

## **Comments on *A Genuinely Educated Ministry* (2007) by A.Dutney**

I was very interested in your book *A Genuinely Educated Ministry*, which brought back memories of the WCC project I was involved in the 1960s and the resultant publication *Patterns of Ministry: Theological Education in a Changing World*, which you were kind enough to refer to in your study. In your book, three points occurred to me as reflecting significant differences between *then* and *now* (and between Geneva and Adelaide).

1. The first of your three studies points to the distinction between two traditions of theological education in Australia: the *Reformed* tradition characteristic of Presbyterian and Congregational churches and the *Evangelical* tradition characteristic of the Methodist Church among others. This distinction is not made in *Patterns of Ministry*. The main reason for this is that the ecumenical spread in the WCC was much wider in the 1960s (and in the last 40 years or so has become wider still) than it is within the UCA.

The main churches we were looking at in the study were Reformed, Lutheran, Anglican, and to a lesser extent: Baptist, Orthodox and Roman Catholic. And the most significant division between patterns of church life and theological education was that between the national and official denominations (CoE, Cof S, Lutheran churches in Germany and Scandinavia, Reformed churches in Switzerland and Holland, Orthodox Churches in Greece etc.), and the independent and free churches in England and America. This division was an organisational rather than a theological one. The main distinction in patterns of theological education was that in the "official" churches, it was usually carried out in university faculties, while the independent churches had no such advantage (except in a rather different form in the USA)

The situation has changed greatly since then, of course, and I appreciate that the Australian situation today is very different from either Europe or America in the 1960s (see my point 3 below). Your studies, however, are concerned with the *Uniting Church of Australia*, and you make it clear that the UCA hopefully will eventually include other Christian denominations as well. No doubt the Anglican and Lutheran churches are possible mates in the long run (perhaps also the Greek Orthodox Church). This may not be an immediate concern, but it does suggest that eventually there might be more than two different traditions existing side by side.

2. You also discuss current thinking in UCA about new patterns of ministry. This too was discussed in the WCC study. One of the things I was asked to do - by Lesslie Newbigin - in addition to looking at emerging forms of theological education, was to follow up his booklet on *A Tentmaking Ministry* (1962), which referred to an experiment he started in some newly converted village communities in South India. Instead of bringing in highly qualified ministers fresh from theological colleges, he decided to focus on members of the village communities, who had taken the lead in bringing their whole community to the Gospel. Once these natural leaders had been taught to read and given a basic knowledge of scripture, he was ready to ordain them as presbyters in the villages from which they came.

Following this lead, I looked at some recent experiments, and notably the introduction of part time priests in Catholic, Lutheran and Anglican churches . I was able to visit the recently founded seminary of the RC *Mission de France* which trained priests to work part-time in secular situations. (The full-time *Priest Workers* of the 50s had already been disbanded by the Vatican). I was asked to speak about this experiment at the (Anglican) Lambeth Conference in 1968. The C of E and the Episcopal Church in Scotland both now make wide and imaginative use of *Non-Stipendiary Ministers* (see *Ministers of the Kingdom: Exploration in Non-Stipendiary Ministry*, by P Baelz & W, Jacob, 1985). The Church of Scotland has been very hesitant in following this example, and the presbyteries have made it very clear that only the full-time salaried ministers really count !

Interestingly several of the original Priest Workers went on to work in Latin America, where they had a significant input to the development of Liberation Theology. Here as in *Basic Christian Communities* in Europe and the Philipines and elsewhere, the pattern was one of small groups of often uneducated people ministering to each other and teasing out the meaning of scripture with the guidance of someone with a traditional theological education acting as their teacher. (See especially the writings of Ernesto Cardenal and the *Peruvian Catechism: Vamos Caminando*).

3. Another point which struck me emerges in Study 3, where you emphasize the need for a new kind of ministry and theological education in the context of the increased secularization of Australian society. You speak of this as something of which the UCA and ministerial candidates have become aware over the last few years. I wish I could say the same of the Church of Scotland. Since leaving St Andrews, I have become aware of the extent to which the Christian churches and indeed religion have become marginalized in British society as a whole and especially in the media. With the possible exception of the Roman Catholic Church, the churches are now regarded as old-fashioned, unnecessary, based on false premises, and in some cases, as socially dangerous - though less so than Islam. While teaching at St Mary's this was not obvious to me for a number of reasons, including family ones. (Two of my three sons and their wives, though aware of some of the good things the churches have done and still do, have decided they don't really need them themselves; and their children have gone a step further and dismissed the churches altogether).

The relative size and solid organization of the Church of Scotland has I think concealed the extent of this secularization to parish ministers who work hard to support their church-members, and are themselves supported by a substantial organization. To see the General Assembly at work and at prayer, and to hear them sing, is enough to convince most of those present that the "Kirk" is an important and confident force in society and will remain so, and that there is really no need to change the way things have been done and are still being done. Reading your third paper, I am struck by the much greater awareness of your students in the last few years, that society has changed and that the churches must change the way they do things and they themselves must be ready to work in new and innovative ways.

Andrew

18/9/07

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Sorry to take so long in sending  
this to you.

Best wishes to Goli & you  
Shirley