacing the church, the argument became that God raised up these groups because the church was not doing its job. At the backbone of this discipleship movement, which is now a powerful, worldwide training influence, are groups such as Campus Crusade for Christ, The Navigators, and Inter Varsity Christian Fellowship. Why is the discipleship movement considered informal? Following the example of Jesus' training of the disciples, it makes no attempt at an intentional, organized course of study, but rather has resources available to flexibly disciple anyone. Yet in the example of The Navigators, they took the basic training series *Design for Discipleship* and formalized it a bit by putting a two-year framework around it, called *The 2:7 Series*. This series, though it is a move toward nonformal, still needs to be classified primarily as informal, since it is not intended to be comprehensive like a nonformal educational system. The discipleship movement as a paradigm in and of itself is primarily an informal one.

The third paradigm of training for ministry, what we are calling the ecclesiological driven, nonformal paradigm, emerged in two forms in the late 60's and early 70's. It first emerged in a sort of church seminary, exemplified in the Logos School of Grace Community Church and the Scribe School of Peninsula Bible Church. Second, it emerged in the theological education by extension movement, TEE, which was focused on developing leaders for emerging churches on the mission field. The Logos School and the Scribe School were "truly church based," using our terminology. They were constructed by local churches and driven by the agenda of those local churches. I remember Gene Getz telling me that when he began teaching at Dallas Seminary, in the height of the discipleship movement, a significant number of students were questioning the viability of the local church for today. Out of the discipleship milieu, Getz wrote *Sharpening the Focus of the Church*,¹⁴ Ray Stedman, at Peninsula Bible Church, wrote *Body Life*,¹⁵ and John MacArthur, at Grace Community Church, wrote *The Church: The Body of Christ*.¹⁶ The Logos School and the Scribe School were attempts to put the local church back at the center of the ministry training process. Following these examples, a hybrid seminary model emerged, somewhat halfway between the formal institutional and the nonformal church-based programs. Two prominent examples were Seminary of the East, a Conservative Baptist Seminary networked in churches throughout the Northeast, and SEMBEQ, a French speaking non-residential, in-service seminary serving a network of churches in the Canadian province of Quebec. At the same time, another movement sprang up that grew to be known as Theological Education by Extension—TEE. Even though it was unfortunately named an extension movement (by implication an extension of formal theological education), many

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¹⁴ Gene Getz, *Sharpening the Focus of the Church* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974).

¹⁵ Ray C. Stedman, *Body Life* (Glendale, California: G/L Publications, 1972).

¹⁶ Which is now called *Body Dynamics*. John Mac Arthur, Jr., *Body Dynamics* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1977).

of the original writers and visionaries¹⁷ actually conceptualized it as an ecclesiologicaly driven, nonformal idea. It was designed to see an adequate number of leaders developed for new churches worldwide—leaders that would actually be developed in the context of ministry. It spread like wildfire throughout the 70's. Though it flattened out in the 80's and declined in the 90's, it has made a significant impact on the current church-based discussion. It responded to a need for ministry and leadership training for the growing church around the world. In the wake of the 70's and early 80's, still another movement has emerged, which is possibly just a fresher run at the original goals of these church seminaries or TEE. Many are referring to it as church-based theological education or church-based ministry training. In our own case, we refer to this movement as C-BTE.¹⁸ It attempts to build relevant cultural models within the ecclesiological paradigm of the New Testament, yet on the cutting edge of the emerging postmodern, technological society.

Turn again to the “Theological Education Continuum” chart. The placement on the chart of each meso or micro paradigm and/or specific model, along with the arrows proceeding out in one or both directions is designed to help identify to what degree each type is institutionally driven, organizationally driven, or ecclesiologicaly driven, and to what degree they are a formal, nonformal, or informal educational program. The arrows are also intended to give an indication of which direction the meso or micro paradigm and/or specific model is moving. The formal educational system is rather clear. Obviously, seminaries, universities, and Bible colleges are institutionally driven. Fund raising, endowments, professors who are properly credentialed, government grants, accreditation status, student enrollment, credit hours and fees, departments—all of these things control the agenda and decisions of an educational institution. These are the matters of the formal educational system. Correspondence schools and evening schools, both fading as paradigms, are part of the formal education meso paradigm. Field education is part of formal residential programs. The recently popular D.Min.¹⁹ program and regional campuses and distance learning strategies are all still playing by the basic rules of the formal paradigm, although they are flexible, picking up some nonformal elements in allowing for such adaptations as creative curricula forms, participatory learning groups, and student portfolios.²⁰

The placement of informal organizations is also fairly clear. They are driven by the agenda of organizations, not fundamentally by the agenda of churches. Though the mission of discipleship controls their educational programming, the heart of their concerns serves the individual, not the churches. And, in the end, I believe most of them are fundamentally driven by the organization and committed to perpetual survival: staff, support raising, administration, field assignments, staff supervision, promotion, products, etc. They are not institutionally driven formal systems and have never attempted to be. And, they are not ecclesiologicaly driven because they envision

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¹⁷ One of the key texts that reflect the original ecclesiologicaly driven intent of the TEE vision is *Discipling Through Theological Education by Extension*, edited by Vergil Gerber (Chicago: Moody, 1980).

¹⁸ See The Center for C-BTE: www.c-bte.org.

¹⁹ For a study on the recent D.Min. program see “Writing Practical Christian Wisdom: Genre and the Doctor of Ministry Dissertation” by Timothy Lincoln in *Theological Education* (Volume 36, Number 1, Autumn, 1999).

²⁰ See Seminary at Boca Raton. www.seminary.spanishriver.com.

themselves not to be a church, but to serve churches. They could have been ecclesiologicaly driven, but they formed primarily as organizations with often very little understanding of the local church. *Mission* in the New Testament is primarily about planting, establishing, and multiplying churches, not merely building organizations of individual disciples. Thus, one must conclude that they are informal programs primarily organizationally driven. It is not enough to merely serve the church or be oriented toward the church. The heart of our mission must be embedded in the entire process of establishing and multiplying churches, in order to be ecclesiologicaly driven.

Herein lies the problem. It is envisioned in the arrows on the chart. Many of the groups that begin with an ecclesiologicaly driven, nonformal premise wind up with an institutionally driven system. How does this happen? Both by the power of the paradigm and by an important concept Barker calls *paradigm paralysis*. The formal paradigm is so powerful that we seek to legitimize nonformal programs by the formal rules. And sure enough, soon they are reshaped by the formal system. Most of those designing the nonformal, ecclesiologicaly driven system were trained in the formal system, and they have a very hard time not seeing primarily through the lens of their formal training. Look at the arrows. Logos School started out almost completely as a nonformal, ecclesiologicaly driven educational program. In three decades, it has become Master's Seminary, one of the most formal programs in our country. TEE never reached its potential worldwide as initially an ecclesiologicaly driven ideal; it was never fully accepted by either the churches or the institutions. Seminary of the East moved fully into the fold when it decided to seek ATS accreditation. SEMBEQ is in the throes of defining its next generation—the verdict is still out. Even the newly formed Spanish River Seminary, based in a church and formed by a church, is basically playing by the old rules. The International Council of Accrediting Associations (ICAA), now International Council for Evangelical Theological Education (ICETE), is known for being in the business of accrediting nonformal mission programs worldwide. The power of the paradigm.

So why does this matter? What is the relevance anyway? To answer this question, we must start by briefly reflecting on what are the key paradigmatic elements of the New Testament paradigm of ministry training.²¹ What of the New Testament is really lost in our modern Western institutions and Western organizations? What are some of the key ideas floating around in the biblical “constellations of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on,” shared by the apostolic band and their communities and embedded in their teaching? Here is a small list of these “beliefs, values, techniques, and so on,” that comprise what Roland Allen referred to as “the way of Christ and the Apostles.”²² I have not attempted to treat this idea of a church-based paradigm from a serious biblical theology approach as I have done previously in *The Paradigm Papers*, but, instead, I am merely noting some core elements of the training constellation in the Paul/Timothy example. I have not quoted individual verses but have basically drawn from Paul's review of his training of Timothy in 2 Timothy,

²¹ For a more extensive reflection on the New Testament paradigm for ministry training see *The Paradigm Papers: New Paradigms for the Postmodern Church*, by Jeff Reed. I delivered these papers over a five-year period addressing the issue of the church-based paradigm rooted in the paradigm of the New Testament.

²² This is a very important phrase in the work of Roland Allen. Allen, an Anglican missionary at the turn of the 20th century, arrived in India only to encounter a Western institutional model of missions, which he considered to be at odds with the New Testament model. After arguing his case through a trilogy of works and extensively reasoned arguments, he was unable to convince the establishment who held to the superiority of contemporary methods. So, he rested back on the phrase “this is the way of Christ and the Apostles” to defend his position. His trilogy included *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), and *The Ministry of the Spirit* (London: World Dominion, 1960).

which is as close as one can get to a biblical theology of training in the early church.

1. *Practical wisdom.* Ministry training was not conceptualized as primarily an academic pursuit. Paul was building into Timothy habits of the mind, habits of the heart, and habits of a disciplined lifestyle. His mastery of the Scriptures was in real life context, learned in such a way as to practically prepare him for every good work.

2. *Community context.* The first church devoted itself to the community. It was inconceivable that anyone would not be vitally involved in the life of a local church. The core elements of the Jerusalem church were devotion to the Apostles' doctrine, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer. The team that was sent out together from Antioch planted and established the church there. They were a vital part of the leadership team. They were truly churchmen. Paul praised Timothy for being one of the few men around him who were genuinely concerned for the welfare of the churches. Most had their own agendas, not that of the churches.

3. *Ministry context.* Paul trained Timothy in the context of the ministry itself. Timothy watched everything that Paul did—the way he worked with churches, the way he handled crises, his devotion to the churches, his handling of the Word, his life passions, his purpose, his faith, etc. Paul made it clear that the essence of Timothy's training took place in the context of ministry—"many witnesses."

4. *Mission driven.* The training was viewed as participating in a mission together. That mission was the planting, establishing, and multiplying of churches. The developmental process Timothy was in was fully integrated with the real-life mission they participated in together.

5. *Evident progress, giftedness.* Even after being with Paul twenty years and approaching his 40's, Timothy was exhorted to be sure that progress in his own personal development was evident to those he ministered amongst. Paul encouraged him to be passionate in the use of his gifts.

6. *Community commending and discipline.* Timothy grew in the context of community life, was recognized by the community, and was confirmed into ministry by local church leaders. This was clearly the essential mark of assessment of Timothy's preparedness for ministry—the ministry on which he had embarked by joining Paul's team.

7. *Entrusting.* Paul viewed the training process as an entrusting process. As Timothy proved faithful, Paul continued to trust him more and more. He saw Timothy as part of his team and as one who would eventually be out from under his tutelage.

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It should be clear from this brief review of Paul and Timothy that the training process took place in service and in the context of Timothy's present and future life and ministry. It took place in the context of community life and in the real ministry of planting, establishing, and multiplying churches. This is a

long way from the formal, institutionally driven context of theological education today. The informal paradigm is closer, yet it too is often a long way from participating in the real life of churches, according to the way modeled by the leaders of the first century churches.

Is all of this really important? Why go to all this “paradigmatic trouble?” What is the effect of allowing Western institutional and organizational enterprises to drive ministry training for the church? What of the New Testament is lost in our modern Western institutions and Western organizations? I believe the following effects are the result of allowing our Western institutional model to drive the preparation of men and women for ministry in the church today.

1. *Lack of leadership.* Everywhere you look in the church today, there is a desperate lack of leadership. This is the cry of evangelical churches all over America. Every movement of churches planted by Western mission organizations, founding its leadership-training paradigm upon the institutionally driven, formal education paradigm, has a desperate lack of leadership. I know of no exception. Take Evangelical Churches of West Africa (ECWA) for example. ECWA consists of about 5,000 churches and 4,000,000 believers. It has two major seminaries that can turn out only about 300 leaders per year. It needs about 40,000 leaders trained at the top level. It would take the formal institutions 160 years to train the leaders it needs today, let alone the 400,000 leaders and workers needed to be trained at the infrastructure level.

2. *Lack of fully prepared leadership.* Changing the context from real community life and in-service ministry to a formal institutional setting has changed the very character of theological education itself. This is well documented in the seminal work by Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education*.²³ Farley establishes the premise that theology as *habitus*—the orientation of the soul for the purpose of acquiring wisdom, which all men and women need—has been replaced by the mastering of academic disciplines for professional ministerial service. Thus, theology and its categories and curricula have become irrelevant to average believers and their church communities. Theology itself has become academically (institutionally) driven rather than ecclesiologically driven.

3. *Nominalism.* Inadequately prepared leaders leads to nominalism in movements of churches. Serious, practical theology (*habitus*) that every believer needs to be rooted in and built up in over a several year period, is absent from our churches. Partially because of the removal of serious ordered learning from the context of community life, the average believer thinks theology is irrelevant. It often is. In the USA, a case can be made for the fact that we are in the front end of a post-Christian culture and are losing up to 70% of our children from our evangelical and fundamentalist homes.²⁴ Every movement of churches primarily dependent on the Western, institutional educational system is on course for fourth generation nominalism. That is, most of the fruit of the first generation is lost by the fourth generation, as that generation descends to a state of Christian “in name only.”

²³ *The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education*, by Edward Farley (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983).

²⁴ This is our own estimation based upon reflection of research interviews with solid evangelical churches throughout the USA and the numerous books describing our culture’s rapid descent into a post-Christian society.

What would be the implications of the churches changing from an institutionally driven, formal educational paradigm to an ecclesiological driven, nonformal paradigm? What would some of the main changes look like? Here are a few observations:

1. *Assessment of preparedness for ministry.* The assessment of preparedness for ministry would need to shift from a narrowly focused academic, degree-granting system to some sort of holistic portfolio-type system, which would measure levels of preparedness in areas such as ministry competence, character development, and practical wisdom.

2. *Educational method.* Educational method would shift from primarily a lecture, information-sharing approach to a real life, problem-posing process.²⁵

3. *Theological encyclopedia.* The curricular agenda would radically change. The current four-fold pattern of organizing curriculum²⁶ to match Western university academic departments and disciplines would change to an agenda set by the natural categories of Scripture and the cultural context of the church²⁷.

4. *Teachers.* The concept of classroom professors would be replaced by gifted and biblically qualified church leaders who are in the process of planting, establishing, and multiplying churches—whose ministry is carried out in the context of the community life of local churches.

5. *Commending process.* Graduations and diplomas would be replaced by the laying on of hands by local church leaders based upon the tested faithfulness and giftedness of those completing the nonformal educational process, with accompanying letters of recommendation and well developed portfolios.

These are the sorts of implications of a paradigm shift to “truly church-based” ministry training.

So what is the solution? Are we calling for the abolishment of institutionally driven formal education? Are the Western institutional and organizational paradigms of ministry training fundamentally flawed and needing to be discarded?²⁸ I do not believe so.²⁹ The key issue, as stated at the beginning of this paper, is not the existence of formal theological education but its power and all pervasiveness in driving the entire upper level leadership

²⁵ In the BILD Leadership Series, we have designed a problem-posing process that moves from a study of the Scriptures to theological readings to Socratic discussion to projects. The entire process is issue driven. See www.bild.org.

²⁶ See Farley. The essence of the argument is that over the last 150 years, all curricula in formal theological institutions has followed a similar fourfold pattern—Bible, theology, church history and practical theology—tied to the Western academy rather than the natural categories of biblical theology combined with the agenda of churches in a particular culture.

²⁷ Theological institutions and training organizations are constantly approaching foundations for major grants to translate extensive resources in languages around the world. I believe the whole issue of theological encyclopedia must be revisited before even considering the option of translating Western resources into Two-Thirds World cultures. See my article *Church-Based Theology: Creating a New Paradigm*.

²⁸ Although post-secondary general education in the form of Bible colleges, universities, and graduate schools is beyond the purview of this paper, I think it can be established that when schools are disengaged from their churches they begin to die.²⁸ See *The Dying of the Light: The Disengagement of Colleges and Universities from their Christian Churches*, by James Tunstead Burtchael (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998). We need to think through the same issues in our educational institutions designed to focus on the post secondary, general education of individual Christians who are seeking to begin their lifework based upon a biblical worldview.

²⁹ The Center for C-BTE Resources is a training organization. We have taken great pains to see that it is ecclesiological driven. For example, all of our organizational leaders must be building programs in their own churches, the portfolio assessment system is adapted by the churches, the assessment of preparedness conducted by the churches, and all recognition of preparedness for ministry is in the hands of the local commending leaders. All of our necessary organizational rules are carefully constructed to allow the organization to give primacy of place to the churches and their agenda.

development enterprise for the church today. Today's leadership training enterprise is both institutionally and organizationally driven, not ecclesiologicaly driven. It is the thesis of this paper that this needs to be reversed in a very significant manner, at a paradigm level. The church needs to be central. By church I mean a local church and/or a network, association, or denomination of churches.

What does it mean to reverse the pervasive power of the formal institutional and organizational paradigms over ministry training and return to the basic educational patterns marked by "the way of Christ and the Apostles"? Here are a few rather radical suggestions:

1. *Educational institutions radically reinvent themselves into resource centers.* A strong case can be made for the fact that only those schools who take this challenge seriously will survive past 2025.³⁰ It is a time for bold institutional leadership. We need to resource the whole church. Institutions, if they perceive their role correctly, can become a resource to the entire church in matters of ministry training as opposed to the 2-3% market of the formal institutional paradigm.³¹ See Appendix 1: "C-BTE Partner Resource Networks" for an example of this new type of institution—a resource center.

2. *Training organizations radically reorient themselves as enablers.* Churches and church leaders do not need someone to come in and train them in their programs or to train their people for them. They need help in developing their own strategies and programs, identifying the best resources available, and designing their own assessment criteria. I believe there is a new kind of colonialism emerging in training organizations and mission agencies who—instead of working themselves out of a job and leaving the big vision of the nation up to the national church—assume a professional "global role" over the churches, again leaving the churches with a smaller vision that they are capable of carrying out!³²

3. *Churches and church leaders need to develop serious ordered learning processes and programs for their own churches.* This would require a radical shift for churches and church leaders who are all too content to leave the job up to professionals. Communities of faith need to think through their role as being the vital context in which ministry training will flourish. Church leaders must assume responsibility.

4. *Accrediting associations must be radically restructured.* This restructuring must figure out a way to return the central role and authority in the assessment and recognition of preparedness for ministry to the local church and its recognized extended leadership structure.³³ See Appendix 2: "C-BTE Assessment-Recognition Options" for an example of radical reconstruction on a graduated scale.

5. *Churches and church leaders and educational institutions and training organizations must build partnerships that are ecclesiologicaly driven.* The key question to ask in this partnership is: Who is driving the paradigm? The churches? Or the institutions and

³⁰ Ibid., Thomas.

³¹ I recently conducted the annual faculty retreat for Lancaster Bible College. I challenged them to think laterally. To continue to be creative and move forward their formal program, including distance learning strategies, but at the same time, to begin a whole new paradigm for the future—a resource center approach (a learning organization) designed to serve 100% of the church.

³² See *Changing the Mind of Missions: Where Have We Gone Wrong?* James Engels and William Dyrness (Downers Grove: IVP, 2000), and *Theory and Practice of Christian Mission in Africa* by Yusufu Turaki (Nairobi: IBS, 1999).

³³ Ted Ward and I wrote a paper in 1988 entitled NACAMP—North American Council for the Assessment of Ministerial Preparation. We found this to be a very difficult paradigmatic problem.

organizations? New partnerships are being formed constantly. The Center for C-BTE Resources is involved in an eight million dollar, five-year project to establish nine international prototypes of ecclesiologicaly driven, leadership training networks, partnering with individual churches and movements of churches worldwide.³⁴ See Appendix 1, “C-BTE Partner Resource Networks” for an example of this type of partnership. TOPIC is an example of a network of training organizations seeking to address the need for leadership training, which a number of us are seeking to steer a truly church-based direction.³⁵

Change is inevitable. Educational institutions and training organizations have a tremendous opportunity over the next few years to reinvent themselves at a fundamental, paradigmatic level. Thomas argues that the only educational institutions that will survive deep into the 21st century are those who attach themselves to learning organizations, so more is at stake than just creativity. We live in a time of almost unprecedented opportunity. Let’s learn to operate by new rules, creative rules, which align themselves much more closely with “the way of Christ and the Apostles.” The success of all future ministry-training enterprises centers around one question: Is the training program ecclesiologicaly driven? The ecclesiologicaly driven approach needs to be in the driver’s seat, at a paradigmatic level, and the institutionally driven and organizationally driven approaches need to take on supplementary roles. I believe it is possible for institutions and organizations to be driven by matters of the churches.

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³⁴ This five-year project will include the building of Partner C-BTE Programs in seventy North American churches and nine C-BTE Leadership Networks, helping them design serious ecclesiologicaly driven, ministry training programs. Dr. Ted Ward will oversee an ethnographic study throughout the five-year project.

³⁵ I am a founding board member of the recently formed TOPIC—Training of Pastors International Coalition—which was formed to build a network of training organizations for the purpose of designing effective strategies to train the 2-6 million pastors worldwide who need training in the fast growing churches. I believe we need to seriously pursue the formation of such partnerships.



C-BTE Partner Resource Networks

A C-BTE Resource Network

A C-BTE Resource Network is a new paradigm in training leaders within a movement of churches. It is more comprehensive than a traditional seminary, encompassing all levels of leadership training, from illiterate pastors to those with the potential of emerging as the next generation of scholars. The following are core elements of a resource network.

Core elements of a C-BTE Resource Network:

1. Conferences, and theological summits and councils
2. An integrated, multi-level core curricula resource of learning modules and clusters of experiences, extending from illiterate leaders to doctoral level work
3. A portfolio directory encouraging lifelong development and ministry opportunities
4. A C-BTE partner program network
5. A C-BTE mission project network
6. An on-line and DVD library resource center
7. A multi-level sabbatical system for in-service leadership development
8. A process for assisting local churches in developing multi-level C-BTE programs in their churches or in small clusters of churches
9. An affiliate network of effective training organizations
10. Resident theologians for mentoring, teaching special seminars, and relevant scholastic tasks
11. A cultivation strategy and publishing resource for emerging scholars
12. An international network of resource scholars
13. A portfolio-based assessment-recognition system designed to effectively interface with the global theological education system

Various Models of C-BTE Resource Networks

Several types of networks are envisioned as prototypes for partnership with The Center for C-BTE Resources. Some are underway as prototypes, and some are being sought as partnerships in the present. Their final shape is yet to be completely determined, but they generally will look as follows:

Types of C-BTE Networks:

1. An Association or Denomination of churches—a network designed within the infrastructure of an association or denomination, fully interfaced and integrated with all formal theological education structures
2. A Movement or Consortium of Churches and/or Mission Agencies—a network designed by a consortium of different associations/denominations of churches and mission agencies and/or training organizations/institutions
3. A Theological Seminary or Bible College—a network designed by a seminary or Bible College serving as a resource network for an identified cluster of churches
4. A Church Supporting Mission Agency—a network designed within a mission agency for the purpose of equipping its missionaries to establish C-BTE resource centers on their fields or to help their network of churches to become fully established through building C-BTE centers within their own churches
5. An “Antioch Church”—a network designed by an individual church, of a strategic nature, following the ancient Antioch and Alexandrian examples, which develops a C-BTE center fully within the sphere of ministry or stewardship of that local church



C-BTE Assessment-Recognition Options

We are in the process of major change in education as we enter post-enlightenment, technological, information-driven societies. The fundamental educational shift is from educational institutions to learning organizations (*Beyond Education: New Perspectives on Societies Management of Learning*, by Alan Thomas). This is bringing significant development to the degree-based assessment recognition system. Folio/portfolio systems are emerging at every level of education (*Experiential Learning: A New Approach*, by Lewis Jackson and Rosemary Caffarella). Jobs are no longer the goal but work portfolios, moving from project to project inside and outside global organizational structures. The following is a system of church-based assessment-recognition options created by The Center for C-BTE Resources for the purpose of accommodating and facilitating this change in theological education.

Waning Paradigm—Degrees, Jobs, Positions

Emerging Paradigm—Folios/Portfolios, Post-Job, LifeWork

Formal Education

Disciplined Lifelong Learning

Combination Residential/In-Service Degree Option

This option is for those who desire a traditional degree from a formal theological seminary. We will broker combinations of the C-BTE programs with seminary degree programs. This fits with the ideas of education by extension, field education, distance learning, and advanced standing credit.

Traditional degree types:

1. Certificates of Biblical Studies (1 & 2 year programs)
2. B.Th.—Bachelor of Theology (4 years)
3. M.Div.—Master of Divinity (3 year post-graduate degree)
4. Th.D.—Doctor of Theology (4-5 years of post-graduate work)

Integrated with 7th Priority Life Development Folio/Portfolio and Development Practicum

New Full In-Service Degree Option

These new degrees, prototyped by the highly successful D.Min. Degree, require no residential training. The pattern: extensive reading, one intense week in class, and a major project per class on the other side of class. These degrees will be built in combination with existing Bible colleges and seminaries.

New In-service Degrees:

1. B.Min.—Bachelor of Ministry (a multi-year program with a college or university)
2. M.Min.—Masters of Ministry (a multi-year program with a seminary or college/university graduate program)
3. D.Min.—Doctor of Ministry (a multi-year program with a seminary or college/university graduate program)

Integrated with 7th Priority Life Development Folio/Portfolio and Development Practicum

New Folio/Portfolio Option

This new option is based upon an entirely new approach to the assessment recognition issue. It is built around a state of the art folio/portfolio system and a collage of certificates designed to accurately measure development at several levels: ministry competencies, academic acumen, and character formation.

Customized Programs around 7th Priority Life Development Folio/Portfolio and Development Practicum:

C-BTE Levels of Portfolio Development (Criteria-Based Certificates offered by churches)

- Ministry Mastery I
- Ministry Mastery II
- Ministry Mastery III
- Ministry Mastery IV
- Ministry Mastery V

Collage of Development Certificates (Initially over 25 certificates from churches, denominations, educational institutions, corporations, learning organizations, etc., recognized by The Center for C-BTE Resources)