CHAPTER ONE

LEVELLING THE GROUND

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The chapter has been deliberately entitled, *"Levelling the ground"*, because, as an introductory chapter, it is aimed at setting the stage for the entire research discourse. It entails various components of the research at hand, namely, a paragraph or two about the Baptist Convention of South Africa,[1] the research itself, how it fits into practical theology, the formulation of the problem, and the framework of the entire dissertation.

The Baptist Convention of South Africa (hereinafter referred to as "Convention") is a fellowship of (predominantly black)[2] Baptist churches in South Africa. It was constituted as Bantu Baptist Church in 1927, and finally came to be known as the Baptist Convention of South Africa.

1.2 THE RESEARCH

1.2.1 The field of research

The title of my thesis is, *Christian Education in the Baptist Convention of South Africa with special reference to churches in the Transvaal[3]: A Practical Theological Investigation.*

---

[1] Chapter three of this thesis, is devoted to the origin and spread of the Baptist Convention of South Africa.

[2] From its inception in 1927, the Baptist Convention of South Africa has always been a fellowship of black churches. It was only recently that a few coloured churches and white individuals joined as members.

[3] Notwithstanding the present breakdown of the Transvaal into smaller provinces in light of the new dispensation in South Africa, I have preferred to use 'Transvaal' instead of the four provinces there in, because it was within that context that Christian education unfolded in the Baptist Convention of South Africa.

As the title suggests, the aim of the discourse is to research on how Christian education was done in the Convention churches from its inception in 1927 to date (1997). The question at stake is whether Christian education enjoyed the attention it deserved; if it did, to what extent it measured up to Biblically and conventionally acceptable standards of doing Christian education in a church situation.

1.2.2   How I arrived at the theme

Mainly, three factors motivated my choice of the theme in question. First, the image of Christian education in the Convention churches. Down through the years to the present, something has been going on in Christian education. There has always been (and there still is) an awareness of the importance of the church's educational ministry in the Convention churches. However, the level of teaching is such that it warrants special attention; it can and must be improved. For one to bring about change in this area, it is proper that the situation be exposed first, after which the remedy can then be prescribed. I should mention that it was for this same reason that I decided to pursue Christian education with Princeton Theological Seminary (New Jersey, USA) at Master's level.

Second, the pursuit of the Christian education programme at the same seminary motivated me further. For the first time I realized that Christian education was a very important dimension of church ministry in the American churches. The idea of full time Christian education directors in churches fascinated me. The teaching ministry is regarded very highly; it is viewed as an integral part of the total church ministry.

Third, the many books, journals, magazines and other types of Christian literature devoted to Christian education overwhelmed me. I became convinced that churches in

South Africa, especially those of the Convention, had to revisit Christian education and give it the place it deserves in the entire spectrum of church ministry. These three factors prompted me to engage in this evaluation exercise.

1.2.3   The erection of borders

I have chosen the churches in the Transvaal as the focus of my research for two reasons: first, to confine the research to a small and manageable area; second, the Convention churches in the Transvaal are by far the strongest and the most in number when compared to Convention churches in the other three provinces.[4] The Transvaal churches set the pace for growth, decision-making, and for the financial strength of the entire Convention. Churches in the Free State, Natal and the Cape are fewer in number, a factor that accounts for their slow growth and weak performance for the denomination. By implication the Transvaal churches are a legitimate representation of the entire Convention in all respects, and thus a suitable focal point for this evaluation exercise.

As touching the scope of material to be covered, the evaluation will revolve around such key issues as the availability of a Christian education programme in churches, the purpose, administration, and the process or method of Christian education, discipleship, lay equipping for the ministry, children, youth and adult ministries, the place of Christian education in the theological training of pastors, the curriculum for Christian education as well as adherence to Biblical models of Christian education.

1.2.4   The purpose of the research

The research and evaluation exercise is undertaken with a view to tracing the development of Christian education in the Baptist Convention of South Africa since its

---

[4] Here I am referring to Natal, Cape Province and Orange Free State as they were known then.

inception (in 1927) to the present (1997); to evaluate it in light of theologically and conventionally accepted, credible and Biblical standards of doing Christian education, thereby bringing to light its weaknesses and strengths, and then prescribing a remedial measure.

At the end of the research I must have been able to establish specific problem areas in the Convention churches in terms of criteria outlined above; problems that may be characteristic of other denominations as well. Presently, what I perceive as being a problem for Christian education in the Convention may be vague, superficial and unfounded. Based on my findings, I would like to lay down strategies for effective Christian education in future, not only for the Convention churches, but for the Church in South Africa and for those parts of the world for whom the findings and strategies will be helpful.

1.2.5   The relevance of the research

The research is relevant in that first, it exposes the existing problems in Christian education in the Church as a whole, not only in the Convention. Mention has already been made of the fact that not only the Convention has problems in Christian education, but denominations and churches in other countries as well, have been plagued by the same problem. Admittedly the problem may not be to the extent that it is in the Convention. In some cases in South Africa the problem may be less while in others there may be more problems.

Second, the research will challenge other denominations to take another closer look at their doing of Christian education, effecting changes and improvements where

necessary. Churches and institutions[5] which did not take Christian education seriously will, at the challenge of this research, give it second thought and thus accord to it the importance it deserves.

Third, strategies set out at the end of the research will serve as an eye opener to those who knew they had a problem but did not know how to go about resolving it. Affected churches will be able to build on these strategies as they go about setting their Christian education programmes in order.

Fourth, it will underline the imperative nature of the teaching ministry of the Church as laid down in Scriptures and as practised by the Church from its inception on the day of Pentecost to the present.

Finally, this is an area in which not much research, if any at all, was done in this country. This was confirmed by the Human Science Research Council, when after much searching, nothing was found which purported this line of research with regard to the teaching ministry of the Baptist Convention of South Africa. Of course there were other Christian education researches in other denominations and in school education.[6] It is hoped that this discourse will add to the already existing research, albeit of other denominations, and serve as a springboard for other similar research projects in future.

---

[5] By institutions I mean universities and other structures which in some way have to do with Christian or religious education. I am thinking here of the so called Sunday school organizations and other such like relevant bodies.
[6] See literature review on page 43 of the second chapter

1.3   HOW THIS RESEARCH FITS INTO PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

At the outset it is important that we first understand the background and meaning of practical theology. In this way it will be much easier to see how this (Christian education) research fits into it.

1.3.1   Understanding Practical Theology

In my understanding, practical theology went through three phases to be where it is today. I see those phases to be, first, when practical theology was not recognized as a theology in its own right; much less a science. Second, when practical theology gained ground as a theological discipline; fully theological and fully scientific; having been confined to certain church practices only. In the third phase, practical theology is viewed as an umbrella for all theology, so that all theology is fundamentally practical theology. My description of practical theology below, will assume these three phases.

In the first phase, practical theology was understood as that theological discipline which was designed solely for the purpose of being a practical aspect of all theological disciplines, so that while other theological disciplines are theoretical, practical theology would represent their practical side. In itself practical theology was not considered as being theological or scientific; it was regarded as a practical outworking of other theological disciplines. It was regarded as a mere piece of technology; an applied science lacking in its area of research (Janson, 1974:311).

Ballard and Pritchard (1996:1) echo the same sentiment, *"... practical theology has been somewhat marginalized from the main academic theological discipline and often accorded a minor place in the theological pantheon..."* For some people practical

theology was not a theological discipline at all because it lacked the questions "why" and "whether". It is accordingly concerned with training and learning how to apply an already established belief. In this way it is not open enquiry but a churchly activity, required for the professional training of ministers. The reason for branding practical theology as untheological is that it is application and not critical theory; it is ecclesiastical not academic (ibid, 12)

The inferior status accorded to practical theology is attested to by Edward Farley (1983:32). He states that before Schleiemacher appeared on the scene it was common-place to differentiate practical theology from the theoretical disciplines, in that it was regarded as an applied part of the theological studies. In this case practical theology *"...was a kind of appendix to those studies with little integral relation to them."* It was Schleiermacher who first integrated practical theology into theology. *"Practical theology never itself became a discipline or science but like theology became a generic term embracing a number of more specific studies."* (ibid, 32)

When practical theology was introduced at university, it was for what one would call, a bridge building purpose between theology and practical work; a bridge builder between theological theory and ecclesiastical practice. Murray Janson (1974:310-311) put it thus, *"Practical Theology was ... originally created as a university subject in order to be a bridge builder, to span gulfs - including the gulf between academic theology and church practice. For the theological student it was intended to provide the method for the practical application of his theological knowledge ... it was an answer to the question of how to do it."*

It was the role described above that earned practical theology an inferior status vis-a-vis other theological disciplines. Thus for a long time it was kept on the periphery; serving only as a means to help other theological disciplines to be practical. Other theological disciplines would theorize and practical theology would actualize those theories. It was for this reason that other universities relegated practical theology to technikons, seminaries and church training centres. After all it was only concerned with the developing of techniques for applying theories in practice. In other universities it was not taught separately, rather it was taught by an ecclesiastical professor, being accorded a lower status than other theological disciplines (ibid, 312).

What compounded the problem further was that even great theologians of Karl Barth and Paul Tillich's calibre accorded inferior status to practical theology. Karl Barth said practical theology was only concerned with the "how", not the "what" of theology. In this case it was subordinate to systematic theology, exegesis, etecera (Barth in Smart, 1954:24). Smart (1954:24) quoted Paul Tillich as saying that *"Practical departments are mere studies of practical techniques, and so essentially outside the scope of theology proper; nothing more than methodological addenda to the curriculum."*

James Smart (1954:38) has this to say about problems surrounding the validity of practical theology as a theological discipline, *"... there is a widespread impression that the practical departments need not be so seriously or deeply theological as the others, and they have suffered severely from lack of theologians in them"* He (1954:39) further pointed out that whenever a lecturer was needed for practical departments (worship, counseling, education, etc.) it did not matter much whether he had any theology or not. Theology ranked very low in qualifications needed.

The first phase of practical theology described above is summed up by Don Browning (1991:3), *"The field of practical theology has been throughout its history the most beleaguered and despised of the theological disciplines ... To admit in a major university that one is a practical theologian has been to invite humiliation."*

In the second phase, practical theology assumed theological and scientific status. As time went on and other practical theologians appeared on the scene, it became evident that practical theology was just as theological and scientific as other theological disciplines. During this time, practical theology was - as was the case in phase one above - confined to certain components of theology only (among others, worship, preaching, counseling, pastoral care, etc.), so that it did not mean the whole of theology, as will become the case in phase three.

Some definitions of practical theology will illustrate its theological status: *"Practical Theology is that part of theology that concerns itself with ... the encounter between God and humanity; particularly with the role of human beings in the encounter"* (Heyns and Pieterse 1990:6). Janson (1974:322) has a similar thing to say, namely, that practical theology is theological because it *"... is concerned with those actions in which God comes to man so that the two can meet. This encounter is an event in which man is not merely an object, a receiving instrument, a dead stick, or a lump of matter, but a constitutive partner."*

"Practical theology is concerned with actions performed in the service of the gospel." Nothing can make practical theology more theological than the fact that it is performed in the service of the gospel. Moreover, Heyns and Pieterse (1990:6) go further to say

9

that since it is concerned with God coming to people, with the emphasis being on people, it is bound to be theological.

James Smart (1954:7) argues that practical theology is a theological discipline because it deals with the response of people to God's revelation of Himself. God has revealed Himself so He could be known, worshipped, obeyed and followed. Thus, God's revelation demands a response from His people. That response may take the form of worship, preaching, teaching, caring, counseling, ministering, etc. The duty of practical theology is to prescribe how that response has to take place.

Don Browning (1991:6) points out that practical theology is accordingly prompted by the fact that as any given religious community acts, it comes up against a crisis in its practices. Upon this it begins to reflect (ask questions) about its meaningful theory laden practices. It proceeds to examine the sacred texts and events that constitute the source of norms and ideals that guide its practices. It brings its questions to the normative texts and has a conversation between itself and these texts. As this religious community juxtaposes the normative texts and its own practices, new meanings come about and new theories are formed to address the present crisis. Such reconstructed religious meanings and practices continue until the religious community meets another crisis, upon which it will reflect again. This is accordingly practical theology.

Practical theology is not only theological, as has been illustrated above; it is also scientific. This is so because it reflects critically on the response of the Church to God's revelation of Himself; ensuring that the response is in line with God's demands, and with

certain humanly accepted principles and practices. By implication all congregational activities fall under the scrutiny of practical theology.

In the words of Heyns and Pieterse , *"Practical theology enquires into the theories underlying the communicative religious actions in the service of the gospel. These theories are evaluated critically and where necessary new ones are developed."* They (1990:7) further reinforce the scientific nature of practical theology by saying, *"...it concerns itself with the scientific study of people's faith and their religious statements about God."* Murray Janson (1974:324) cannot agree more, *"Practical theology is a science because it investigates the structure and function of the communication systems which act as intermediaries for God's coming to man."*

James Smart (1954:38) put it thus: *"...practical theology is the study of the Church in action, the critique of its practices in the past, the determination on principle of what should be its practices in the present, and the training of its ministry to be guides into a right fulfillment of its nature in response to God in the future."* He (1954:38) continues to sound a warning that *"practical does not mean untheological"*, that *"practical considerations are as thoroughly theological as those that arise in the Biblical, systematic, and historical departments of theology"*.

What made practical theology a science was also the fact that it opened its doors to human sciences so it could learn from them (without necessarily serving them). This was specifically so in pastoral counseling, where it became obligatory for theology to take cognizance of the methods and results of other human sciences, especially psychology. (Janson, 1974:314)

Thus as a science, practical theology has its own field of study, namely, practical theological theories, and applies its own scientific methods. It takes proper account of praxis, but it does not simply apply theories developed by other sciences. It is more on a theoretical side of the ministry, while the pastor, church worker and the active member are on the practical side.

In light of the argument above, we can safely conclude that practical theology is just as equally theological, scientific and important as any other theological discipline. It is important to note that up until the second phase described so far, practical theology has been confined to certain components of theology only, namely, worship, preaching, teaching, counseling, pastoral care, ministry, etc. What this amounts to is that only these components are practical; other theological disciplines are not.

Heyns and Pieterse (1990:12) confine practical theology to preaching, instruction (home, church, etc), liturgy, mutual care by church members, pastoral care, and various other forms of service. James Smart (1954:39-45) confines practical theology to liturgy, education, preaching, pastoral care, missions and evangelism, while the Baker's Dictionary of Practical Theology embraces stewardship, worship, homiletics, evangelism and missions, counseling, education, administration and pastoral ministry as components of practical theology (Turnbell, 1967). To date this is still the case in most (if not all) universities and theological institutions.

In the third phase one notices a move from just a few components comprising practical theology to the whole of theology as being fundamentally practical. The password now becomes, *"All theology is practical or at least must be practical."* Uppermost among the

proponents of this view of all theology being practical, is Don Browning. He (1991:7,8) argues that *"Christian Theology should be seen as practical through and through...Historical, systematic, and practical theology should be seen as subspecialties of the larger and more encompassing discipline called 'Fundamental Practical Theology."*

Browning (1991:8) quotes a few thinkers, among others, Paul Ricoeur, Jurgen Habermas, William James, John Dewey, etc, as being agreed that practical thinking is the centre of all human thinking and that theoretical and technical thinking are abstractions from practical thinking. This way of thinking has implications for theology, changing fundamentally the historic formulations of the organization of theological discipline. By implication theology as we know it today, first came from practical thinking before it became theology and theory. It was for this reason that Browning (1991:8) came up with a new formulation, *"I argue that theology as a whole is fundamental practical theology."* In this case not only certain components are practical but the whole of theology is practical. The argument is that before it even became theology, it was first practically thought through in the mind; only thereafter did it become theory. If we are agreed that all theory is derived from practical thinking first, it is logical to say that theology is the result of practical thinking; therefore all theology is practical theology.

Browning (1991:35) further points out that *"... the new definitions of practical theology can be found in Germany, Holland, England, Canada, Latin America, and the United States."* In light of these developments, the province of practical theology has been greatly enlarged; it may no longer be confined to just a few components of theology to

be carried out by ordained ministry; instead practical theology is now defined as *"...critical reflection on the church's ministry to the world"* (Alistair Campbell in Browning, 1991:35).

Indeed new books have been published on this new broader picture of practical theology. Among others Browning (1991:36) mentions himself, Fowler, Groome, Gerkin, Schreiter, Winquist, Miller and Poling, and McCann and Strain, all of whom are in the United States.

Be that as it may, it should not be as though this notion of all theology being practical theology is completely new. Already there has been a feeling in other quarters, that of necessity all theology must be practical, or at least have a practical orientation. For example, Janson (1974:321) argued, *"All theology should have practical orientation in it, so that all disciplines are practice oriented; it must eventually be such that it can be applied practically."* Mette (in Janson, 1974:321) maintained that *"Practical theology must be regarded as a theological science of action (or operational science) within the context in which theology as a whole is understood as a practical science."* All theology must attain to practical life, or else it is no theology at all. He (1974:315) continued to say, *"While all theological subjects strive to be genuine sciences, they ought also to possess a practical disposition. No theological discipline should be pure theory."* In the same vein W. D. Jonker (in Janson, 1974:315-316) declares, *"All theological subjects must be practical. It is in the nature of theology to be practical and ecclesiastical. If it is neither of these, then it is bad and irrelevant theology."*

Still other theologians like Pannenburg, Karl Rahner and Sperna Weiland have expressed a similar concern about the nature of all theology; that as a matter of fact all theology must be practical, if it is to help Christians to live as it is required. Otherwise it ceases to be theology in the true sense of the word (ibid, 316). It should thus come as no surprise that Don Browning came out so forcefully for what he calls fundamental practical theology, implying that all theology is practical theology. Accordingly, all other theological disciplines become submovements within the broader practical theology (Browning, 1991:36), while those components which belonged to practical theology are now being collectively referred to as strategic practical theology or fully practical theology (ibid, 8).

Whereas I am in full agreement with this new development of branding all theology as being practical theology (or fundamental practical theology, as Browning would have it) for reasons that have been cited above, I will, however, for purposes of this essay, use practical theology to refer to those theological components mentioned in the second phase. My contention is that to date the use of "practical theology" in theological institutions and universities is still confined to those components only. In the main those components are preaching, teaching, worship, counseling, pastoral care, ministry, evangelism, missions, etc.

1.3.2   How Christian education fits into Practical Theology

Having said this much about the merits of practical theology, we should now turn our attention to how Christian education fits into it. Christian education rightly fits into practical theology because *"... the work of education is carried forward in worship,*

preaching and in pastoral relationships" (Smart, 1954:40). Moreover education takes place also in missions and evangelism (which are components of practical theology).

If preaching is part of practical theology, so is Christian education. This is so because *"... the teacher and the preacher have a common ministry. They serve the same revelation of God which comes to them from scriptures and from the total witness of the church. Both stand under the same peril of having their ministry destroyed by the substitution of some other revelation for the revelation of God ... Both teacher and preacher must be biblically, systematically and historically grounded to qualify for their work"* (ibid, 41).

Christian education is practical, hence a part of practical theology because teaching which takes place in Christian education, is an event, a practical occurrence, it is an action of the church in response to God's coming to people. Teaching is passing on the revelation of God to people. This makes it a practical subject. The goal of Christian education is to prepare Christians for Christian life and service; it is practice oriented.

Browning (1991:213) pointed out that *"All Christian education, 'like all practical theology, takes place in communities of faith, inquiry and action.."* From time to time Christian education has to take questions that arise from the faith community back to the text and norms of Christian faith and then bring answers back to bear upon the practice of the same community. This practice no doubt makes it a practical subject.

Like preaching and pastoral care, Christian education involves a communication of some truth to one or more people with a view to converting, edifying, reminding, or

teaching them. Jesus was practically involved in the process of teaching and preaching. The two went together. Apostles and disciples in general, also taught. It is for this reason that I contend for Christian education as being a component of practical theology.

Other authors take it for granted that Christian education is part of practical theology without trying to prove that this is the case. A case in point is Dr C.M. Heyns and H.J.C. Pieterse in the second chapter of their book, *A primer in practical theology*. This chapter deals with the field of practical theology. In this chapter, Heyns and Pieterse (1990:12) state that *"The main fields of study are preaching, instruction in Sunday schools, the home and elsewhere in the congregation, celebration (both liturgical and otherwise), mutual care, etc."* Thus for them, instruction, which is Christian education, is part of practical theology. Murray Janson (1974:323) alludes to religious education (or Christian education)[7] theory of practice as being the task of practical theology without going into detail as to how religious education fits into practical theology.

Another Christian educationist worthy of note in this regard is Richard Robert Osmer. In his book, *A Teachable Spirit*, he takes it for granted that Christian education is a component of practical theology without expanding on how this is possible. He has this to say (1990:218) about congregational education and nurture, *"The ability to engage in practical theological reflection does not develop automatically in every Christian. It only emerges in conjunction with a congregation that is a community of practical theological discourse, one that teaches its members over the course of many years..."* Notice that practical theological reflection is made possible by teaching for many years. For him, therefore, teaching (Christian education) is an aspect of practical theology.

---

[7] The difference between Christian and Religious education will be treated in chapter four. For now they will be used interchangeably as each author chooses to do. In a conventional sense, they mean the same thing.

Christian education is not only practical, but it is theological in that the content taught is God's revelation of Himself to people so that people will respond to Him in repentance, worship and service. Christian education is at the service of the gospel; it concerns itself with Christian faith; in this way it qualifies to be called a theological subject.

The history of the Israelites abounds with instances of where teaching was done about God and what He required from His people. The words of Moses to the Israelites will clarify this argument, *"Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments which your God commanded me to teach you, that ye may do them in the land wither ye go to possess it"* (Deut. 6: 1 KJV). Not only were the Israelites taught, they were also commanded to teach their children as well: *"And these words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shall teach them diligently unto thy children..."* (Deut. 6:6, 7, KJV). The prophets not only preached but also taught God's Word. Priests, scribes, rabbis and Pharisees taught in synagogues.

The New Testament also abounds with examples of the teaching ministry. Jesus came teaching, preaching and healing (Matthew 4:23). His main theme was the kingdom of God (or the kingdom of heaven). His last word to His disciples was that they should make disciples of all nations and baptize them and teach them to observe all that which He had commanded them (Matt. 28:19-20). The apostles not only preached, but they taught new believers Christian faith (Acts 2:42). In this instance what makes Christian education theological is the content that was and is being taught; teaching about God, His revelation of Himself to people, and all He requires from them.

In light of all the arguments so far, Christian education is a component of practical theology. It spans across the entire spectrum of practical theology and also stands on its own as a practical theology component.

1.4   FORMULATION OF THE PROBLEM.

The problem at stake is the doing of Christian education in the Baptist Convention churches. Christian education has not received the attention it deserved. Even in churches where it is practised or done, it does not in anyway measure up to its full potential. It is my contention that Christian education (the teaching ministry of the church) is a problematic area in our denomination.

My argument is based on what I know as a Convention pastor and leader, as well as on what I have heard and still hear pastors and laity in the Convention complain about. Some pastors complain that they have no teaching gifts, while others argue that they did not receive training in teaching during the course of their training for pastoral ministry. The lay people in turn, complain that some of their pastors do not teach; in some cases even if they do teach, they do not teach effectively.

1.4.1   The problem as argued by other Christian educators and authors

The problem in the doing of Christian education is further attested to by other Christian educators and authors the world over. In varying degrees and in different ways, Christian education is beset with problems. The observations of some of these Christian educators are worthy of mention.

James Smart (1954:12-13) pointed out that in the past, Christian education (or Religious education, as it was known then and is still known in other church circles) tended to be more closely related to secular education, and not to theology. The educational side was emphasized at schools. Teachers who taught at school were trained in the methodology of teaching religious education not in its content. This trend led to ministers of religion

regarding their task as that of preaching and sacraments only. Laypeople would be assigned to do the work of teaching without proper training in that area as ministers had no time.

Findley Edge (1956:vii) prefaces his book, *'Teaching for results'* with a problem in Sunday school teaching. He stated that *"The improvement of teaching in the Sunday school is one of the most pressing problems facing our churches today...Our teachers themselves, are the ones most keenly aware of their own limitations and are most urgent in their request for guidance and help."* Added to this problem is the fact that Sunday school teachers themselves *"...are aware of the fact that they are not getting the results they desire – either in Bible knowledge or Christian living. In spite of the fact that some members have attended Sunday school for five, ten, fifteen or more years, there is an amazing lack of Bible knowledge even among those who are most regular in attendance. This is a matter of no little significance..."* (Ibid, vii-viii).

Stanley Glen (1960:9-26), underscoring the plight of Christian education in the 1960's, spoke of *"The subordination of the teaching ministry."* Accordingly, teaching in churches is emphasized outwardly, but in practice it remains subordinate. He (1960:9) continues, *"The subordination is not a surface phenomenon due only to limitations at the administrative level, but a spiritual phenomenon due to a deeper, underlying condition, which robs the teaching ministry of its power and obstructs it in relation to the constitutive source of faith."*

What is surprising is that the subordination of the church's teaching ministry persists despite the large and important place teaching had in Jesus' ministry, as well as the emphasis Judaism put on teaching (ibid, 9). The subordination of the church's teaching ministry manifests itself in various ways.

First, the sharp difference between the church building and the Christian education classroom displays the subordination of the teaching ministry glaringly. The church

building is usually well structured and infra-structured while the classroom is ignored. In some cases there is no special classroom at all; teaching thus being relegated to a back room.

Second, in some pulpits sermons do not bring up explanations of times, contexts, and vocabulary; some are void of teaching content. On the contrary, the pulpit must also be a place of teaching.

Third, the optional nature of the minister's teaching role underlines the low esteem accorded to the teaching ministry in the church. In this case, ministers may choose to teach or not to teach, while pastoral ministry embraces teaching as its integral part. To be a pastor is to be a teacher.

Fourth, the insignificant place Christian education occupies in some theological institutions, highlights the dilemma faced by the teaching ministry in the church. In some theological institutions Christian education is taken as an elective, as opposed to homiletics, which is held in high esteem. Moreover, whatever was done in Christian education under the circumstances outlined thus far, was not comprehensive as was supposed to have been the case. It was focused on the teaching of children only.

Fifth, the preference of religious experience at the expense of truth, is a pointer to how lowly truth (teaching) was regarded vis-a-vis the excitement about emotional religion, ecstatic wonder, and sacramental mystery. *"...the church is less concerned about the intelligible content of its faith than with the nominal and subjective. Instead of holding the two together in a kind of balanced and integral relationship, it tends rather strongly to emphasize the latter at the expense of the former"* (Glen, 1960:25). Further, *"Worship is exalted at the expense of preaching, the holy at the expense of the intelligible. Sermons are designed more for the feelings than for the mind"* (ibid, 26).

The situation outlined by Stanley Glen above may have changed for the better over the years. However, in other places it is still the case. Until recently, the Convention's theological training institution did not have Christian education as a subject. Whenever it was there, it was limited to Sunday school training only, i.e., the focus was on how to teach children and not youth or adults. Moreover, such a subject would last for as long as the lecturer was there; as soon as he left, the subject was also left out of the school curriculum.

Jim Wilhoit (1986:9) strongly warns, *"Christian education is in crisis. It is not healthy and vital; as a discipline it is bankrupt. To say that a discipline is bankrupt is not to claim that it is worthless or that its scholars are not diligently working, but rather that the discipline is not doing what it is supposed to do... all too often it exhibits the fatal flaw of having no clear purpose."* Accordingly, this crisis is caused by the lack of purpose at the grassroots level. The Sunday school teachers, youth counselors and Bible study leaders have no slightest idea of what the purpose of Christian education should be.

In the same breath, Iris V. Cully (1976:4) contends that local church Sunday schools are beset with many goals. Parents have one goal in mind; Sunday school teachers have another, while the minister and the board each cherish their own goals as well. There is accordingly, *"...no connected effort at a unified purpose."* She went further to say that due to lack of care for Sunday school by other people, *"... some have tried the most drastic solution: dropping the Sunday school."*

John Hull (1984:1, 2), a professor of religious education in the University of Birmingham, admitted that Britain too, did have problems in the area of religious education, especially as it related to the relationship between secular and religious education in schools and Christian nurture in churches. What he noticed though, was that the British problem was not isolated. His lecturing assignments to Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States of America confirmed these findings. He

observed that *"Worship in the Christian communities of Western Europe and North America, if not beyond, is passing through a serious crisis"* (ibid, 6). I can go on and on with general problems facing churches today in Christian education. One thing is sure, that in some way, all denominations and religious institutions the world over, have their own problems in this respect.

Richard Robert Osmer observed that among the problems that have plagued the American Mainline Protestant Churches in the 1930's and 60's is that of restoring the teaching office in the church. In his (1990:4-5) words *"The restoration of a church that can teach with authority ... may be the pressing issue before the mainline churches today. A strong teaching ministry is especially needed in the face of the modern individualism and counter-modern authoritarianism that are so prevalent in American society."* He (1990:5) maintains that for these mainline churches to resurface and continue to wield a significant influence on American society, *"...it is imperative that the leadership of those churches rediscover and even recover the heritage of the classical teaching office as formulated by Martin Luther and John Calvin."*

Christian education has accordingly, not been given its proper place of importance in these mainline churches. He (1990:5) sums up the problem of Christian education thus, *"The American mainline Protestant churches are at the crossroads. Which path they take may very well rest on whether they can restore the teaching ministry of the church to its rightful place of importance."*

The problem of individualism that was occasioned by structural and cultural pluralism, poses a problem to authoritative teaching. Osmer (1990:30-31) remarks, *"it will be virtually impossible to rehabilitate an authoritative teaching office in contemporary Protestantism without first reckoning with the peculiar difficulties posed by modern individualism."* Thus, individualism is as it were, a problem to reckon with, if the restoration of authoritative teaching is to come about.

In South African universities that offer religious or Christian education, the emphasis is more on practical theology or pastoral studies rather than Christian education (or didache) in its own right. By implication Christian education has been absorbed as being part of pastoral studies and nothing beyond that. At the minimum, some universities have a special place for catechesis, as evident in some journal articles and several dissertation titles.[8] It is only in some theological training institutions that Christian education is beginning to enjoy attention.

This development underlines the problems that beset Christian education in terms of being recognized as a fully-fledged unit apart from pastoral studies. It just shows how that Christian education is given an ancillary status while other theological disciplines enjoy major status. It should come as no surprise when such ancillary status is accorded Christian education at local church level; after all this is the impression that was given by the university where the local church pastor was trained for his ministry.

That Christian education should be given full status and not be under pastoral studies is evident from the notion of spiritual gifts. In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, the gift of a teacher is mentioned alongside that of a pastor (Eph. 4:11). Among the Christians mentioned as having been in the church at Antioch, teachers are mentioned separately from prophets (Acts 13: 1). In this way, Paul and Luke respectively accorded to Christian education its own position as a unit in its own right, apart from pastoral ministry, though pastoral ministry and teaching are inseparably bound together.

Still other factors underscore the problematic situation Christian education is facing. An article in *Christianity Today*, entitled *Study Highlights Importance of Christian Education*, brings to light concerns expressed by six mainline denominational church leaders in America. *"Troubled by the state of Christian education"*, these leaders *...gathered in 1986 to discuss the possibility of such a study. Among their chief concerns*

---

[8] See Bibliography, under journal articles and dissertations.

was a lack of interest among adults in Christian education, and the inability to maintain involvement of youth after their junior high-school years." (Christianity Today, 1990: 48).

A study, entitled, *"Effective Christian Education: A National Study of Protestant Congregations"*, motivated by similar concerns, was conducted by the Search Institute of America in 1990. The findings of the study include such truths as that people who go to church lack a faith that is vibrant; that adult Christian education has been left out or is *widely neglected* and that the spiritual growth of kids was grinding to a halt (Schuller, 1993:1).

In his opening words to the book entitled *'Mastering teaching'*, Mark Galli (Hestenes, Hendriks and Palmer, 1991:7) shares an experience in his church, which underlined the problem the church school was facing. He observed, *"I was in my first church, about to fix a not untypical problem: the church school had sagging attendance and low morale. Teachers had lost vision for what they were about."* Roberta Hestenes (Ibid, 82) relates a similar experience, this time with adults, where only 5% of the church adults attended simply because they felt they were adults and could not learn anymore. If they did not learn in their youth, and childhood, they were not about to do so then; it was just late. These experiences underscore the problems Christian education is going through; problems that need special attention in one way or the other.

The failure of the church in its communication, theology, methodology and focus are also cause for concern in the doing of Christian education. In his article on *The real challenge to the church in the new South Africa*, Rev. D. C. Coetzee, looking at the church (in South Africa) from the past, contends among others, that *"... it has failed to communicate in a meaningful, consistent, uncompromised and powerful manner the kingship of Jesus Christ over everyone and everything."* He observes that if the church was successful in communicating the gospel message, Christians would have been in a position to demonstrate *"that the Lordship of Christ transcends political differences.*

They would have been compelled to denounce powerfully and unequivocally the fallacy of following leaders, policies and slogans which ignore or belittle the eternal and unchangeable laws of God's reign of justice and truth and love" (Coetzee, 1994:19-20).[9]

The church has also failed to connect its theology *"...to the daily life of people and groups. Until now, it has failed to provide systematic and methodical answers to empirical questions and to incorporate these answers in theological thought. For instance, when and how do modern people have religious experiences, which religious attitudes have an impact on their individual and social life, how do they participate in the life of the church community, and how does the relation between church and society take shape in ordinary life?"*(J. A. van der Ven, in Hennie Pieterse, 1994:77). This abstract is focused on practical theology in general, but in my view, it has implications for Christian education, especially as it is concerned with *"...how the major themes of Christian faith can be made more relevant to present and future generations."* (pg 77).

Arguing for a proper focus for Christian education in the churches, Perry G. Downs (1994:7, 8) contends that as the Church sought to respond to different human needs, setting up relevant programmes and ministries to address needs, covering a wide variety of topics in the name of relevance, it has compromised the depth and focus of the central issues. As it were, the focus of Christian education should be teaching for spiritual growth; but this aspect has at times been marginalized. All of a sudden people are being helped to feel good instead of doing good and being good; needs of people are much more important than reconciliation with God. The purpose of his book therefore, is to restore the Bible in its rightful place as an essential element for spiritual growth, not psychological findings.

---

[9] The list continues of what the church would have been able to do and achieve, had it not failed in communicating the gospel message in a meaningful, uncompromising, and powerful way.

Finally, there is the problem of the crisis of religious life and the disappearing Christian worldview for the various educational systems. Fullenbach Johannes recognizes the crisis facing religious life in the year 2000. He asserts that *"The crisis of religious life is real and cannot be avoided or escaped. If religious communities are to surviv, ...they must be on fire with Jesus' vision of the kingdom of God which means living in solidarity with the poor and marginalized and proclaiming the kingdom message of righteousness, peace and joy"*(Fullenbach, 2000: 19). What is coming out of this notion, is the kind of spirituality that goes along with social concerns.

One of the concerns he shares about religious life in year 2000 is secularization. He pointed out, *"Secularization and the disappearance of the transcendence are on the rise. This means that religious, and all Christians in the free world, are challenged to witness to their faith in a way that helps people in the east who are now free to express their faith not to fall prey to western secularism."* (pg 21). Lamenting the days in South Africa when the Christian worldview dominated the secular education, when, in her words, *"South African education and Christian Education were once synonymous,"* Barbara Wannenburgh (1995: 35), in her article on, *A guide to Christian education,* argues that *"...the educational system that is emerging both at primary and high school levels is humanistic to a large degree. Agnostics, atheists and different religions have found their way into the classroom. ...Unless there is a return to a Christian worldview, we will throw away the next generation of children."* In the same breath, J. L. van der Walt (1990: 247) contends that *"Despite many years of reflection on and discussion of the theory and practice of Christian education in the RSA and other parts of the Western world, full justice has so far not been done to the ideals of Christian education in the practical situation of the classroom. This conclusion is drawn on the basis of an*

analysis of certain utterances by educationalists from four different parts of the world as well as on an analysis of some books generally used in RSA schools."

The plight of religious life in the third millennium is reiterated by Milton Anley, in his letter concerning *The future of Christian literature*. He raises a concern to the end that public interest in Christian literature is declining alarmingly in South Africa. Statistics estimate that *"...less than five percent of Christians in the whole of South Africa enter a Christian bookshop once a year, and that for a lesser known Christian author, only one book per outlet per year will be sold...Church ministers report that their congregations are far more conversant with the contents of the Reader's Digest than they are with the Bible. The average Christian home probably spends less than R5 per month on Christian literature and more than R100 per month on newspapers and secular magazines"* (Anly, 1996: 5).

It is against this background that I contend that not only the Convention has a problem with Christian education, but denominations, churches and institutions in other countries experience this problem as well.

1.4.2 The manifestation of problematic areas in Convention churches

The problem of Christian education in the Convention churches manifests itself in several ways:

1. Initially the title, Sunday school, was used to refer to the teaching that took place in the morning, just before the Sunday worship service. It was intended for children. As time went on, it became evident that all ages had to attend Sunday school. However, the young people[10] and adults did not attend. A new name was then used, "All age

---

[10] By young people I mean from the age of 15 upwards. Some teenagers have been in attendance from the earliest times.

Sunday school" This name was changed later to "Family Bible Hour" to impress upon church members that the whole family is to be involved. The confining of Sunday school to children and then later to all ages, and the consequent change of names, underlines the problem that exists in Christian education.

2.   Indeed some form of teaching did go on in Convention churches. However, it was not consistent, not properly planned and administered. Moreover, most churches that did get involved, used borrowed material. They were not in a position to design their own contextual curricular. Up until now – except for three churches[11] - this problem has not yet been properly resolved; churches depend on material from other Sunday school organizations and denominations.[12]

3.   The concern about inadequate teaching in Convention churches has been expressed by church members themselves as they grappled with issues from their encounter with life's day to day challenges, other Christian heresies, politicians and proponents of other prominent religions. The feeling has always been that the church leaders have not done enough to equip members for these challenges. The present outcry in respect of the calling of pastors is that only those pastors who can teach are preferable.[13]

4.   For a long time Christian education was never part of the training of pastors for ministry. If there was any training, it was only for teaching children. When it became evident that all people had to be taught, a special period was then given to one of the gifted teachers among the Union missionaries to lecture for one week on "All age Sunday school." It was only recently that the training of pastors included Christian education; when the Southern Baptist Convention (through their missionaries) took over

---

[11] This is only as far as Transvaal churches are concerned. Those three are Ekangala, Kagiso and Mabopane Baptist Churches
[12] Granted that some borrowed curricular may be well suited for certain contexts, so that there is nothing wrong with a position of this nature, for as long as the curriculum serves the required purpose.
[13] Baptists believe that congregations should call pastors of their choice. They do not practise the transfer system, where a higher body decides which pastor to move to which church. The pastor may, after much prayer, consultation and consideration accept or decline a call.

the Bible school and converted it into a theological seminary. Presently, the Baptist Convention of South Africa has established its own training centre for pastors, known as the Baptist Convention College. Only one basic course is offered in Christian education in this college.

5.   The making of disciples has been the uppermost concern in the Convention. Papers were delivered from time to time in the Convention's annual business assembly and in regional conferences on the great commission. However, the Convention has succeeded in the making of new converts and not disciples. Among themselves, the Convention churches have confessed that they have been good in leading souls to Christ, but they are still failing when it comes to nurturing and training new converts in true discipleship. Up until now this is still the problem in most of the churches.

6. Another problem related to the one above, is the equipping of the saints for the ministry. The Bible teaches that gifts of leadership have been given for the equipping or preparation of the saints for ministry (Ephesians 4:12). Paul put it very clearly to Timothy, that he should pass on to other faithful witnesses what he (Timothy) has heard from him (Paul); these witnesses will also pass it on to others (II Timothy 2:2). The equipping of the saints for ministry was the approach Jesus used. He trained the twelve apostles who in turn revolutionized the world through their preaching and teaching. The deficiency of lay training in Convention churches looms large when a pastor leaves for another church. The deacons or remaining church leaders are usually at a loss of what they are to do. They depend on pastors of other churches to do things for them as they have not been trained for the task themselves.

The facts thus far outlined, briefly underscore the problems that the Convention has in Christian education, hence the need for research, evaluation, and remedial steps.

1.5 THE FRAMEWORK OF THE THESIS

The first chapter is an introductory account of the discourse or research in question, as has been demonstrated so far. It deals with the research, how it will unfold, where it will be confined, and why it is being undertaken. The second chapter focuses on methodology. It concerns itself with the way the research will be undertaken; which methods of research will be used and why, as well as literature review. A brief historical overview of the Baptist Convention of South Africa receives attention in the third chapter, while the meaning and purpose of Christian education, giving a background into what Christian education is all about, is the focus of the fourth chapter. In the fifth chapter, the historical development of Christian education is described, with three areas in view, namely, the Old and New Testaments, and the Reformation. The sixth chapter relates the historical development and the current practice of Christian education in the Transvaal Convention churches. In the seventh chapter, the Convention's teaching ministry is being evaluated in the light of the historical and current background of the Transvaal churches. The eighth chapter prescribes the remedy that will bring about effective Christian education in future. Some basic strategies that should be observed to enhance authentic Christian education are discussed. The thesis is concluded in the ninth chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

2.1 BACKGROUND

This chapter is devoted to the methodology of the research. It embraces such components as the nature of the research, oral and written sources, the model adopted for the dissertation as well as the literature review.

2.2 METHODOLOGY

2.2.1 The nature of the research

The general approach to this research is empirical, qualitative, explanatory and evaluative. It is empirical because it is based on concrete evidence; it is based on facts as they have been unfolding over the years. The research embraces the educational ministry of the Transvaal Baptist Convention churches from 1927 to the present (1997). The nature of this research is underscored by the use of interviews, the Baptist Union handbooks, published books, journals, theses and dissertations.

The research is qualitative in that it does not follow a strictly formalized approach, as would be the case with quantitative research. The scope of research is usually undefined, and a more philosophical approach of operation is adopted (Mouton and Marais, 1988:155-156). In this approach, *"One arrives at certain findings inductively on the basis of material obtained from interviews with people. One knows too little, so one sets out to acquire the necessary knowledge"* (Burns and Grove, 1993:77).

This type of research is undertaken with a view to describe and promote the understanding of given phenomena as a whole. Unlike in quantitative research, there is no ready-made hypothesis; the aims are general and the researcher allows the phenomenon researched to speak for itself. He allows it to exist on its own and to reveal itself in the way it is while he (the researcher) registers it (Mouton and Marais, 1988:163). What is more, in qualitative research, the researcher tends to become involved with the phenomenon researched.

On the contrary, quantitative researchers distance themselves from the phenomenon researched; they adopt a more aloof stance (ibid, 163). Moreover, *"quantitative researchers impose a system upon phenomenon researched. This imposition manifests itself as a set of categories for a content analysis, a structured interview schedule or response categories in a questionnaire or a psychological test"* (ibid, 163). I argue that this research is qualitative because it aims to record facts as they present themselves, whether through interviewing or reading. Based on the facts, an analysis will be made and a conclusion be drawn as to the state of affairs.

The research is explanatory in that it seeks to bring to light how Christian education was done and is done in the Baptist Convention of South Africa and why this was the case. Mouton and Marais (1988:45) maintain that explanatory studies *"attempt to explain a given phenomenon... in terms of specific cases."* Thus in this research, a description of Christian education in the Baptist Convention of South Africa is given and reasons why it has assumed a given shape explained.

The research to be undertaken is not only qualitative and explanatory; it is also evaluative. Mouton and Marais (1988:45) contend that *"In evaluation we are primarily concerned with the assessment or evaluation of the effectiveness of a given practice, intervention or social programme."* H.W. Byrne (1979:65) gives a detailed meaning of evaluation, namely, that *"Evaluation means to find the value of, to determine the worth of, to appraise, to test and measure. Evaluation is concerned with the ascertaining and establishment of quality in education. It involves the determination of the present state and status of the educational system. It concerns the measurement of success or failure. It lays the groundwork for making changes necessary to the achievement of improvement. It concerns the identification of needs, problems, clear objectives, efficient processes, adequate resources and sufficient outcomes."*

The title of the thesis is, *Christian education in the Baptist Convention of South Africa with special reference to churches in the Transvaal: A practical theological investigation.* The aim of the research is to measure the effectiveness of Christian education in the Baptist Convention of South Africa in light of conventionally and Biblically accepted standards. Among others, questions to be answered in this evaluation exercise are: Does Christian education in the Convention measure up to what is conventionally accepted as being the practice of Christian education in churches? How does it differ from other Christian education practices? What are its strengths and limitations? How did Christian education in the Baptist Convention of South Africa unfold over time? Thus, from the outset, the research is aimed at evaluating the way Christian education was done down through the years, using given criteria for authentic Christian education.

2.2.2 Interviews[14]

Lack of Christian education literature in the Baptist Convention churches has led to the conducting of interviews among various stakeholders within the Convention churches. Forty leaders (pastors and congregants) of Convention churches were chosen and interviewed on churches for which they are (were) leaders.[15] Pastors were chosen according to the length of time they have been in a given church. The focus on pastors as interviewees was motivated by two factors, first, because they are leaders in the churches, and therefore they know and understand the very heartbeat of the churches for which they are pastors, as it relates to the churches' entire ministry, especially Christian education.

Second, Biblically, pastors are teachers. At the minimum, they are expected to teach their flock. Any pastor who cannot teach is not worth the title (I Tim. 5:17; John 21:15-17). To feed the flock means among others, to nurture it through teaching and to establish it in doctrine (I Tim. 4:12-16). More than anyone else, the pastor should know about the educational activities of the church as about all other aspects of ministry.

Congregants (laity) were selected on the basis of having been in a given church for a long period of time, at least from the mid-eighties to the late nineties (1985-1997). This period paints a picture of the current mode in as far as Christian education is concerned in the Transvaal Convention churches. They were also chosen according to the important role they have played in the leadership of the church. By virtue of their

---

[14] Interviewees appear under oral sources on pages 454-455. Interview questions constitute appendix 'A' on pages 380-384.
[15] It should be borne in mind that Baptist pastors move from one church to another, depending on the call to another church and the choice of the pastor in question. At the time of the interview, some pastors were in their second or third pastorates, hence they were interviewed on at most two churches.

involvement in this way, they should also know about their church's educational programme.

Twenty-seven churches were identified according to their locations. The Baptist Convention has ten regions in all. Transvaal has five regions. Seven churches were identified from Southern Gauteng, six from Central Gauteng, one from North West, four from Mpumalanga, five from Capricorn, and four from Great North. Care was taken that both urban and rural settings and each of the five Transvaal Baptist Convention regions be represented among churches interviewed. Moreover, each of the churches had to be ten years or older, so as to rightly fit into the 1987-1997 category of churches. The names of pastors and leaders interviewed on behalf of their churches, and the churches about which interviews were conducted, appear under *Oral sources (Interviews)*, on pages 454-455, under the Bibliography.

A questionnaire was designed for this purpose, to ensure that same questions were asked throughout (see appendix 'A' on pages 380 to 384, for a sample of questions used in the interviews). Responses to questions were recorded in my own words (see appendix 'D' on pages 390-434). A great deal of traveling was done to reach all interviewees. Their cooperation was remarkable. Some admitted that the questions in themselves were an eye opener as to how Christian education was to be done. In Venda (Limpopo province) four pastors have had to be interviewed together as there was no time for one on one interviewing. As a consequence I may not have accumulated all the facts about each of the churches involved. The only difficulty was that of securing the statistical status of churches interviewed. As it seems, most churches do not have records of membership readily available.

Be that as it may be, the cooperation of the interviewees turned the exercise into a more fascinating experience. The interviews were carried out in year 2000, from the month of February. The membership roll was difficult to determine; hence no information on it. To the present time, the Convention office is still struggling to secure statistical returns from churches.[16]

2.2.3 Baptist Union hand-books

The Baptist Union handbooks were used as a primary source, along with interviews. Handbooks give some background into the history of the Baptist Convention and that of Christian education within the Convention from 1927 to 1980[17]. An overview of the history of the Convention and that of Christian education in the Convention churches of the Transvaal from 1927 to 1987 was needed. The handbooks are the only available and reliable source pertaining to this important information. Obviously one would have wished that there be other literature with the Baptist Convention perspective, so as to maintain the balance in terms of the authenticity of facts.

2.2.4 Secondary sources

For secondary sources I have used the Bible, published literature, journal articles, theses and dissertations as well as the minutes of the Convention assembly. It should come as no surprise that the Bible is regarded as a secondary source. This is the case because the research concerns the way in which Christian education was done in the Baptist Convention as well as the evaluation and remedial measures thereof. For more information on literature used, see *Literature Review*, below.

---

[16] It did not occur to me to inquire about the historical background of each of the churches that were interviewed.

[17] Reporting on the Baptist Convention of South Africa in the Baptist Union Assembly by the SABMS began in 1892 and ended in 1980. Hence from this time (1980) onward, I have depended on oral sources for information about the Baptist Convention of South Africa.

2.2.5   The model adopted for the research

For the research model I have adopted the model cited by Don Browning for his *fundamental practical theology*, namely that underlying all theology are the four submovements: descriptive, systematic, historical and strategic practical theology (Browning, 1991:8). He refers to these four components as submovements of all theological reflection. In this case all theology is *fundamental practical theology*, meaning that all theology is practical through and through. Much has been said about all theology being practical above. I will venture my own submovement in addition to Browning's four submovements, namely, analytical theology, and I prefer to place it in the fourth place, just before the strategic submovement. A brief explanation of each of the submovements follows below; so does the relation of each one of them to my thesis to test its suitability as a model.

The first submovement is *descriptive theology*. Browning (1991:47) describes descriptive theology as a kind of research that gives a description of a situation or practices at hand; what happens and why it happens. The task of descriptive theology is accordingly "...*to describe the contemporary theory-laden-practices that give rise to the practical questions that generate all theological reflection. It attempts to analyze the horizon of cultural and religious meanings that surround our religious and secular practices. Descriptive theology...attempts to understand people and groups in their concrete situations, communicates affirmation, preserves the cohesion of selves and identities, and builds on strengths*" (ibid, 284). What this does mean is that descriptive theology gives a detailed (or thick) description of the state of affairs or the situation at hand; which description raises questions to be answered by other submovements.

In the dissertation under review, descriptive theology takes the form of giving a detailed description of the background or situation of the Baptist Convention of South Africa. The first and second chapters give a description of how the thesis will unfold. Details like the focus of the research, methodology, literature review, as well as the framework of the dissertation, as discussed in this chapter, are all, part of descriptive theology. In addition, the sixth chapter that describes the current practice of Christian education in the Transvaal Convention churches falls under this category.

The second submovement in Browning's model of fundamental practical theology, is *historical theology*. Historical theology delves into the historical background of the situation at hand or thus described. In so doing it answers some of the questions asked under descriptive theology. The questions may be, "What are the historical facts behind the situation in question? Why did it have to be that way? When did it take place? etc, Browning (1991:49) points out that *"Historical theology asks, 'What do the normative texts that are already part of an effective history really imply for our praxis when they are confronted as honestly as possible?"*

In the case of the research under consideration, *historical theology* is represented by the third, fifth and part of the sixth chapters. The third chapter is focused on a brief historical overview of the Baptist Convention of South Africa. In the fifth chapter, the history of religious education in the Old and New Testaments and the Reformation receives attention, while part of the sixth chapter handles the history of Christian education in the Transvaal Baptist Convention churches. These chapters answer the question on how Christian education came about and how it developed over time. This is historical theology.

The third submovement in the model I have adopted, is what Browning calls *systematic theology*. He (1991:52-53) argues that *"...systematic theology is seen as a more orderly expression of a fundamental practical theology that addresses general issues and shared themes running through our practices."* Put simply, systematic theology investigates the current church practices in the light of the past Christian normative experience, i.e., the word or text. Questions asked in this regard are, *"What does the Bible say about the present practice? How would Christians of old have reacted to such a situation?* The past and present are fused together. Systematic theology is systematic in character because of *"...its effort to investigate general themes of the gospel that respond to the general questions that characterize the situations of the present"* (ibid, 51).

When churches grapple with issues and respond differently to them, *"... it is the task of systematic theology to identify these and other common issues and then to search the Christian tradition for common themes that will address these broadly practical and existential questions"* (ibid, 53). In this way systematic theology fits neatly into this thesis as it addresses issues like the meaning and purpose of Christian education (in chapter four). Thus, systematic theology lays down biblical, theological and conventionally accepted principles and practices of Christian education.

The fourth submovement, which is my own creation, in line with Browning's line of thought, is *analytical theology*. Admittedly, this submovement comes across as systematic theology as described above. However, I have chosen to coin a new submovement in this way because this dissertation focuses on the analysis of Christian education in a given denomination. Systematic, to me would be more of doctrinal issues; the laying out of truth as it is taught in the Bible and as it has come to be understood by

other theologians. For example, the chapter on the meaning and purpose of Christian education as well as isolated references to what should constitute authentic Christian education (i.e., a theory of Christian education), would be classified as systematic theology.

The chapter on the evaluation of Christian education is, for all I care, more analytical, than just systematic. For this reason I have preferred to use analytical theology to refer to the evaluation of Christian education as encapsulated in chapter seven. I include in the same category, the review of books or articles, comparison of different theological schools of thought, and the critical analysis of issues. A case in point is the comparison of Christian education in one denomination (or church) with that of another. Such comparison to me would be analytical, rather than systematic, though the analysis may be systematic in substance.

The fifth[18] and final submovement that underlies Browning's model of a fundamental practical theology is *strategic practical theology*. Defining strategic practical theology, Browning (1991:8) observes, *"I use the phrase, strategic practical theology to refer to what is commonly understood as the church's disciplines of religious education, pastoral care, preaching, liturgy, social ministries and so forth."* By implication, strategic practical theology has to do with the practical life of the church; it has to do with the concrete situation of what has built up from descriptive, historical, and systematic theology. It is what traditionally used to be called practical theology, i.e., the practical outworking of all theological disciplines. However, it differs from this

---

[18] This will always remain the fourth of Browning's submovements.

traditional understanding of practical theology in that it proceeds on the premise that all theology is practical from beginning to end.

Further, strategic practical theology *"...establishes norms and strategies of concrete practices in light of analysis of concrete situations"* (ibid, 58). A case in point is the fact that in my thesis, the last chapter deals with strategies for effective Christian education in the church. After everything has been said and done, strategic practical theology answers the questions, "What is the way forward, given circumstances as outlined? What strategies should we apply so as to bring to finality the analysis that has so far been our concern in this thesis?"

It is quite clear that strategic practical theology *"... builds on accomplishments of the other three movements of all theology, namely, descriptive, historical, and systematic theology. It is indeed a crown of all theology; a culmination of an inquiry that has been practical throughout"* (ibid, 57).[19]

Strategic practical theology is thus applicable to my thesis in that at the end of my discourse I outline strategies that have to be followed in a concrete situation faced by the church, if Christian education is to be effective. As has been demonstrated so far, the four submovements proposed and used by Don Browning for his fundamental practical theology, as well as the fifth I have added, are applicable to my thesis as they represent the movement my thesis will be taking from beginning to end. The movement followed in this dissertion is descriptive, historical, systematic, historical, descriptive, analytical, and finally strategic.

This brief description explains the methodology assumed throughout this dissertation.

---

[19] To this I add my own submovement, analytical theology. Thus, strategic theology builds on it as well.

2.3 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.3.1 Introduction

The aim of literature review is to highlight the current state of research as it relates to the dissertation in question. It aims at bringing to light viewpoints by other Christian educators, authors, and researchers about the research under investigation. The present research exercise would not have been sufficiently valid without the extensive use of other literature material. Literature review shows that the discourse in question was not undertaken in isolation from the current state of affairs as regards the subject being researched.

It will not be possible to reflect on everything that is being said about the subject at issue in other literature material. Much of it has already been reflected in the essay. The approach here is to dwell on a few themes that occur in the dissertation and in the literature used. In the main, literature used included the Baptist Union handbook, published books, journal articles, theses and dissertations.[20]

2.3.2 The South African Baptist Hand-books

Under methodology, the Baptist Union handbooks have been mentioned alongside interviews as primary sources for this research discourse. The handbooks in themselves may not have been aimed at the history of the Baptist Convention per se, however, the South African Baptist Missionary Society, in its annual reports on work among natives in South Africa, has had to reflect this history (indirectly). In their attempt to give annual reports on progress made in their missionary endeavours, a history of the Baptist Convention of South Africa was born. In this dissertation I have used handbooks

---

[20] For theses and dissertations I have confined myself to South Africa only.

extensively in reporting about the beginnings, growth and spread of the Baptist Convention of South Africa, as well as on Christian education from 1927 to 1980.[21]

2.3.3 Published books

A substantial amount of published books was used in this research. Sad to say though, that almost all books used were American, with little or nothing from South Africa. Be that as it may, the literature was very useful. Various tenets of Christian education, featured predominantly in these books, and are reflected throughout the research discourse. As a result, it will not be necessary to delve into those tenets at this stage. Among others the published books dealt with the meaning, purpose, content, administration, process, history, curriculum and the evaluation of Christian education. An interesting theme that is recurring in the published books, and has a direct bearing on this dissertation, is the notion that in different ways and in varying degrees, Christian education is beset with problems. This theme has also been dealt with on pages 18 to 30 under '*The formulation of the problem.*'

On the South African scene, published Christian education books are a rarity, especially as it pertains to the church's educational ministry. One senses that there may be a few books written in Afrikaans, coming from the Dutch Reformed Church.[22] A few books have been published, albeit for Christian education in schools.

2.3.4 Journal articles

As it relates to theological journals, numerous articles have been produced on Christian education. However, these too, are not as many as they deserve to be, when judged against the number of Christian journals in circulation. It is only in isolated journals like

---

[21] Reports on Baptist Convention work in the Baptist Union handbooks date up to 1980.

[22] Many Dutch Reformed Church journals do have articles pertaining to teaching or catechesis. Moreover, many responses to the removal of Christian education from the privileged position it enjoyed in the past, by the present South African government, came from the Dutch Reformed Church scholars; not as though other scholars did not respond to this move.

Christian Living Today and *Christianity today,* to name a few, that Christian education receives extensive attention at all.

Numerous journal articles in Christian education were generated as a response or reaction to the South African government's move to strip Christian faith of its longstanding privileged position in the school curriculum and in the public media (radio and television). Herbert Staples, who was a *Superintendent of Education (Academic) responsible for Bible Education and Biblical Studies in the Transvaal Education Department,* in his article on *Christian Religious Education in the new South Africa,* (Staples, 1992:24) hinted something of the new role Christian religious education would play, by addressing such questions as, *Will the Bible still enjoy a privileged position in our schools? Will the privileged position that Christianity enjoyed be something of the past?* In answer to these questions, which form part of his article, Staples (ibid) stated that Christian religious education would assume the same position as other religions. It would no longer serve as a school subject.

It will be worth a while to single out examples of Christian education articles that were a response to the government's new move on religion in state schools. Among others, *Die moontlikheid van Christelike onderwys in Suid Afrika na 1994* (The possibility of Christian education in South Africa after 1994), by J. L. Van der Walt, (1997), *Biblical Studies in South Africa: the case for moral values,* Punt J. (1997), *Skole kan nog Christelik wees* (Schools can still be Christian), by Mouton F, (1997), *Christelike onderwys kan nog!* (Christian education is still possible), by O. Raubenheimer (1997), *Christelike skole: die uitdaging vir die toekoms* (Christian schools: a challenge for the future), by C. Opperman, (1996), *Is daar nog ruimte vir skole met 'n Christelike karakter?* (Is there still room for schools with a Christian character?), by H. J. Steyn (1996), *Christian higher education in the new South Africa,* by Reinecke, C. J. (1997), *Is Christelike privaatskole die oplossing?* (Are Christian private schools the solution?) by E. Hay, (1996). *Religious education in the new South Africa,* by S. B. K. Makhadu, (1995). And so the list goes on.

Some of the themes which are handled in the journal articles, and which have a bearing on the research discourse are catechesis, discipleship, new approach to Christian education, children, youth, and adult Christian education, community involvement, theological education, and recommendations for Christian education in future. One recurring concern is the fact that something needs to be done about Christian education. All of these themes are referred to in the dissertation.

Two journal articles come very close to what the dissertation is all about. One such journal article is, *Geloofsonderrig en die toekoms* (Christian education and the future), by the late Prof. L. M. Heyns of the University of South Africa (1994:155-164). The very title of his article fits very neatly into the concern of my research discourse. His main concern is the role of Christian education in a changing situation of the church, and how Christian education can help in equipping the church for the new society. The political events are changing the direction the society is taking; the church as part of the society cannot ignore such changes, especially if it seeks to reach the same society and be of relevance to it (ibid, 155).

In the process, Heyns traces the doing of Christian education through the ages and proposes a new model for doing Christian education in the new South African dispensation, namely, that all facets of Christian education should be thoroughly planned for and be continuous; that a minister of Christian education be appointed to take charge of the Christian education programme in the church as the education planner and coordinator; that needs of members be determined continuously as teaching and training goes on, so that Christian education will minister to those needs as they differ from one person to another; that the pastor and those charged with training, should not teach the same thing to the same people all the time; that skills training should come into play, not just cognitive teaching only; and that special training be given to parents while young people are meeting elsewhere, and that various categories of members be taught and trained separately by virtue of their uniqueness. One example hereof is the single adults and single parents classes. Heyns concludes that this can only be possible if

pastors have been trained not only to be in the leadership as teachers, but also to be learners. (161-163)

The second journal article which comes close to the research discourse in question, is the one entitled, *Turning toward tomorrow: An educational agenda for the church*, by Robert C. De Vries. His (1995:168) argument is that for too long, *"The modern church has relied fairly heavily on schooling methods and structures during the twentieth century to convey the faith to the next generation of believers."* He contends that change is taking place rapidly, so that the context within which nurture must occur is not static. The question confronting the church is, *"How does the entire church reach the world with an instructive word of Christ so that all God's people are equipped for ministry?"*

The focus of his essay, is fourfold, namely, the reaffirmation of the goal of educational ministry as maturity or perfection; teaching toward six distinct but interrelated aspects of that maturity or perfection,[23] learning to confront the post-modern culture; and the use of new and innovative educational methods as the church passes on the faith to the next generation of believers (168-169). His concern about the goal, content, and method of Christian education, constitutes part of the dissertation under review; this makes his article very relevant.

Such is the picture as it pertains to journal articles and their relation to the research discourse at issue. I can safely say the articles have been very helpful in enhancing the flow of the dissertation.

2.3.5 Theses and dissertations

Except for one dissertation from Princeton Theological Seminary, all dissertations considered in this research were South African. This is the case because the research under review is purely South African and it is concerned with a denomination in South

---

[23] For purposes of brevity and focus, these 'six' have not been referred to in this dissertation.

Africa. Therefore, its originality can only be tested in light of other researches in South Africa.

Various Christian education theses and dissertations have been written; researches have been conducted with regard to the doing of Christian education in churches and in theological institutions. Several of these, especially those from the Dutch Reformed Church school of thought, were focused on *catechesis*. What came out very clearly, was that catechesis was confined to children and youth only, preparing them to partake of the Holy Communion and the life of the Church (Olivier, 1982: 2; Putter, 1984:1; and Strydom, 1985). This understanding of catechesis bears similarities to my understanding of a membership class, (an aspect of Christian education which is taken up in the research exercise). Other scholars called for the extension of catechesis to include adults as well, not just to end up with children and youth. Martinus Hermanus Heyns (1996:xvii), argues for the inclusion of *catechesis in all forms of ecclesiastical ministry, thereby ministering to all congregation members, not only children. This, at the same time, implies the liberation of ecclesiastical catechesis, so that it can have a renewing and constructive effect on the entire congregational ministry.*

Reginald Brengle Codrington, in his dissertation on *A pedagogical evaluation of multicultural Christian education at Bible Colleges in South Africa*, contends for a contextual and multicultural approach to Christian education in Bible Colleges of South Africa. Whereas the white culture has been advantaged at the expense of those of other racial groups over the years, time has come, that a truly successful multicultural approach come about (Codrington, 1985: (ii). Kasonga wa Kasonga also called for a contextual approach in the doing of Christian education in Africa, as opposed to the old colonialist and missionary approach. He argues for the kind of Christian education in Africa, which inspires hope and engages imagination. His observation was that *"Missionary Christian education has been far too individualistic, pietistic, intellectualist-cognitive in structure, as well as inappropriately print-oriented in methods. Today there is a need for wholistic approach focusing on the total person as*

well as the total community" (1988: v). Still another dissertation with cultural concern is that of Higgs, M. J. He also argued for a multicultural approach to Christian education; an approach that takes into account various cultural groups.

Also of relevance to my research, was the dissertation that was devoted to the youth,[24] by Gory, R. W. He traces the various stages youth ministry went through in the Methodist Church, how that the policy of Christian education was generally rejected by the same church. He observed, however, that soon, Christian education and youth would find a firm footing. Cerff K. in *The establishment and management of a transformative Biblical Christian School submitted to a local church*, calls for the maintenance of a Biblical Christian worldview in education. For this reason, *"Education leaders in Biblical Christian education should evaluate the current strengths and weaknesses in Christian education, identify priorities, and practise methods of addressing these, with a view to delivering high standards of excellence in every sphere. This is in keeping with the mandate to equip students for the academic, social, emotional and physical challenges of adult life, to fulfill a meaningful role in society and their individual God-ordained destiny, "*

Three dissertations by Ngcobo S., Mitchell J., and William K. F. merit attention for their special focus on the local church. They speak very directly to my research essay as it is also concerned with the doing of Christian in churches. In *Local church members in service of the church*, Ngcobo raises a concern about the spiritual quality of Christian life in the Roman Catholic Church, and questions the effectiveness of Christian education in Catholic Seminaries and local churches. There is no doubt that this is the concern of my research discourse; the effectiveness of the Christian education programme in the Convention churches. Ngcobo argues further to say that seminaries produce pastor preachers and not pastor teachers, a case which I am arguing in relation to the role of pastors in Christian education in the Transvaal Convention churches. As a

---

[24] Much of the data on theses and dissertations, and some journals, was based on abstracts from computer print-outs. Hence no proper referencing.

solution, he suggests that *each diocese should establish a religious education programme, headed by the bishop. Different denominations need to co-operate in bringing religious education to their constituencies."*

William K. F., writing on *An investigation into the contemporary significance of the work of John Wesley with regard to local church polity and educational initiatives,* challenges the present approaches to Christian education, modeled on a school-instructional paradigm, and proposes that the church educates for lived Christian faith based on intentional faith nurture within the immediate context of the faith community and family. The development of faith should be the focus of the educational activity. *"Educating for lived Christian faith must seek to allow people to develop eyes to see and ears to hear the word of God within their lived context."* His argument flies in the face of any attempt to separate spirituality from Christian education, evident in Smallbone's thesis on *The integration of Christian spirituality into evangelical Christian education within the South African local church context.* Smallbone presumes the separation of Christian spirituality from Christian education. He proposes an integration of the former into the latter. I argue that spirituality and Christian education may have been separated for purposes of emphasis; however, in practice, the two may not be separated; spirituality is part of Christian education. If the aim of Christian education is to nurture believers to the point of reaching maturity in Christ (Eph. 4:11-15), a process that has everything to do with spirituality, then spirituality is the goal of Christian education.

James Mitchell's *Non-formal, Christian Religious Education for adults at a local charismatic church on the Witwatersrand: A case study,* has interesting features for the dissertation under consideration. First, it is an investigation that was directed at the doing of Christian religious education in a local church; second, it is specifically focused on adult Christian education. In his own words, *the case study examines the non-formal, adult Christian religious education provided by the Christian Life Ministries Training College, Freeway Park, Boksburg, in an attempt to answer the two overarching*

research questions...To what extent does the Christian religious education provided for adults by an apparently successful local church-based Bible school conform to the current theory and practice of this form of adult education, as discussed in the literature?" The second question he is trying to answer is, *What factors are necessary for the successful establishment and continued existence of a local church-based Bible school on the Witwatersrand?"* Briefly, the findings of the research are that adult Christian religious education in this church-based Bible school, *for the most part, compares fairly well to the current theory and practice of this form of adult education* (158), but that however, *there are a few areas where the school does not compare well...* to the theory and practice of adult education. He makes recommendations based on the research findings (166). His contribution is very helpful in enhancing adult Christian education in the Convention churches.

2.4   CONCLUSION

It has been the attempt of this chapter to lay down the methodology employed in the research at hand, as well as to review relevant literature in Christian education to ascertain originality and ensure a well thought out and informed discourse. Literature review as outlined on pages 43-51 above, and as reflected under the formulation of the problem on pages 19-30, confirms, rather than invalidate the originality of the research discourse at issue, especially that part of the literature reviewed is of South African origin. By implication, research on the doing of Christian education in the Baptist Convention of South Africa, is the first one of its kind, and therefore bears the stamp of originality.

CHAPTER THREE

THE BAPTIST CONVENTION OF SOUTH AFRICA: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

3.1   INTRODUCTION

An investigation into the doing of Christian education in the Baptist Convention churches presupposes a brief historical background of the Baptist Convention of South Africa as a whole, especially that of the churches in the Transvaal as the main focus of the thesis. It will not be possible to give every little detail of the history in question; however an attempt will be made to embrace critical aspects thereof. The beginning of the Baptist Movement in Europe receives attention in chapter five. It should also be said that the statistical standing of churches is not so clear as from 1981[25] to date, except to say that as at the writing of this dissertation, it can be said with certainty as to how many churches comprised the Baptist Convention of South Africa. The issue of eliciting statistical reports from the Convention churches is a problem of the office of the Convention. Most churches do not respond timeously on matters communicated in writing. It should come as no surprise therefore, when the number of members in the Transvaal churches is not reflected in this section, especially from 1981.

In the main, this section entails the role of native workers[26] and missionaries in the founding, growth, and spread of Convention churches, early beginnings, the formation or constitution of the Bantu Baptist Church, from 1927 onwards, the break with the Baptist Union of South Africa in 1987, and the Transvaal Baptist churches.

---

[25] The South African Baptist Missionary Society (SABMS) ceased to report on and to record Convention affairs in the South African Baptist handbook in 1980. The Convention does not have those records.

[26] Throughout this thesis, any use of native or native workers refers to blacks of South Africa as they were known then.

3.2 THE ROLE OF NATIVE WORKERS AND MISSIONARIES IN THE FOUNDING, GROWTH, AND SPREAD OF THE BAPTIST CONVENTION OF SOUTH AFRICA FROM 1869 TO 1927

Reflecting on the role of native workers and missionaries in the formation and growth of the Baptist Convention is important in that an attempt is being made to give as accurate an account of this work as possible, of who was involved and to what extent he was (they were) involved in this church planting mission. To a very large extent, native workers (ministers, evangelists and preachers) were responsible for the starting and growth of the Convention churches from its inception to the present; missionary superintendents confirm this truth in their report. Missionaries were also involved in this mission work, especially in the opening of new mission stations. A brief description of the facts follows below.

3.2.1 The role of native workers in the founding and growth of the Baptist Convention of South Africa

One does not hear much about the conversion of native workers (leaders) in the primary sources used for this research. Humphrey Mogashoa (2000:35) also confirms this notion when he says, *"Documented evidence of Baptist work among natives prior to the formation of the SABMS in 1892 is hard to come by, let alone of native leadership prior to 1892."* However, a substantial amount of information has been provided in the same sources about the role of native leaders in the ministry of Baptist Convention churches.

The SABMS report (in Mogashoa, 2000:44) relates a scenario in 1904, where native leaders (deacons and preachers) gathered quarterly, at a given church, to give and discuss reports from their various places of ministry. It was here that half-yearly preaching plans were drawn. What is interesting about these meetings is that participants themselves paid the costs.

The SABMS report of 1914-1915 (TSABHB, 1915-1916:30) states that natives in Kaffraria (Eastern Cape) inaugurated a gathering known as, *Ibunga lamabandla*

aseBaptist. "(A council of Baptist churches). There can be no better evidence for native initiative in the evangelization of their people, and in running their own affairs. European superintendents got involved in these native meetings (Mogashoa, 2000:44).

Missionary superintendents themselves, admitted that natives were highly involved in their work. Their report of 1932 has it that, *"The work of our missionaries has become increasingly administrative with the extension of their fields, and we are perforce relying more largely on the native for evangelizing of his own people."* ((TSABHB, 1932-33:18). Further, missionaries commended the involvement of natives, praying for them in their work, *"We commend to the enlightening grace of God all the numerous band of native coworkers who are so faithfully spreading the truth according to their ability in Xosa, Zulu, Sesuto..."* (ibid, 1925-26:14).

The acknowledgement of missionary superintendents is encountered again in their 1926-27 report. Referring to the 300 preachers who formed the backbone of the work that was done, the report said, *"They are the backbone of our work, without whose enthusiastic devotion our European churches would be absolutely helpless to carry on the work at all. It is well for us on whom the financial burden often presses, to realize that ours is only a part, and even a smaller part of the work that is done. It is our privilege to be 'sleeping partners' of those who are out in the scorching heat of the vineyard fulfilling our joint task"* (TSABHB, 1926-27:14).

Such admission is appropriate, for all it is worth, in that it has always been the policy of missionaries to ensure and enhance *"The evangelization of the Bantu by the Bantu"* (Reed, 1983: 302). What is more, native workers are mentioned as directly involved in the founding of new work, not just working hard (TSABHB, 1926-27:17). A certain evangelist, John Ndimangele, was quoted in 1922 as having preached under the power of the Holy Spirit, leading 250 natives to the Lord in Adelaide, Kaffraria. These had come to seek for membership with the SABMS (Mogashoa, 2000:54).

What are we to say of Rev. Shadrack Mashologu (East Griqualand), whose leadership was so much sought after, even by missionary superintendents (TSABHB, 1928-29:9, 11), or Rev. J. J. Lepele of Lesotho whose work was covering a large area, with 516 members in his churches, 4 buildings, 13 preaching centers and 39 native preachers linked to his self-supporting work? (SABMS report in Mogashoa, 2000:55). These, and probably more other factual evidence, point to the essential role played by natives in the founding and growing of native Baptist churches in South Africa.

3.2.2 <u>Missionary involvement in the origin, growth and spread of the Baptist Convention of South Africa</u>

Missionaries in turn, played a very important role in the rise and growth of Convention churches in South Africa. Their role has been that of opening new stations and starting new work there. On occasion they are reported as needing the help of native teachers and evangelists, a factor which proves that they did work alone to some extent especially as it pertained to founding new mission stations (Missionary minutes of 1902-03: 154). Statistical reports show that in some places missionaries were responsible for the preaching stations, being engaged also in opening and running new schools (TSABHB, 1940:16; 1944:24)). In addition, missionaries[27] were responsible for the supervision and coordination of native work, administrative tasks, training of native leaders, providing financial support and exercising discipline with the help of native leaders. The names of Carl Pape and Arthur Phipson, to mention a few, will go down in history as missionaries who knew the language of natives and, actually started new work among them. The next sub-section will show that the German evangelist, Carl Pape, was among the first missionaries to start new work within the native population.

It is worth noting that other missionary organizations were also involved in the evangelizing of natives, the Lott Carey Convention, U.S.A., the National Baptist

---

[27] Missionaries who were in charge of councils (or associations as they subsequently came to be known) were given the title of 'Superintendent'. I have deliberately chosen to ignore this title in my dissertation so as to avoid confusion; there were other missionaries, especially women, who were not necessarily superintendents, but were involved as missionaries.

Convention, U.S.A., and the South African Native Baptist Association (TSABHB, 1903-1906:71). Briefly, native workers and missionaries were partners in the ministry of evangelization of blacks in South Africa.

3.3 EARLY BEGINNINGS (1869-1927)

It was through the effort of German Baptists in South Africa, that the first Baptist Convention church was founded in 1869 in the Eastern Cape. Carl Hugo Gutsche is mentioned as having been *"the first German Baptist minister to work among blacks, while working among Germans"* (Mogashoa, 1998:45). Carl Pape, a German missionary and evangelist was appointed in July 1867, as an evangelist (Ibid, 45). It was in 1869 that Carl Pape founded the first Convention church in the Berlin area, near East London. It came to be known as Tshabo mission, being under the Berlin Baptist church of the Germans. It was handed over by the Germans to the SABMS in 1892, on the occasion of its formation, under the auspices of the Baptist Union of South Africa (Reed, 1997:23).

Statistics reveal that for some years, Tshabo Mission was the only native work founded so far, so that no other churches were founded until much later. John Adams was mentioned as the first native evangelist to take charge of Tshabo Mission. He was also the first native minister to attend the Baptist Union Assembly in 1892, on the occasion of the founding of the SABMS. He died in 1893 (Mogashoa, 2000:40-41).

It was only in the 1895-96 missionary report that mention was made of the second native church, King Williamstown, under the missionary superintendents, J. W. Joyce and C. W. Pearce. This native work was founded in 1894 (ecclesiastical returns, 1895-96). Other places, Pondoland and Tembuland, were mentioned as labour fields for missionaries, especially that land was offered for the building a mission station (TSABHB, 1896-97:48-49).

Two additions of new work were made in the 1897-98 handbook. Statistics reflect the names of Buffalo Thorns founded in 1895 and Bizana in Pondoland under the

missionaries (Ecclesiastical returns, 1896-97). The statistics do not reflect any native worker. As it seems, missionaries were responsible for this work. By 1900, there were 8 churches on the statistical returns (TSABHB, 1900-1903: 54-55). The interesting feature is that mention is made of native work in the Transvaal under the leadership of the Boksburg and Troyeville churches. The name of Rev. E. R. Davies in Boksburg features prominently in this respect as having been the leader of this Native Mission Work, which was not yet affiliated to the SABMS. This was the first time work was mentioned in the Transvaal. All in all, the 1900 SABMS statistical report reflects 8 churches, 3 native ministers, 199 members, 5 church buildings, 4 Sunday school teachers and 55 scholars (ibid, 1899-1900:54, 55).[28]

As the Convention work grew, it spread from Kaffraria (Eastern Cape) and the Transkei to other parts of South Africa through the hard work of native workers, missionaries, and European churches. Already in 1920, work was divided into two councils, *"...the Northern council representing the Transvaal, the Free State, and Northern Natal; and the Southern council representing Kaffraria, Tembuland, and the Transkei"* (Mogashoa, 1998:46). The councils were set up to facilitate coordination of work and native leadership by missionary superintendents. In the words of the SABMS' secretary on the occasion of the inauguration of the Bantu Baptist Church, *"District Native Councils... have been created...to act in a consultative capacity so as to help...by expressing the Native point of view in matters of importance..."* (TSABHB, 1926-27:19). By this time, the number of churches had grown considerably. Kaffraria had 8 churches under one missionary, C. W. Pearce (1902)[29], 400 members, 11 Sunday schools, 23 Sunday school teachers and 303 scholars; Transkei, led by native ministers, Revs. Alfred K. Maqanda (1896-1918), Booker B. Mdodana (1896-1920), James Ntleki (1899), Maurice J. Ntwini (1913), Percy

---

[28] See table II on page 365.

[29] The dates behind the names of missionaries and native workers (ministers) represent the years when they settled in the districts in question, not their dates of birth.

D. Ntleki (1917), and Blythe B. Mgwanqa (1919) had 14 churches, 346 members, 13 Sunday schools, 22 teachers, and 322 scholars.[30]

The Griqualand East district under Revs. S. Mashologu (1917) and Fred. Nzekeni (1919), had 11 churches, 431 members, 14 Sunday schools, 27 teachers and 360 scholars. Tembuland under H. Peinke (1918), had 6 churches, 2 native ministers, and 83 members. The low number of membership was the result of all stations having lost some of their members through the general exodus, most probably due to the famine that had struck this district (TSABHB, 1920-22:45). Statistics do not report about Sunday school work in this district. Pondoland district under W. Brailsford (1920) had 10 churches, and 260 members. Nothing was reported about the Sunday school statistics. In total, the Convention had 3 missionaries, 9 native ministers, 49 churches, 1520 members, 38 Sunday schools, 72 teachers and 985 scholars.[31] (TSABHB, 1920-22:22-25)

3.4 THE CONSTITUTION OF THE BANTU BAPTIST CHURCH

3.4.1 Preparatory stages

The work of the Baptist Convention had grown to the point where it became necessary that it be constituted as a unit. Preparatory stages of such a move were indirectly underway. The native leaders (deacons and preachers) quarterly meeting reported about in 1904, and the inauguration of *Ibunga lamabandla amaBaptist*, (Council for Baptist Churches) by natives during the occasion of the Easter weekend in Kaffraria in 1915, comprising Kaffraria and Transkei (1904 and 1915 SABMS reports in Mogashoa, 2000:44) were a shadow of the reality that was to materialize in 1927. By implication, native leaders were already prepared to run their own work, albeit with the need for more and better training.

---

[30] Transkei statistics include work that was founded by Lott Carey missionaries. Hence the few ministers who were attached to Lott Carey and its districts. The statistics under table III on page 366-369, will paint a clear picture of the situation at hand.
[31] The number of Sunday schools, teachers and scholars, excludes Tembuland and Pondoland, for which there were no statistical returns.

By 1926 the Northern and Southern Native Councils were operating in full swing, meeting occasionally to discuss matters of common interest and fellowship. The missionary report states, *"The success and usefulness of the Northern and Southern Native Councils has led to the decision to form an Eastern one for E. Pondoland, E. Griqualand and Alfred County, and Durban as distances have prevented their representatives from attending in Kaffraria or Transkei"* (TSABHB, 1926-27:16). What is being argued here is not so much the formation of another council as to the vibrancy, success, and usefulness of native councils. The stage was now ready for the formation of one body of all Convention churches.

The formation of the Baptist Convention (as it is known presently) was precipitated further by the meeting of four missionary superintendents of the Baptist Union in June of 1926. It was during the occasion of this meeting that a recommendation was made to the end that *"...the name of our Native churches be 'The Bantu Baptist Church of the S.A.B.M.S.'"*. It was further indicated that the name would *"...be most acceptable to the Natives and will be a help in the work."* (ibid, 16). Minutes of the 1926 missionary sessions (September, 20) add to say that coming up with the new name was also in response to the request of native leaders (ibid, 33).

3.4.2   The Bantu Baptist Church

On Friday, the 25th of February, 1927, at Tshabo in Kaffraria, the native churches were officially constituted as *The Bantu Baptist Church of the South African Baptist Missionary Society*. Nothing better could have taken place at Tshabo at this time, than the beginning of another phase in the history of the Baptist Convention of South Africa. It was at Tshabo, that the first Convention church was founded in 1869 by Carl Pape, the German missionary. The missionary report refers to this occasion as *"Of outstanding interest in the year's work..."* (TSABHB, 1927:18). The inauguration meeting was attended by *"Native ministers and evangelists in large numbers from the Border, the Transkei, Pondoland and Transvaal* (ibid, 18). The then President of the Baptist Union, Rev. C.

Garratt, conducted the inauguration ceremony, with the help of the Union Executive, missionaries and friends.

Excerpts from the official statement of the secretary of the society at that time, say a mouthful in respect of the name itself and the operation of the Bantu Baptist Church in relation to the SABMS: *"This name marks the Church as belonging to the Bantu people, and will help them to realize that the Church is not a foreign institution imposed on them from abroad, but is part of the great universal church of all nations and languages, colour and race, that is bound together by the common bond of faith and love for the Lord Jesus Christ...The power given to its deliberations is advisory only, and subject to the vote of the Committee of the S.A..B.M.S...European control is needed not because of racial difference, but of stored experience...The Bantu Baptist Church is really the Native work of the S.A..B.M.S. as before, with all its property vested in and belonging to the Society; but we want to bring you more fully into consultation, that under our leadership you may share more clearly in shaping your destiny...An assembly representative of all fields of work will take place at regular intervals. The first one will be arranged probably in 1928"* (ibid, 19).

It will be of interest to note the churches that constituted the Bantu Baptist Church on the occasion of its inception. A complete record of names of churches and their ministers appears on pages 366-369 as statistical table III.[32] Only names of districts and numbers of members, ministers, churches, Sunday schools, teachers and scholars are given here. As at the Union assembly of 1927, districts that comprised the Bantu Baptist Church were 10, namely, Kaffraria, in Cape Province (17 churches), Midlands (4 churches), Glen Grey (7 churches), Transkei (20 churches), West Pondoland (3 churches), East Pondoland (11 churches), East Griqualand (18 churches), Natal (14), Orange Free State (2), Transvaal (58)[33]. Notice that already the Transvaal was by far the largest in terms of the number of

---

[32] A separate list of ministers as on the day of the inauguration appears on page 435.

[33] The Transvaal number of churches includes 5 churches that were connected with European churches. See relevant statistical returns at the end of the thesis.

churches, though it was initially not part of the missionary work. The total number of churches that made up the Bantu Baptist Church was 154, native ministers were 23, missionaries 6, members 4812, Sunday schools 42, teachers 81, and scholars 999. A comparison with the 1920 statistics on page 60 shows a marked growth in other areas, while others were almost static. The number of churches added was 105, ministers grew by 14, missionaries by 3, members by 3292, Sunday schools by a lousy 4, teachers by 9 and scholars by 14.[34]

3.5   FROM 1927 ONWARDS

3.5.1   Continued growth

From this time onwards, native churches continued to grow in numbers, and so did the ministers, Sunday schools, missionaries and all other related components. It should be mentioned that the founding of other churches was not only through the preaching and dedication of native leaders or the efforts of missionary evangelists; rather, the Baptist testimony was spread through forced removal of people from one place to another by the government of the day, as well as by changing labour conditions, when one whole group of people would be resettled because of new work having to be done in a given area (TSABHB, 1926-27:18).

Convention pastors and leaders were taking ownership of their work, being capable of giving, leading and presiding over meetings. Gradually, missionaries began to loosen the overseeing grip, so that Convention leadership took over the reigns. The missionary role changed to that of being coordinators, rather than supervisors. More and more Convention members took the call to ministry and new churches were founded. Churches were now able to pay their pastors' stipends, though it was not so much. Some churches still depended on missionary handouts. This considerable growth in the Convention churches came as a blessing to missionaries and to the Baptist Union in general. This is the case, because from the outset, the aim of the SABMS was to plant self-supporting, self-

---

[34] This tendency says a lot about the statistical returns. There were no Sunday school statistics under the Transvaal, only churches and members.

governing and self-propagating churches. In time the name changed from Bantu Baptist Church to Bantu Baptist Convention in 1966 (Reed, 1983:302) and then to Baptist Convention of Southern Africa in 1968.[35]

This growth occasioned other challenges for the Convention, among others, the large number of members that were to be overseen by very few pastors and evangelists, as well as the need to train same for this huge task. The 1979 statistical returns are very significant as a milestone in the era of missionary leadership. So is a short description of the Baptist Convention church polity.

3.5.2 The training of native workers for ministry

Even before the inception of the Bantu Baptist Church in 1927, notwithstanding the continued responsibility of missionaries over districts and native councils as the case might have been, there has always been a need to train native workers for ministry. Back in 1910, one of the observations made by the Colonial Aid Society about Pondoland in its Memorandum to the Arthington Trustees, was the need for the instruction of native evangelists. To this end an offer of 150 pounds was made by these trustees for the building of "...a new Mission in Pondoland, with accommodation for Native Evangelists for training, and 100 pounds per annum for a period of three years towards its support" (TSABHB, 1910-11:40). The Pondoland institute was opened in 1912 (SABMS report in Mogashoa, 2000:52).

By 1932, the need for training native leaders was still evident. Missionaries felt their work had become increasingly administrative; as a consequence, they were relying more on the natives to evangelize their people. That very responsibility had implications for the training of native leaders, "Yet that very fact accentuates the intensified need of instructing and training him for the work. Only as he can read and understand the Word

---

[35] The record confirming the 1968 change of name is not available. Moreover, recently, 'Southern', has changed to being 'South' so that it is now called The Baptist Convention of South Africa'. This was due to the fact that to date there is no Convention work else where either than in South Africa.

of God, can he become and remain an enthusiast in conveying the Word of Life to his fellows" (TSABHB, 1932-33:18).

Other institutes that were built as a result of the need for training native workers, were the Berlin Institute which was opened in 1930 and came to be known as *The Ennals Institute for the training of Baptist Ministers and the Evangelists* (Minutes of the Missionary Session of the 1930 Baptist Union assembly, Baptist Union handbook 1930-31, pg 30). Subsequently, Millard Baptist Training Institute was built in 1939 and opened in 1940 at Orlando in Johannesburg. It was closed in November 1959, having trained 45 ministers and 25 other members who had benefited from its courses (Reed, 1983:369-370).

In its place the Baptist Bible Institute was built and opened on the 14th of February, in 1960, with Rev. J. A. Hendricks as the Acting Principal (ibid, 370). Subsequently this institute closed also and the property was bought by the Southern Baptist Convention. It was turned into a theological seminary, being known as Baptist International Theological Seminary. For a few years Convention pastors trained at this institution, but due to leadership policy problems the Convention opened its own college in 1995 and had its first graduations in April 1998.

3.5.3   Statistical returns for 1979

A look at the 31st December, 1979 statistical returns[36] in the 1980-81 Baptist handbook will paint the picture of how the scenario looked like when the missionaries ceased to report about the Convention and when power was left in the hands of Convention leaders and churches. The Convention had 9 fields (Associations)[37]. The table on page 64 below, sums up the statistical standing of the Baptist Convention as at the end of 1979.

---

[36] These were the last such statistical returns. The Convention has never been efficient in resuming the responsibility of keeping statistical records. This makes the last statistical picture necessary.

[37] Any 8 to 10 churches within the radius of 50kilometres from a given point, would form an association. For example all churches within that radius from Pretoria, formed an association. Under the Convention leadership, the associations came to be known as regions.

TABLE I

Baptist Convention Abbridged Statistical Table for Dec. 1979[38]

Num	Ass	Dist	Chu	Min	Miss	Mem	SS	Tea	Pup
1	Ciskei	12	40	11	1	3362	26	47	2173
2	Natal	7	14	14	1	1600	35	47	1231
3	N/Cape	12	25	10	none	992	28	35	640
4	N/Tvl	13	40	20	none	2908	44	82	1563
5	OFS	11	18	9	1	1592	19	25	837
6	S/Cape	11	24	8	1	1559	26	35	809
7	S/Tvl	17	34	22	1	2320	32	52	1317
8	T/kei[39]	24	29	14	1	3926	90	73	2216
Total	8	107	224	108	6	18259	300	396	10786

Num - Number   Ass - Association   Dist - Districts

Chu - Churches   Min - Ministers   Miss - Missionaries

Mem - Members   SS - Sunday Schools   Tea - Teachers

Pup - Pupils (scholars)

A few things need to be said about the statistical information as reflected here and at the end of this dissertation. Going through the statistical information as reflected in the Baptist handbooks over the years, one notices that there are discrepancies about the information given. In some cases there were no reports from churches, resulting in the statistical information being incomplete. In one case a missionary report stated that *"...our statistics are not quite complete and do not in all cases exactly correspond with those of last year"* (TSABHB, 1924:14). However, the statistics in themselves are commendable as they give an idea of the state of affairs at a given time. In most cases they are accurate.

---

[38] Statistical Information on this table was drawn from the 1979 statistical returns as reflected on pages 148-157 of the 1980-81 South African Baptist Hand-Book

The abridged statistical table above includes ministers who are under probation and who may not have been included in the 1979 statistical returns, but appear on the ministerial list of the Convention pastors. As at the compiling of this research discourse, the Convention had 10 regions, namely, Capricorn (in the Limpopo Province), Central Gauteng, Eastern Cape, Free State, Great North (Far Northern part of Limpopo Province), KwaZulu Natal, Mpumalanga, North West, Southern Gauteng and Western Cape.

3.5.4   Baptist Convention church polity[40]

While considering the history of the Baptist Convention of South Africa, it may be of interest to allude to its form of church government.[41] As opposed to Episcopalian and Presbyterian forms of church government prevalent in other church groups, Baptists are Congregationalists. In the Episcopalian form of church government, only one person makes final decisions (e.g. the Pope in the Roman Catholic Church). The Presbyterian form of church government advocates that the church council (committee or board) makes the final decisions. On the other hand, the Congregationalist form of church government vests the power of final decision making with the church, while church leaders may recommend only. In matters of faith and conduct, all three forms of government are agreed that the Bible alone, is the rule.

Baptist Convention churches are autonomous. What this means, is that they are self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating. Autonomy, however, does not mean working in isolation from other Baptist Convention churches. As a matter of fact, it is taken as a given that Convention churches belong to regional and national structures. In other words, they work in fellowship and partnership with other churches, while maintaining their autonomy. Any church that suddenly decides to work alone is regarded with suspicion, and finally ends its ties with the Convention.

---

[39] There are nine regions/associations in all, but the Pondoland one has been absorbed by Transkei, so that table I has eight regions only

[40] All the information in this section is based on my knowledge and understanding of the Baptist denomination.

In the event of new churches coming on board, they are first called branches or outstations of a given mother church. They will then apply to the region and finally to the national body (through its Annual Business Assembly) for recognition as a fellowship. Subsequently, at the recommendation of the region, and after a brief and satisfactory interview by the national executive board, such a fellowship shall be accorded autonomous status at the same national gathering. Regional and national meetings are held by churches and by ministries within the churches (that is, children, youth, adults, etc)

3.6 THE BAPTIST CONVENTION AND THE BAPTIST UNION PART COMPANY

3.6.1 The 'merger' talks

Even before the SABMS finally ceased to operate as such, with the understanding that Convention churches had matured enough to can run their own affairs, multiply and support their own work, a new desire had arisen to have one denomination only, instead of the two, (i.e., the Baptist Convention and the Baptist Union). This desire was already expressed in missionary circles. They were looking forward to a time when the two bodies would be one, thus enhancing a common Baptist witness in South Africa. The words of Rev. Stuart Akers in his 1976 annual report, point to this aspiration, *"For the above reasons and others – including the possibility of African churches coming into full membership of the Baptist Union..."* (Parnell, 1977:137). During this time, missionaries assumed the status of coordinators between the Convention and the Union, the Baptist Convention having become an association of the Baptist Union.[42] From 1978 talks began between the two bodies with regard to the formation of one Baptist body in South Africa.

---

[41] All Baptists the world over, subscribe to one form of church government, namely, that of being Congregationalist. The Convention has been singled out to ensure that in case of some misrepresentation in the handling of the subject at issue, other Baptist denominations should not be implicated.

[42] It was in 1960 that the Convention became a member of the Union and could therefore send a representative to the Baptist Union assembly. In 1967 it became an association of the Union, no longer represented by the SABMS in the assembly. (Mogashoa, 1998:50)

It should be noted that from the earliest times, the Baptist Union has been open to take into its membership any other Baptist church, irrespective of race or origin, for as long as the church in question subscribed to certain conditions. The Umgeni Road Baptist Church, in Durban, was such an example, having been a member of both the Union and the Convention.[43] This time the trend was getting the churches of the Convention to join the Baptist Union, so that by 1988, there should not be any Convention anymore. When this idea was unacceptable to Convention leaders, it changed from joining to merging, so that the two bodies would become one organization.

While this understanding may have been acceptable to Convention leaders to a great extent, it did not mean to them what it was supposed to have meant. There was always the suspicion that even under the new dispensation, white domination of blacks would continue, especially as blacks brought nothing to the negotiating table by way of resources. Moreover, the idea of a new name was totally unacceptable to the Baptist Union leaders.

3.6.2   The separation

This state of affairs led to the Convention taking a decision in its 1984 Jabavu assembly, that they should stand on their own. This decision was prompted by the visit of the Nigerian Baptist Convention General Secretary, Dr. Ola Akande. In his talks, he urged that the Convention stand alone, if it wanted to grow in every respect. In the meantime, the merger discussions were still on. It was only in December 1987, at the John Powell assembly, in Cape Town, that a final resolution was taken to severe ties with the Baptist Union of South Africa, and to become an autonomous body. The resolution, captured so well by Humphrey Mogashoa (1998:57), states, *"...that the Convention stays on its own as an independent autonomous body; that the merger be removed from the Convention agenda and that Resolution seven of December 1986 be implemented;* [44] *and, that the*

---

[43] The site of this church has since been sold to a company back in the early eighties. The Lamontville Baptist Church became the main church in its place.

[44] Resolution seven was one of the decisions taken at a special meeting convened at Etembeni in the Free State. It stated that *'while realizing that the Convention due to many causes, is far from being equal to the B.U., it is the Convention's desire to be*

Baptist Convention reaffirms its commitment to maintaining a healthy and sound relationship with the B.U. on the basis of brotherly and Christian fellowship, and in sharing faith and practice, but herewith withdraw its Associational Status from the B.U."

This decision did not go down well with the Baptist Union leadership. At the same time, the decision was to affect the Convention membership heavily. Many churches left the Convention to remain with the Baptist Union. Some churches decided on their own, while others were ignorantly lured into remaining with the Union. One of the pastors who had remained with the Union stated categorically that the Union promised them good money if they could stay with them. Most of the churches that remained with the Baptist Union were from all other regions except the Transvaal. In the Transvaal only 9 churches defected, the majority remained with the Convention. No wonder that to date, the Transvaal churches set the tone for the stability and progress of the entire Convention. In KwaZulu Natal and the Eastern cape a few churches threw their lot with the Convention. This defection to the Union led to prolonged strained relationships between the Convention and the Baptist Union, with the result that for some time, the focus of the Convention was on the Convention/Union conflict and not on the ministry.

With the course of time however, a process of healing and reconciliation was set in motion. Attempts are being made (including other Baptist bodies, namely *'Die Afrikaanse Baptiste Kerk*, the *Baptist Association of South Africa* and the *Baptist Missions of South Africa*) to form a federation of Baptist churches which would enhance a common Baptist witness in South Africa. Considerable progress has been made in this regard.

---

allowed to stand on its own in order to promote growth within, that is, learn all the necessary skills necessary for sound leadership, etc. When the Convention is ready it will obviously consult with the B.U. about the implementation" (Mogashoa, 1998:56)

3.7 THE TRANSVAAL CHURCHES OF THE BAPTIST CONVENTION OF SOUTH AFRICA

A description of the Transvaal churches of the Baptist Convention is occasioned by the focus placed on them as a point of reference for the evaluation of Christian education in the Baptist Convention churches as a whole. Reasons why Transvaal churches were chosen as a point of reference were given in chapter one.

The Convention churches in this part of South Africa are not mentioned in the South African Baptist Hand-Books until 1899 when missionaries in their session, commended Boksburg and Troyeville churches for the work they had begun among natives in the Transvaal. In Boksburg, the native work was led by Rev. E. R. Davies. Up until 1915, these churches were not as yet affiliated to the SABMS. They were only an issue of discussion in missionary sessions. The SABMS was not ready to take up such huge responsibility at once, as it had serious financial implications for the Society (TSABHB, 1915-16:35, 38). Rather, a decision was taken to send Mr. J. W. Joyce "...to undertake a three months' tour of inspection of the work in the Transvaal to enable the Committee to ascertain the character of the work, and what the demand upon the resources of the Society was likely to be" (ibid, 35).

It should be borne in mind that by this time Transvaal was leading the Convention in terms of the number of churches and members. There were 4 disctricts, 49 places of worship and 2281 members under Rev. E. R. Davies (ibid, 16, 36). It was admitted that Rev. Davies could not adequately oversee such massive work alone as he was already a pastor of Boksburg church (ibid, 37). Mr. Joyce visited the Transvaal at the beginning of March in 1915, and prolonged his stay to six months due to poor health. These months were spent in visiting the 49 churches and branches (ibid, 36). It was only on May 21, 1916, that the SABMS officially took over the work in the Transvaal and placed it under the care of Mr. J. W. Joyce (TSABHB, 1916-17:42).

The Transvaal churches grew in number, as a result, on the occasion of the inauguration of the Bantu Baptist Church in 1927, there were 11 ministers, 53 churches[45], and 1923 members. [46] The average membership of churches was 36.

By the mid 1950's, Transvaal was divided into two regions, namely, the Northern Transvaal and the Southern Transvaal. All churches in Pretoria and on the Western, Eastern and Northern side of Pretoria, fell under the Northern region, while churches in Johannesburg and the Western, Eastern and further South of Johannesburg belonged to the Southern Transvaal. As can be seen, the two regions themselves are spread out over a relatively large area, hence the many churches. It was for this reason that in subsequent years, the Northern Transvaal was divided up into two other regions. First, all the churches North of Warmbaths came to be known as the Far North Baptist Region, while the remaining churches came to be known as Central Baptist Region (thus substituting 'Central' for 'Northern').

A few years down the line, another region was formed, namely, Mpumalanga , embracing all Convention churches in the Mpumalanga province. Far North also broke up into two regions, Capricorn (Nylstroom to Pietersburg, including Phalaborwa) and Great North (Gazankulu, Louis Trichardt and Venda) regions. In 1980, the last year of missionary reports about the Convention work, statistics of the Transvaal churches stood at 35 ministers, 75 churches,[47] 75 Sunday schools, 136 teachers, and 2880 scholars.[48]

The membership of the Transvaal churches as at the writing of this dissertation, cannot be determined as it is difficult to elicit statistics from church leaders. Only the list of regions and their churches are attached as appendix C on pages 388-389. Suffice it to say that at the writing of this discourse, Transvaal had 5 regions, namely, Great North with 5 churches, Capricorn with 15 churches, Mpumalanga with 11 churches, Central

---

[45] This number excludes five native churches which were connected to European churches.

[46] The inaccuracy of the statistical returns is showing up again. The Transvaal churches have dropped from 2281 in 1915 to 1923 in 1927. One can only hope that there are valid reasons for this decrease over such a long period of time.

[47] Most churches did not submit membership statistics, hence no reflection of the entire Transvaal membership at this time.

[48] See pages 374 to 379 of table V of December 1979 statistical returns.

Gauteng, 16 churches, and Southern Gauteng with 26 churches. Transvaal churches are 73 in all. This list of churches does not include branches or outstations. To date the Transvaal churches are setting the tone for the entire Convention in all its operational obligations.

The description of Transvaal churches is intended to give a bird's eye view of what these churches are really all about. So much else could have been said. However, whatever was said was considered as most important in terms of the research at stake.

3.8   CONCLUSION

Admittedly, not all information about the Baptist Convention has been given in this sub-section. Issues like the Bantu Baptist Church constitution would have been of interest. The aim has been to give a brief overview, so as to understand something of how the Convention churches were founded and spread in South Africa. Suffice it to say that the Transvaal Convention churches in their present form, still set the pace for ministry and growth in the entire Convention.

The meaning and purpose of Christian education in the next chapter, also becomes an important milestone on our evaluation journey. Surely, there is no way that Christian education can be evaluated fairly and in an informed manner, if its meaning and purpose have been taken for granted.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE MEANING AND PURPOSE OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

4.1   INTRODUCTION

In the attempt to investigate Christian education in the Baptist Convention of South Africa, with special reference to churches in the Transvaal,[49] it will be necessary to explore the meaning and purpose of Christian education; this will form part of the basis or framework within which the investigation will take place. Moreover, it will be important to understand where I am coming from in my understanding of Christian education.

The meaning and the purpose of Christian education, is not as easy as it looks. One is bound to look into the concept *'education'* itself as it has far reaching implications for Christian education. Further, other titles used for "Christian education" also come into play. Here I mention four titles only, namely, Catechesis, Religious Education, Religious Instruction, and Christian Religious Education. These titles have to be explained and then related to Christian education. It is only after this has been done that the purpose of Christian education can then be handled.

4.2   THE MEANING OF EDUCATION

"Education" is a very broad concept. Consequently, different meanings have been attached to it. Several educationists and scholars have advanced the meaning of education from different contexts. Three categories of education surface as we unravel the concept 'education,' namely, *formal, non-formal and informal education.*

---

[49] See footnote 3 on page one.

The exercise of exploring different meanings of education will bring us to a definition of education that has a bearing on Christian education in particular. *Education* is an English word which comes from the Latin root, *educare,* meaning to lead out. The prefix "e" means 'out'. The root meaning of 'education' is thus, to lead out (Groome, 1980:5). P.C. Luthuli (1981:9), moving in the same vein with Thomas Groome, has this to say, that education in its Latin origin means bringing up, or train or provide schooling for. He has in mind, a child, and argues that *"leading out the potentialities of a child can...mean only one thing: leading him to maturity."*

According to Lawrence Cremlin (in Pazmino 1988:79), *"Education is the deliberate, systematic, and sustained effort to transmit, evoke or acquire knowledge, attitudes, values, skills or sensibilities, as well as any outcome of that effort."* In this particular definition, education is deliberate, in that it is not accidental but intentional and planned. It is systematic in that if follows a given sequence and it is sensitive to where people are; it depends on participants readiness. It is sustained because it is a continuous effort between teacher and student (pupil). The effort continues for a long time; as matter of fact, it may continue until death.

Randolph Crump Miller (1963:53-54) defines education as *"...a process whereby the accumulated wisdom of society is passed on to its members, and at the same time, a process whereby members of a society reach out for new knowledge. Education may involve a general interpretation of the values of a culture, a specialized and limited appreciation of certain aspects of a culture, or intensified learning that in some respects may transcend culture."*

"Education is a process through which the total personality of an individual is developed and refined in a balanced way" (Ashraf, 1992:81). *"This concept education thus assumes a description of total human nature: 'spiritual', 'moral', 'intellectual', 'imaginative', 'emotional,' and 'physical.'* All these *"are different terms used to signify different aspects of personality"* (ibid, 81). Ashraf approaches the definition of education from a psychological point of view, with his emphasis on human development. This development has to do with personality growth in aspects of his being. Thus, accordingly, education brings about this growth.

Thomas Groome (1980:21) defines education as *"... a political activity with pilgrims in time that deliberately and intentionally attends with people to our present, to the past heritage it embodies, and to the future possibility it holds for the total person and community."* For him education is a political activity because it has to do with people, and people are referred to as pilgrims because they are on a journey to the future. Thus *"as a political activity with pilgrims in time, education should empower them to critically reclaim their past so that they can work creatively through their present into their future...all education, at least implicitly, is a reach for the transcendent because it...aims constantly to move us beyond our present limits toward the realization of our full possibilities..."* (ibid, 21).

Groome (1980:21) distinguishes among three dimensions of educational experience, namely, what the learner already knows (past), what the learner does not know but is there; it meets him as new knowledge (present), and what lies in the future; what he does not know but has potential to know.

John Wilson (1992:11) has this to say about what education is not, that *"Education is not training, conditioning, indoctrination, brainwashing and other processes. Education involves initiating people into various forms of thought and activity in such a way that they are helped to become more well-informed, understanding and reasonable."* Education for him, has to do with acquiring knowledge and understanding that

knowledge, so that it transforms one to be reasonable. In the end his definition has to do with maturity as the end result of education.

As may have been noticed above, the definition of education has been confined to people in general. Some authors, however, confine the definition to children. P.C. Luthuli (1981:9) confines his definition to black children in particular and maintains that whether culturally, socially or otherwise defined, education is aimed at a child, to influence him on his way to adulthood. In all instances, the child needs guidance and help *"on the basis of society's needs, beliefs, aspirations and convictions."*

Luthuli (1981:11) argues further, with respect to black people in general that, the aim of education among black people *"... is to bring the person to an awareness of his individual obligations, to make him conscious of the new demands of propriety, and finally to guide him towards the recognition of his responsibilities as a free person."*

"Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes the 'practice of freedom', the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world" (Moran, 1988:21). In this particular case *"... education is the dealing critically and creatively with reality and discovery of how to participate. Education is not the means to anything else; it is the name of that constant reshaping or transforming in which embodied meaning e-merges or is un-covered"* (ibid, 21).

Admittedly, there are many definitions given as to what education is all about. It will not be possible to reflect all of them in this essay. A brief analysis of the definitions given so far will be appropriate so as to reach some finality as to what education really is. While I agree with definitions of education given based on different contexts and perspectives of those who have given them, I have a few objections to raise concerning certain elements in some of the definitions. First, John Wilson (1992:11) argues among others, that

education is not "training." Indeed I do agree with him on other aspects of what education is not. However, I differ with him on the notion that education is not training. It depends entirely on what he understands by the word "training." In my view, training is part of education in that one is being educated into doing something. Granted that not all training is education, but some of it is. The Bible urges that parents should train up children in a way that they will not depart from when they are grown up (Proverbs 22:6). Such training is to me, education in a way of life, for as long as it is not forced on people. In some aspects of education, practical training is needed, so that the learner knows how to do certain things.

Cremin's definition of education (as cited by Robert Pazmino) also raises questions. He argues that education is among others, systematic (Pazmino, 1988:79). When we say education is systematic we mean that it has been organized; it has been well planned for, like it is the case with school education, where there are curricula and syllabi. I contend that not all education is necessarily systematic. In some cases individuals learn by observing others doing things, without any systematic arrangement whatsoever. If we take the example of growing children, we notice that they learn through imitation, though in other cases some of the education will be deliberate and systematic. Education cannot be confined to formal teaching, rather teaching is just an aspect thereof.

In the third instance education may not be confined to children only as seems to be the case with other definitions. Indeed education has everything to do with children; however, adults can be educated as well. Any definition of education which goes as far as children only, without qualifying that it involves all sectors of society, falls short of the comprehensive understanding of education in its entirety. Gabriel Moran (1988:20) argues that "...education should not be confined to children only but should be inclusive of adults, schooling and non-schooling forms; formal and informal education." Dr. Reginald Codrington (1985:12) argues, "Education must be seen as a lifelong occurrence, even though it may be true that the greatest intake of information and the most profound formation of character takes place in the earlier years. He was

responding to Foster's definition of education which also confines education on the *'not – yet – adult'* (Foster in Codrington, 1985:12)

Education should not be manipulative; it should be free and not be bound. Otherwise it ceases to be education. *"True education is liberal education; that which leads from shackles of an unexamined life to the freedom of intentional and productive patterns of thought and behaviour"* (Lines, 1988:144).

Education should allow and enable the learner to study or learn freely, critically and creatively, so the learner can make independent conclusions about material thus learnt. Education can only be conservative to the extent that it harks back to the past heritage, to build on the present knowledge or skills for the future. It is continuous.

In any educational enterprise, there is transmission of information, whether directly or indirectly. This transmission takes place within communities and societies. In all educational activities information is shared, knowledge is gained, skills are acquired, minds are sharpened. There is more understanding taking place. Whenever education takes place there is change for the better, otherwise no education has taken place. Education changes the learner for the better. Timothy Lines (1988:144) has it that *"Education can be nothing less than an impetus for change from one state to another. If one who is educated has not changed, then no education has taken place at all."*

Education is helpful in that it brings about maturity in the learner in the areas of thinking, criticizing, experimenting and controlling the world. The learner grows mentally and socially. To be valuable, education must have enough information to provide guidance and sufficient adaptability to encourage exploration. Only in this way can one talk of authentic education (ibid, 145).

The above analysis sums up my view of education; that it involves transmission of tradition (information, knowledge) directly (through teaching) or indirectly (through

informal interactions) which lead to gaining knowledge, acquiring skills and getting more understanding on issues. It blends the past and the present for the future, and it is continuous; it never stops. It takes place within the context of communities and societies for the betterment of its people, so they could know how to live and take their rightful positions within their communities and societies in an attempt to build same further.

In conclusion, three ways in which education takes place are, formal, informal and non-formal. *"Formal education is defined as that form of education that is institutionalized, chronologically graded and hierachically structured in a system that spans primary through higher education and would include even pre-schooling system in some countries"* (Pazmino, 1992:62).

"Formal education generally means that an artificial situation is organized in which children are deliberately brought together with the aim of teaching them certain knowledge and skills by suitably qualified persons..." (Luthuli, 1981:23).Thus, formal education is the kind of education that has been planned beforehand, for which syllabi and curricula have been compiled and learning centres set up. This kind of education is deliberate, and can be assessed regularly. In this case suitably qualified instructors are appointed for the task of transmitting knowledge and skills to learners.

"Informal education is the lifelong process by which every person acquires and accumulates knowledge, skills and insights from daily experiences and exposure to environment and through interaction in life"(Pazmino, 1992:62). It is the type of education that takes place outside the school or recognized institution. It is the education that takes place at home, where no teacher is involved, but where learning takes place anyway. The first place for children to learn is at home. *"The function of home education is to make the young child aware of norms, values and beliefs in the particular cultural context of the home"* (Luthuli, 1981:22). In short, informal education takes place anywhere at any time. It may be deliberate and systematic, like in the case of

a home, where children may be deliberately and systematically taught cultural or Christian values as the case may be.

"Non-formal education is defined as any organized systematic educational activity carried on outside the framework of the formal system to provide selective types of learning to particular sub-groups in the population" (Pazmino, 1992:62). Non-formal education may take the form of initiation schools, scouts, young women associations, etc.

Whereas the meaning of Christian education will be dealt with later, it is important though, to note that Christian education differs from education in general in that the former is confined narrowly to education in Christian faith only. In all other respects, except for the difference above, Christian education is like education. All definitions that pertain to education are also valid for Christian education. Education is the same, whether historical, psychological or whatever else.

Important features that were observable in education will surface in Christian education. Christian education in particular, like education in general, may be systematic, deliberate and sustained. It may be formal, non-formal and informal. It is also concerned with the past, the present and the future. It takes place only where there is learning.

This background of education and its three dimensions, has laid the groundwork for the investigation of "Christian education." Principles of education will however, as has been observed above, remain the same throughout. It will be appropriate at this time to consider the meaning of Christian education.

4.3   THE MEANING OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION.

Whereas it has been presumed, especially in America, that Christian education has to do with Christian faith, conversion and growth in that faith, it has become evident, however, that the term itself is ambiguous. It may mean four different things or even

more. Books have been devoted to this subject in an attempt to unravel the actual meaning of the term itself. I mention two books, namely, *The Contours of Christian Education* and *Critical Perspectives on Christian Education*. In these books whole essays by other contributing authors are devoted to the term "Christian education" and what it may mean to others. Some authors for example, argue for Christian nurture instead of Christian education, while others contend for Catechesis or Religious Instruction, etc. The present focus will be on the different meanings purported by the term, the meaning of Christian education as conventionally understood and accepted, a brief analysis of the meaning of the term as well as the origin and nature of Christian education. The purpose of Christian education will follow at the end.

4.3.1 Different meanings of "Christian education."

First, Christian education can mean the kind of education Christians should engage in; that which Christians should know and be taught about, as opposed to general education intended for everyone else. In one sense, says Evelina Orteza y Miranda (1994:20), Christian education means the education or knowledge that a Christian should have as a Christian. It may not necessarily be Christian in outlook and content; it may be any subject for as long as it is something Christians should know about.

Second, Christian education may mean to others, *"... the intellectual development of a critical evaluation of the Christian faith..."* (Astley and Day, 1992:14). In this case one engages in the study of Christian faith critically. To this one can add the study of Christianity as a whole without really committing oneself to being a Christian. Such a focus would be on Christianity as a religion and on those who profess to be Christians.

Third, Christian education can mean to others, the whole approach to education. Jeff Astley (1994:4) points out that *"Christian education" is a term that is also used to denote a reflective Christian perspective on the practice of general education, including education about religion, usually in the context of a school or higher education."* What this means is the critique of general education undertaken from a Christian perspective.

Dr. Stuart Fowler (1987:10), echoing the same sentiments, contends that in this case, Christian education " *is used in a more comprehensive sense to refer '... to education that is developed in the light of the Christian faith, a comprehensive educational practice that is shaped by Christian faith as its basic motive...' 'Christian,' describes the quality of education discussed"* and not the content thereof. Such an approach to education "*... forbids the acceptance of any educational practice that divorces earthly relationships from the God relationship."*

This approach to education is underpinned by the fact that God is truth (Psalm 31:5), the Son is the Lord of truth (John 14:6), and the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth (John 14:16, 17). Education that is Christian is education that aligns itself with God's truth. Frank Gaebelein (1964:43) states that if God is truth as it has been described above, "*... then truth in its boundless dimensions, unknown and undiscovered, must be at once the context and goal of our education."*

Viewed in this way, it should not be presumed that education is necessarily exactly and definitely Christian in some way; it does not mean there is anything Christian about it; rather, "*...there is a Christian perspective on it or a Christian manner of viewing it,"* (Miranda, 1994:17). It is carried out in a Christian way.

In the last instance, Christian education may, as it does in this essay, mean the communication of God's truth (the Christian faith), with a view to making disciples of Christ. It has to do with conversion, nurture and service. It is the transmission of Christian faith to people so that they will believe and become followers of Christ, thereby living for Him and growing in Him to the point of serving Him in the world.

Briefly these are the ways in which Christian education can be understood. None of them is wrong. It must be clear, however, that in this essay, the latter meaning applies; Christian faith as communicated and lived out in the world. While the debate on the meaning of Christian education rages on, we shall concern ourselves with this meaning.

4.3.2   The meaning of Christian education: a conventional approach

I call this understanding of Christian education a conventional one because many books that have been written on this subject assume this understanding. Moreover the recent debate on what Christian education should mean, stems from the very fact that for a long time Christian education was understood to be concerned with Christian faith and nurture or discipleship.[50] Up until now, this is the understanding, especially in America. This understanding does not however rule out the use of other terms for Christian education. Other such terms will be dealt with later.

Notwithstanding the fact that they are among the chief actors in the debate against the present understanding of Christian education, that is, Christian education as it relates to the communication of Christian faith for conversion and growth, Jeff Astley and David Day (1994:20, 21) maintain that *"...whatever we make or say of Christian education, it must be part of the teaching activity of the church...If this is to be authentically Christian, then it has to be related to the person of 'Christ.' For Christian education to qualify as such, it must retain some contact with its centre. That centre is Christ Himself."*

Against this background I will now focus on the meaning of Christian education as it has evolved over time. I will give several meanings from different educationists and authors; and then lift up what I consider to be important features or basic principles entailed in the term 'Christian education.'

Robert Pazmino (1988:81) defines Christian education as *"...the deliberate, systematic and sustained divine and human effort to share or appropriate the knowledge, values,*

---

[50] I understand discipleship to mean, the winning of unbelievers to Christ, the nurture of the new believers, the training and sending of the same to do ministry. Discipleship embraces the whole of the Christian life: winning, building, training and serving.

attitudes, skills, sensitivities and behaviours that comprise or are consistent with Christian faith. It fosters change, renewal and reformation of persons, groups and structures by the power of the Holy Spirit to conform to the revealed will of God as expressed in the Old and New Testaments, preeminently in the person of Jesus Christ, as well as any outcomes of that effort."[51]

Randolph Crump Miller (1956:53, 54) defines Christian education as *"... the effort to make available for our generations – children, young people, and adults – the accumulated treasures of Christian life and thought, in such a way that God in Christ may carry on His redemptive work in each human soul and in the common life of man."*

"Christian education", says Lawrence Richards (1975:16), *"is concerned with life, and with growth of eternal life within the human personality, towards likeness to the God who gave it. Christian education is concerned with the progressive transformation of the behaviour toward the character, values, motives, attitudes, and understanding of God Himself... Christian education can never deal with individual life alone, It has to concern itself with the processes within the body which nurtures corporate and individual growth in Christ. Any Christian education approach which focuses on either ... in the exclusion of the other is bound to fall short."*

Jeff Astley, introducing the book he and Leslie Francis have edited (1994:3), states that *"... one major focus of interest is on Christian education understood quite generally as designating those processes by which people learn to become Christian, and to be more Christian..."* Whereas the main focus of the book is the debate on what Christian education really means, Jeff Astley acknowledges that the present understanding of the meaning of Christian education is the one that is accepted quite generally as conversion to Christian faith and growth in becoming more and more like Christ.

---

[51] Robert Pazmino has derived this definition from Lawrence Cremin's definition of education. See under definition of education on page 73.

Bruce Powers (1981:17) defines Christian education as *"... the ongoing efforts of believers seeking to understand, practice, and propagate God's revelation."*

4.3.3 A brief analysis of definitions rendered thus far

A brief analysis of definitions given above will assist us as we seek to delve into the underlying elements and principles that constitute what we understand Christian education to be.

Each educator or author has defined Christian education in a way that best expresses his understanding of the concept as well as the background or context from which he comes. In my opinion, any definition of Christian education must entail the following elements, Christian faith as the content of what is communicated, conversion or discipleship as the goal of communication of Christian education, nurture of new believers to become more and more like Christ, training new believers for ministry, and finally engagement of new believers in the ministry so they can in turn, train others to do likewise. Service or ministry entails all that which is done in the name of the Lord, whether it is witnessing, community service, service to believers, etc. My argument for the five elements I have just mentioned is based on the concept of discipleship.

In the making of disciples five[52] elements are involved, namely,

(a) the preaching, teaching or transmission of the gospel. The gospel embraces all that which concerns Jesus Christ or what can simply be called Christian faith.

(b) the response to gospel preaching (or Christian faith teaching) by the hearer. In this case it is the unbeliever who responds to the call to become a Christian (a disciple). He turns from his old way of life to God through Christ.

---

[52] Basically only four elements are involved, winning, nurturing, training and sending. Throughout the dissertation I have stressed that there are four elements of discipleship...the fifth element is the act of transmission, and has been included for the sake of Christian education. Christian education is through and through about transmission.

(c) the nurturing of the new believer in the new way. The new disciple is being nurtured (built up) so that he becomes more and more like Christ. The nurturing is done in the context of other believers so that he grows together with the bigger body of Christ.

(d) the preparation of the new believer for ministry. The new believer has been saved to serve. All Christians are called upon to serve God as a kingdom of priests (I Pet. 2:9). It is important that the new believer be trained to be like his Master. This is exactly what Jesus did; He not only called and nurtured His followers, rather He trained them for future ministry in the world. It was for this reason that the five-fold gifts of leadership were given so that among others, saints may be prepared for the ministry (Eph. 4: 11-15).

(e) the independent involvement of the new believer in the ministry. By this time he has grown to the point where he is not only like Christ, but does all that which Christ did, depending on the gifts God has endowed upon him. The new believer can make disciples on his own. This does not mean the new disciple has ceased from growing; rather, growth continues while he is also involved in making other disciples and serving God in other ways. It was the desire of Jesus that His disciples make other disciples (Matthew 28:19).

In short the five elements entailed in the process of Christian education are, teaching (transmission), winning, building, training, and sending or service. Any definition of Christian education should have these five elements, though they may be expressed otherwise.

Going back to the definitions given earlier on, one notices that some definitions have all the five elements while others have just a few. Pazmino's definition carries all these elements. He talks of "sharing" which represents teaching, then he alludes to Christian faith as that which is taught, though he does not say it directly, then also there is the

element of conversion in "change" and "renewal." The word "conform" implies continued growth, while knowledge, skills, behaviours, imply training and nurturing. The last part of the definition is broad, speaking of "any outcome of that effort." The outcome may be independent ministry, etc.

Randolph's definition only has the four elements of teaching, change, growth and Christian faith as content of what is *"made available to our generations."* Nothing specific is said about involvement in ministry or training for that ministry. While Lawrence Richards may have given detailed treatment to this subject in earlier chapters, in the definition outlined above he does not go into detail. He speaks of Christian education as being life, without going deeper. He touches on the element of growth in character and the transformation that takes place in the believer. Other elements may be implied, but they are not so explicit.

Jeff's explanation does not say much about elements thus outlined. He only goes so far as the *"... processes by which people learn to become Christians... "*, which may imply teaching, change and growth. However, in his earlier admission, he alluded to some of those elements directly, saying that Christian education *"...must be part of the teaching activity of the church"*, and that it must be centred in Christ. In this case the transmission and the content of that which is transmitted, comes out clearly. The elements of training and actual involvement in the ministry do not come out. Bruce Power's definition entails, continued growth, service and the content of what is taught. These elements are respectively represented by *'...the ongoing effort of ...seeking to understand the practice, the propagation of, and God's revelation.'* The initial stage of conversion is not mentioned.

Admittedly, many other definitions have been advanced by countless other authors, some of which may be raised as this essay progresses. The few mentioned are representative of the total picture portrayed by all the authors. I argue that *Christian education is the transmission (presentation) of Christian faith (the gospel, God's*

revelation) to people (individually and corporately) with a view to converting them to God (or to Christian faith) through Christ, nurturing them in Christian faith so they will grow in Christian knowledge and Christlikeness, preparing them for ministry in the world, and ensuring that they carry out the ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit.[53]

4.3.4   The origin and pervasive nature of Christian education.

Christian education has its origin in the Bible, especially in the person of Christ. Without the Bible there is no Christian education. About the origin of Christian education, Edward L. Hayes (1964:31) has this to say, *"Christian education arises from the fertile soil of the bible. The biblical revelation of God's dealings with His covenant people Israel and the example of Jesus and the apostles form the seedbed for what we know today as Christian education. We look to the biblical record for both its origin and form. Its purposes, methods and institutional expressions are rooted in the Scriptures. Any instructional activity that is worthy to be called Christian education should take as its foundation and authority, the bible."*

Echoing similar sentiments with regard to the Bible as being the origin and norm for Christian education, Daniel, Wade, and Gresham (1987:33) argued that *"Biblical revelation is normative and foundational; that is, it sets the standards and provides a basis for all Christian education, including both the content that is taught and the methods by which it is taught. All educational factors must be in keeping with the reality presented in the Bible."*

Christian education is based on Christianity, and Christianity is based on the person of Christ. *"Christian education has no existence in its own right; it is wholly dependent upon Christianity and exists solely for the sake of Christianity"* (Eavy, 1964:51).

---

[53] I have deliberately included the notion of ensuring that ministry is carried out because Jesus ensured that apostles and disciples carried out the ministry by sending the Holy Spirit and speaking through Him from time to time. Paul did the same to Timothy, Titus, etc. (II Timothy 2:2)

Edward Hayes (1964:31), however, argues that even though the Bible is central to Christian education, it should not however be misunderstood as limiting the church or Christian education. Surely Christian education has to develop with time, adapting to changes in methods and approaches, but unbending in its content and principles. The Bible serves as a guideline for the perpetuation of Christian education endeavours, so that certain principles are not compromised.

Christian education may not be confined to the teaching of the Bible only. However, *"... teaching it is a mandatory part of any Christian education programme worthy of the name"* (Wilhoit, 1986:159).

It is worth a while to note that Christian education has to permeate the whole life of the church. In other words, all aspects of the church should directly or indirectly communicate some truth. All aspects of church life must be an occasion for learning something about God; hence the reference to its pervasive nature. The following phrase says it all: *"Adequate Christian education should enable the church to equip and enable persons (individuals, families, the whole congregation), to*

(a)   make the faith and heritage of the Christian community their own,

(b)   continue to grow in Christian commitment; and

(c)   participate in God's continuing work of making the good news of love, justice and well-being a reality for all human kind within the life of persons, homes, congregation, community, nation and the whole world" (Eastman, et al, 1976:10).

The pervasive nature of Christian education is further underlined by the words of Furman (1979:33), in Homegrown Christian education, *"Christian education must have a dimension which incarnates the responsibility and opportunity for believers to be a family, a united people rich in their diversity but gathered by a common loyalty... there*

is more to Christian education than an orderly round of Bible studies, catechism and confirmation class. Car washes, potlucks, hikes, blood drives, hospital visitations, choirs, and sport events can each contribute to Christian education – provided that they are consciously coordinated by a master plan supported and enriched by many varieties of worship."

John L. Kater Jr, (1979:26) contends for a Christian education in which all members are teachers of one another. Basically, he says the same thing that Furman argues for. His definition of Christian education is from that angle. *"Christian education is the process by which the whole Christian family shares its life with one another, nurturing each other, helping one another to move ever more deeply into life with God and with each other"* (1979:25). He (1979:26) goes further to say he believes *"...any parish can become a teaching and learning community in which the whole congregation is involved in Christian education – in nurturing one another's faith."*

The pervasive nature of Christian education finds further support from Scriptures. A case in point is Paul's letter to the Colossian church, in which he urged them to *"... teach and instruct each other with all wisdom..."* (Colossians. 3:16). Another example is that of the letter to the Hebrews, in which the author rebukes the believers for failing to teach one another. He states that by then, the Hebrew believers should have been teachers themselves, yet they still needed someone else to teach them elementary lessons (Hebrews. 5:11-14).

There can be no better approach to Christian education than this one, that all members should be involved, and that the whole of the church's programme should be geared towards fostering learning. By implication, Christian education takes place in the church and in the context of the whole body of Christ. It cannot just be an individual learning alone; rather he learns in the context of the corporate body of Christ, that is, the whole congregation.

Up until now I have described the meaning of Christian education as it is generally understood. There is however, another side of the coin, the fact that in other circles, other words or terms are used in the place of Christian education, without changing the meaning thereof.

4.4   OTHER DESIGNATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Any discourse on the meaning and purpose of Christian education will be incomplete if it did not take into account other designations for Christian education. This is so because there are certain connotations attached to these designations. It has to be determined why Christian education was or is known by a particular designation and not as Christian education, as one may well expect. Some of those designations are Catechesis, Religious education, Religious Instruction and Christian Religious Education. These titles deserve attention.

4.4.1   Catechesis.

The term *"Catechesis"* as we know it today, comes from a Greek word *"Katechein"*, which means *'to resound'*, *'to echo'* or to *'hand down'*. The etymology of the word implies oral instruction. It was used in the New Testament as an oral instruction in which a very simple explanation is given as milk rather than solid food, is given to children (see Hebrews 5:12-14; I Corinthians 3:1-3) (Groome, 1980:26). The term itself is an ancient Christian word that in later years came to be used, among others, by the Roman Catholic Church.

Along with the word 'catechesis' are the words *'catechism'* and *'catechumen'* which come from Greek and mean to inform or to instruct (*katecheo*) new believers. *'Catechumen'* is the one being taught. These words have to do with instructing someone in the content of faith. Luke used it four times, while Paul used it for example in Romans 2:18, I Corinthians 14:19, Galatians 6:6 (Gangel and Benson, 1983:89).

History goes that during the time of the early church Fathers (2nd century) it became necessary that adults who became Christians should spend several probationery years before they received baptism and the Lord's Supper. They were subjected to the teaching of elders, deacons or lay people in the homes of those teachers (ibid, 88). Thus, these new converts were called catechumens, and their schools were called catechumenal schools.

The catechumens would be instructed as in the synagogue; they would then be released, while baptized believers celebrated the Lord's Supper. Catechumens were also known as trainees, and were comprised of believers, children, adult Jews and Gentile converts. They went through stages of training, namely, the stage of the *'hearers'*, in which case they were instructed in elementary doctrine, the *'kneelers,'* who remained for prayers when the hearers withdrew, and received further advanced instruction. The kneelers were required to live worthy lives to prove readiness for the third and final stage of training, the *'chosen.'* During this last stage intensive doctrinal, liturgical and ascetical training was engaged in preparation for baptism (ibid, 88, 89).

Kevin Nichols (1992:61) argues that the central concern for catechesis is *"… the development of faith towards maturity…"* This, he says, is an[54] agreement of most accounts of catechesis. John Westerhoff III (Benson, 1988:209) sees catechesis as embracing the whole of church education. He defines catechesis as *"… the process by which persons throughout their lifetimes are continually converted and nurtured, transformed and formed, by and in its living tradition."*

For the Roman Catholic Church, teaching religion is called catechesis. What makes it special and unique for them is the fact that it is under the direct control of Catholic hierachy, something foreign to religious education (Lee, 1988:34).

---

[54] Quoted from John Westerhoff III, 'The Challenge: Understanding the problem of faithfulness,' in A faithful church: Issues in the History of Catechesis (ed) John Westerhoff and O.C. Edwards Jr (Wilton Conn: Moorehouse Barlow, 1982), pg 1, by Warren Benson.

Recently it is predominantly the Roman Catholic Church that uses catechesis in the place of religious or Christian education. They are however, not agreed as to the meaning of catechesis. This is accordingly evident from the definitions they give to the term (Lee, 1988:34-36). James Michael Lee himself (1988:37) defines catechesis as *"... that form of pastoral activity which under the explicit direction of the catholic hierachy seeks by intentional and deliberative pedagogical procedures to teach persons to faithfully follow in a personal and corporate manner the teaching of the Catholic Church as the ecclesiastical hierachy authoritatively, interprets these teachings."*

It is worthy to note that at least until recently some churches in South Africa still use the catechesis approach in teaching. Teaching only went so far as giving initial elementary doctrinal teachings in preparation for confirmation. After confirmation there is not much learning going on anymore.[55]

A few observations will be helpful as I conclude the discussion on catechesis. Looking back at the period of the early church and the early (2nd century) church Fathers, one notices that the use of catechesis was much broader, more comprehensive than might be thought of now. Examples of texts cited point to catechesis as meaning instruction or teaching. I would agree with John Westerhoff III that Christian education and catechesis mean one thing and can therefore be used interchangeably. My argument is that catechesis may have changed over the years, so that it came to be narrowed down to simple church membership classes, with the focus being on elementary doctrine. What the word really meant was instruction in the Word of the Lord and in doctrine in general. This could be the kind of teaching that the early disciples were subjected to. In that case it befits Christian education. This becomes especially true when one takes into consideration the discussions on the three stages of the catechumens discussed above. The third stage implies intensive training, which may mean engagement in solid and deep teachings of Scriptures.

---

[55] I am referring here especially to black churches which practice confirmation. Usually there is no much teaching after confirmation. Even if there is, it is rather very minimal, as compared to the preparation for confirmation.

However, if catechesis was initially intended for a certain period only, so that nothing would then happen thereafter by way of instruction, then it may not be called Christian education at all. It may form part of it. If in its Greek context it meant instruction in the entire way of life and by all means possible, then it rightly deserves to be called Christian education. Christian education involves the total life of the church; it may be intentional and unintentional teaching or passing on of truth to other believers.

Groome argues that the term catechesis may not be extended beyond what it seeks to convey. He is critical of people like John Westerhoff III and Berard Marthaler who attributed to catechesis the same meaning as one would give to Christian education. If catechesis is *"...the process whereby individuals are initiated and socialized in the church community... "*, then it is not tantamount to Christian education as it is limited to the initial stage of the membership of the church only. If it is a continuous process that takes place intentionally or unintentionally throughout the life of the church, then it can rightly be called Christian education.[56]

4.4.2   Religious Education.

Another term or title used to designate Christian education as it is generally understood, is *'Religious education'*. For a long time in America religious education was used to mean instruction in Christian faith and nurture. In Britain, 'religious education' has always been in use, designating Christian nurture whether in schools or in churches. Up until now, 'religious education' is still in use, although the meaning has undergone a shift. In the 1950's and 60's in America, a new term 'Christian education' came into use to refer to Christian faith and nurture in the place of religious education. Presently, for some American churches religious education and Christian education are used interchangeably, while others prefer the use of the one against the other. The latter understanding is due to the fact that there are in other quarters a strong feeling that

---

[56] Page 50 of the second chapter, deals with catechesis as described in theses and dissertations.

Christian education and religious education are not the same, the latter is broader than the former. I will unpack the development of religious education in some detail.

There was a time when religious education was the only word used and it meant the same thing as Christian education today. In the course of time, the title 'Christian education' emerged. For some time it meant the same thing as religious education, however, it soon came to mean something different from religious education. Despite this development, there are those who still use the two terms interchangeably.

Like Christian education, religious education purports more than one meaning. It may mean education that is religious, that is, education that may not necessarily be about religion but is through and through informed by religion. It is education that is underpinned by religious principles. Still, religious education may mean education in religion; the study of religion in general or one religion in particular. In this short discourse on religious education, the latter meaning will apply.

Initially, the title, 'religious education' was in use long before 'Christian education' emerged as a term to be used. During this time religious education was focussed on Christian faith as a way of life; not just as a religion, as it later became the case in American schools.

The use of the term 'religious education' goes back to the time when the Sunday School Movement was founded by Robert Rakes in 1780 (Mason, 1964:29). Religious education was used mainly to mean teaching in Christian faith and nurture of new believers. The Religious Education Association was founded in 1903 with the dual purpose of inspiring the religious forces of America with an educational ideal and the educational forces with a religious one (Westerhoff III, 1976:3). Nothing was said of Christian education until decades later. The International Council of Religious Education was also formed, and it functioned for more than a quarter of a century under

this name. The Federal Council of Churches was organized in 1908, still using 'religious education' in a confessional way.

Up until now the title used in Great Britain has always been religious education. Until recently, this title referred to the transmission of Christian faith with the purpose of turning people to Christ. What this meant was that in schools, religious education was taught in a confessional way, that is, in a way of converting people to Christ. The approach has been that of persuading pupils to become Christians and to nurture them.

In time 'Christian education' emerged as a term to be used to mean religious education. Westerhoff III (1976:4) pointed out that it was only in the 1940's and 50's that religious education changed its name to Christian education, without changing the image of the church school and religious instruction. Harold Carlton Mason (1964:25) observed that when the Federal Council of Churches changed its name in 1950 to the National Council of Christian Churches, the International Council of Religious Education became a commission thereof, thus changing its name to the Division of Christian education of the National Council of Christian Churches. Religious education now became Christian education without any qualification.

With the emergence of Christian education an interchangeable use of the two terms ensued, so that religious education meant Christian education and Christian education meant religious education. The interchangeable use of the two terms is noticeable from several statements. First, Mason (1964:34) used religious education and Christian education interchangeably. He argued, *"Another contemporary movement in religious education is the camping and summer conference movement. There are two generally accepted kinds of Christian education camps..."* Here the two words have been used in the same context to mean the same thing.

Second, Marlene Mayr's (1988:7) book of which she is an editor, is entitled, *Does the Church really want Religious Education?* In this case religious education has to do with

Christian faith; persuasion to this faith and nurture therein. Going through the essays in this book one observes that religious education, a subject of the whole book, is focused on Christian education in the church. What we know as Christian education is known as religious education in this book.

Third, Benson (1988:196) observes that the very people *"... engaged in the discipline have even stumbled over what to call it, Christian education or religious education."* He goes on to outline an example of such interchangeable use, which underpins the confusion prevalent among the educationists. He cites Marvin J. Taylor who edited four significant volumes in the area of religious education. In the first (1960) and the last (1984) volumes, he used religious education, while in the two middle volumes (1966 and 1976), he used Christian education.

Westerhoff echoes a similar concern of not knowing which word to use. He states that in the journal, one finds words like religious education, religious instruction, Christian nurture, catechesis, ecumenical education, etc, to refer to religious or Christian education. He contends that *"While searching for an identity, today we cannot even agree on a name by which to be identified"* (Westerhoff in Benson, 1988:197).

In the fifth instance, the Southern Baptists are said to be using Christian education to denote their colleges and seminaries. *"To them, religious education refers to the discipline or field identified with the educational work of their churches and the departments in the above schools that specialize in the educational ministry of the local church"* (ibid, 197-198). It is for this reason that Benson concludes that the Southern Baptists are confused.

Up until this time 'religious education' and 'Christian education' were used interchangeably, in some cases people not knowing which word to use. It became clear as time went on, that the two terms would no longer mean the same thing for all Christians. The two could thus no longer be used interchangeably. Religious education

came to be viewed as being broader than Christian education. [57] Those who prefer to use 'religious education' in the place of 'Christian education' argue that the former is broader in meaning, accommodating other religions as well. Christian education on the other hand, is accordingly narrow, and leaves out other religions; giving an impression that it is superior. Moreover, it is alleged that Christian education reeks of indoctrination, brainwashing and conditioning as it forces people to become Christians. Groome (1980:24) is one of those authors who are critical of 'Christian education', saying that he would rather use religious education because it enables all traditions of the Christian church to do religious education in an emancipatory manner.

As has just been pointed out, there are those Christians who feel religious education is broader than Christian education as it includes all religions. They prefer to use Christian education, saying that it is narrower in focus and is actually part of religious education.

Groome's (1980:22) definition casts light on this broader understanding of religious education as against the narrow focus of Christian education. He defines religious education activity as *"... a deliberate attending to a transcendent dimension of life by which a conscious relationship to an ultimate ground of being is promoted and enabled to come to expression."* Religious education focuses specific attention on empowering people in their quest for a transcendent and ultimate ground of being. It leads people to consciousness of what is found, relationship with it and expression of that relationship. Groome's definition embraces all religions; it does not refer to any particular religion. The quest for a transcendent being and relationship with it, is religion. Thus religious education may be education in any religion, not just Christian education.

Gabriel Moran (1994:41) admits that indeed religious education is broader than Christian education or catechesis. *"I think that there is no debate on the fact that 'religious education' is etymologically, historically and operationally wider in meaning*

---

[57] It should be remembered however, that some still preferred to use religious education in the place of Christian education. This has become the case until today.

than catechesis or Christian education. It is that very breadth which some people fear because it suggests abstraction or generality."

Religious education was no longer confined to just Christian faith or one religion. This is especially so in Great Britain, where previously Christian faith was taught as a content of religious education in schools. In the late 1960's religious education became simply, education about religion so that the learner was acquainted with a variety of religions; he could make his own choice of which religion to subscribe to. In the words of Henry and Regina Wieman (in Miller, 1956:53) *"Religious education is education about any religion without seeking to indoctrinate others or influence the learner to pursue a particular religion."*

It was because of the plural nature of the British society that there was a move to change the confessional state of religious education to a more open and inclusive one, so that all other religions are accommodated. In Britain (as in Canada, USA, S.A., etc) there is a growing diversity of religions. There are Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Sikish and Buddhists for whom Christian religion is just one of those religions, not the main one (Hull, 1984:46, 47).

On the other hand Christian education concerns itself with Christian religion only, with special focus on the Bible or with the Bible as being the only source of reference. The centrality of the Bible in Christian education is underlined by the following words, *"The bible is the word of God; it is the foundation and final authority for the goals and content of Christian education ... Christian education is fulfilled when unbelievers come...to love Him, to be like Him, to serve Him"* (Sayes, 1978:49).

Those who contend for Christian education argue that it is different from religious education in its origin, uniqueness, specificity and its teaching. Randolph Miller (1956:53) distinguishes Christian education from religious education in terms of the origin of the former. Christiana education *"... begins with the fact that we have a gospel*

and that Christian education begins when we are confronted with it...It involves the individual as he/she makes a personal decision, and it has an impact on society in terms of vocational responsibility. It is concerned with history because God chose to reveal His nature through historical events, and thus the past is essential for an understanding of the present and of our hope for the future. It begins and ends with personal relationships... These personal relationships are between persons and persons and between persons and God."

Christian education is unique in that it is centred around the Bible; it concerns the God who has revealed Himself in Christ. In Christ God became a human being and lived perfectly among people, proving in many ways that He was perfect human being and perfect God. No other religion purports such unique distinctiveness. God has revealed Himself to humanity in Christ, and the Bible is the record of God's revelation of Himself to people both through Israel and her prophets as well as through His Son in the New Testament.

Christian education is specific; it deals with Christian faith; with Jesus as the author of that faith. Christian education has to do with the presentation of Christian faith by word of mouth or by way of life, with a view to leading the learner to God through Christ. In this case it will not be vague as it is specific and not general. Religious education is general; it is vague; it can refer to any religion.

Speaking for Christian education, C.B. Eavy (1940:12-13) contends that *"Teaching that is truly Christian stands therefore, for the reception of His indwelling presence, power, and love and a reciprocal relationship that reproduces the Spirit of Christ in everyday life."* In short, in Christian education we teach for faith not just for knowledge of Christian religion.

Warren S. Benson (1988:199) also argued for Christian education, maintaining that religious education may be used only in ecumenical contexts; in reality, there should be

no fear in using Christian education; after all it is based on the fact that God revealed Himself directly. Our mission is to tell people about Jesus Christ and to lead them to maturity. Jesus Christ is the centre of what our mission is all about. Thus, 'Christian education' is the way to go.

In concluding this discourse, I contend that the use of Christian education is appropriate if our aim is to transmit Christian faith for conversion and growth in Christlikeness. Where we deal with religions in general, it will be fitting to use religious education. Moreover, I have no problem with those who use religious education for Christian education or vice versa. I argue that the subject under review is Christian education.

4.4.3   Religious Instruction.

Still another term usually interchanged with Christian education is *"Religious Instruction."* It has been used interchangeably with Religious education as well. It was also used for Christian nurture, in which case one can conclude that it is also used interchangeably with Christian education. A brief account of its definition, scope, interchangeable use, goals or functions, and evolution will help in determining its relationship to Christian education.

To understand religious instruction, it will be proper to understand 'instruction' first. According to the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, (1978:581) to instruct is *"to give knowledge or information to; to train or to teach. It is to teach or train someone in such a way that he/she is able to do something."* Thomas Green (in Sarah P. Little, 1982:39) argues that *"...instruction has to do with those activities that necessitate the 'manifestation of intelligence'; that call for concern with the question "why?" It "involves communication of a certain kind, and that kind is the kind which includes giving reasons, evidence, argument, and so forth, for the purpose of helping another understand or arrive at the truth."* Put another way, *"Teaching (which is instruction)*[58]

---

[58] Brackets are mine.

is the process of dealing with subject matter in such a way as to enable students to assess the truth of the same in terms of their own frame of reference" (ibid, 39)

"Religious Instruction' denotes the teaching about all religions of the world...Religious instruction is a pedagogical process which occurs in every type of setting." It is thus apparent that religious instruction is *"a facilitational process which occurs in each religion and in every setting...cutting through and collapsing the restrictiveness which anyone religion or setting is intrinsically bound to have"* (Elizabeth Moore in Lee, 1988:33)

Religious instruction is accordingly not restricted to one setting, school, church, home, etc. It takes place in any setting for as long as there is instruction in religion. Michael Lee (1971:3) argues that *"...religious instruction is a work of teaching, not of theologizing; in other words, religious instruction is a process whereby learning is facilitated."* The aim of modern religious education is not just mere knowledge, but it is lived religion (Hotinger in Lee, 1971:11)

In the same vein, James Michael Lee (1971:19) pointed out, *"Religious instruction of the effective kind is that which is noted in the now. In concrete terms, religious instruction is itself life, and not a preparation for life. The religion class is a laboratory and a workshop for Christian living where students learn Christian living precisely by engaging in Christian living in the here-and-now learning situation."*

According to the above definitions, religious instruction is not just acquainting the learners with information or knowledge of religion. It is Christian nurture; it is persuasive; someone has to become a Christian and live as such. Thus, the aim of religious instruction as it relates to Christian faith, is that persons will come to believe in Christ as their Saviour.

However, the situation changes when religious instruction is no longer confined to Christian nurture. Elmer J. Thiessen (1992:66) states that *"...in the last fifteen years, religious instruction, which was Christian in orientation, in USA, Canada, and Britain, in state maintained schools, has undergone a major transformation. The emphasis is now teaching about religion as opposed to Christian faith and nurture."*

What has been described so far as it relates to religious instruction as transmission of Christian faith, ties up properly with what we understand Christian education to mean. The interchangeable use of religious instruction with religious education implies that the two are used in the same way; they mean the same thing. Locke E. Bowman Jr (1988:126) uses religious instruction to mean the same thing as religious education when he says, *"As a case in point, look at the decimated departments of religious education in our seminaries; ...many seminaries that formerly had full professors devoting themselves to the field of religious instruction with special attention to the needs of future clergy, have allowed these positions to go unfilled."* Bowman uses religious education and religious instruction to mean the same thing.

Having said this much, I contend however, that Christian education is broader than religious instruction only in so far as Christian religion is concerned. Instruction is just but one part of education by which people learn. Education is much broader than instruction in that people are educated both formally and informally. Some learning is not necessarily deliberate. Still some other learning may be intentional without involving instruction. People may learn from a long observation of practices, thereby be able to do some things themselves. Instruction is never accidental; it is always intentional. *"In informal terms, education, though not planned, happens whenever and wherever learning takes place – and that can be anywhere"* (Little, 1982:36).

Religious instruction may be used interchangeably with Christian education, but it is not Christian education. Over and above the question of broadness of scope of the latter, religious instruction differs from Christian education in that it may mean instruction in

any religion, while Christian education focuses on Christian faith. In this particular case the use of 'Christian education' to refer to education in Christian faith, is still the most appropriate.

4.4.4   Christian Religious Education.

'Christian Religious Education' is yet another word or term which is being advocated in the place of 'Christian education.' It is a designation that was coined by Thomas Groome, and he devotes a whole book to it. The title of the book in question is *Christian Religious Education*. Christian religious education is *"...a political activity with pilgrims in time that deliberately and intentionally attends with them to the activity of God in our present, to the story of the Christian faith community, and to the vision of God's kingdom, the seeds of which are already among us"* (Groome, 1980:25). In short, Christian religious education is an activity which involves people, hence a 'political' activity. 'Pilgrims' are people who are on a journey. Christians are referred to as being pilgrims and passers-by (I Peter 2:11, 12). This is the activity of God in the present time. As the Christian faith community engages in its Christian activities, God is also involved with them.

Groome (1980:24-25) argues that for religions in general, the use of 'religious education' is appropriate; however, for Christian religion in particular, 'Christian religious education' would be a better option to use because

(i) it acknowledges the fact that Christians are not the only people who are religious. There are other people who own the enterprise as well; people who have their own religions.

(ii)   it allows identification of Christian religion with other religions, e.g., Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, etc.

(iii)   Christian education has a connotation that suggests indoctrination and arrogance. It may mean that Christians (officials of the church) indoctrinate children to obey them. It sounds like it has oppressive overtones.

Groome (1980:24) admits that the term 'Christian religious education' has its own inadequacies, but it is advantageous in the way that has been outlined so far. The term, he argues, is cumbersome and not very aesthetic, so in some cases he will use religious education (ibid, 25). His argument against Christian education is that it is not sufficiently specific. It may leave out Roman Catholics, Presbyterians, Baptists, etc. Moreover, he (1980:24) observes, *"becoming unduly specific could promote a narrow sectarianism in what ought to be a common enterprise."*

Jeff Astley also prefers the use of 'Christian religious education' in the place of Christian education and other titles. He (1994:9) maintains that, first, the use of 'Christian religious education' avoids any hint of Christian empire building and 'colonial dominance.' Second, the term is sufficiently generic to be ecumenical. Third, at least it differs from religious education as understood by British who include religious education in secular schools. Astley (ibid, 9) contends further that Christian religious education, as opposed to the religious education of secular schools in Britain, is concerned with a confessional churchly activity of evangelism, instruction and nurture.

I have two observations to make about Groome and Astley's notion of Christian religious education being a suitable title to express Christian education as we know it today.

First, the idea of Christian religious education being more ecumenical as opposed to Christian education, which sounds specific and narrow, does not make sense to me, unless my understanding of ecumenism differs from theirs. To me ecumenical simply means being at one with all churches that subscribe to Christian religion. The South African Council of Churches for example, is an ecumenical body that is comprised of

different denominations that subscribe to Christian faith[59]. Any talk of another religion either than Christian religion, evokes the expression, *'inter-faith dialogue.'* The use of Christian education can only be questioned among other religions. I would be more comfortable if 'Christian religious education' was preferred so as to accommodate all other religions, hence paving the way for interfaith dialogue. but not for expressing Christian faith in particular.

Second, 'Christian religious education' would be appropriate in a place where many religions were being discussed, so that Christian religion was now in focus among all other religions to be discussed. In this context it makes sense to use Christian religious education. However in a situation where the audience subscribes to Christian faith, I see no reason why 'Christian education' should not be used.

Be that as it may, each one of us comes to the table with his own background; a background or context that affects his way of viewing reality. These contexts impact on our understanding of words and their use. Christian education is just as good as Christian religious education, depending on who uses it, where he is using it and how it is understood by the audience in question.

4.5   CONTENDING FOR CHRISTIAN EDUCATION.

Indeed the debate of whether to use Christian education, religious education or Christian religious education, etc, rages on. Until such time that a global consensus is reached on which would be the most suitable title to express the transmission of Christian faith and nurture for life and ministry, I shall contend myself with the term, 'Christian education.' I do not deny that the term Christian education evokes a number of meanings, as I have indicated earlier on, yet I still believe that 'Christian education' is the suitable term to use. I argue that Christian education should be used and maintained for the following reasons:

---

[59] In the past year or so, with the new dispensation in South Africa, members of other religions are now coming on board the South African Council of Churches. I am not yet sure about constitutional and operational implications attendant thereto.

First, Christian education has to do with Christian faith or Christian religion, even before it deals with the persuasion of people to become Christians. At least it explains what Christian faith is all about so that even if no one wants to become a Christian, he should at least understand what it all entails and what makes Christians tick about it. I argue that the question of indoctrination Groome has alluded to earlier, does not hold water.

Second, Christians assume that Christian faith is the only religion and faith that there should be. They believe that Jesus alone is the way back to God, and that all other religions are false.[60] Benson (1988:199) argues that whereas 'religious education' may be used in other contexts, in reality, *"there should be no dilly dallying or uncertainty about the use of Christian education, after all it is based on the fact that God revealed Himself directly."* He maintained that *"... while evangelicals should use the term 'religious education'... for reasons of politeness, nonetheless... they must ever hold fast to the central fact that theirs is Christian education rather than religious education."*

In my opinion there would surely be nothing wrong in having 'Hindu education' or 'Islamic education' without mentioning 'religious.' In the same manner, there should be nothing wrong in the use of 'Christian education' to refer to the passing on of Christian faith, as well as nurture in Christslikeness, without mentioning 'religious.'

Third, using Christian education gives Christians a sense of ownership, certainty and confidence about what they stand for. It helps them to embrace Christian faith as Jews would embrace Judaism or Muslims embrace Islamic faith. The use of the word distinguishes it from other religions. This may sound arrogant, however, it makes Christians feel more comfortable to know that they can stand for their faith without being apologetic about it. This is especially so in the South African context where Christianity used to enjoy focal and major attention; an attention which is now divided

---

[60] I am aware that for all it is worth, this is just an assumption. However, I am taking this position to give Christians the benefit of the doubt, allowing them to operate within that premise.

among several other religions. With the emergence of other religions it is important that Christianity asserts its position and maps out its boundaries, without looking down upon others. Eavey (1964:51) arguing for Christian faith, states that *"... Christianity is not just one among a number of religions. It is more than a mere religion. A religion is any system of faith in and worship of a supreme being, or a god or gods. Christian faith is ... much more than this. It has to do with the God who has revealed Himself in creation and in His Son; the God who became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14). It has to do with the Christ who died for the sinners and rose again on the third day, thus vindicating His Sonship and Lordship, far above any other so called 'god."*

Fourth, the accusation that 'Christian education' may have negative overtones of indoctrination, conditioning, or brainwashing may only be true to the extent that people or students are not allowed to think for themselves. No one in his true senses, will embrace Christianity without thinking it through. Jesus' approach was purely persuasive, without however, forcing people to believe. He made it very clear that *"...If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow me"* (Luke 9:23). Any presentation of Christian faith that overlooks the hardships involved in following Christ, amounts to indoctrination, conditioning, brainwashing, etc. Multitudes followed Christ not so much because of indoctrination or being forced to do so. They did so willingly, exclaiming, *"No one ever spoke the way this man does..."* (John7:46). Peter confessed that there was no place to go, if they were to forsake Christ, for in Him are the words of eternal life (John 6:68-69). How can Christian education be branded as indoctrination when there is always such a high price to pay in order for one to be a follower of Christ?

Finally, Christian education is centred in Christ. It does not have independent existence. It derives its authority from Christ who is its founder. To me this is what matters. Whether there should be 'religious' after 'Christian' is immaterial. It concerns the religion that was brought about by Christ and should thus rightly be called Christian education.

I conclude by saying that, after everything has been said and done, each of us has his own preferences of which title to use, contingent upon our backgrounds, understanding, and preferences. I prefer to use Christian education for reasons that make sense to me. Someone else prefers religious education for other reasons, etc. No one can claim sole authority in determining what title is to be used for the teaching of Christian faith. Each person is entitled to use the title that he prefers, without being critical of other designations.

4.6   THE PURPOSE OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

No enterprise can be undertaken without clearly defined and specific goals in mind. Christian education is no exception to this rule. It may not be undertaken without a clear purpose of what it is intended to achieve in the long run, especially if it is to occupy its rightful place in the broad spectrum of theology.

'Purpose' for Christian education is important, for in it we are dealing with a God who has a purpose. From the foundation of the earth or rather before anything was formed or created, God had His eternal plan in place (Eph. 1:4, 5). Whatever has taken place in history, has either been allowed or occasioned by Himself according to His eternal purposes. He was pleased to reveal His purpose about His creation to us. He expects His people to be purposeful and orderly (I Cor. 14:40).

In Luke 14:25-33, Jesus expressed the same notion of purposefulness. He underlined the importance of planning, counting the cost, before any major project can be undertaken. His coming to the world was planned before the foundation of the world. He was ever conscious of His task and the time frame at His disposal (John 4:27; 9:4). At the end of His earthly ministry, when He was about to be arrested and crucified, He made a closing prayer, known among Biblical scholars as a priestly prayer (John 17). On the cross, before He gave up His spirit, He cried out, *"It is finished,"* meaning that the work for which He came to the world had been accomplished; the price for human redemption has been paid.

Paul's purpose for living, after his conversion and involvement in ministry, was epitomized in the words, *"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain"* (Phil. 1:21). His life was full of purpose; his time was fruitfully used. When he was about to die, he reminded Timothy that he had fought a good fight, he had kept the faith, he had run the race; all that which was left for him was a crown of righteousness (II Tim. 4:7, 8).

Whatever purpose we may come up with must surely be in line with what Jesus, His disciples, and the early church did in the area of Christian education (Acts 4:13; I John 2:6); their purpose must be our purpose. Methods, contexts and approaches may differ, but the purpose must be the same; it must be derived from Scriptures.

As Nancy T. Foltz (1988:170) has observed, *"The purpose of religious education[61] in the church must be observable from the denominational headquarters all the way down to the local churches... The programs, the curriculum resources, the budgets, must reflect consistency in the purpose and programs."* By implication, a good purpose of Christian education is the one that will permeate the entire operation of a denomination; it should not just be confined to a particular component or local church only.

Good Christian education, says Lawrence Richards (1975:24), is the one that is focused on the whole body of Christ, not just an individual. He observes that such oversight, that is, of *"...isolating the educational ministry of the church from the congregation's total life is a deadly error."* Rather, *"Christian education must deal with the bringing of all members of the body into a ministering relationship with each other."* He derives this understanding from the fact that the Holy Spirit gives gifts for the benefit of all, not just for one person.

Christian education must also take into account the doctrine of the church. Members must understand the church and its doctrine and how they fit into it. Any purpose of

---

[61] I have argued for the use of Christian education as a suitable term in this thesis. However, where it appears in a quotation or is used by another author to mean Christian education, I'll leave it to remain as such.

Christian education must bear this in mind; ensuring that it reinforces the church doctrine. Moreover, in seeking to formulate a good purpose of Christian education, it is very important that Christian education *"value all men as persons, respecting all men as having worth and dignity... "* (Richards, 1975:15).

Our approach in Christian education should always be such that it helps *"... persons to become knowledgeable, faithful, competent Christians as individuals and committed members of the body of Christ in corporate ministry"* (Browning, 1976:151). One cannot overlook the fact that there are (in many quarters) problems in the purpose of Christian education. One such problem has been highlighted by Jim Wilhoit. He (1986:9) argued that *"Christian education is in crisis. It is not healthy and vital; as a discipline, it is bankrupt... all too often it exhibits the fatal flaw of having no clear purpose. "* He maintains that the current crisis in Christian education stems from lack of a clear purpose at grass roots level.[62]

James (1986:11) underlines the importance of a purpose in Christian education thus: *"There must be a purpose for the efforts that lay workers put forth. Good communication skills, engaging methods, and well conceived curricula should serve the basic purpose, not replace it. "* Lack of purpose in Christian education leads to disharmony *"... in who we are and what we do in our religious education activities"* (Foltz, 1988:170). In the words of Daniel Aleshire (1981:33), *"An objective provides a focus and serves as a magnet within an ongoing enterprise. "*

Several authors have given what they perceive to be the purpose of Christian education. I will give some of these purposes below and analyze them so as to come up with what I think is the purpose of Christian education. As will become evident from closer comparison or study, the meaning (definition) and the purpose of Christian education will overlap in many instances. In other instances they will be different. It should come

---

[62] This quotation was taken up on page 21 under the formulation of the problem. It is captured again here for purposes of emphasis and coherence of facts.

as no surprise therefore, when what is considered to be the definition of Christian education suddenly becomes its purpose. In some instances it will be difficult to draw clear lines between definition and purpose. For example, Christian education is the transmission of Christian faith with the view to leading unbelievers to Christ. This definition has a purpose in it; the purpose is to lead unbelievers to Christ.

For Jesus, the purpose of Christian education, as implied in His approach, was threefold. First, His teaching ministry was used for *"... the proclamation of the gospel of the coming kingdom in small group settings."* Second, Jesus used His teaching ministry to instruct the disciples fully into the nature of the gospel so they could leave behind their old inadequacies of understanding God, themselves and the world around them. Third, Jesus taught so that disciples should be in a position both in mind and heart, to carry on the ministry He had begun among them (Smart in Aleshire, 1981:34)

In his own words, Aleshire (1981:36) maintains that the purpose of Christian education *"...is that persons become believers, mature as believers, and function as believers. It is as people learn these lessons that they enable the community – the church – to become the effective body of Christ, the faithful new humanity, and the redemptive people of God."*

Randolph Crump Miller (1956:37) writes, *"The main task of Christian education is to teach the truth about God, with all the implications arising from God's nature and activity, in such a way that the learner will accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, will become a member of the body of Christ, and will live in a Christian way."*

Another Christian educationist rendered the purpose of Christian education even more comprehensively: *"The objective of Christian education is that all persons be aware of God through His self disclosure, especially His redeeming love in Jesus Christ, and they respond in faith and love – to the end that they may know who they are and what their human situation means, grow as sons of God rooted in the Christian community, live in*

the Spirit of God in every relationship, fulfill their common discipleship in the world, and abide in the Christian hope" (Taylor, 1976)[63]

Robert Pazmino (1992:38, 39) argues for conversion as a goal of Christian education; conversion not understood as a once off event like Paul's conversion to faith on the road to Damascus. Pazmino refers to the kind of conversion that is continuous, so that it has proclamation, growth and maturity as well as ministry in it. Some aims are brief, for example, " ... *to bring all of man's experiences under the control of God"* (Eavey, 1964:54); *"...the man of God perfected in character and conduct until he is like God"* (ibid, 56); *"... to make men whole"* (Miller, 1956:55); *"...to produce godliness and Christlike maturity"* (Gangel & Benson, 1983:27). It will not be possible to reflect all renderings of the purpose of Christian education by different authors. However, before the analysis, something about the purpose of Christian education according to Jesus and Paul needs to be said. The purpose of Christian education for Paul was conversion (Acts 17:1-5; Romans 10:1-4; I Thessalonians 1:9); spiritual growth and maturity (Acts 18:11; Ephesians 4:11-15; Colossians 1:9-11); perfection of the saints for presentation before God (at the coming of Christ) (Colossians 1:28; I Thessalonians 5:23); strengthening of believers (Acts 14:22; I Thessalonians 3:2-4) and preparation of believers for ministry (service) (Ephesians 4:11-12; II Timothy 2:2; Hebrews 5:11-14).[64]

Jesus did more teaching than preaching. This is the view of many scholars. Indeed, more than anything else, the gospels portray Him as a teacher. He taught about the kingdom of God. The goal of His Christian education was conversion (Matthew 6:33; John 3:3, 4; 6:28, 29), spiritual growth and maturity (Matthew 5-7; 13; John 15); entry into heaven (Matthew 5:8; 7:21-25; 25; Luke 10:20); strengthening of believers (Matthew 5-7; 24; John 14- 17) and preparation for ministry (Mark 1:17; Luke 10:1-20; John 13; 15; 20:21; 21:15-17). Jesus' goal of teaching is summed up in His concept of making disciples.

---

[63] Page of the quotation cannot be remembered.

[64] I am aware that the authorship of "Hebrew" is controversial, however, I am presuming that Paul is the author thereof, acknowledging the controversy surrounding the authorship of the epistle in question.

Accordingly, His followers were to make disciples of all nations as they went about their daily duties (Matthew 28:19-20). Discipleship entails four elements[65] in it, namely, conversion to Christian faith, nurture for growth, training for ministry and sending to do the ministry "...*As the Father has sent me, I am sending you*" (John 20:21). So much can be said about Jesus, the Master teacher. This is intended to give a glimpse of what was in His mind when He went about teaching in synagogues and in market places.

Going through the purpose of Christian education as described above, mainly from Christian educators, one notices three main elements standing out as the main goal of Christian education, namely, conversion, growth to maturity and ministry or service. Any other goals are secondary as compared to the three. Admittedly, each author has explained the purpose of Christian education from his own perspective, emphasizing what mattered in his particular context almost to the exclusion of other important elements in the purpose of Christian education. It is for this reason that in some cases the purpose is short, while in other cases it is long and broad.

Daniel Aleshire (1981:36) summed up the purpose of Christian education. According to him, the purpose of Christian education "...*is that persons become believers, mature as believers, and function as believers.*" Robert Pazmino (1992:38, 39) sees the goal of Christian education as being conversion throughout, so that conversion becomes a continued process. The three elements mentioned above are implied in his purpose of Christian education; after all Christians change every day for the better. This is what Pazmino calls conversion. Randolph Miller's rendering of the purpose of Christian education is broad, but does not include the element of service or ministry. He (1950:37) speaks of "... *in such a way that the learner will accept Jesus as Saviour, ...and will live in a Christian way.*" Clearly, conversion and growth are reflected in his understanding of the purpose of Christian education, but ministry may be implied. We can only hope that he had ministry in mind when he talked of living in a Christian way.

---

[65] I do not lose sight of the fact that previously I talked of five elements; I included presentation of Christian faith.

The secondary aims of Christian education may be, among others, knowledge of Christian faith (without necessarily committing oneself to it), and strengthening of believers. This is a secondary aim because from the outset when Christians set out to teach, they do not have this goal in mind; except that it becomes an indirect result of their teaching, as truths become clear in the minds of hearers. Moreover, whenever strengthening is needed, some special kind of exhortation is engaged. Christians do not always need to be strengthened, but they always need to grow and be involved in the ministry.

Still another secondary goal of Christian education is to prepare saints for heaven. It is secondary in that it is part of growth and maturity; it is implied in these components (see Ephesians 4:11-15). Any other goals not mentioned here - except for conversion, maturity and ministry - are secondary.

Based on the purpose of Christian education as espoused by different Christian educators above, and in line with observations that have been made, I argue that *the purpose of Christian education is to so present Christ (the gospel, Christian faith, the revelation of God, the kingdom of God), in whatever context, in whichever way possible, that the learner may hear and understand the gospel (Christian faith, Christ) to the extent that he will respond in faith, turning away from his old way of life to God through Christ, and through constant nurturing, grow in the knowledge of Christ and His likeness in the context of other believers, and through quality training, be involved in the broader ministry of the local church as laid down in the Holy Scriptures.*

The rejection of the gospel by the learner does not however mean that Christian education has not taken place. Teaching about Christ may not yield positive results, as the purpose outlined above may seem to imply; however, teaching has taken place anyway.

4.7   CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have described the meaning of Christian education, the titles often used for Christian education and the purpose of Christian education. I have contended for the use of Christian education as a designation preferable to those already described, without being opposed to the use of other titles by other individuals.

The features thus discussed, are very important as one attempts to make a practical theological investigation of Christian education in the Baptist Convention of South Africa. The assessment of the teaching ministry of the Baptist Convention churches stands and falls by these important descriptions.

The historical development of Christian education, which follows in the next chapter, is also an important component in the investigation process.