

CHAPTER FIVE

THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Christian education as practised today in churches, especially in the Baptist Convention of South Africa (BCSA) in this regard, has its roots in the Old and New Testaments as well as in history. Any evaluation of Christian education must be preceded by the history of that Christian education; how it began and came to be where it is today. In this case the evaluation of Christian education in the Baptist Convention must be preceded by its history in the same denomination.

The history of Christian education in general must come before that of the Baptist Convention in particular, for it is out of this general history of Christian education that the history of the Baptist Convention Christian education came from. This chapter will focus on the development of Christian education in the Old and New Testaments, and the Reformation. The purpose thereof is to trace the beginnings of Religious education⁶⁶ all through history to the point where the Baptist Convention came into the picture.

The three areas I have identified along with the rise of the Baptist movement, are important in that they set the tone for the doing of Christian education in subsequent years. They are particularly important for the Baptist Convention history of Christian education. The Old and New Testaments lay the groundwork for Christian education in that they furnish us with the record of how the teaching ministry of the church began and how it took shape in the course of history. What makes the two Testaments so indispensable is that in both cases, God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is the author of religious education. The three persons are involved in religious education. This

truth will become evident as this essay proceeds. There can thus be no better source and justification of Christian education in our churches than this truth. If God in His trinity, was involved in teaching, then His people have to follow suit.

What is more, the Old and New Testaments are not only the basis and pattern for Christian education; they also constitute its content. Christian education is through and through about these two Testaments, otherwise it ceases to be Christian education, unless it has been used to mean the approach in all teaching, and not the content. It is for this reason that Paul the apostle reminded Timothy, “*All Scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work*” (II Timothy 3:16, 17). It is against this background that the history of Christian (Religious) education is traced from the Old and New Testaments.

The Reformation period also comes into focus as a critical period in the history of the Church in general and that of Christian education in particular. First, the Reformation characterizes the restoration of the early church’s faith and practice. Second, the Baptist denomination (like other Protestant denominations) is a product of the Reformation period. A more detailed description of how the Baptist denomination emanated from the Reformation follows later in this chapter.

Notwithstanding the flaws which may be identifiable in the Reformation event, some of which were the condoning of infant baptism and the control of the church by the state and vice versa, the Reformation in itself went a long way in among others, impacting upon the direction Christian education was to take, after the dark period of the Middle ages.

⁶⁶ I have used ‘Religious education’ deliberately, seeing that there is no Christian education in the Old Testament, except to say Christian education has its roots in the Old Testament.

In addition, the historical development of Christian education forms part of the basis or framework within which evaluation will be done in the seventh chapter. The sequence to be followed in this chapter is the historical development of Religious education in the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the Reformation, and finally, the rise of the Baptist denomination.

5.2 THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

5.2.1 Background

I have preferred to use “*Religious education*” instead of Christian education in this instance because it is only in the New Testament that we begin to talk of Christian education. In the Old Testament it is more of religious education or Jewish Religious Education than anything else. It is against this Jewish religious background that Christian education came into being centuries later in the New Testament. The New Testament is only new to the extent that Jesus Christ appears on the scene as a new mediator between God and people (I Tim. 2:5) as opposed to the Old Testament where the blood of animals featured predominantly.

The link between religious education in the Old Testament and Christian education in the New Testament is noticeable among others, in the way in which Old Testament prophets pointed to the coming of Christ, the Messiah. Already, they taught about Him in the Old Testament, so that His coming in the New Testament was a confirmation and fulfillment of what was taught in the Old Testament. It should come as no surprise therefore when Peter alludes to the prophets’ yearning to understand and to see what they prophesied about. He argues that it was for us in this age that these things were made manifest; the prophets were serving us, not themselves (I Peter 1:10-12).

In another instance Christians are referred to as being the new Israel, the people of God, a peculiar nation, a kingdom of priests, etc, titles that were used to refer to Jews as God's nation in the Old Testament (I Pet. 2:9). Further, the link between the Old and New Testament religious education can be deduced from the fact that New Testament writers as well as Jesus Himself, used the Old Testament to teach about the way of salvation. They interpreted the Old Testament in the light of the new covenant as embodied in Jesus Christ. The two Testaments are clearly inseparable.

Briefly, Christian education is rooted in Judaism, for it arises from the Judaeo religious history. It is not possible to understand Christian education fully without going back to its Jewish roots in the Old Testament. J. Ottis Sayes (1978:35) argues that any study of Christian education should begin with Jewish education, especially in the Old Testament times, because Christianity has to date, retained much of its Hebrew heritage. It may rightly be called "*Transformed Judaism.*"

The teaching ministry (religious education) in the Old Testament begins with God as the Teacher. The God who is a Teacher Himself commands Moses to teach the Israelites His laws, statutes and commands. Moses not only teaches those laws, but he in turn, commands Israelites to teach their children about God (Deutoronomy 6:1-9). Along with God and Moses, the Old Testament further portrays Jewish parents, priests, prophets, sages (wisemen) and Scribes (Rabbis) as teachers within the Jewish context of relationship with God.

5.2.2 God as Teacher

Religious education begins with God, not humans. It is as we begin with God that we shall know what to do with education (Hayes, 1991:42). Byrne (in Hayes, 1991:32) scored a point when he said, "*The fundamental thought underlying nearly everything that we would want to say about Christian education is that God is the teacher. It is He who establishes all truth; it is He who wills that men shall know the truth. He gives us*

curious and reflective minds to seek the truth and grasp it and use it. He even gives us the supreme privilege of helping Him in partnership both to teach and to learn”

God revealed Himself to the Jews through history and the law. Thus Hebrew history is Bible history. It is the history of God revealing Himself to Jews and the Jews responding in obedience to God. Initially God revealed Himself to Abraham, and in this revelation God taught Abraham His Word; He taught him what it was to believe; to hold on to God’s promises under all circumstances. Abraham became a friend of God because He learned from Him and obeyed Him (II Chron. 20:7; Psalm 25:14).

God revealed Himself to the Jews through Moses and to the Israelites directly through His mighty acts of deliverance from Egyptian slavery (Exod. 3, 12). He manifested Himself to Moses, teaching him about who He was, and then Moses in turn, taught the Israelites about who God was. On the other hand, God also taught the Israelites about who He really was through the miraculous deliverance from Egypt and through the mighty deeds He brought to pass on the way to Canaan. In this way God was teaching the Israelites to honor Him and believe Him as the only God who was. Throughout, God was involved in the process of teaching the Israelites. His revelation was intended to educate them. Whereas He used Moses to reveal Himself and to teach His laws, He also revealed Himself personally to the Israelites by His mighty works.

The overarching theme of Jewish education was about God. God had manifested Himself to them; in turn, their duty was to teach about the God who had revealed Himself.

5.2.3 Moses, the teacher of the law

From childhood Moses was taught by his parents. It is thus no surprise that when he became an adult, he preferred to be identified with the suffering Jews, rather than be called Pharaoh's daughter's son (Hebs. 11:24, 25). Such a drastic step of even risking his life for the cause of the Jews could not have been possible without the teaching background of his parents about his Jewish roots.

Moses was appointed to teach (Exodus 18:20; 24:12; Deut. 4:14; 31:19). He himself was taught by God who revealed Himself to him, as "*I am who I am*" (Exod. 3:14). Through His mighty deeds, from the time that He appeared to Moses on Mount Horeb, God was taking Moses through a process of learning, so that he knew God better as days went by. He was ever along with all other Israelites, sometimes alone, in the school of learning about God and His laws.

What he heard and learned and saw in God, he would pass on to Jews. God instructed him from time to time about what he was to tell the Israelites. He gave him ten commandments and laws pertaining to living (Exodus 20). The books of Exodus to Numbers, all have to do with the law that God gave to the Israelites through Moses and other Jewish leaders. Moses declared God had commanded him to teach the Jews His statutes, judgements and commandments (Lev. 26:43-46). In Deuteronomy for example, Moses revises the law, repeating it to the Jews. The law was the foundation of Jewish education. The purpose of the law was instruction. The law was "*... in charge of us until Christ came*" (Gal. 3:24, GNB). The law was intended to expose sin. It also demanded holiness and righteousness, being based on the holiness of God (Lev. 11:44-45). The law was the central core of Jewish education.

5.2.4 The teaching role of Jewish Parents.

Parents were in turn, tasked with the responsibility of teaching their children God's laws. The home became the most important place for the instruction of children. Parents were commanded to teach their children, even before they could be taught on other levels or at other places. They were commanded by law to teach their children the history of the people and the ordinances of the law (Ex. 12:26-27; Deut. 4:9-10; 6:6-7; 11:19). Parental teaching responsibility to children was epitomized in these words, *"Never forget these commands that I am giving you today. Teach them to your children. Repeat them when you are at home and when you are away, when you are resting and when you are working"* (Deut. 6:6-7, GNB). The book of Proverbs abounds with fathers and mothers teaching their children the way of life. Sons and daughters are urged to respond in obedience to their parental teaching (Prov. 1:8).

Throughout Jewish history, parents and the home were the foundation of teaching for children, even before the church came into the picture. Parents were first teachers. God gave a law to the Israelites and commanded the fathers to teach their children so that coming generations should know Him and the law (Ps. 78:5-7). Father and mother were assigned to teach the child from his first years. The child's soul was to be moulded from childhood. The law was written on door posts, parchments, tied around their necks so the child could learn it and know it. Festivals and rituals were occasions for teaching as well. Children would ask questions and thus be educated in the law of God and in the festivals and rituals. Other institutions of learning about God were mere auxiliaries when compared to the role of parents and the home in the teaching of children.

Jewish family life demanded obedience from the child. The child had to honour parents. The father was the head of the family; discipline was severe. Adult education went on in that parents were to learn over and over again what they were to teach their children. It

was the responsibility of fathers to instruct sons in the way of life (Prov. 22:6; Eph. 6:1-4).

Religious education began in the home. In the New Testament as will be seen later, the home becomes a very important centre for children's education in the way of the Lord.

5.2.5 Priests as teachers in the Old Testament

Priests are people who act between God and people. They were the descendants of Levy, and were appointed for the task of serving God and the people, representing them to God and God to the people. They were not supposed to own property, they lived on tithes from the people of God (Lev. 10:12-15; 21-35; Num. 18:8-20). Among others their duties were

(i) to instruct people in the law of God. They were commanded to teach God's law (Lev. 10:11; Deut. 24:9; 31:9). This duty was the most important (Deut. 33:8-10). In fact Samuel, the prophet and priest, regarded it as sinful not to teach God's law (I Sam. 12:23, 24). The law was to be read after every seven years before all Israel; all Israel was to listen to the reading of the law (Deut. 31:10-13)

In the main, like Ezra, priests interpreted the law to the people. C. B. Eavey (1964:55) has this to say about priests, that their duty was to transmit to generations of priests to come knowledge concerning rituals and ceremonies of the law. "*...the priests were to teach people how to worship, to instruct them in the law of sacrifices, in ritual, and in religious duties. Every place a priest functioned was a place of instruction in the law and in religious observance.*" Priests further taught people (Jews) how to live in relation to one another. They were instructed in ethical and civil duties. The nature of their religious services led them to being exempted from other duties and from owning property.

(ii) to pray for people, offer sacrifices and perform ritual ceremonies. All these were also intended not only to appease God, but to evoke in people some attitude and belief towards God. The holiness of God was being proclaimed.

5.2.6 The teaching role of Prophets.

Prophets were raised by God to declare His message to the nation of Israel. They were messengers of God sent to call the nation to order; to declare God's Word for the hour to the people. They would declare God's message to the people as God the Holy Spirit prompted them. However, they were also teachers of God's law. Fletcher Swift (in Eavey 1964:59) says the following about prophets, *"Probably no nation has ever produced a group of religious and moral teachers comparable with the prophets of ancient Israel. Through their spoken public addresses and writings they became creators of national, religious and social ideals, critics and inspirers of public policies..."*

Prophets were divinely called by God to speak a message that He gave to them for the hour. They represented the highest education; education that was centred on God. Their message was based on the past; on the teaching of Moses' law. They directed attention to God as Creator, Sustainer and Ruler of the universe. They taught that God was Israel's God who had chosen them for a purpose. He is just, holy, righteous, merciful, loving, understanding and patient with His own people. He is in control, all knowing, all powerful – punishing His own people for wrong doing, rewarding those who do good. (Ibid, 60).

There was also the school of prophets of which disciples of prophets were members. This school was run by older prophets. They trained these disciples and left them literary legacy – their writings still speak to the moral, social, and spiritual ills of our society today (Sayes, 1978:41)

5.2.7 Wise men (sages) as teachers

Not much is said about this category of people, but they were very important in Israel. They were often referred to as elders. They became more prominent after exile (Eavey, 1964:56). Solomon was an example of such people. The book of Proverbs underlines the fact that there were many such wise people also known as sages. Solomon did compile his own proverbs but most of them came from other wise men of his time. Whereas Solomon had his own sayings, he also “...gathered into orderly arrangement, teachings which were current among the people and perhaps had been for centuries.” (Ecc. 12:9) (Eavey, 1964:57). They were accepted by people and looked up to as wise people because of their age, insight, understanding and experience.

Sages ministered to individuals in Israel. They used proverbs as has been pointed out above. Their main focus was to give council on life and the fear of the Lord. They instructed people in wisdom, and in just, wise, and fair dealings, for that is what God required. “*They stressed the harm and evil of impurity, falsehood, pride, dishonesty to parents, unjust practices, cruelty, intemperance, and irreverence. They highly exalted such virtues as truth, honesty, fairness, patience, courage, humility, charity, and godliness...*” (Ibid, 57).

Wisdom began with the fear of the Lord (Prov. 1:7). For any one to be wise, one had to fear the Lord. Proverbs 1:2-6 articulates vividly what the aim of wisdom was. This wisdom was available to all categories of people. However, more than any other category, the wise people concentrated on young people.

Like all other Jewish categories of leaders and teachers thus far, sages indicate the importance and development of religious education among Jews.

5.2.8 Scribes also served as teachers.

We read for the first time about scribes in Jeremiah 8:8 in the Old Testament, where scribes are condemned for being dishonest by changing God's law. It is therefore unthinkable for the Israelites to presume they knew the law. Scribes were writers or copiers of the law. Their emergence in the Old Testament was occasioned by the need to preserve the law. The fall of Judah and the destruction of the temple necessitated the preservation of written and oral tradition. In this instance the scribes became very important people. Scribes were descendants of Levites and priests.

Their duty was mainly to copy the law, to edit it and to interpret it (Gangel, 1991:18). More than anything else they served to preserve the law and in this way they gained prominence.

As has been pointed out, like prophets, priests and sages, scribes were viewed as interpreters of the drama of the Lord in history and in revelation (Hayes, 1991:34). What this amounts to is that scribes not only copied the law, but they taught it to people, interpreting it to them. Their method of teaching was among others, public discussions, questions and answers, memorization, the exact verbal reproduction of the teacher's words, stories, oral laws, etc (Sayes, 1978:41, 42).

The scribes gained prominence after exile, for more than ever before, they needed to copy the law, study it and interpret it to people. Ezra is an example of the important role played by scribes after exile. The Bible says about him, "*For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the Lord, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel*" (Ezra 7:10).

By the time Jesus appeared on the scene, some scribes were so good and had achieved so much distinction that they earned themselves the title, “Rabbi”, which meant a “Master” in teaching. For this reason, Jesus Himself was called Rabbi. He taught with such distinction that He earned Himself this title (Matt. 7:28; John 3:2).

The only failure of the scribes during Jesus’ time was that they could not see how their teachings were fulfilled in the New Testament. Be that as it may, their role as preservers of the law, especially as teachers (interpreters) thereof, underscored the importance of religious education for their time.

The Old Testament is the seedbed of Christian education. This is so because Christian education can be traced back to Jewish religious education in the Old Testament times. In the discourse thus far outlined, I have sought to trace the development of religious education in the Old Testament. I can safely conclude that teaching ministry permeated the whole of the Old Testament.

5.3 THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

5.3.1 Introduction

It has already been pointed out that Christianity, as we know it today from the New Testament, has been greatly influenced by Judaism (Jewish education). To this end Charles Benton Eavey (1964:76) argued, “*Jesus and the apostles revered the teachings of the Old Testament though they spoke out forcefully against the ideas and opinions of men that had corrupted God’s revelation.*” Therefore in many ways, Christianity was modeled after Judaism.

This should come as no surprise for Christianity emanates from Judaism. Jesus was born as a Jew to save Jews. He came to fulfill the law (Judaism) and not to destroy it (Matthew 5:17). Salvation was first for the Jews, and then for Gentiles. Paul admitted this fact to the Roman Christians, *“I have complete confidence in the Gospel; it is God’s power to save all who believe, first the Jews, and also the Gentile”* (Rom. 1:16, GNB).

During the occasion of his missionary journeys, Paul would start with the Jews, arguing with them to the end that Jesus was the Messiah. When they did not accept his teachings he would go to the Gentiles (Acts 18:7ff). Jesus defended this truth clearly, sometimes harshly, as with the Syrophoenician woman (Matt. 15:21-28). I am reminded of how He ministered to the Jews only, saying He also was the son of Abraham (Luke 19:1-10). He further sent 12 disciples to the household of Israel only (Matt. 10:5-6).

Worship and instruction were modeled after the synagogue pattern. Children were to be instructed by parents. The New Testament teaches the same thing as well (Eph. 6:4). As much as Jews were to be taught God’s law, in the same way new believers in the New Testament were to undergo vigorous apostolic teaching in the temple and in houses (Acts 2:42; 5:42). In many ways Christian education resembles Jewish education. The question at stake however, is exactly how Christian education developed in the New Testament.

In the New Testament, as in the Old Testament, teaching begins with God; in this case with Jesus Christ Himself, hence Christian education. The Holy Spirit is also referred to as the teacher, enabling believers to teach and giving gifts of teaching to the church. Further, Jesus commanded His followers to teach, which they did. Thus in short, in the

New Testament, in one way or another, every Christian is a teacher. What stands out glaringly is that Christian education constituted a very important component of the entire ministry of the New Testament church.

5.3.2 Jesus, the Teacher.

Jesus was a teacher. He was the first person to teach in a New Testament sense. Nicodemus referred to Him as a teacher come from God (John 3:2). More than anything else the Gospels portray Jesus as a teacher. Forty five times He is referred to as a teacher and fourteen times as a Rabbi. He was a teacher par excellence. *“He used teaching as a chief means of accomplishing what He had come into the world to do. That was to show men the way to God and to shape their attitudes, ideals and conduct to conform to God’s will. Teaching was His business. He was often a healer, sometimes a worker of miracles, frequently a preacher, but always a teacher”* (Eavey, 1964:78).

His disciples, enemies, and crowds all regarded Him as a teacher. He also regarded Himself as a teacher, acknowledging the title as it was used of Him (John 13:13). Three reasons help us realize that He was a teacher, namely that, people recognized Him as a teacher, calling Him ‘Rabbi’ or ‘Teacher’, without Him instructing them to do so (Matt. 7:28; John 3:2). The Gospel writers described Jesus’ ministry as a teaching one. There are many references to this end, among them Mark 4:1-2; 6:2, 6; 8:31; 9:31; 12:35. He was so enmeshed in teaching that He came to be known as a great teacher. The third reason that helps us recognize He was a teacher, is that His followers were called pupils or disciples, which really meant learners. The word itself is used two hundred times to refer to Jesus’ followers (Wilson 1981;54).

As has been pointed out, Jesus did more teaching than preaching. In some cases it was difficult to draw the line between teaching and preaching. What mattered, however, was

the fact that communication was done (Gangel and Warren, 1983:67). He taught all categories of people. He taught multitudes (Matt. 5-7), small groups (Matt. 13; 16; John 13), and individuals (John 3; 4). His approach was that of going from place to place, ensuring that He went to where people were. He would begin from the known and proceed to the unknown. A case in point is His conversation with the Samaritan woman, where He began by asking for water, and then proceeded to revealing Himself as a Messiah, something the Samaritan woman knew about but did not know the person Himself (John 4). Another example is His use of parables, i.e., earthly stories with spiritual meanings.

He taught with so much authority that the crowds marveled. Some said of Him, “...*Nobody has ever talked like this man*” (John 7:46, GNB). His overarching theme was the kingdom of God. The purpose of His teaching was to lead people to God through Himself (John 14:6). He came to show the way back to God; to demonstrate how people ought to live in relation to God and to one another. He came that we may have life and have it abundantly (John 10:10).

One overriding feature in Jesus’ teaching ministry is the equipping of disciples for ministry, what we can call ‘*discipleship*.’ His way of teaching was such that He reproduced Himself, so that after He was gone, His disciples would perpetuate His ministry. His last and so called great commission, that His followers go and make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:19-20), was proof that He had taught and trained (discipled) them to the point of entrusting them with the work of discipling others.

Time and space will not allow that Jesus' teaching ministry be described any further; of importance is the fact that it reinforces the importance of Christian education and sets the tone for its development in the New Testament Church and in subsequent years.

5.3.3 The imperative to teach

In the Old Testament God commanded certain people to teach, e.g., Moses, Priests, etc. They in turn commanded others to teach. Moses commanded parents to teach their children (Deut. 6:6, 7). In the New Testament Jesus both teaches and commands His followers to teach as well. In the great commission, He commands His disciples to teach new believers to obey His commands, and promises He will be with them to the end of the age (Matt. 28:19-20). After His resurrection, He commanded Peter to tend His flock. Three times He commanded Peter to look after His lambs (i.e., His church) (John 21). Feeding the flock means among others, teaching the Church of Jesus Christ.

Paul urged Timothy and other church elders to teach. He himself was a teacher. He urged Timothy to pass on what he had heard from him before many witnesses, to other faithful witnesses who would in turn pass the same to others (II Tim. 2:2). This implies teaching. The author to the Hebrew Christians rebuked them in that up until then they still needed to be taught, when they should actually be teachers themselves (Hebs. 5:11-14).

Talking to parents Paul urged that they should not provoke their children to anger, rather they should bring them up with Christian discipline and instruction (Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:21). This practice was taken over from the Old Testament where parents (the home) were responsible for teaching their children. Writing to the Colossians, Paul reminded them to "...*Teach and instruct each other with all wisdom...*" (Col. 3:16, GNB). He further instructed Titus to "...*teach what agrees with sound doctrine...and to instruct*

older men to be sober, sensible and self-controlled...” (Tit. 2:1-2, GNB). Older women must accordingly be instructed to behave as women who live a holy life should. They are to teach what is good and train younger women to love their husbands and children (Tit. 2:3-5). After the example of Jesus, teaching becomes imperative for all Christians, not just for religious leaders only. The letter to the Hebrews says it all, “...*you ought to be teachers...*” (Hebrews 5:12).

5.3.4 The apostles and disciples of Jesus Christ also taught.

The whole of the New Testament abounds with teaching experiences and lessons. It is important to note that the writings in the New Testament are teachings in themselves. They arose out of varying circumstances; were intended to address specific situations, however, in the final analysis, they are teaching lessons themselves. In this case, the words of Paul to Timothy about the writings of the Old Testament hold true also for the New Testament writings. “*All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching the truth, rebuking error, correcting faults, and giving instruction for right living...*” (II Tim. 3:16, GNB).

From the coming of the Holy Spirit and the resultant conversion of many Jews, teaching of apostolic doctrine went on daily (Acts 2:42). Peter taught on the day of Pentecost in his famous sermon (Acts 2:13-40). Preaching was teaching.

Whereas there was in the early church, much preaching, fellowship, healing and miracles, teaching seemed to have dominated the ministry of apostles. Teaching and preaching went together, “*And every day in the temple and in people’s homes they continued to teach and preach the good news...*” (Acts 5:42, GNB).

Paul spent most of his time teaching. The Bible portrays him more as a man who taught than preached. Indeed he did preach even as he was called to preach to the Gentiles (Gal. 2:7). On several instances he spoke of himself and his colleagues as having preached (I Cor. 1:23; 9:16). It cannot therefore be denied that Paul ever preached. He knew it was his calling and he preached often times. However like Christ, he seemed to have done more of teaching than preaching.

In Antioch Paul taught believers for the whole year (Acts 11:22-26). He taught during his missionary journeys with Barnabas and Silas. His approach was that he first teach (by argument and debate) the Jews in their synagogues before he turned to Gentiles (Acts 18:4-7). He was a teacher more than He was a preacher (Acts 13:14-48). In Corinth, he stayed for a year and a half teaching people the Word of God (Acts 18:11).

In Ephesus he held discussions and taught in Tyrannus hall for two years (Acts 19:9-10). His letters were purely instructional, though arising out of particular needs. It is said that fifteen times in the pastoral epistles the word "*didaskalia*," meaning to teach, is used by Paul. It cannot be denied that teaching was very important in the ministry of Paul. Several Biblical texts underline this fact; they are, I Cor. 11:14; Ephes. 4:21; Col. 1:28; 2:7; 3:16; II Thes. 2:15; I Tim. 2:12; 4:11; 6:2; II Tim. 2:2; Tit. 1:11) (Gangel and Benson, 1983:24).

The effectiveness of Paul's teaching ministry can be seen in the elders he appointed in every place, in Timothy and Titus, as they were matured enough to can pastor churches. Paul equipped the saints not only for life, but also for ministry, thus fulfilling his own

words to the church at Ephesus, where he spoke of the leadership gifts being given among others for the preparation of the saints for the ministry (Eph. 4:11, 12).

What are we to say of Peter, Apollos and elders? Peter taught at the house of Cornelius the way of salvation (Acts 10). His letters imply that he taught for maturity. This aim is evident in his words that the believers in dispersion should desire the sincere milk of the word so they could grow in their salvation (I Pet. 2:1-3). Further, he urged them to “... *continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*” (II Pet. 3:18, GNB). Apollos was an eloquent speaker. He proclaimed and taught correctly with great enthusiasm facts about Jesus (Acts 18:24-28). Elders were assigned with the duty of teaching the Church of Jesus Christ (Acts 20:28) and some of them taught so well that they deserved double honour (I Tim:5:17).

In the imperative to teach as well as in the teaching event itself as seen in the life and ministry of the early apostles and disciples of Christ, one notices the development of Christian education and the importance it assumed for many more years to come.

Christian education would however not have been possible without the help of the Comforter, the Holy Spirit. His role as a Teacher and as the one who empowers believers to teach, receives attention below.

5.3.5 The Holy Spirit as Teacher

In the Old Testament God was portrayed as a Teacher. Jesus Christ was also a Teacher par excellence in the New Testament. The Holy Spirit, the third person in the trinity, is also a Teacher. All in all, God in His three Persons is a Teacher.

The Holy Spirit is portrayed as a Teacher, first, because Jesus said about Him that when He comes He will teach the disciples everything and make them remember all that which He had told them (John 14:26). As a Teacher He guides into all truth (John 16:13), and among others, He gives gifts of teaching, knowledge and discernment (I Cor. 12:8-11; Eph. 4:11) to the Church.

Second, The Holy Spirit would illuminate the understanding of the disciples. Roy Zuck (in Wilhoit, 1986:56) explains illumination thus, it “...is the Spirit’s work, enabling Christians to discern the meaning of the message and to welcome and receive it as from God”. Paul expressed it aptly in his letter to the Corinthians, “For the message about Christ’s death on the cross is nonsense to those who are being lost; but for us who are being saved it is God’s power” (I Cor. 1:18, GNB). Speaking directly about the illuminating work of the Spirit he said, “Whoever does not have the Spirit cannot receive the gifts that come from God’s Spirit. Such people really do not understand them; they are nonsense to them, because their value can be judged only on a spiritual basis. Whoever has the Spirit, however, is able to judge the value of everything...” (I Cor. 2:14, 15, GNB).

Third, the Holy Spirit reveals truth about God so that that which was not known is revealed and known (John 15:26). An example of the revealing work of the Holy Spirit is the confession of Peter about who Jesus really was. At the question of Jesus as to who the disciples said He was, Peter responded to say Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of the living God (Matt. 16:13-17). Upon Peter’s response Jesus remarked to say Peter could never have known had it not been revealed to him by the Father. The revelation was the work of the Holy Spirit. Describing the order of worship to the church in Corinth, Paul urged, “...when you meet for worship, one person has a hymn, another a teaching,

another a revelation from God...” (I Cor. 14:26, GNB). This revelation would obviously come by God the Holy Spirit, thus confirming His teaching role.

In the fourth instance, the Holy Spirit is a Teacher because He transforms both teacher and student alike. Transformation of people is the purpose of Christian education so that they should be converted and become more and more like Christ (Eph. 4:11-16). It is the Holy Spirit who regenerates (changes, transforms) unbelievers at the point of repentance (John 3:3-5; Tit. 3:5). After the initial transformation at the point of conversion, the Holy Spirit continues the work of transformation, changing believers from one image to another as they become more and more like Christ (II Cor. 3:18).

Fifth, the Spirit facilitates the work of Christian education. He not only transforms teacher and student alike to grow in Christ’s likeness, He also enables the teacher to transmit information with power and conviction (I Thes. 1:5). Each time the filling of the Holy Spirit is mentioned in the Bible, it is usually accompanied and associated with works or a life of power. An example to that end is His mention in Acts 4:29-31, where after much prayer, the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit and they preached boldly and performed healing miracles in the power of the Holy Spirit.

In the sixth instance, the Holy Spirit engenders interest in the things of God so that Christians will “*...seek those things above, where Christ is...*” (Col. 3:1). He causes Christians to focus their minds on spiritual things, not on earthly things or carnal matters (Rom. 8:5, 6, 10, 14).

Seventh, the Holy Spirit has played an important part in bringing about the Word of God. He inspired Bible writers to write as they did, hence the Bible as we have it today

(II Tim. 3:16, 17; II Pet. 1:20, 21). In the same manner He enlivens the Word of God so that through it, we can hear God speaking to us. It is no wonder that the Word of God is regarded as the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17). Through the Holy Spirit, the Word becomes sharper than any two edged sword (Hebs. 4:12).

Finally, the Holy Spirit glorifies Jesus Christ. As the Word of God is preached and taught under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, He lifts up Christ in the believer and the unbeliever, so that Christ is seen and understood as who He claims to be, the Lord of lords, King of kings and Saviour of the world. The Holy Spirit elevates Christ, not Himself (John 15:26; 16:13-15).

The role of God the Holy Spirit as outlined above, makes Him a Teacher and an important agent in Christian education. Christian education is not possible without the Holy Spirit. It rises and falls by the Holy Spirit.

5.3.6 Teaching as a gift of the Holy Spirit

Teaching is mentioned as being one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:11, 12). What is more, teaching is mentioned in the same text as one of the five leadership gifts by which the church should be edified, nurtured and prepared for the ministry. The Holy Spirit does not only teach, as has been explained above, He also gives among others, a gift of teaching for the benefit of the Church of Jesus Christ. Teaching as a gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church is so important that it is mentioned along with that of prophecy in the church at Antioch. It is said, "*In the church at Antioch there were some prophets and teachers...*" (Acts 13:1, GNB).

Christian education in the New Testament begins with Jesus Himself and then proceeds to God the Holy Spirit. It continues with the Holy Spirit giving gifts of teaching to the church, enabling believers to teach effectively. Further, it becomes imperative for Jesus' followers to teach, so that not only apostles or religious leaders of the day taught, rather all Christians are expected to teach other fellow Christians and unbelievers. This description briefly underscores the development of Christian education in the New Testament.

5.4 THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION DURING THE REFORMATION

5.4.1 Introduction

I have pointed out earlier on that the Reformation was very important in that it was within that context that the Baptist denomination came into being. Moreover, the Reformation constitutes a very critical period in the history of the Church, and in particular, that of Christian education. It characterizes the restoration of Christian doctrine, justification by faith, priesthood of all believers, etc., all of which have implications for Christian education. During the Reformation the content of Christian education was fully restored, the image of the Church brought to question, the beliefs and practices of the Roman Catholic Church outrightly challenged.

Reformation meant for Martin Luther, the purification of a corrupt institution (Reed and Prevost, 1993:189). Reformation had to do with the total turn around of the Church in its teaching and practices. It is the renewal of the Church in doctrine, practice and emphasis.

Notwithstanding the flaws in the Reformation, i.e., the acceptance of infant baptism and the control of the Church by the state, a situation that led to the rise of the Anabaptist

movement, the Reformation was a milestone in the history of Christianity. Like the Old and New Testament history of religious education, the Reformation also warrants special attention as it forms the basis on which Protestant Christian education came into being. Moreover, it may be longwinded and irrelevant to rewrite the whole of the history of Christian education. Reformation directly impacted on the direction Christian education was to take from that time on.

Reformation was prompted by the practices and teachings of the Middle Ages church. The state of the Roman Catholic Church (which had become a state church by this time) had deteriorated to the point where it now became necessary and imperative to do something about it. It will therefore be expedient that some key concerns in the Middle Ages Church be raised as an introduction to the Reformation discourse.

It was emperor Constantine the great who turned the church into being a state church, thus robbing it of its independent status. In the first, second and third centuries, the Church had enjoyed independence from the state, a tendency characteristic of the early New Testament Church. It was from 329 A.D. onwards, that the church became a state church. It assumed the name, the Roman Catholic Church. Chester O. Galloway (1978:60) preferred to label the period from 329 to 529 (the fall of the Roman empire) the period of the Western Church because for the first time the church and the state became one thing; something foreign to the nature of the church from its earliest formation.

The recognition of Christianity as a state religion meant that whereas initially not everyone would qualify as a member of the church, this time all people were accepted into the church as Christians, following the order of the emperor. By implication, masses of people were baptized and accepted into membership of the church without proper understanding of Christian faith, let alone personal Christian faith in Christ. This development spelt the beginning of the decline of Christian faith and personal



commitment to it. The work of the church leaders grew, as they had to teach people who were admitted into the church the experience of new birth. They had to find new ways to nurture large numbers of persons and lead them to a deeper understanding and appreciation of Christian faith (Kennedy in Pazmino, 1988:130).

It was during this time that monasticism came into being, as a reaction to corruption in the Church. Certain individuals were gravely concerned about the secularization of the Church in its merging with the state. However, this fourth century turn of events as described so far, did not deter men of Aurelius Augustine's (354-430) calibre from preaching and teaching right. His thinking, vision, and teaching about the greatness of God, the goodness of His grace, and his emphasis on the sinfulness of humanity carried wide influence among churches in Europe. He distinguished between knowing God and knowing about God. He taught that God can be known through faith. He also taught about the origin of sin, predestination of humanity, the irresistible grace of God, perseverance of the saints and the necessity of both baptism and the Lord's Supper for salvation to be complete (Galloway, 1978:62).

The period of the Middle Ages spans the entire period from 529 to 1350. It was called 'Dark Ages' because the Bible was no longer followed to the dot; Christian education was very scarce in the churches. Salvation was through the priests. The church was at its worst in terms of secularism and compromise. Only in monasteries was there any sound education at all. In universities and cathedral schools, only certain people qualified, namely, those who were entering the orders (Pazmino, 1988:131).

The practice of parents as educators of children in the faith also declined and was replaced by institutions such as monasteries. Economic survival was the main concern of people. The only way of learning for the common person was within the confines of worship. It was in worship, ritual, architecture, art, drama and Christian festivals that Christian education messages were communicated to the masses.

It should be borne in mind however, that in other quarters, learning went on. Scholasticism reached its peak during the time of Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274) in the thirteenth century. For him to teach was “...to mediate between God and man, to pass ideals of the church, and to glorify God in the development of ones own intellectual capacity as well as that of others” (Gangel and Benson, 1983:119). Among others, the scholastic education dealt with the existence of God, attributes of God and the relation of humanity to God. It was at this point that the study of theology was raised to that of being a science (Eavey, 1964:113).

Be that as it may, the Middle Ages underscored the decline of Christian education. One can say Christian education was at its lowest ebb in terms of its confinement to monasteries, cathedral schools and universities, to the exclusion of masses. Celibacy or single life emerged as a viable option that redefined Christian faith (Pazmino, 1988:131) so that it was no longer faith in Jesus Christ alone, but it was all sorts of teachings which were to serve as provocative elements for the subsequent Reformation.

5.4.2 The beginning of the Reformation

Reformation, as has been pointed out earlier, came about as a result of the moral degeneracy of the church, especially during the Middle Ages. There was a conviction among those concerned, that the church needed to reform from its corrupt and degenerate state. There was serious doctrinal error that needed urgent attention. A case in point was the selling of indulgences⁶⁷ by pope Leo X for the dead believed to be in purgatory, so that their quick release from purgatory to heaven could be secured. For Ulrich Zwingli, the Swiss reformer, Catholic statutes, monasteries, mass, purgatory, worship of saints, and celibacy were cause for concern. He replaced these doctrines with Protestant doctrine such as the supremacy of Scriptures, the church as a separate entity independent of government control (Roland Bainton in Reed and Prevost, 1993:197)

⁶⁷ The Webster's New World Dictionary defines indulgences as *Roman Catholic Church remission of punishment still due for a sin committed but forgiven*” (Warner Books Paperback Edition, 1990, page302).

As for Martin Luther, the sale of indulgences brought matters to a head. What they amounted to was that anyone who bought them would secure a quick release of a loved one from purgatory, “*Soon as the coin in the coffer rings, The soul from purgatory springs*” (Ulich 1968:108). Martin Luther was further influenced by his reading of Paul’s letter to the Romans, which taught justification by faith.

The aim of the Reformation therefore was to restore true doctrine in the Church, especially the doctrine of salvation. Humanity is as it were, sinful before God and can only be made right with Him by believing in Jesus Christ. Martin Luther and the reformers taught justification by faith and by grace alone; the earthly priest could therefore not mediate for anyone, nor could the buying of indulgences secure any form of forgiveness or release from purgatory (Anderson, 1981:44)

Thus the primary goal for reformers was the restoration of evangelical Christian doctrine (Oberman, 1994:180). Ulrich Zwingli was concerned about the nature of the Church; his goal was to engage in Biblical inquiry into the nature of the church and doctrine (Walton, 1984:69). He was further motivated by the goal to form one Switzerland, in so doing he compromised some Biblical teachings, hence the rise of Anabaptists (Ibid, 78).

Moreover, the aim of the reformation was to ensure that the church returned to its former status of purity and preaching of pure doctrine. John Calvin maintained that the church needed to change, though it would be a costly undertaking (Foxgrover, 1984:180). For Desiderius Erasmus, what was of primary importance was Christlikeness (De Molen, 1984:15). To him this is all that really mattered. All in all, what reformers wanted to achieve was the preservation of a pure church through pure faith (Ulich, 1968:107).

The aim of Christian education during this time was “...to train all Christians to be *priests of the living God*” (Pazmino, 1988:136). Further, the aim of Christian education was the protection, enhancement and extension of ones personal development in respect

of the community of faith. The Reformation period is the time when Christian education flourished extensively; it was revived.

5.4.3 The primacy of Christian education during the Reformation period.

Teaching was viewed as an important task in the Reformation. Not everyone could teach; only those qualified to teach could do so. Calvin maintained that “...*even if some ministers be found of no great learning, none is admitted, who is not at least tolerably fit to teach*” (Foxgrover, 1984:182). The aim of instruction was to lead people towards unity with God (Ulich, 1968:120). Education was important not only for secular purposes, but first for Christ and then for secular reasons. Youth were to be involved in the church; it was from here that they had to choose a career. In this case, Christianity and education went hand in glove. Teachers had to be approved by pastors (ibid 123). Pastors assumed the leadership of the church by virtue of their profession as ministers (Pazmino, 1988:135). In the same breath, preaching had to be teaching, just like in the case of Jesus, where there was no clear dividing line between preaching and teaching (ibid, 136).

In pastoral ministry, teaching occupied a high priority (Kennedy in Pazmino, 1988:136). Calvin saw ministers as teachers at school because of their spiritual leadership and pure doctrine. They became school supervisors, chief teachers (ibid 136). The importance of teaching was also characterized by the requirement for teachers to lead by example; instilling in students habits and values which pleased God; among others, sobriety, hard work, thrift and responsible behaviour (Ulich, 1968:198).

Desiderius Erasmus also underlined the primacy of teaching. He regarded himself as a teacher of true Christianity. He taught that people must seek to be more and more like Christ (De Molen, 1984:15). He did admit imperfection in this life but urged that Christlikeness should be sought by all people. His literature was devoted on bridging the gap between God and humanity.

Martin Luther viewed instruction as very important. People had to listen to his instruction, even if they did not believe. They were not to be forced into believing. Everything had however, to be done to ensure that they listened to instruction. If they refused instruction they were to be given to the devil or be punished by not being given food to eat (Ulich, 1968:116-117).

5.4.4 Important Reformation teachings.

Important teachings of reformers were among others, justification by faith, the priesthood of all believers, predestination, spirituality, centrality and supremacy of the Scriptures and the role of parents in religious education. It was Martin Luther who came out strongly for the justification by faith (Ulich, 1968:108). In this regard other reformers followed in his track, though in their own right. They were all convinced that humanity was born in sin; was inherently wicked and can only be put right with God through faith in Jesus Christ. Salvation was a personal commitment to and faith in Jesus Christ. It could not be earned by works; it was solely by grace (Pazmino, 1988:135).

Another cardinal teaching of the Reformation was the priesthood of all believers, as opposed to the one and only priest to whom confessions were to be made. By implication, all Christians are priests before God by virtue of their conversion. The Roman Catholic Church could not claim the title for a given group of leaders only, (Ibid, 136), rather, all believers are priests; they have been called upon to pray for the world and to teach people of the world about God. A priest is the servant of God who serves between God and people, performing functions mentioned above. The priest is called upon to stand in the gap between God and the people (I Samuel 12:23; Ezekiel 22:30). The reformers further denied the superiority of clergy over laity. The priesthood of all believers underscored the equality of all believers before God.

Predestination was another doctrine that was taught during the Reformation by John Calvin. It soon bore his name, being entitled, "*Calvinism.*" The human race is accordingly wicked and the soul is in total depravity; not capable of seeking God on its

own. The world is evil and it is getting worse. Sins that were previously viewed in a serious light, are no longer an issue, e.g. adultery (Foxgrover, 1984:184). God has ordained beforehand who would be saved, He has planned the life of everyone from eternity. This doctrine is called "*Predestination*". The duty of the believer is to groan continually till Christ comes. Redemption would be completed at the coming of Christ (Ibid, 182).

More than anyone else during this time, Desiderius Erasmus stressed personal spirituality. He was very concerned with holiness and Christlikeness. For him devotion to God had to manifest itself in real life; it had to be evident in the actions of the individual believer, otherwise it would not be acceptable (De Molen, 1984:11-12). Christian life was to be life of freedom not ritual, but a simple accessible life. Erasmus described a Christian as "*...a man who has embraced Christ in the innermost feelings of his heart, and who emulates Him by his pious deeds*" (Ibid, 24).

Still another cardinal principle about which the reformers were in agreement was the centrality and supremacy of Scriptures. The Scriptures are the only rule of faith and life; not church leaders or the council. The Gospel was therefore not dependent on the council, it was to be preached freely; its claims unchallenged by the council authority (Walton, 1984:69). To this end the password of the day was *sola scriptura*, which meant Scripture alone, as against traditions of people. As it were, "*...the Word of God took a new central position in the educational nurture of the church, both Protestant and Catholics were affected by this emphasis. He (Martin Luther) thus insisted that the Bible be the only guide for determining the worth or danger of a particular contribution*" (Galloway, 1978:72).

It was for this reason that the Bible was translated into German by Martin Luther, so everyone could read it in vernacular, or in the language he understood best (Pazmino, 1988:135). Desiderius Erasmus produced the first critical edition of the Greek text of the New Testament. He loved the church and the Bible, insisting "*...that the most exalted*

aim of the church was to obtain knowledge of the pure and simple Christianity of the Bible” (Galloway, 1978:70).

Ulrich Zwingli’s contention was that there had to be a renewal of theology; and the church had to be brought under the directorship of Scripture. The Word of God had to be obeyed at all costs. Preaching was to be based on Scripture throughout (Oberman, 1994:190). His reform programme was based on Biblical norms and was begun on the first of January, 1519, in Zurich. Though encouraged by Luther, Zwingli did his own independent study of the nature of the church and its doctrine (Walton, 1984:69). His concern for Scripture as final authority in moral and religious matters, was manifested in the way in which he challenged the council of which he was a member, about the Bible as the basis of preaching and the sole guide to Christian living and believing. Thus 1523 was the beginning of the Protestant movement in Switzerland, when Ulrich preached on the Gospel of Matthew.

In public schools of the day, the Bible had to be read. People had to be taught the Bible; they should be able to read it (Ulich, 1968:109). Masses were as it were, to be instructed in the Word. They were to be given one lesson at a time, so they could understand.

The role of family in religion was an issue that also received special attention during the Reformation, especially under Martin Luther. He underlined the importance of children. To him, the home was the first and most important place of learning for children. He wrote a catechism for families to read and teach in a home context (Gangel and Benson, 1983:140). All children of both sexes must be educated. Education had to be compulsory and state supported. It had to revolve around faith in God. The main purpose of education was to develop Christian character in children so they could serve God, church, state and society (Reed and Prevost, 1993:192).

Calvin also believed in the importance of children. He stressed that they should not just be taught to give suitable answers but they should appropriate God’s message and live

lives of godliness. He wrote tracts, articles and catechisms, entitled, "*Instruction in the faith*", published in 1537, and "*Catechism of the church of Geneva*", which was published in 1814. He will be remembered for his famous "*Institutes of Christian Religion*" (Gangel and Benson, 1983:146).

The issue of home teaching was characteristic of the Reformation period. Parents were regarded as being responsible for teaching their children, even before the church could come into the picture.

5.4.5 Writings and translations of the Reformation.

Another area, in line with the teachings of the Reformation above, is the description of literature during the time of the Reformation. Such a description will illustrate the importance accorded to Christian education during the period under review. Some of the writings and translations of the Reformation have been mentioned above. Martin Luther, John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli and Desiderius Erasmus, to cite a few examples, contributed much in the area of writing and translation for Christian education.

Martin Luther translated Scriptures into German for people to read the Bible in their own language. He developed a simple catechism for compiling theology (Galloway, 1978:70-72). He further wrote catechisms for families to teach and to read. He is noted for the ninety five articles he nailed on the church door at Wittenburg in 1517, in October. In these articles he set out to protest against Roman Catholic teaching, especially on the matter of salvation. He primarily argued for the principle of justification by faith in Jesus Christ and by grace alone.

John Calvin wrote tracts, articles, catechisms, "*Instruction in the faith*," and the famous "*Institutes of Christian Religion*." He also wrote, "*Concerning scandals*" (Foxgrover, 1984:182). He further developed the doctrine of predestination, the broader teaching of which came to be known as "*Calvinism*." He further produced the "*Catechism of the church of Geneva*," published in 1814 (Gangel and Benson, 1983:146)



Ulrich Zwingli wrote sixty six articles in 1523 to replace Roman Catholic doctrine with Protestant teaching. At the request of the Council for a catechism, he wrote "*Short Christian Instruction*", in 1523 he wrote "*On the Christian Education of Youth*", and "*Christian education for boys*". In May 1525 he produced a Commentary on true or false religion, while in 1530 and 1531 he produced "*The confession of faith*" and "*Explanation of the Christian faith*" respectively. (Bainton in Reed and Prevost, 1993:197)

Desiderius Erasmus wrote "*Philosophia Christie*", "*Imitation of Christ*", "*Devotio Moderna*." "*The handbook of the militant Christian*" and "*Complaints of peace*" Erasmus produced the first critical edition of the Greek text of the New Testament (De Molen, 1984:11-22).

These and other writings were produced by reformers with a view to underscoring the importance of the teaching ministry of the church. I did not mention all other reformers and their writings; however, let it suffice that Christian education was revived to its fullest potential during the Reformation.

5.4.6 The effect of the Reformation on Christian education.

The Reformation wielded a great effect on Christian education as a whole. For the first time in many years the Bible occupied the central position as a rule of faith and conduct. It began to play an important role in the educational nurture of the church, both in the Protestant and Roman Catholic churches. A new direction was established for Christian education by the teaching material and hymns developed during this time (Galloway, 1978:72).

The whole of theology and the church were renewed under the directorship of Scripture. In Switzerland, the sixty six articles of Zwingli dealt a death blow to Roman Catholic teachings on statutes, celibacy, purgatory, worship of the saints, monasteries, and beliefs and practices not in line with Scripture. These, Zwingli openly challenged. The

mediatorial work of Christ was reclaimed as opposed to that of the Roman Catholic priests. The freedom of conscience in religious matters was restored (Reed and Prevost, 1993:197)

The translation of the Bible into languages that were understood by all people had a tremendous effect on Christian education, especially as all believers are priests, and therefore need to have access to Scriptures. The educational role of the Church and the state was emphasized, so that needs of common people also received special attention. The preparation of catechisms that were to go a long way in setting the pace for church membership classes in future, writing of hymns for congregational worship (Ibid, 193-194) all impacted upon the role Christian education was to assume.

Martin Luther contributed to Religious education by rejecting ecclesiastical abuses like the sale of indulgences. He produced his 95 theses, a development which was to bring about the Protestant movement.

All that can be said is that Christian education was strongly influenced by the Reformation, to be where it is today. The question at stake now is, how does this Reformation, with all its developments, link up to the Baptist denomination? This leads us to the next consideration, namely, the rise of the Baptist movement.

5.5 THE RISE OF THE BAPTIST MOVEMENT

5.5.1 Introduction.

Following the discourse on the history of Christian education during the periods described so far, it is only logical that the historical development of Christian education in the Transvaal churches of the Baptist Convention of South Africa receive attention.

Such a historical development, dealt with in chapter six, rightly precedes the evaluation of Christian education, which follows in chapter seven.

The historical description of Christian education in the Convention churches of the Transvaal, should in turn, be preceded by *The rise of the Baptist Movement* as it will be important that the link of the Baptist denomination with the Reformation be properly established. It is for this reason that I now turn to the origins of the Baptist Movement.

5.5.2 The rise of the Baptist denomination.

The description of Christian education during the Reformation presupposes the link of the Reformation with the Baptist movement. It is, as has been pointed out earlier, within the context of the Reformation that the Baptist denomination came into being. Christian education in the Baptist Convention of South Africa therefore is by and large the product of the Protestant movement which arose out of the Reformation.

The rise of the Baptist denomination goes back to the Anabaptist movement which came into being as a result of dissatisfaction with the extent of reform. From the Anabaptists originated the General and Particular Baptists. In describing the rise of the Baptist movement, the origins, growth and fate of the Anabaptists deserve special treatment.

5.5.2.1 The Anabaptists.

The title "*Anabaptist*" referred to those believers who opposed infant baptism, advocating for adult baptism of those who have believed. This was the title given to them by their opponents, among whom were reformers themselves. The word means to baptize again or those who baptized again, the rebaptizers. They contended that infant baptism was unscriptural and therefore baptized believers.

The beginnings of the Anabaptist movement goes back to Switzerland in Zurich, among the followers of Ulrich Zwingli (one of the reformers of the day). Some of the followers of Ulrich Zwingli were not happy with the way he tolerated what they considered to be the wrong teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. Among others it was the practice of infant baptism that was disputed by these followers, and yet tolerated by Zwingli (and other reformers like Luther and Calvin). Zwingli reckoned that the change had to be gradual, not abrupt. However, for his followers, especially Conrad Grebel and Felix Manz, immediate change was inevitable. Anything that did not accord with Scriptures had to be discontinued immediately, "*Without tarrying for any council decision or for fear of popular prejudice*" (West, 1959:241).

After repeated attempts to persuade Zwingli to understand Biblical principles they stood for, a complete break came about in 1525 on January 17. From this time on the Anabaptist movement began and grew, spreading all over Europe and England. The Anabaptists underwent fierce persecution and killings. However they could not be obliterated, though they were killed in large numbers. Persecution led to the movement spreading in all directions.

The Anabaptists, as they came to be known, had their own distinctive teachings, among others they were opposed to infant baptism, contending that true baptism was for believers. They maintained that the Bible was the Word of God and therefore absolutely authoritative in all matters of faith and life, not a bishop or pope or priest. They further argued that the true church type was that of a fellowship of believers free from state control (West, 1959:232). Anabaptists taught that Christianity was a way of life rather than a system of belief. They also taught that there should be no compulsion in the things of religion, rather, there should be religious toleration (Ibid, 235-237).

They vehemently carried to “...its conclusion the great principle that it is the right of every man to seek God’s truth in the Scriptures, and mould his life in accordance with that truth as he sees it” (Browne, 1911:1-2). As it relates to the church and the state, for the Anabaptists, “The salient feature of that faith was the principle that a church according to Scripture, is a voluntary association of believers, with whose organization and support the state has nothing to do, and over whose belief and worship no civil power has jurisdiction” (Ibid, 2).

In the 1530’s, when persecution of the Anabaptists broke out in Switzerland, some fled to England and soon became a threat to the church of England. At the order of king Henry VIII, Anabaptists were persecuted in England as well in 1538. An account is related of 19 men and 6 women who came from Holland and were arrested because of being charged with being Anabaptists (Crosby in Whitsitt, 1980:34). The same account reports that in 1539, 16 men and 15 women were banished to Holland where men were executed and women drowned.

Be that as it may, Anabaptism had already spread in England. This is especially so because in one Anabaptist synod at Bockhold in Westphalia, in 1536, the English representatives of the Anabaptist wing were present. As a matter of fact, one of these English Anabaptists bore the expenses of the synod (West, 1959:252). The church of England resolved to take strong action so as to ensure conformity of all priests and parishes as against the Anabaptist threat. Queen Mary of England sought to steer the church towards Rome, while, in subsequent years, Queen Elizabeth the first and Matthew Parker, archbishop of Canterbury, desired to bring about uniformity within the Church of England, though it was difficult and unpopular. The aim of Queen Elizabeth was to steer the Church of England between Rome and Geneva, but she did not want to be blamed (Ibid, 257). To this end the Archbishop produced “*The Advertisements*” in 1566. The Advertisements were articles which were intended to enforce uniformity among the Anglican churches in England. Every minister was required to subscribe to them (Gee and Hardy in West, 1959:257). These two moves, that of Queen Mary and

queen Elizabeth the first sparked off a negative reaction which was to bring about the formation of what church historians called the English separatist churches. By the time of Queen Elizabeth, these separatist churches were already there.

It is presumed that many of the separatist churches which broke away from the English Church must have been Anabaptists or at least reminiscent of same. Scholars believe that many of these separatists were Anabaptists for several reasons. First, the Anabaptists had come to England in the 1530's onwards, and they posed a threat to the longstanding English church, hence persecution. Second, the presence of the English speaking Anabaptists in the Westphalia Synod in Bockhold in 1536 testifies to the fact that indeed there were Anabaptists in England. Third, Louis Fargo Browne (1911:3), states it categorically that *"All the people scattered in England from the Reformation days, held distinctive tenets of the Continental Anabaptists. Moreover there was no record of any permanent congregation before the early years of the 17th century until the formation of the Baptist congregation"* (Ibid, 3) This was the period when the first English Baptist Church came into being. Browne (1911:3) argues further, *"The first group of English Baptists were dissenters from the English separatist Church in Amsterdam"*

5.5.2.2 The Baptist Movement.

One of the separatist leaders, John Smythe who was ordained by the Anglican bishop of Lincoln in 1594, had moved to Amsterdam in Holland with his congregation due to the persecution that had broken out as a result of the separatist trend. John Smythe was driven to separatism by the decision of the Hampton Court Conference to reaffirm conformity and the issuing of new canons. He was joined by Thomas Helwys of Brixton Hall in Branford (West, 1959:263).

The first English Baptist church was formed on foreign soil in 1609 by John Smythe and Thomas Helwys and their followers. What was interesting about this separatist group

that had now formed itself into a Baptist church, was that it resembled the Anabaptists in its theology of the apostolic days. All Anti-Christian converts who had joined them were to be baptized before being accepted into membership. All separatists who baptized infants were of false constitution (Ibid, 266). This group denounced their previous errors, and started a church of believers all over again. Smythe baptized himself by affusion and then baptized the rest of the followers. It was in this way that the first English Baptist church was formed in Amsterdam, Holland.

Subsequently, at the influence of Simon the Mennonite, John Smythe backtracked with some of his followers and joined the Mennonites. The Mennonites had blamed John Smythe for baptizing himself and for other doctrinal matters. Thomas Helwys remained with the small group of 8 to 10 members when Smythe denounced separatism on joining the Mennonite Church. *“That small company, by bravely standing their ground at a critical period became the founders of the body of Christian people which subsequently acquired the title of General Baptists in England”* (Whitsitt, 1980:52). The Mennonites taught that Jesus died for all people, that grace was for all, and they denied the original sin. In this way the Arminian strain (as opposed to Calvinism) became explicit in Baptist thought, hence the title, General Baptists (West, 1959:267).

Thomas Helwys and his group, then known as General Baptists, returned to England and in 1611, the first Baptist church was formed in London at a place called Spitafield (Ibid, 268). This was the first permanent Baptist church (Browne, 1911:3). It was the beginning of General Baptists in England. This movement spread and soon there were four such Baptist churches in Lincoln, Coventry, Salisbury and Treverton (West, 1959:269).

Particular Baptists, who were predominantly Calvinist, as opposed to the General Baptists described above, came about in 1633 in England under the leadership of John Spilsburg (Browne, 1911:3). They were particular because they came from the Calvinist Puritan stock. They believed in predestination; that Christ died for the elect and not for all people (West. 1959:270). By 1638 they were joined by others and in 1655, already there were seven particular Baptist churches in England.

Particular Baptists broke away from Henry Jacob who led an independent church that he founded in South Wark. He was formerly a pastor of an English church in Zeeland. The contention of the seceders, (who subsequently became particular Baptists), was that Jacob recognized English parish churches as true churches. They were not formed according to the voluntary principle, hence seceders did not accept them. Another argument was that some still believed in infant baptism (Browne, 1911: 4).

It should be remembered that throughout, the mode of baptism was sprinkling. There was no question of baptism by immersion until 1641. The confession of faith articles of John Smythe and Thomas Helwys had nothing to do with baptism by immersion as this was not a problem then (Whitsitt, 1980:57). Baptism by immersion was introduced for the first time among the General and Particular Baptists in 1641 by Richard Blunt. He got baptized by immersion at Rhynsburg from John Batten. When he came back, he declared that some members were unbaptized Mennonites. It was only at this time that baptism by immersion became a norm for both strands of the Baptist Church (Ibid, 62).

As pointed out earlier, the General and Particular Baptists differed doctrinally, but were similar in many respects. They met separately and were independent from the

government. They however, advised each other, sent messages to each other and held meetings to discuss matters of common interest (Browne, 1911:4). General Baptists denied infant baptism, the doctrine of election, reprobation and final perseverance (Latch, 1954:81), which doctrines were upheld by Particular Baptists. On a whole Baptists were democratic in outlook, chose leadership according to spiritual gifts not education, separated the church from the state, advocated the liberty of conscience, accepted into membership those who confessed Christian faith and were baptized by immersion; they rejected infant baptism, upheld adult baptism, respected the government and magistrates and believed that where it was necessary, Christians may be chosen to serve as magistrates or in politics. The Baptists further advocated religious tolerance, so that there was to be no persecution of those who did not go to the Church of England. They appointed their own officers and raised autonomous congregations (Browne, 1911:4).

An analysis of the General and Particular Baptists as outlined above, except in the case of baptism by immersion, underscores the fact that Baptists as we had them then and now, are descendants of Anabaptists. There may have been differences with regard to Calvinism or reformed doctrines as they were not so emphasized during the period of the Anabaptists. One may speculate to say that as much as Calvinism spread the world over, there may have been these two strands of Anabaptists already in the 16th century. Be that as it may, it cannot be denied, as Louis Fargo Brown has pointed out, that “*The first group of English Baptists were dissenters from the English separatists Church in Amsterdam*”, a separatist group which was Anabaptist in outlook (ibid, 3).

The description above sums up the rise and spread of the Baptist movement during the Reformation period

5.6 CONCLUSION

The aim of this essay has been to trace the historical development of Christian education from the Old Testament to the Reformation, and to locate the Baptist denomination within the Reformation, in so doing, to capture something of how Christian education must have been carried out during this time. The Christian education of the Reformation must have spilt over into the Baptist movement, except for places where Baptists differed from some of the Reformation teachings as demonstrated in the rise of the Anabaptists. It was from this Baptist movement in Germany and Great Britain that the Baptist Convention of South Africa was born in 1927.⁶⁸

With the historical development of Christian education in the Old and the New Testaments and the Reformation in the background, and with the description of the rise of the Baptist movement, a need arises for the description of the historical development of Christian education as well as the present state of affairs as it relates to the teaching ministry of Convention churches in the Transvaal, hence the following chapter.

⁶⁸ It is worthy to mention that though British Baptists have been very instrumental in nurturing the Baptist Convention of South Africa, German Baptists were already involved in Kaffraria (Ciskei). They were also concerned with God's work among natives, as they were then known. Their work came to be absorbed by the Baptist Union of South Africa.



CHAPTER SIX

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION IN THE TRANSVAAL BAPTIST CONVENTION CHURCHES

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In the third chapter a short historical background of the founding and growth of the Baptist Convention of South Africa was given. In the process I zoomed into the historical background of the Transvaal Convention, as they are the point of reference for this research. This chapter is aimed at describing the historical and current background of Christian education in the Transvaal churches. The title of the dissertation is about the evaluation of Christian education in the Convention churches, with special reference to the churches in the Transvaal; hence this focus. The historical part of this chapter, dates back from 1927 to 1987, and much of it will be drawn from the South African Baptist Hand-Book; while the current background will be derived from interview responses.

As for the present time, I argue that Christian education is taking place intentionally in the Transvaal Baptist Convention churches, locally and regionally. However, I have to add that it has not as yet reached Biblically and conventionally acceptable and credible standards as would be expected of the Church of Jesus Christ through the ages⁶⁹. Generally there is a great awareness of the importance of viable Christian education programmes for churches among members, especially the leaders. It is sad to say, however, that not much is being done to match the awareness. The practice of Christian education in the Transvaal Convention churches varies from one church to another, but it is 90 percent if not 100 percent similar on regional level.

⁶⁹ A much more detailed evaluation, which is the purpose of the entire investigation, follows in chapter seven.

Christian education in the Transvaal churches (as in all churches of the Convention), assumed the route of pre-Sunday service lessons, membership and Bible classes, age group ministries, Christian workers' training and refresher courses, regional conferences as well as Christian literature publication. It is only as this chapter is handled in this way that it will be more logical and understandable.

6.2 PRE-SUNDAY SERVICE LESSONS⁷⁰

I have used 'pre-Sunday service lessons' to include Sunday school for children, and all age Sunday school or family Bible hour for youth and adults. The Transvaal churches first followed the Sunday school route, with children being the focus thereof. Only in later years was concern expressed, that youth and adults also be included in these pre-Sunday service lessons. Teachers and their involvement also come into play.

6.2.1 Sunday school work⁷¹

In its early beginnings, Sunday school work in the Baptist Convention was confined to children only. This factor partly accounts for the difficulty of getting adults to attend Sunday school classes. This tendency has led to the name being changed from Sunday school to '*All Age Sunday School*' (1962)⁷² and later to '*Family Bible Hour*.' (1971)

In the Transvaal, it was only from 1930 onwards that anything in the area of Sunday school began to show up or was reported about. Eastern Cape was the earliest of all

⁷⁰ In other churches these lessons may take place after the morning service due to double services or other reasons. Kagiso Baptist Church is an example where Family Bible Hour takes place after the first Sunday service. The second service takes place after the family Bible hour (which includes children as well)

⁷¹ Throughout I have used Sunday school to refer to children only.

⁷² 1962, as it seems from the records, marked the change of the name from Sunday school to All Age Sunday School, while it was only in 1965 that it was introduced in the Baptist Churches.

provinces in this regard, with already 17 Sunday schools being reported in 1930 in Pondoland (TSABHB, 1930:15).

From the earliest times (1892), missionaries and their spouses, as well as single women missionaries, were involved in Sunday school work in the Convention churches. Soon the missionaries were joined by volunteering youth from European churches in the neighbourhood. The 1931 Baptist Union assembly missionary report concerning the Transvaal has it that “*A most promising feature is the development of Sunday schools conducted by Europeans, in which some of our churches must receive honourable mention*” (TSABHB, 1931:15).

A similar notion is captured again in the following year’s report, where Europeans from neighbouring churches were commended for undertaking Sunday school work among natives. This was especially so in Johannesburg, Pretoria, Germiston, Maritzburg, Queenstown, Cambridge and East London (ibid, 1932:12). The same trend is reiterated the following year (ibid, 1933:9). In the 1950’s European volunteering youths are reported as having continued to teach among African churches. Mr. Erickson, the then Northern Transvaal missionary superintendent, thanked them for their good work (ibid, 1950:5).

6.2.2 All Age Sunday School

Whereas all through these years Sunday school was confined to children only, in the early 1960’s a concern grew that an all age Sunday school be set up to cater for all age groups. Among others, this desire was expressed by the Southern Transvaal missionary superintendent the Rev T. S. Akers. The purpose of the all age Sunday school class was to

address the problem of Bible doctrine among adults. The feeling was that adults too, needed to be catered for in Sunday school classes, hence the change of the name (TSABHB, 1962:75). In 1964 all missionaries were expressing the desire to have an all age Sunday school (ibid, 1964:73).

Doctors Allen Adams and Gains Dobbins from the United States of America⁷³ were very instrumental in the introduction of the all age Sunday school among Baptist churches in general. Meanwhile a white American woman missionary, Ms Ingles, came along under the auspices of the Baptist Union of South Africa. She was responsible for the training of all age Sunday school⁷⁴ teachers in the Southern Transvaal region. By the 1970's she was already enmeshed in this work and she met with great success (TSABHB, 1970:120). Subsequently, Miss Ingles put together a teacher training team that came to be known as 'Go Teach.' This team consisted largely of African ministers from all over South Africa. Each region was represented in the 'Go Teach' team. The members were trained to train others in running an all age Sunday school. The team took off in full swing and soon, churches and regions were visited and their members trained. The 'Go Teach' team operated until the mid '90's. It faded away gradually by being left out of the agenda of the national committee meetings and the annual national business assembly meetings.

Not much was said about the content of Sunday school classes among children from the earliest times. One would presume that Bible stories and the love of God for humanity must have been the focus of most if not all of teaching. Another feature that appears to have characterized Sunday school teaching was memory verses.

⁷³ The source reference cannot be located.

⁷⁴ By this time the title 'Sunday School' had changed to 'All Age Sunday School' with a view to attracting adults and youth to the Sunday school classes.

The kind of literature mentioned in the missionary reports suggests the content that was taught in Sunday school classes. For the first time booklets entitled “*Lesson helps*” were given to teachers in 1965 in the Ciskei and Pondoland. 200 copies were distributed in January and 300 in April (TSABHB, 1965:81). In the Northern Transvaal there was no literature yet at this time. There seems to have been some waiting in Sunday school activity. The impression given is that work would be resumed as soon as literature was provided (ibid, 1968:113). ‘Lesson helps’ were prepared with pictures for Sunday school work (ibid, 1969:140). A missionary superintendent, the Rev Winkelmann, was responsible for its preparation (ibid, 1965:92)⁷⁵.

Another notable feature in the doing of Sunday school within the Convention churches was the introduction of Scripture examinations in the 1960’s, especially in the Southern and Northern Transvaal. For the first time examinations were written towards the end of 1960, with 200 hundred children participating. They obtained an 80% pass (TSABHB, 1961:80-81). Over the years the trend of writing examinations continued, but not all regions participated. They were encouraged to do so (ibid, 1968:125). It is reported that in 1967, 700 scholars wrote and got diplomas (ibid, 125). The writing of examinations stopped in 1987 when the Baptist Convention of South Africa became an autonomous body, independent from the Baptist Union.

6.2.3 Family Bible Hour

In 1971 the name ‘*All Age Sunday School*’ was replaced with ‘*Family Bible Hour*.’ The idea of all age Sunday school still did not appeal to adults as the caption ‘Sunday school’ was still there. The impression has always been that Sunday school was meant

⁷⁵ Christian literature publication is dealt with as a separate sub heading later in the essay.



for children. This impression still holds today, with Sunday school being used for children, and Family Bible Hour being used for youth⁷⁶ and adults.

The first meeting to introduce Family Bible Hour was held at Orlando Baptist Church in 1971 by the then Christian education committee and some African ministers.⁷⁷ The aim of the meeting was to dispose of the concept 'Sunday School' and to replace it with 'Family Bible Hour' so that all family members should come for Bible classes. Under the leadership and training of the 'Go Teach' ministry, family Bible hour took off vehemently, especially in the Transvaal. It has to be said that not all churches in the Transvaal caught the Family Bible Hour vision; only those churches that were visited by the Go Teach ministry captured the vision. Literature material was being prepared for both teachers and learners by the Baptist Union Publications Committee. First it was women and youth who attended, and then men followed later.

In the course of time, especially after 1987, Family Bible Hour and Sunday school took another turn. The focus was now on the conflict between the Baptist Convention and the Baptist Union over member churches of the former who were crossing the floor to the latter even after the Convention had severed administrative ties with the Union. Many activities of the Transvaal churches were delayed.⁷⁸ With the fading away of the 'Go Teach' team, the situation got worse. Consequently, some of the churches reverted to Sunday school for children only, while others continued with family Bible hour. Still other churches never had family Bible hour at all.

⁷⁶ It should be mentioned that although youth did not attend 100%, at least many teenagers did attend Sunday school.

⁷⁷ This information came from interviews with pastors who were involved in this meeting.

⁷⁸ It can only be understandable that Transvaal churches should have been the most hit, since they remained with the Convention while most of the churches in other regions left with the Union.



The situation as at present manifests various features. In the 27 churches that have been interviewed, Sunday school as intended for children is still the dominant feature. Very few churches have the family Bible hour, for example, the Kagiso, Mabopane, and Revival Baptist churches, are examples of churches that have family Bible hour, though it stands to be improved. Others are planning to either revive it or introduce it for the first time.

In the Convention, Sunday school is one phenomenon that has enjoyed (and still enjoys) popularity on a very wide scale. Whereas Christian education may be weak on other levels it is alive and well on the level of children. Admittedly there are cases where Sunday school is weak, however, it is only in a few instances that this is the case.

6.2.4 The recruitment and involvement of teachers

The involvement of African (native) teachers in Sunday school work comes only in the 1940's. The appointment of Rev. Jas Piliso as Sunday school organiser in the Transvaal in 1944 by the Bantu Baptist Churches, bears witness to the involvement of natives⁷⁹ at that time (TSABHB, 1945:29). Evidence shows that native women were the ones involved in teaching, rather than men. A call to pray for able women teachers to "*...be found throughout the whole field...*" underlines the role of native women in Sunday school work (ibid, 1965:88). The need for more native teachers continued into the 1960's and beyond (ibid, 1969:131, 135; 1975:97).

The emergence of Sunday school teachers from among natives, necessitated the setting up of special training for them. Sunday school teacher training courses were held in different regions of South Africa, wherever there was Sunday school work. For example in 1962 a Sunday school teachers training course was held in Orlando (ibid, 1962:71).

⁷⁹ In all cases 'native(s)' shall mean African or black people of South Africa; this is the title that was used by Europeans at that time to refer to blacks.

The Ciskei region by far outclassed other regions in this area. In 1965, 75 teachers attended the Sunday school teachers training course in July and December. The training was successful (ibid, 1965:80). Lessons taught in these teacher training seminars were, the Bible, the way of salvation, Personal evangelism and Baptist Faith (ibid, 81).

Presently, teachers in these Sunday schools and family Bible hour structures, are recruited on a voluntary basis. In some cases teachers have volunteered without being asked, as they were moved by the need to teach children. In churches like Jouberton in Klerksdorp, volunteering has ceased to be the way of recruitment. The same can be said of Kagiso, in which case suitable people are identified from among the members, or recommended by their teachers. In other cases a special announcement was made in the church for those who would like to be Sunday school teachers. The criteria often used embraced the willingness to teach children and the spiritual maturity of the prospective teacher. In the past anyone could be called upon to teach children, however, recently, strict measures are observed so as to ensure that the integrity and credibility of the Sunday school and family Bible hour programme is maintained. In some cases it is the pastor who either makes an open appeal in the church, or approaches the person he feels can best fulfill the task of teaching. He interviews him himself and recommends him to the church for final appointment.

Teachers themselves constitute the Sunday school committee. They meet to prepare lessons, to evaluate past lessons and to discuss existing problems and future plans. Not all churches have such committees. Atteridgeville Baptist Church is an example of a church that would meet one day in the week to evaluate past lessons, and to prepare for the following week. Now that the church has split, and it is now known as Calvary Baptist Church, this is no longer the case, especially as they had no pastor for quite a while. In some instances each teacher looks for teaching material alone, sifts it and prepares it for presentation as a children's lesson. The Jubilee, Daveyton, and Fairley Baptist Churches are but instances where teachers prepare individually for their lessons.



Such teachers do not usually consider themselves as a committee; they only meet when they have to buy presents for children or when the Sunday service programme is to be held by the Sunday school. Very few churches have their teachers meeting beforehand for preparation; Kagiso, Jouberton, and Mabopane, fall within this category.

It is circumstances where teachers prepare separately and do not constitute a committee that expose the local pastor's indifference to the Sunday school programme. It is his duty to coordinate teachers and form them into a committee. Further, these are churches where Sunday school in general, is not taken seriously. In most of these cases the pastor has nothing to do with Sunday school, regarding it as something that belongs to women. He has other things to do. It has to be mentioned that in very few churches, there is just one teacher who does everything and accounts to herself. The church committee may need a report only when a special request has been made to buy gifts for children or to have a special children's day. It is commendable to say that in some of the churches where there are no Sunday school committees, the church committee takes over, in terms of seeing to it that at least something is going on and that necessary material is bought.

In many urban churches there are special Sunday school committees constituted by the teachers themselves. Some of them do have portfolios for the committee members, that is, the Sunday school or Christian education superintendent, or coordinator, the secretary, treasurer, organiser and other additional members. The Kagiso Baptist Church has this arrangement. Some do have committees but do not have portfolios, except for the Sunday school or Christian education leader, who usually convenes meetings. The Revival and Kwa-Thema Baptist churches are examples of churches where there are no portfolios, but teachers constitute the committee. Such vibrant Sunday schools and family Bible hour structures are usually typified by general numerical church growth as children influence their parents to come to church, and as Sunday school teachers visit and invite parents to church where they hear the Gospel and get saved.

Material taught varies from borrowed curricula to self-compiled Bible lessons. In those places where Sunday school is not regarded highly, teachers have to fend for themselves, going around to friends and organizations to look for curricula. In the more serious churches, as I have described above, the church is involved in looking for suitable curricula for Sunday school and family Bible hour. A special budget is assigned to buy books from relevant organizations. Among them are, the Baptist Union of South Africa, Scripture Union, South African National Sunday School Association and Sunday School organizations in Baptist churches in North Africa (usually Nigeria).

In some cases where there are no books, teachers compile their own material, as they see fit. The Mabopane Baptist church teachers meet once quarterly to determine material to be taught. Such material is not randomly pounced upon as in the case of teachers who work individually. In this case Mabopane is contextual in its curriculum. In a few cases, the secular school syllabus is used to determine what is to be taught. This has been found to be very helpful as the aim of such syllabi have always been to show the love of God to children.

As it relates to the method of teaching, the story telling method dominates all other methods, but it is occasionally used interchangeably with the dramatization method. Once or twice a year, given Bible stories are dramatized by children and performed in the church on a special Sunday school day. Of course the question and answer method is used frequently with the story telling method, though still dominated by it.

6.3 CHRISTIAN WORKERS' TRAINING AND REFRESHERS' COURSES

Christian education found fulfillment (as it still does today to some extent) in Christian workers' training forums and refreshers' courses. The Christian workers category

includes ministers,⁸⁰ all lay people (youth, men and women), Sunday school teachers and their organizers as well as youth coordinators and leaders. I have deliberately referred to Christian workers training and refreshers courses as Christian education because while the main purpose of these gatherings was training and preparing saints for ministry, much of it was Christian education inclined. For example, there would be much of Bible study lessons, doctrine, and ethical training, issues that could rightly be accorded the status of Christian education.

Minutes of the missionary sessions in the Baptist Union Handbook of 1904, (page 52) have it that a given committee was authorized to prepare a course of study for the training of native evangelists to work under European supervision. Refreshers courses were also held in respect of Christian workers. A great deal of teaching took place in this forum. As in other instances outlined so far, missionaries were responsible for the teaching and training of native Christian workers; so were European ministers.

The period from 1892 to 1926 was characterized among others by the teaching zeal of missionaries and the receptivity of native Christian workers. The approach of missionaries was that of instruction, while natives received teaching with eager hearts (TSABHB, 1924:14). The attendance was overwhelming, underscoring the natives' desire to be taught and trained in the things of the Lord. In 1937, 20 workers attended a Christian workers course (ibid, 1937:33).

⁸⁰ Ministers are usually not included in the area of Christian education as their training is much broader than just Christian education. However, due to the low standard of training which was prevalent then, it was very helpful for them to also attend Bible lessons for ordinary church members.



Already in 1936 concern was expressed by missionaries that native Christian workers needed training (ibid, 1936:24). Of course such training was already going on at Orlando in Johannesburg (ibid, 1938:33). Lay preachers and evangelists met monthly and quarterly for training and Bible study (ibid, 1937:37). In the Eastern Transvaal, in Pilgrim's Rest, preachers' meetings were held quarterly, but fuller instruction was desired (ibid, 1925:19). This desire suggests a discrepancy in the quality of training given. Be that as it may, people are reported to have been willing to be taught, but there was the problem of illiteracy, "*We have willing workers, but mostly illiterate men as many converts are from the raw heathen*" (ibid, 1955:54).

Despite the problem of illiteracy that plagued missionary instruction efforts up until the 1950's, Christian workers training went on. Deacons, preachers and Sunday school teachers continued to receive lectures. Literature was translated into Sotho, Zulu, and Xhosa, so as to assist African lay preachers (ibid, 1959:67). What is more, good attendance continued to be reported (ibid, 1960:54). The content of these Christian workers training courses ranged from doctrine and Bible study to the Christian way of life.

As mentioned earlier on, refreshers' courses went hand in glove with Christian workers' training. Among others, lessons offered were on cults, Sermon on the mount, early Christian church, ministerial ethics and etiquette. Local European ministers gave lessons on the epistle of Jude and the person of Christ. Courses were also held in Southern Transvaal at Orlando (in Johannesburg) in 1958. They were conducted by Rev. A. D. Phipson and the missionary director (ibid, 1958:75).

In the Northern Transvaal the missionary superintendent, Mr. Armstrong, held lessons for ministers and lay preachers (ibid, 1959:77). From 1980 onwards, not much was done by way of preachers training. If anything was done at all, it was on a very small scale as missionaries no longer had much control over African churches. By this time churches were free from their intervention. It was assumed that churches had reached a state of maturity; they were now self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating. They no longer needed the close monitoring of missionaries. As a result, the standard of Christian workers training declined as most of the Convention ministers were not capable of conducting such training lessons. Moreover, the problem of organization and funding, posed a daunting obstacle.

The only teaching and training that went on was in June/July in the Free State (at Etembeni) where lessons were conducted for lay people on Personal Evangelism, Doctrine, Bible Study and Homiletics. The 1981 report goes, "*The Christian Workers' Course now held annually for the past three years in June/July at Etembeni, is going from strength to strength*" (TSABHB, 1981:99). This was reminiscent of the Christian workers' training that has characterized missionary times. Recently, the Winter School of Theology, under the auspices of the Baptist Convention College,⁸¹ has taken the place of Christian workers courses. Indeed, much remains to be done for the equipping of lay believers for ministry.

An encouraging element about the Christian workers training was that it bore fruit. Soon, Africans were beginning to do work on their own. Whereas there was a complaint from one of the missionaries about natives not understanding the way of salvation in

⁸¹ The Baptist Convention of South Africa set up its own theological training institution in 1995 and named it 'Baptist Convention College.'

1955 (ibid, 1955:59, 60), the same missionary turned around in 1959, reporting positively about Africans. Now they were able to bring souls to Christ, to preach the gospel and to start new churches all on their own (ibid, 1959:72).

The state of affairs as at the writing of the dissertation, reveals that some Sunday school teachers do not go for refreshers courses. This is usually because no special budget is provided for Sunday school, or teachers do not know of any such Sunday school teachers training centres and times. Some of those interviewed have indicated that they are still waiting for the Baptist Convention to set up or revive the Christian education department. One such example is the Kwa Thema Baptist Church. In places where Sunday school and family Bible hour are held in high esteem, either special internal arrangements are made to host such Sunday school teachers' workshops or teachers attend workshops by other structures. Special Sunday school experts are invited to conduct such internal workshops. Of the 27 churches interviewed, only nine have not yet undergone training for teachers, let alone refreshers courses.

6.4 MEMBERSHIP AND MID-WEEK BIBLE CLASSES

6.4.1 Membership Classes

Membership teaching classes (known as confirmation classes in other denominations) represented another mode of Christian education in the Baptist Convention churches. These classes were intended to prepare new members or converts for full church membership. Miss Doke, one of the women missionaries, reported back in 1938, "*There have been 104 responses...and these are now gathered in the hearers classes*" (TSABHB, 1938:28). By the 1950's these classes still went on (ibid, 1950:51).

As time went on, it became necessary that special material be prepared for these membership classes. The catechism was translated into the native language (Sotho,

Zulu, Xhosa) by Doctors C. M. Doke and J. E. Ennals. These two were commended by the Baptist Union Assembly for the remarkable work they had done (ibid, 1935:59). Another booklet which came to be used for this purpose in later years was "*Incwadi yemibuzo yaseBaptist*" (Baptist book of questions) (ibid, 1965:86) which was also translated from the English version. Subsequently, '*Churchmembership*' was produced and used for the preparation of new members, It was also translated into native languages.

The duration of the membership class was fairly long, '*...candidates receive instruction during a long period of probation before being accepted for baptism*' (ibid, 1930:11). In some cases the preparation of members took longer because of the illiteracy problem (TSABHB, 1965:87). As it appears, membership classes were regarded very highly. The long period taken underscores this fact.

With the disappearance of missionaries from the scene, the membership classes period got shorter for some, while for others they got out of question, except for one or two lessons considered important for membership. What other pastors meant by membership classes was the coming together of aspirant members for just one or two hours for orientation and a few tips on salvation, baptism and on being a church member. The longest period used for membership classes among churches interviewed was two months (eight days). Most vacillate from one to two, very few go to 4, only Ekangala went to six days on occasion. Those who say they do have membership classes may be talking of just one lesson or two before an individual is baptized and accepted into full membership. Three churches that I spoke to, are planning to have a comprehensive membership package. That some pastors were not involved from earliest times has been attested to by one of the missionary reports, to the end that pastors just had no time of discipling new converts. They are busy making converts but do not disciple them at all (TSABHB, 1980:11).

6.4.2 Mid-week Bible Classes

Bible classes, known in other quarters as Bible Study classes, or mid-week Bible study, permeated the whole of the teaching spectrum of the Transvaal churches of the Convention. What this means is that while it may have been mentioned alone in some instances, in many others it was alluded to along with other teaching activities. In churches in the Transvaal, Bible classes were carried out during the week. The content may have been a given book of the Bible or some doctrine or so. Other subjects which could have been a possibility, are an introduction to the New and Old Testaments, the doctrine of God, Jesus, angels or stewardship. To add to the list, Victorious Christian Living could have been another topic that was handled by missionaries of old (subsequently, Convention pastors also focused on this subject, especially for young people). At stake here is the fact that Christians came together during the week to learn something from God's Word. Whatever the missionaries might have meant with Bible classes, in the final analysis some teaching did take place.

As pointed out earlier, there are cases where Bible classes are mentioned alone, not along with lay preachers' training or membership classes. A case in point is the report about Bible classes that took place in the 1950's. Nothing else is mentioned either than just the Bible classes (TSABHB, 1950:50). In the 1970's it is reported that some churches continued to hold mid-week Bible study classes (ibid, 1970:142).

In other instances Bible classes are mentioned along with other teaching activities. One missionary report states that Bible study classes went along with monthly and quarterly meetings for preachers and evangelists (ibid, 1937:37). Preachers and evangelists, among others, did Bible study lessons in Orlando, Johannesburg (ibid, 1938:33). The



training of Christian workers (as alluded to earlier) included the study of the Bible as well. In some cases it may have been more of Bible study lessons during these training sessions, than the actual training.

In the earlier years it was missionaries and European ministers who conducted Bible classes among native groups and in churches. As time went on, native ministers came on board as well, conducting Bible classes for their members. Such teaching was usually the Bible itself, church administration, doctrine, Christian way of life, etc, as circumstances at hand might have dictated (ibid, 1965:91). Missionaries acknowledged that the pastor had a very important role to play in Bible teaching both for young converts and grown up Christians (ibid, 77; 1969:99)

In 1970 stewardship seminars were conducted by American ministers in several churches throughout the country of South Africa. These seminars had a big effect on churches. Whereas previously, giving was very poor among church members, with the conducting of seminars on stewardship a great change came about. More than ever before, members started to give a tithe of their income (TSABHB, 1970:117; 1975:96; and 1980:112). Gradually, pastors began to grasp the importance of Christian education for their members (ibid, 1969:140).

Mid-week Bible classes continued in some churches by way of cell groups, membership classes and leadership training, while on Sundays, it continued as Family Bible Hour. Of all churches interviewed, only five had nothing going on during the week. For some, cell groups have taken the place of Bible Study classes, while others are involved in cottage meetings⁸². The attendance is usually not so good, except in cell groups. Some of

⁸² These are preaching services that are held in homes during the week, aimed at either encouraging new Christians, or reaching out to family members. Such meetings are held throughout the week where there is a funeral case.



excuses given for poor attendance are the lack of transport; some people have to travel long distances to come to church; coming back from work late. For the cell group the attendance is usually good as it involves a small group of people who live close to each other and who soon become a formidable family unit.

Briefly, mid-week Bible classes have taken the form of cell group and cottage meetings in most of the Transvaal Convention churches. Few have retained Bible study classes, while only five have nothing going on at all. The attendance is very poor, except in cell groups, which begin in small numbers but soon grow into big units that also have to be broken down into other new cell groups. Teaching goes on there anyway.

6.5 AGE GROUP MINISTRIES

Age group ministries refer to meetings where various age groups, from children to senior adults, meet at different times for their services. Usually preaching, teaching, discussions, training, etc., take place in these meetings. On occasion, such times are also used for business meetings. Age group ministries represent another forum or interventions where Christian education takes place. Perhaps more than anywhere else - except in the Sunday school context - it is here that teaching takes place in the Transvaal Convention churches. These ministries embrace children, youth, men, women, young adults, single parents, and married couples.

6.5.1 Children's Ministry.

Children's ministry does not differ in any way from Sunday school as described earlier. Rather, the latter is part of the former. Children's ministry implies a fully-fledged programme for children, not only for Sunday school, but for the spiritual development of the child as a whole. In children's ministry, there is a special committee and budget devoted to children only. There is a separate children's service while the main Sunday service goes on. Another important component that characterizes children's ministry is the evangelism that is carried out among children. This is one of the primary goals of



having a children's ministry component. It further implies that children have their own pastor who does house visitation, looking after the children with a committee that has been put in place for this purpose.

In the Transvaal churches, it is only among very few cases that this ministry is practised. By this I mean children's ministry in its entirety as described above, not Sunday school only. Even so, it is not to the expected extent as outlined so far. For example I do not know of any particular church that has a pastor for children, but I know for sure that some churches are already practicing children's ministry, having special services, outings and rallies for children, in addition to the traditional Sunday school. Churches like Temba, Mamelodi, Kagiso, and Soshanguve,⁸³ to name a few, do have this ministry in place, though still in its embryonic stages. On the national level a special desk has been created at the Convention's head office for children, with a fully employed staff member.⁸⁴ It is commendable that at the writing of this essay, a national children's ministry coordinator has been appointed by the National Executive Committee of the Baptist Convention, to take the challenge further and to come up with a full national committee and programme for children's ministry. Hopefully two years down the line, the ministry shall have taken off in full swing in churches, regions and on the national level.

6.5.2 Youth Ministry

Youth ministry is a component of Christian education; wherever it is taking place in the context of the church, Christian education is indeed going on. In the Baptist Convention of South Africa, youth ministry is quite a late development, when put side by side with Sunday school and membership classes. An interesting feature is the way in which youth were reported to be receptive to the gospel back in 1937. Missionaries indicate that there

⁸³ Soshanguve and Mamelodi were not among churches interviewed, but serve as good examples as it pertains to Children's ministry.

⁸⁴ The German Baptist Union is in partnership with the Baptist Convention of South Africa, among others for the purpose of promoting children and youth ministries. The European Baptist Mission is also in partnership with the Convention, being responsible for the salary of their missionary in South Africa and for the Convention Children's ministry worker.



were conversions among youths (TSABHB, 1937:30). Such receptivity is reiterated by Rev. A. D. Phipson in 1959 (ibid, 1959:72). This development of receptivity and conversion of youth prompted in missionaries and African ministers a desire to start youth work. This desire was epitomized in the words, “...we cannot rest until every circuit has a vital youth movement” (ibid, 1961:73). In the Southern Transvaal, a Sunday school organizer, Rev Paulus Makhubu, sought to establish youth work in the Baptist Convention churches (ibid, 1958:76).

The appointment of the Sunday school organizer also cast a ray of hope on youth work in the churches of the Transvaal. (TSABHB, 1961:75-76). All in all youth work took off in full swing in the late 1960's. Mention is made of the appointment of a youth worker in 1968. In various regions youth rallies and camps were held (ibid, 1968:110-118). Clearly by the late 1960's youth work had become commonplace for all regions of the Baptist Convention. Missionaries were greatly encouraged by this development (ibid, 116).

Local churches in the Transvaal soon held youth meetings, so did all other churches in the Convention. Regional youth rallies and camps continued to dominate the scene. It was through these youth regional gatherings that churches that did not have youth services before or those whose services were weak, picked up and gained stature. It should be borne in mind that in these youth services, whether regional or local, preaching and teaching took place, especially in regional meetings as special speakers were invited.

In December 1979 the first national youth convention was held in Bloemfontein (ibid, 1980:112).⁸⁵ Since then, national youth gatherings took place biannually. Important themes handled in these gatherings were salvation, love, victorious Christian living, holiness, growth, youth and the world, choosing a life partner, etc. Service programmes were twofold, mainly preaching and teaching. One thing certain is that teaching has always been the norm in these regional and national meetings. Local churches that could afford special speakers (teachers) did invite them for their youth services.

Presently, youth ministry has become a very powerful component of ministry within the life of Transvaal Convention churches. It ranks second in position, in terms of viability, Sunday school (for children) taking the lead. Admittedly, youth work varies from church to church. Some churches are very strong in this area, while others are still very weak. In very few cases there is no youth work going on, or it has died out with the departure of a youth leader.

The attendance usually varies from fifty to eighty percent, in some cases to ninety percent. Not all youth groups are properly organized, but most of them are. Admittedly a few churches are still struggling to bring youth together or to come up with a viable youth programme. There is however, a general agreement that youth programmes in churches are very strong. This has led to the coining of the notion that the strength and growth of any church can be measured by the number of young people it has and the viability of the youth programme it displays.

Many churches are so organized that they have programmes drawn up for the whole year. Various activities reflect on their programmes; among others, preaching, teaching, recreation, choir practice, outing, etc. Not all youth ministries are that creative as to

⁸⁵ From 1969 I became part of the youth ministry development in the Convention. Much of what will follow about youth will



bring about a variety of programmes. Youth services are usually lively, being able to draw other youths to their services. They have their fully-fledged committees who meet from time to time to plan and to arrange for services and to attend to issues. In some areas committees struggle to meet because of lack of transport, the long distance to be traversed to church, and in other cases due to lack of commitment on the part of some. Committees themselves still need attention. Among others they need leadership training. To this end a course on children and youth ministries has been commenced by the Baptist Convention College.⁸⁶ In places where there are no youth committees, church committees take full responsibility for the youth programme, appointing youth sponsors to assist them on their way to maturity and as they seek to assume full responsibility for their programmes.

For teaching, young people invite their own pastors and some members within the church, depending on their expertise in the matter to be dealt with, as well as their ability to teach or communicate effectively. Teachers are also invited from outside the church, for as long as they are good in specific areas. Such teachers have to be approved by the pastor first, lest some teach wrong doctrines. Topics vary from salvation, holiness, victorious Christian living, the role of youth in the church, the home and the community, to dating, courtship, marriage, and career guidance, to mention just a few. All in all, youth ministry in the Transvaal Convention churches is generally up and running.

On regional level, special committees have been appointed to lead youths. They are elected by young people at their regional meetings. They serve for two years only, and may be reelected for another two years, after which they may not be elected for the next two years. Each region hosts a regional rally during the year, and then holds a camp at the end of every other year. The December holidays are alternated between regional

be based also on my personal experiences as a young person then.

⁸⁶ The Baptist Convention College was opened in 1995 through the influence of the then Convention leadership efforts to address the problem of contextual theological and ministry training for blacks.

camps and national youth conventions. The spiritual rallies usually last for a weekend only, while the biannual camps and national conventions span the period of a week.

At these regional gatherings, there is, among other things, preaching and teaching. Preaching is usually done in the morning during devotions, and in the evening service. Teaching on contemporary issues like HIV/AIDS, community involvement or doctrinal matters that warrant attention, takes place during the day. Teaching may assume the form of story telling, workshops and group discussions, after which report back is expected from each group. Experts in various areas are invited to these meetings to address pertinent and contemporary concerns affecting youth.

6.5.3 Young Adults and Single Parents

This is a fairly new ministry within the Transvaal Baptist churches. It is still in its formative stages. Young adults are men and women from age 21 to 35 and usually unmarried. They do not fit into the youth or adults. It was for this reason that there has been much talk around setting up this ministry. In some churches and regions, it is already taking shape. It may not be possible for some churches to have it as there are only a few young adults in them; hence there are interchurch talks in other circles aimed at bringing young adults from different churches together to constitute that ministry. In some regions the ministry has been accepted in principle; it is gradually taking off. Two regions are ahead already in this regard namely, the Central and Southern Gauteng regions. They are now negotiating the formation of the ministry on a national level. The Kagiso Baptist church is one example of a church that has this ministry as a local church. Other churches think of it only on the occasion of Easter weekends, when they have their workshops. The Soshanguve and New Covenant Baptist churches cater for this category during the occasion of their Easter weekend services. Unfortunately, it does not go beyond this point.

Along with young adults, there is the single parents ministry consisting of divorcees and widows. Single parents are in the main, women. Some of them join ranks with young adults, especially those who are still young. In some cases the two have merged to form one body. However, more and more single parents are constituted separately, consisting largely of young females. The older single parents are usually few, as many of them join the ranks of the women's ministry.

Topics which concern young adults and single parents are, loneliness, getting married at a late age, living single, the challenges faced by young adults and single parents, remarriage, single parenting and other topics of spiritual concern.

The two ministries need to grow. Where they do exist, a great deal of teaching goes on rather than preaching. One can only hope that other regions will catch the vision and roll it into action as a matter of urgency, seeing that this age group has its own interests and perceives life differently from others, while they also grapple with problems unique to themselves only.

6.5.4 Adult Christian education

Christian education further took shape within the context of men and women's ministries in the Transvaal Convention churches. Women's meetings appear to have started much earlier than men's meetings. They were led by missionaries' wives.

Women held their meetings locally on Thursday afternoons, regionally once per quarter, and nationally once a year (TSABHB, 1950:50). Missionaries' spouses played a very significant role in the instruction of women on the occasion of their meetings (ibid, 1965:85). However, owing to the illiteracy that plagued most of the African women, progress was slow (ibid, 88). With time, women's meetings grew stronger and were consequently commended by missionaries in their annual reports (ibid, 1961:80; 1962:71, 73). Women took responsibility of their own work (ibid, 1958:73).



Women continued to meet on Thursday for prayers, and quarterly and annually for business and lessons. However, as more and more women began to engage in secular work, local Thursday meetings declined in attendance, especially in urban areas. As a consequence, some died out. Some still honour their Thursday meetings, particularly in rural areas where most women are at home. The teaching ministry of women on a local church context has not been an effective one. This was all due to the illiteracy and the consequent shallow level of spirituality. Only few women planned for these services; most were merely pounced upon to share a Word or preach, without having made thorough preparation of self and the message.

As more and more women got educated, the standard of teaching went up on regional levels. Over the years women's conferences continued, this time with teaching being on a higher note. With the phasing out of missionary involvement in the 1980's, women invited their own speakers to their regional meetings. The regional level of women's meetings has grown tremendously in recent years, with new sorts of programmes being introduced by the elite. In the main, themes that received attention were doctrine, marriage and family life, dealing with adolescents, handling the in-laws, the role of a woman in the house, the church, and the community. These and others not mentioned here, were dealt with on regional level. During the early years of missionary dominance, teaching hovered around doctrine, Bible study, Christian living, purity, Christian growth, etc.

As we enter into the third millennium, the Transvaal Baptist Convention's women's wing remains a formidable ministry to reckon with, especially on the regional level. As it relates to local services only few churches are doing well. The working class has dealt

a deathblow to the women's local Thursday services. However, in most churches, Thursday meetings still go on once a week for grannies and housewives, while Saturdays are used by the working class. It is only in a few cases that these local women gatherings are strong at all. For those who meet on Thursdays, there is more of preaching than teaching. At regional level, youth and women are equally strong. However, youth are much stronger at local church level.

The exact date and year when the men's meetings began cannot be ascertained. What is known about them is that they had begun as the Bantu Baptist Men's Association, with the 'BBMA' tags on their jackets. It is said that in 1934, they took on the name, "*Sons of the Redeemer*" (TSABHB, 1934:15). They also met quarterly for instruction by missionaries. Teaching is said to have taken place (ibid, 1950:50).

In 1975 the executive committee was concerned about the apathy of men not taking their meetings seriously. Speakers were to be called upon to address the problem (TSABHB, 1975:98). To date men's meetings still constitute a problem, especially with regard to attendance and goal setting. In many local churches men's meetings have come to a stand still. Only in few cases is work going on at all. All churches interviewed confess the same weakness that men are very difficult to deal with; their meetings are very weak. In one church, Ekangala, men are taking their meetings seriously because of the concern expressed by women members. In Meadowlands, men used to be more active than women. As a matter of fact Meadowlands, ranks 2nd in terms of the number of men in the church. They are 120 in all.



Notwithstanding the weak attendance alluded to above, the Transvaal Baptist men's ministry is fully organized in terms of its administration, especially on regional level. There are local and regional committees that do planning. Meetings continue to be held and good speakers are being invited on regional level, albeit with weak attendance. Preachers and teachers are invited to address specific issues of concern.

The men's ministry is nearly as old as the women's, but it is the weakest component of them all. It may only be in very few churches that men are meeting locally at all. The ministry may be there in name only, while in practice it is at its lowest ebb, or not there at all. One can actually count the churches where something is taking place. Where such meetings exist, they are held once a month; two to three churches may be meeting once a week. Topics such as the man in the home, the church and the community are tackled. There is a general concern among men themselves that something needs to be done.

Another area in which the educational ministry of the church finds expression is the marriage and family life ministry. Once a month couples and single parents⁸⁷ meet together for lessons on marriage and family life. In one case it is once in three months, as the case may be. Of the churches consulted, eight hold such meetings once a year as couples or families. Some complain that the attendance is weak. Only one church hosts couples meetings once a week, with 50 to 60% attendance. Another church hosts such a meeting once a month, while two others hold couples meetings once in every three months (albeit with weak attendance). Two churches have confessed that they have lessons on marriage only, and some premarital counseling for couples intending to marry. Three churches have reported that they had couples meetings when the pastor was still there. Since he left, there is nothing going on. Five churches have nothing going on in this area. Up until now some are still just talking about it, with no initiative to begin at all. Those few churches which have regular couples meetings, whether

⁸⁷ Not all single parents attend couples meetings; in some cases they do not feel welcome. However, older single parents attend marriage seminars. It is for this reason that single parents are treated separately below.

jointly with other churches or alone, testify of how good such meetings are and how that some couples are being won to the faith through them.

Where such meetings take place, a speaker is invited to address one of the thorny issues in marriage, e.g., finances, sex, communication, child upbringing, dealing with in-laws, etc. After the presentation of the speaker, questions and discussions usually follow, so as to grapple with issues that may not have been covered by the teacher in question. Sometimes issues covered need further clarity. All churches know how important these meetings are, but not all have done anything as yet. In most cases the initiative of the pastor is what is required. Some are interested in such meetings, being prepared to travel far in order to attend couples meetings held in other churches. Besides, there are interdenominational couples meetings that are usually well attended. They are usually organized by organizations such as Campus crusade for Christ. Some churches also organize these meetings, but very few churches indeed.

Some pastors do their teaching during premarital counseling sessions. Readily prepared lessons are given to couples about to marry. Again it has to be said that not all pastors have these lessons. Very few of them are capable of preparing them. On a whole counseling may take one or two sessions only for such pastors. Some do not do any counseling at all, unless requested by a given couple about to marry. To date I do not know of any Convention pastor who has done a thorough marriage counseling course. Premarital lessons are planned from sheer experience. Another challenge remains for the Baptist church to take couples meetings and premarital counseling more seriously.

6.6 TEACHING ON SPECIAL OCCASIONS.

The educational ministry of the church finds fulfillment during special occasions in the life of some churches. These special occasions take place over weekends or span an entire week in the year. A given church would plan that in line with its year's theme, a special speaker should be called upon to give special lessons that will enhance the theme. For example, a church may set aside missions or evangelism as the emphasis for

the year. In that case a speaker will be called upon for a weekend or a week as the case may be, to give lessons on missions and/or personal evangelism. On occasion the whole church may go out for a weekend for leadership training. It has to be said though, that it is only in very few churches that this is being done. It is hoped that with time many churches will learn from others and follow suit.

6.7 REGIONAL CONFERENCES

Long before the formation of the national body, the Bantu Baptist Church, as it was known then, churches had formed themselves into councils. Missionaries had been instrumental in constituting these councils. Subsequently, they were known as associations. Recently, the Baptist Convention calls them regions. On the other hand, the Baptist Union continues to use 'Associations'. Each association would comprise a number of churches within a given radius. As these churches grew in number, more associations came into being.

Each region would hold its own annual business conference, a practice that has been carried over from the Baptist Union of South Africa. Some held these annual conferences during the Easter weekend, while others held theirs in September. What is interesting is that the practice still holds to date. Along with business, papers were delivered by various speakers. First it was the missionaries and European ministers who delivered these papers; with time however, African ministers joined their ranks in delivering papers at annual regional business conferences. The involvement of African ministers was a sign of growth.

There was both preaching and teaching at these annual regional conferences. Examples of themes or topics handled at business conferences typify the teaching ministry that

took place there. In 1961, the Northern Transvaal had as its theme, “*Now is the time to witness*” (TSABHB, 1961-62: 79). The Southern Transvaal handled “*The walk of faith*” in 1969 (ibid, 1970:119). A later report states that in 1975 the Northern Transvaal held its annual business conference and their theme was “*God’s way of keeping the church going and growing*” (ibid, 1975:102), while the Southern Transvaal, in the same year, expounded “*Victorious Christian Living*” (ibid, 98). So the list goes on. All in all, Christian education took place on this level and still does. When the missionary era elapsed, the African ministers took over the teaching role completely. All Transvaal regions (except for Southern Gauteng) devote the Easter weekend to spiritual enrichment, so that a great deal of preaching and teaching takes place. Business has been left to September/October.

6.8 THE ROLE OF CHRISTIAN LITERATURE IN THE TEACHING MINISTRY OF THE BAPTIST CONVENTION CHURCHES⁸⁸

Whereas Christian literature (be it tracts, pamphlets, books, Bibles, hymns, instruction manuals, etc) has gone hand in glove with the different modes of teaching described so far, it is in my opinion important to underline the essential role it played. The publication of Christian literature on its own, epitomizes the measure with which Christian education was viewed by the Convention churches. It demonstrated the high esteem accorded to the teaching ministry of the church.

In many cases, Christians and unbelievers alike, were able to read literature on their own, without attending Bible study sessions or instruction classes.⁸⁹ In this way some

⁸⁸ Due to the general nature of this sub-topic, it would not have been possible to confine it to the Transvaal churches. The focus is simply on the Convention as a whole and how it gained from this ministry. Transvaal is part of this big organization.

⁸⁹ While the earlier years were marked by illiteracy, it should be borne in mind that as time wore on, people were able to read the Bible in their own languages, hence the translations. The illiteracy rate declined by the years.

got converted by merely reading a tract or a Christian pamphlet on the way of salvation. Many Christians had no one to teach them after their conversion, but through the reading of Christian literature, they grew somewhat in their knowledge of Jesus Christ. It is for this reason that I have given Christian literature a special focus.

Missionaries have met and discussed the importance of Christian literature for African work. One such meeting was held in Bloemfontein, where it became evident that some publications were needed to help (TSABHB, 1965:112). This was a Christian education conference of missionaries.

Christian education literature was published by the Christian education department (of the Baptist Union of South Africa) with a view to addressing specific components of the total teaching ministry of the church. For example, some literature was directed to new converts and new members, men, women, youth, and children. Other Christian literature was geared for the training of Christian workers, namely lay preachers, Sunday school teachers and organizers, personal soul winners and various other church leaders.

First, literature was prepared for Sunday school teachers and scholars. Much has been said under 'Sunday school' so far. It will not be necessary at this stage to go into details. It will suffice to mention the title, *'Lesson Helps'* as a booklet that was published by one of the missionaries to help teachers and learners in 1965. Second, material was published for youth. It was acknowledged that the department of youth required attention. Special lecture notes were thus compiled for youth leadership conferences and camps. There was a desire that such material be produced, which meant that only lecturers had these literature material (ibid, 112).

In the third instance there was literature material for membership classes and members in general. Booklets on church membership, practical Christian living, the family of God, and who the Baptists are, were being planned (ibid, 112). I know for sure that a “*Church membership*” booklet was finally produced, in which questions were asked and answers provided on doctrinal subjects. This booklet was soon translated into Zulu, Sotho and Xhosa (ibid, 1968:99; 1969:19). Other publications for churches included “*Incwadi yemibuzo yaseBaptist*” (the Baptist book of questions) (ibid, 1965:86), which was also used for youth; a stewardship manual intended for instructing members in giving, and “*Introduction to doctrine*” (ibid, 1968:126, 127); Zulu, Sotho and Xhosa hymns for African churches, some of which were composed by Africans. A Zulu catechism was also published (ibid, 1964:67); 800 booklets on “*Help from above*”, written by W. Goodman, were distributed to churches. These booklets were available in Zulu as well, being entitled, “*Usizo oluvela phezulu*” (ibid, 1965:90).

Fourth, there was literature material prepared for Christian workers, especially lay preachers, leaders and ministers. A case in point is the “*Helps for lay preachers*” (TSABHB, 1965:81); “*Amandla evangeli*” (the power of the gospel), written by Rev. Vikstroom (ibid, 90), “*A Commentary on the book of Romans*” which was in the process of being compiled by Rev. Johansson at the time of the report (ibid, 1964:67). Sermon material was also translated for lay people to use.

A “*Bible Way Correspondence Course*” was introduced by the Baptist Union of South Africa through its publication press, *Baptist Publishing House*, in Roodepoort. This correspondence course soon became popular among many African churches (ibid,



1969:143). Individual Christian leaders and members registered for their knowledge and edification.

Thus, Christian literature played a very important role in the Christian education of the Baptist Convention of South Africa, - and of course in the Transvaal Baptist Churches - illustrating the extent to which the teaching ministry of the church was regarded, especially by missionaries.

6.9 CONCLUSION

What has been said so far, about the historical development and the current state of affairs in Christian education in the Transvaal Baptist Convention Churches, underscores the teaching ministry prevalent in the Convention as a whole. So much could have been said about other aspects of teaching in these churches. Suffice it to say that indeed, based on the historical evidence and the interview findings about the Transvaal churches, the Baptist Convention of South Africa, was, from its earliest formation, involved in Christian education; granted that in the initial stages it was missionaries and European ministers who taught, the African leaders following much later.

Chapter seven will evaluate the doing of Christian education in the Transvaal Baptist Churches, and in so doing, in the Convention as a whole. The evaluation will be followed by prescriptions for effective Christian education in future for both the Baptist Convention of South Africa and the Church of Jesus Christ as a whole.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE EVALUATION OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION IN THE BAPTIST CONVENTION CHURCHES OF THE TRANSVAAL

7.1 INTRODUCTION

7.1.1 Background.

The aim of the entire discourse has throughout been to evaluate the teaching ministry of the Baptist Convention of South Africa, especially churches in the Transvaal. The information given so far in the preceding chapters, particularly chapters 4 and 5, forms the basis of the evaluation process. By implication, the meaning and purpose of Christian education in chapter 4, and the teaching ministry as purported in the Old and New Testaments, and the Reformation, in chapter 5, forms the framework around which evaluation will revolve. In addition, literature on Christian education will be a helpful standard in this important process.

As pointed out in the first chapter, the purpose of the evaluation exercise is to uncover and reflect on the doing of Christian education in the Baptist Convention churches, with the Transvaal Baptist Convention churches as a point of reference. What this implies is that what the Transvaal Convention churches did right will be raised; and what needs to be improved will also be brought to light. Once this has been done, a way forward will be paved, setting out strategies for effective Christian education in future.

While other missionary organizations were involved with natives in South Africa, as alluded to in chapter 3, the SABMS will feature predominantly along with the Transvaal

churches in this essay as they were involved in overseeing the Baptist Convention work since 1892.

I contend that indeed the Transvaal Baptist Convention churches have been involved in Christian education in various ways through the years; that many such efforts were and are still very good, but that however, the exercise as a whole was tainted with inefficiency, inconsistencies, shallowness and lack of singleness of purpose. These and other factors will manifest themselves as the evaluation unfolds. What is implied here, is that though teaching took place and improved over the years, much still needs to be done to bring it to Biblically and conventionally accepted standards.

7.1.2 The general trend in Christian education.

It has to be emphasized though, that evaluation of Christian education in the Baptist Convention of South Africa is undertaken with an understanding that no country or denomination can claim that they have arrived yet, as it relates to the doing of Christian education. While the Baptist Convention is plagued by its own problems in this area, denominations in South Africa⁹⁰ and other countries had their problems as well. In the first and second chapters mention has been made of problems that beset Christian education to date. It has been said that in America, as elsewhere in the world, Christian education has gone through struggles and still is, in some way. Several authors were quoted as saying Christian education needs help.

Thus, it should be borne in mind that problems or shortcomings which may be identified within the teaching ministry of the Transvaal Convention churches, are not a new phenomenon at all; they are typical of other denominational problems, though they may vary from the one to the other. All of these denominations are grappling with some issue

⁹⁰ I am assuming that this is the case also in South Africa. No special literature has been referred to as proof to this end. Granted that such a blanket statement about South Africa stands to be tested. Personally, I do not know of much or any Christian education literature for South African churches as a whole.

of Christian education. This assertion does not in anyway condone the position as it stands within the Transvaal Convention churches.

7.1.3 The basis of evaluation

Evaluation of any Christian education programme must be rightly underpinned by a framework on the basis of which it will unfold. As a matter of fact, a complete theory of Christian education would be an appropriate measure to bring forward. Paragraph three on page three of the first chapter, sums up areas to be covered in the evaluation process. I repeat the paragraph here for purposes of this evaluation, *“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.”*

In addition, as I have pointed out under ‘background’ earlier in this chapter, the fourth and fifth chapters, directly or indirectly, form a basis for the evaluation process. For example, the two chapters dealt respectively with the meaning and purpose of Christian education and the historical development of Christian education through the years. I contend that in some way, some guidelines have been lifted indirectly. I am thinking here of the purpose of Christian education in chapter four, underscoring that every Christian education must have a purpose; and of the historical background of the Old and New Testaments in chapter five, which lay down some basic principles of Christian education. Both testaments point to who must teach, how often he must teach and what he must teach about.

The Reformation history, also in chapter five, has much to teach in terms of how Christian education should be carried out. A case in point is the emphasis on the priesthood of all believers; underlining among others the fact that all Christians must teach and be witnesses of Jesus Christ. The Reformation laid special stress on the teaching ministry of the local church. Among others, a substantial amount of literature has been produced during this time – whether in pamphlet, booklet, or book form – underscoring the church’s educational ministry. The Reformation has put Christian education in the limelight within the church’s entire ministry. I am saying that in some way, guidelines can be derived from these two chapters as to the framework or basis of evaluation. For purposes of this thesis though, I will give a few guidelines that will form the basis of this evaluation. I argue that what is much sought after is what I have come to call “*An Authentic Christian Education Programme.*” This is what I believe should be looked out for in any Christian education venture.

In this regard, my thesis is that the Baptist Convention churches (along with other Christian churches the world over) should be engaged in authentic Christian education programmes. There is a difference between ordinary Christian education programmes, which are Christian education in name only, and authentic Christian education programmes. In one way or another, churches are involved in the teaching ministry, but not all are necessarily involved in authentic church educational ministry, as is supposed to be the case. Authentic Christian education is the kind of Christian education that measures up to what it takes to be good Christian education. Another way of putting it, is calling it an effective Christian education programme. It will not necessarily be ideal or perfect in every sense of the word; after all it is only human. However, it displays elements of serious business and true commitment, (for lack of a better expression).

The following factors - which are, for all practical purposes, an unpacking of paragraph three on page 3 of chapter one - constitute an authentic (or effective) Christian education programme.⁹¹ The programme must be deliberate; it must not be accidental; being a concern of a selected insignificant group in the church, while the leadership looks on with indifference, showing no support whatsoever. It is a programme that has been well planned for; it should have a purpose or mission statement that underlies its activities. Authentic Christian education has a good administrative structure, with committees and teaching staff that undergo training from time to time. Planning committees are held, and evaluation meetings are catered for periodically. All age groups, that is, children, youth and adults, are taken care of and attended to according to their needs and age levels. They are viewed in a serious light. Attendance records are kept and absenteeism attended to promptly.

Authentic Christian education takes teaching material seriously, ensuring that a relevant and contextual curriculum is in use. The curriculum must be in line with the goal of Christian education and the church as a whole. Such a curriculum is subjected to evaluation at the end of every year to test its suitability for the coming year and for the time at hand. Moreover, an effective discipleship programme is put in place for new members. Various interventions or modes of doing Christian education are put to use, as circumstances may allow. What I mean here is that Sunday school classes, membership training, preparing the saints for the ministry, marriage and family life components, and other such like interventions are regarded highly for the educational enrichment of all members.

⁹¹ Page 3, in chapter one, has something of the basis of evaluation, as it highlights the concern of this entire thesis.



Against this background, process is very important; any authentic Christian education will take process seriously, ensuring that it is abreast with modern methods of teaching, e.g., the dialogical method where the teacher and the learner are both learners and teachers alike. Periodically, methods should be evaluated against the change noticeable in learners. If there is no change in learners, then no education has taken place. The involvement of the pastor in Christian education is very critical; so is the evaluation of the church's educational ministry.

It is in light of what I have outlined so shortly above that I will evaluate the Transvaal Baptist Convention's Christian education programme (virtually the Baptist Convention educational ministry as a whole). I do not claim that I have said all that which needed to be said about the basis of evaluation; however, at least this is the line I will be pursuing in my analysis.

7.2 THE EVALUATION PROCESS

The term 'evaluation' has been explained in the first chapter; it will not be necessary to define it again here, except to say that it is concerned with the raising of strengths and limitations in a given phenomenon, giving reasons why that is the case where possible, and prescribing remedial measures for problems at hand.

First, the commendable features in the doing of Christian education in the Transvaal Convention churches will be highlighted. By commendable features is meant those things that the churches in question did right, i.e., their strengths as it pertains to Christian education. These features will be lifted from the entire Christian education practice; by implication, all components of the church's educational ministry will be analyzed and the good of each brought to light.

In the second instance, what Transvaal Convention churches did wrong, or that which needs radical or moderate improvement, will be raised. It will be discovered that same components have their strengths and weaknesses. For example, Sunday school, youth and adult ministries, will be found to have both strengths and weakness.

7.2.1 Commendable features in the Christian education of the Transvaal Convention Churches

The existence of a Christian education programme, salvation preaching by Baptist native ministers, the teaching dimension of preaching noticeable in the churches at issue, growth indicators, the awareness about, and the effectiveness of (some) age group ministries, regional conferences, the Christian workers' training and refreshers' courses and the publication of Christian education literature, constitute commendable features under discussion.

7.2.1.1 The existence of a Christian education programme

One thing the Transvaal churches of the Convention have done and should be commended for, is the providing of platform for teaching to take place and for being involved in teaching themselves. At least the Convention has from its inception, been concerned with Christian education within its ranks, no matter how weak this might have been in its initial stages.⁹²

Different modes of teaching - Sunday School, membership and Bible classes, youth, etc, as mentioned in chapter 6, emerged over time in the history of the Baptist Convention; affording opportunities for the instruction and training of church members and leaders as

⁹² Mention should be made of the fact that SABMS has been very instrumental in this respect. It was from their burden and involvement in Christian education that natives later followed suit, doing Christian education, though it was not so up to standard.

the case might have been. However, it is not as though these modes were perfect. By no means. Rather, what is being argued for is that at least an opportunity was afforded for teaching to take place.

From the early beginnings of the Baptist Convention of South Africa, missionaries, their spouses and other female missionaries were involved in Sunday school work and in membership classes. Among the single women missionaries I refer to Misses Berlin and Box who started Sunday school work at Tshabo (near East London) on the tenth of July, in 1894 (TSABHB, 1895:53). The name of Miss Doke may not be left out as one of the woman missionaries (ibid, 1940:14). These missionaries understood that it was very important to teach God's people. They had gone out of their way to ensure that in one way or another, instruction of God's people took place.

In time natives who became church members and leaders also engaged in some form of Christian education, albeit on a weaker note as they themselves were not so well trained.⁹³ Black ministers took it upon themselves to teach. Recently teaching takes place in conferences on regional and national levels.

The quality of teaching has since improved as a result of members getting educated and being able to compile lessons on their own. Teaching is taking place in the Transvaal Convention churches; whether through ministers, members or invited guests. Such teaching may not be so up to standard in some cases; it may be shallow or deep; what remains is that teaching is taking place. This in itself is indeed a commendable feature.

⁹³ Ministerial training was of a very poor standard. Most of the Christian workers were illiterate, hence the poor and shallow quality of their teaching ministry.

7.2.1.2 Salvation preaching by Baptist native ministers.

While missionaries themselves were involved in teaching and preaching among Transvaal Convention churches (of course throughout the Baptist Convention), the content or method of their presentation left much to be desired. Indeed they were genuine in their work, however, failure to understand the culture and communication methods of natives led to their weak preaching and teaching which could not reach natives properly. This matter receives full attention under *'limitations in the Christian education of Transvaal Baptist Convention churches'*, later.

This sub-heading means for the first time after a long period, the Convention churches heard and understood the salvation message. They did hear the same message preached by missionaries, but it was not so forthright; challenging people to radical repentance from sin to Christ. Conversion preaching and teaching of this caliber came from ministers who got saved during tent evangelistic crusades. They went to Baptist and other Bible institutions for pastoral training and came back to take charge of churches which needed pastors⁹⁴. In the initial stages their preaching met with fierce opposition from older members who came to prefer the *Mongameli's* (missionary superintendents) because of their mild and acceptable preaching. However, some persisted until the message of salvation was understood and accepted. I have to say this though that some salvation preaching was very rude, being partly accountable for the opposition to such preaching.

One of the prominent ministers who introduced the message of salvation to Baptist Convention churches was the Reverend Elijah Mkhwanazi. He went from place to place,

⁹⁴ I have explained earlier on that Baptists in general use the call system to employ pastors. Some pastors had left because of calls to other churches. Others were old and had to go on retirement. Still others had died of old age or sickness.

preaching the message of repentance and forgiveness of sins in Baptist Convention churches. It was largely through his influence that for the first time most Convention churches understood what it meant to be saved or to be born again. One old lady gave a testimony to the fact that for a long time she was a member of her church, but it was for the first time that she heard a salvation message preached in that way. She got converted through the preaching of Rev. Mkhwanazi.⁹⁵ Many other men of his caliber preached a similar message to Convention churches that were full of churchgoers only. It was because of this new trend in preaching that many churches split and that new life was infused into the remaining church members.

Not all Transvaal Convention churches experienced the split. Some churches were founded by saved evangelists and pastors. The preaching of the salvation message saw the establishing of new churches that were based on the true doctrine of repentance and forgiveness of sins (Luke 24:46, 47). We owe it to those pastors who were brave in the face of opposition and consequent lack of material and financial support that most churches are in the light of salvation today. Since then, teaching ministry focused on salvation and the purpose of Christian education, that is, of leading men and women to Christ, was better catered for.

7.2.1.3 The teaching dimension of preaching in the Transvaal Convention churches.

It has often been said that good preaching is preaching that teaches. Typical of the Convention as a whole, is the type of preaching that issues in teaching. Whereas I may not be judgmental about the preaching of other denominations or ministries, I am

⁹⁵ She spoke personally to me on the occasion of my practical work at the church she attended. She passed away a few years ago.

confident in saying that Baptists are noted for being good preachers in that they teach while they are preaching. An argument may be raised in this regard, to the end that all preaching is teaching after all; there is no need to give credit to Baptists for this practice. It has to be said with due respect that other kinds of preaching revolve around a word, a phrase or a sentence; being purely emotional and noisy and lacking in content.⁹⁶

Arguing for good preaching and teaching, James Smart (1954:19) contended that *“Preaching is preaching and teaching is teaching, and yet good preaching is also teaching and good teaching has in it the note of a preacher’s proclamation...The content of preaching and of teaching is the same. But preaching essentially is the proclamation of this word of God to man in his unbelief.”* Convention pastors may not have been well trained in the area of Christian education, as facts will prove later; however, they have been well prepared in the area of preaching, so that they are noted for preaching systematically. I have in mind here, the different types of sermon structures, especially the topical sermon outline, which method may also be used for preparing and presenting lessons. In this way of preaching Convention pastors have always excelled to the point of being invited to preach over the air⁹⁷. It is this type of preaching that has fostered spiritual growth among Convention church members; to date, it is still fulfilling this role.

⁹⁶ I am having in mind low quality type Bible training institutions that I know of personally, where ministers were not properly groomed in good and systematic preaching. Then there are those ministers who have been merely promoted to the position of pastoral ministry without any training. Some of them did not want to have anything to do with such training, believing that the Holy Spirit would do the teaching work; He does not need Bible schools.

⁹⁷ From as early as 1961 missionaries reported that black ministers were already participating in Bantu Radio Ministry. They observed about the radio ministry, *“This ministry is appreciated by many”* (TSABHB, 1961:74)

7.2.1.4 Growth indicators within the Transvaal Convention churches.

Another commendable factor within the Transvaal Convention churches is the quality growth which took place over the years, so that at a certain point, churches were able to do things on their own independently of missionaries. By implication, churches were getting more and more autonomous as years went by.

It has to be said that from the outset the aim of planting churches was that at a later stage, they should stand on their own in every respect; as it were, they should be autonomous. Three principles of autonomy as advocated by Henry Venn (England) and Rufus Anderson (America), subsequently embraced among others by Baptists, are the planting of self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating churches. In other words, churches that were to be founded were to govern themselves, support themselves financially and otherwise, and expand themselves in evangelism and missions. To this end, Venn and Anderson, both regarded as joint fathers of the three selves, “...argued that the founding of autonomous indigenous churches was the aim of mission” (Bosch, 1980:134, 152).

This is the direction in which the South African Baptist Missionary Society (SABMS) was moving. Their goal was that after everything has been said and done, natives should evangelize their own people, hence their motto, ‘*The evangelization of the Bantu by the Bantu*’ (TSABHB, 1965:71). Their aim was that the black churches would grow in every respect, among others, in reaching their own communities for Christ. It is therefore remarkable to note that over a period of time, Transvaal churches grew to a point where they were capable of carrying out some aspects of ministry on their own. This growth towards autonomy noticeable among churches in question, can be attributed



to the teaching ministry that took place over the years, no matter how faulty it may have been at some points. The growth was directly through Christian education efforts and indirectly through some actions on the part of missionaries and native pastors of their day; actions which may not have been intended to teach; but which did convey some teaching to native members and leaders.

The growth in itself was not necessarily perfect, as will be explained below; however, it constituted a milestone in the movement towards the right direction. It meant that gradually, Transvaal churches were beginning to do things by themselves, learning to carry out ministry on their own. Among others the growth towards autonomy was demonstrated by the assumption of leadership by some Convention leaders, financial management, adopting of own constitution, participation in radio preaching, Sunday school growth, youth camps and mid-week Bible study classes.

The appointment of Sunday school and youth organizers from among the Convention leaders and the assumption of leadership roles in presiding over regional conferences, as well as the shifting of the responsibility of administration and spiritual work to the native ministers, were characteristic of a growing denomination. Names of Baptist leaders like Revs J. Piliso (TSABHB, 1945:29), Paul Makhubu (ibid, 1954:53), S. Silinga (Ibid, 1961:75-76), Jerome Matshebula (ibid, 80) and Nathaniel Nkosi (Ibid, 1968:110), feature prominently in the Sunday school and youth organizing work. Each of these men of God was appointed as Sunday school and youth organizer. In one conference in the Northern Transvaal region (now known as Central Gauteng), Rev. J. J. Lepele presided over all scheduled meetings; a step which was new and appreciated by all (ibid, 1961:79-80).



Then there was the issue of finances, which for a long were contributed and administered by missionaries, but were been taken over by some Convention regions. In the initial stages of 1961, the churches demonstrated a willingness to pay part of their pastor's stipend while the missionary society paid the rest; no matter how little the stipend in itself might have been (ibid, 1961:74).

Generally, churches were beginning to run their own finances, having been given the freedom to open accounts in their local churches' names (ibid, 83); being capable of giving to ministry projects. In the Transvaal for example, (the Northern and Southern regions, now known as Central and Southern Gauteng), the Baptist Women Association was reported to have given R200 towards Bible students and church furniture (Ibid, 80). Moreover, whereas earlier on, the ticket system⁹⁸ was used as a mode of giving, a resolution was passed in the Northern Transvaal region to the end that "*...tithing should be taught as a basis for Christian stewardship in our churches*" (ibid, 79).

By 1970, churches were financially viable, paying their pastors salaries, providing for transport and housing. The Baptist Convention knew the gospel to the point where they had a missionary in Botswana whom they fully supported (TSABHB, 1970:101-102).⁹⁹ Not all regions had embraced this trend. Orange Free State for example, was reported to be coming along very slowly. The majority of churches in this part of the Convention were not yet ready to take full responsibility (ibid, 123). It was only in 1980 that an

⁹⁸ What happened was that each member of the church had a ticket which had columns for twelve months. Members were expected to contribute at least 10 or 20 cents then per month, which would be reflected on the ticket; the pastor signing next to the month of payment. The members kept the tickets and brought them along when it was time to give. This method of giving was not Biblical at all. The Baptist churches must have copied it from other churches. Those who did not pay regularly would be deprived of certain privileges due to loyal members.

⁹⁹ I have to qualify these assertions though, by saying that housing in this regard meant the building of mission houses or parsonage or manse. The question of the Botswana missionary was so far the one and only venture which came up as a result of immigration circumstances surrounding this missionary in South Africa. To date we do not have another missionary.

Orange Free State church was reported to be able to pay its pastor well, so that he had to leave his secular work.¹⁰⁰

Another pointer to growth towards autonomy was the readiness of churches to adopt their own constitutions. These constitutions were drafted by missionaries and adopted for implementation by churches. In one of their reports, missionaries reported that Africans were to adopt their own constitution the following year, that is, 1966. Accordingly, it was expected that at least blacks should “...realize a new responsibility for the extension of Christ’s witness in their midst and for the support of those who serve them in the pastorates” (TSABHB, 1965:71). This move was undoubtedly a sign of growth on the part of the Transvaal Convention as a whole; the growth which must have come about as a result of some form of learning.

Still another growth indicator was the progress registered in Sunday school work. From its inception within the Baptist Convention, Sunday school work was confined to children only. Children would come together on Sundays just before the main service and be instructed in the knowledge of God and in good Christian living. Both the Old and New Testaments underscore the importance of teaching children. They are to be brought up in the way of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4). They are to be taught God’s Word; they must know about the love of God as demonstrated in His dealings with the Israelites of old and the whole of the human race (Deut. 6:6, 7; John 3:16).

¹⁰⁰ By any standards, the pastors’ stipends alluded to above in all regions, were extremely low. By that time any pastors who earned that much, were to be full time in their pastoral work. To date most churches are still unable to pay their pastors reasonably well.



Missionaries and Europeans who were involved with the Baptist Convention in its early beginnings, as well as native members who first taught alongside missionaries, and subsequently took over the role of teaching Sunday school children, did a very good job. They have held this responsibility in high esteem. A paper delivered in the 1924 Baptist Union business assembly by Mr. John G. Birch on *'Sunday school work among natives and coloured people'*, underlines the high regard accorded to Sunday school work then (TSABHB, 1924:33, 37). Sixteen years later, missionaries still regarded Sunday school work as being important, *'Sunday school work plays an important part in all our missionary activities, and we are glad to note that there are now 3960 scholars'* (ibid, 1940:14).

Further, other commendable elements in Sunday school work entailed the special training given to prospective Sunday school teachers and the refreshers courses that were held from time to time. A Sunday school teachers' convention was held at Orlando in 1962 (Ibid. 1962:74). One Sunday school organiser who was responsible for this convention, also conducted correspondence courses for Sunday school teachers (Ibid, 74).

Still another good element is that of the growth of Sunday school work in terms of pupils, teachers and Sunday schools. The missionaries complained about the difficulty of recruiting teachers as I pointed out earlier, yet it cannot be denied that Sunday school work grew in the three areas mentioned above. For example, statistics show that in 1940 there were 74 Sunday schools, 3960 pupils and 161 volunteer teachers in the whole of the Convention (TSABHB, 1940-1941:28).¹⁰¹ Ten years later, the report says there were

¹⁰¹ Up until this time Lambaland (Rhodesia) was also included in the statistics; it is not easy to determine Convention statistics in particular at this stage.

116 Sunday schools, 229 teachers and 6792 scholars (ibid, 1950-1951:62-65). In 1980, there were 282 Sunday schools, 447 teachers and 10049 pupils (ibid, 1980-1981:148-157).

In the Transvaal alone, statistics stood at 31 Sunday schools and 89 volunteer teachers in 1950. In 1980, there were 76 Sunday schools, 128 volunteer teachers (ibid, 1980:151-155). These figures characterize growth in the doing of Christian education in the Transvaal Convention churches.

One other positive feature about the Sunday school – a feature which marked growth in the Transvaal churches - was the setting up of the ‘Go teach’ ministry team by a missionary from America, Miss Ingles. Much has been said about this important move under the historical development of Christian education in the Transvaal Baptist Convention churches (see the preceding chapter). Suffice it to say that the aim of the ‘Go teach’ ministry was to train all age Sunday school teachers in different churches to teach effectively.

The participation of some of the ministers in radio preaching was symptomatic of the remarkable growth Transvaal ministers had experienced. They participated in Bantu Radio (TSABHB, 1961:74). They could never have been involved to this level if they had not grown spiritually and otherwise.

Commencement of youth work, the consequent hosting of youth rallies and camps first on regional and later on national levels, are all indicative of the tremendous growth the Transvaal Baptist churches had undergone.

7.2.1.5 The practice of age group ministries

The division of church members into various age groups, that is, children, youth, and adults, for purposes of ministering more closely and relevantly to each of them, is a praiseworthy element in the doing of Christian education among the Transvaal Convention churches. In the preceding chapter, I have alluded to these age group ministries. Notwithstanding some limitations in them, the awareness about their importance, and the effectiveness of some, is a feature that must be noted in a positive light. Thus, Sunday school, youth, women and men's ministries, have continued since the missionary era to date.

Among the various age groups Sunday school (for children) and youth are the strongest. They are followed by the women's ministry. Of 27 churches interviewed, 14 have viable youth programmes. What is meant is that they have a committee that runs the programme, a whole year's (or at least a six months) rooster has been drawn up and is being adhered to. There are a variety of activities, teaching, preaching, singing, outings, recreation, etc. Other youth programmes are moderate, lacking only in a few things. As it relates to Sunday school work, only one church indicated that they did not have Sunday school due to believers not coming forward to volunteer for teaching. All other churches indicated that they do have a Sunday school programme running.

Women's meetings have also proved to be very strong in that almost all churches have a women's meeting going on, regardless of how weak some of the meetings may be. Some meet on Thursday, as has been the traditional practice. The working group meets on Saturday. Some of the programmes have proved to be very good, being of the same nature as those of youth. The regional women's meetings are even stronger and much

more organized than some local church settings, with a viable and functional committee which meets regularly to evaluate, plan and transact women's business.

7.2.1.6 Regional meetings

Regional meetings of churches in the Transvaal are another praiseworthy phenomenon. These are meetings where all age groups come together for spiritual services. A great deal of preaching and teaching takes place in these meetings. There are usually two regional gatherings per annum. The one is mainly for business discussions, held in September/ October, and another is held during the Easter weekend, mainly for spiritual upliftment of believers. Indeed Christian education is catered for in these meetings; special speakers are invited to address specific issues. Lately, in the Central Gauteng region, regional meetings alternate with cluster church or individual church meetings during Easter weekends. By implication, in one year, all churches of the region meet for spiritual edification, while in another year some churches group themselves together or others meet alone for the same purpose.

7.2.1.7 Christian workers' training and refreshers' courses

The missionary era will be noted among others, for the importance attached to the training of Christian workers. This subsection has received attention in the preceding chapter. What is sad though is that it dampened with time among Convention leaders, though it was still practised. While there may be national and regional meetings intended for this purpose, the attendance is usually poor, and material taught is often the same. Some churches are involved, but to a lesser extent. While this feature appears as a limitation below, it has been mentioned here mainly to give credit to missionaries for regarding the training of workers in such serious light.



7.2.1.8 Christian education literature

This subsection has been discussed fully in the preceding chapter. What is being argued here is that it constitutes one of the good things the Transvaal (virtually the whole Convention) churches have done in Christian education. The production of literature by missionaries through the Baptist Union marked the high regard in which Christian education is held in the Baptist family as a whole. It has to be said however, that, commendable as this act has been, it was not the initiative of the natives or their leaders, rather it was the Baptist Union through its Christian education committee and some of its missionaries. The Convention may not be blamed for this, since they did not have facilities. Moreover, Christian education was still a struggle in itself, bearing in mind the poor training Convention leaders received. The enhancing of literature by Convention churches underscored their support of the move, and thus gives them credit as having held Christian education in high esteem themselves. Since the Convention severed administrative ties with the Baptist Union, nothing is being done by it in this direction. There is no publication of Christian education literature; with the result that churches and regions are doing as they see fit.

The eight commendable features thus far described, underline the positive side of the doing of Christian education in the Transvaal Convention churches. As can be deduced, there was and there still is a great deal of good in the educational ministry of the Transvaal churches. This picture paints the educational ministry of the entire Baptist Convention of South Africa in a positive and encouraging light. However, such Christian education was not without its limitations.



7.2.2 Limitations in the Christian education of Transvaal Convention churches.

The historical account described in chapter 6, and the interview responses of the 27 churches reflected as appendix 'D' on pages 394 to 433 reveal that Christian education in the Transvaal Convention churches had limitations as well. The content of missionary preaching and teaching raises a few questions. Some administrative hurdles in the Christian education of the Transvaal churches also merit attention. Age group ministries manifest some inherent weaknesses; so does the discipleship programme, encapsulated in membership and Bible study classes, and in preparing believers for ministry. Poor involvement of pastors in the church's educational programme says it all.

7.2.2.1 The content of missionary preaching and teaching

Under commendable features above, I have alluded to salvation preaching by some black pastors. This feature has been mentioned against the background of misconstrued missionary teaching and preaching. The history of the Baptist Convention of South Africa shows that something was not right with the Christian education and preaching of missionaries, especially on the subject of salvation. As already explained, the teaching and preaching of some of the Convention pastors brought about a radical change in the right direction.

The purpose of Christian education for those not converted is leading them to Christ, and for those who are believers already, the purpose is to help them grow to spiritual maturity and to train them in ministry (Eph. 4:11-15). In light of this purpose, the content of Christian education is Christian faith, as personified in Jesus Christ. Jesus' content of teaching was the Kingdom of God as embodied in Himself. He taught and preached about the Kingdom of heaven; that is, the reign of God in heaven and on earth

through Himself (Matthew 4:17; 13; Luke 17:21). Thus, briefly, the content of our teaching ministry is Christian faith and life and all that which goes with them.

Frankly, most missionaries have failed in this area. They have failed in teaching for faith. The history of the Convention as a whole illustrates this fact clearly. The problem was not so much that they did not teach or preach the right content. What did not go right was their approach. They did not understand the customs and spirituality of natives. They emphasized 'believing in Jesus' as if natives understood what they meant. For the early church this expression was common and was understood to mean dedicating of oneself to Christ and His rule. It meant turning away from the old way of life and sin, to God for forgiveness, deliverance, reconciliation, and eternal life.

For natives believing simply meant agreeing with what was said; it meant to accept intellectually what was being said without committing oneself to the one in whom you believe. Africans were misunderstood for having given their lives to Christ just because they were agreeable to the claims of Christ and His apostles. Subsequently it became necessary that the word, 'believe' be unpacked. The early Church understood 'believe' to mean the giving of oneself to Christ and depending entirely on Him for life. Believing means receiving Jesus Christ into ones own life (John 1:12) so He can change it and mould it into His likeness (II Cor. 3:18). In the second and third century church, the meaning of 'believe' was broken down further. For this reason it took sometime before anyone could be accepted into membership. The membership class was quite long; intended to ensure that the prospective members understood the Christian faith and life into which they were being initiated (Eavey, 1964:85).

To date, in the African context, the concept 'believers' means those who have accepted the claims of Christ in principle and attend church. They may not have changed or been born again. In Sotho and Zulu, the word is translated, '*Badumedi*' and '*Amakholwa*' respectively, and it refers to all those who believe in the existence of God, and in the death and resurrection of Christ for them, and go to church regularly. There is no commitment of oneself to Christ in this regard. These are precisely the type of believers missionaries produced within the Baptist Convention churches. The problem of sin was never probed or adequately challenged; rather, the worship of ancestors and some of the African customs were branded as evil and were to be disposed of. In that regard missionaries were successful, though not necessarily correct in all respects. Otherwise, surface acceptance of the claims of Christ was regarded as true conversion. This approach to teaching and preaching, has led to Convention churches being filled with unbelievers. That this was the case is evident from several factors.

First, one of the missionaries himself, testified about the poor quality of missionary teaching and preaching and urged that something needed to be done about it. He was reacting to the gospel antagonism and the widespread spiritual ignorance among natives who were church members and preachers; presumed to have been born again. If the natives truly understood the gospel and had received it genuinely, antagonism and spiritual ignorance would not have been encountered. What this missionary saw in the members, was a group of people who were neither converted nor conversant with the way of salvation. Hence he called for drastic change of approach: *"I would urge that my Society take very definite steps to give these people help by organizing courses to teach nothing else but the way of Salvation, and simply drill them by repetition...There is a great need for teaching Salvation and Holiness of life amongst our Church members...It*



may be out of my province to say anything but I feel, however, that some revolutionary changes are needed in the Bantu work of the SABMS” (TSABHB, 1955:59, 60). Surely, there is something seriously wrong here; how could the natives become church members when they did not even understand the way of salvation at all?

Second, antagonism to gospel preaching reported by missionaries themselves (ibid, 60) and attested to by myself¹⁰², underlines the failure of missionaries to drive the message of salvation, repentance and faith in Jesus Christ home among natives. How could they be so antagonistic to gospel preaching by fellow Christians (ministers who were truly converted) when they themselves had received that gospel? This observation leads to the third factor to underscore the missing of the mark by missionaries in their teaching and preaching, namely, the splitting of many Convention churches when converted ministers took charge of the congregations. The older members were so opposed to gospel preaching that they broke up and formed other Baptist churches, affiliating among others, with the National Baptist Convention, an American Baptist organization that has work in South Africa. So far I know of over six Transvaal Baptist churches that split at the preaching of repentance to God and faith in Jesus Christ by saved native ministers.

In the fourth instance, the reports given by superintendent missionaries¹⁰³ to the effect that a number of some of the native members *have fallen away and gone back to Heathenish ways* (ibid, 1940:15), - notwithstanding the fact that even truly converted Christians may fall back to their old ways of life - raises questions as to whether they

¹⁰² I am witness to the fact that when ministers who were converted came to preach in some of the churches, there was real antagonism to the preaching on salvation. I happened to attend such a church as well and only got saved much later when the true gospel was preached.

¹⁰³ Different regions were led by missionary superintendents of the SABMS. However, throughout, I have addressed them as missionaries, to avoid long windedness.

were really saved or not. It may be that they have merely been attracted to membership and not to salvation, hence it was easy for them to go back. These and other factors not mentioned here, underscore the failure of some (if not most) missionaries in their approach to the teaching and preaching of the gospel message to native blacks.

7.2.2.2 Some administrative hurdles in the doing of Christian education

Notwithstanding praiseworthy overtones outlined earlier, it should be pointed out that Christian education in the Transvaal churches had limitations as well. Among others, the goal (purpose) of Christian education, the Christian education committees, volunteer workers, curriculum, attendance and record keeping, the budget and facilities for Christian education, and the evaluation of the Christian education programme.

7.2.2.2.1 The goal of Christian education

One major weakness that may have occasioned other weaknesses in the process, is the lack of an overriding goal for Christian education in churches. Jim Wilhoit (1986:9) has rightly pointed out that Christian education is plagued by a lack of purpose. Whereas the goal of Christian education as pointed out in the fourth chapter of this discourse is the presentation of Christian faith for conversion, growth, Christian responsibility and involvement in the mission of God in the church and in the world, it does not seem to come out clearly among the churches interviewed, though each had their purpose of teaching. Indeed each of the churches did have goals; varying from salvation, spiritual growth, to training for ministry. I have to say that the latter part of the goal, namely, the training for ministry, was identifiable in a few churches only.

The major problem as it relates to the purpose of Christian education in the Transvaal Convention churches (and indeed in the Convention as a whole) is the lack of an overriding goal characteristic of the mission of the church. Almost all churches interviewed did not have clear mission statements. Only one church had a mission statement. As a result, whatever purposes may be there for Christian education, are not related to any overall mission of the church. It is no surprise therefore to see each church coming with its own purposes. Moreover, there were no short or long term goals, except that learners should be led to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and children be brought up in the way of the Lord. The aims in themselves are varied and good, but they lack the overriding element that typifies the total mission and vision of the church.

One would expect that during the missionary era, the idea of a mission statement for the church should have been commonplace for all congregations. This was, however, not the case. During that time, the purpose of teaching was to lead hearers to the saving faith, to nurture new believers for growth, to initiate new members into being Baptists and to disciple new believers for ministry; though they were not so successful in the latter, as their teaching approach was questionable.

The problem of having a purpose statement in churches was compounded further by the fact that the denomination did not have a goal or a mission statement for a long time. It can be appreciated that missionaries did keep the fire burning as it related to Sunday school and family Bible hour material; however, they did not come up with one purpose statement for the whole denomination; a statement which would determine a direction for the individual churches to follow. It was only in 1994¹⁰⁴ that a purpose statement

¹⁰⁴ I was part of this meeting held at KwaMhlanga in the Mpumalanga region.

was formulated and a vision conceptualized. Against this background the Convention as a whole could see that there was a direction in which to go. Be that as it might have been, the effect of the denominational mission statement was felt and followed on a national level only, but never really filtered down to regions and churches; hence each church and region still followed their own immediate goals.

Recently there is an attempt to let the national goal filter down to regions and churches. For example, the presidential theme for 2001 and 2002 is, '*The church growing and glowing*.'¹⁰⁵ This theme underscores the desire of the denomination to grow spiritually and numerically. For the two years attempts will be made to ensure that the theme is enhanced at all levels of the Convention's operations. In this way some form of uniformity is being forged for the entire denomination. It is hoped that such themes will then underpin the goal of Christian education for the Convention in future.

Lack of a uniform goal in Christian education has led to a duplication of topics in local and regional meetings. Good as the topics may have been at various levels, there has not been any proper coordination among them, so as to avoid repetition of the same thing. What has happened – unfortunately still happening – is that women would suggest that they be addressed about child upbringing, while men in their meeting would deal with the relationship of the father to his children. Another example is that young people would deal with the topic on the Holy Spirit and His gifts. Men or women would deal with the same topic six months down the line; and so the list of examples goes on. Only the singleness of purpose across the region and the entire denomination can ensure that lessons are so properly coordinated that there would not be any overlapping at all.

¹⁰⁵ Every two years a deputy president takes over from the president and leads the Convention denomination as its president. He is expected to come up with a theme which will run for two years, in line with the vision of the denomination at that time.



The problem of not having fixed goals in churches and regions has led to topics being pounced upon at the whim of a given committee without taking due care that there should be continuity in issues handled. Unrelated topics would be chosen from time to time, whether locally, or regionally, especially among youth, women and men. A resolution was taken at the Convention's business assembly held at the University of Fort Hare in December of 2000, that all its structures on all levels of its existence align their agenda, teaching and activities with the presidential theme¹⁰⁶. This decision was taken for the sole purpose of enhancing uniformity in all denominational activities. Already, most if not all of the regional and national meetings (youth, women, men and the Easter conference)¹⁰⁷ held so far in 2001, have taken as their theme, *'The Church growing and glowing.'* This move will go a long way in ensuring that the whole Convention pursues one direction, one goal, and one vision. It will in turn affect the direction Christian education will take henceforth.

7.2.2.2.2 Christian education committees.

In its broadest sense, Christian education includes such components as Sunday school (and/or family Bible hour), children, youth and adult ministries, marriage and family life ministry, Bible and membership classes and any other form of teaching that takes place in the church, the region and the national structure. In this sense there is only one such all-embracing Christian education committee in the Transvaal Convention churches, namely, that of the Revival Baptist Church. All other committees are age group inclined, that is, committees for Sunday school or family Bible hour, youth, men and women. Of

¹⁰⁶ I was part of the leadership that prepared this and other draft resolutions for the assembly in question.

¹⁰⁷ The youth, women and men, each held their separate meetings in some regions already. The Easter conference is an annual denominational event held regionally throughout the country. It embraces all the members of churches in their respective regions.

the 27 churches interviewed, only 12 have Sunday school committees. Only one of the twelve has portfolios, i.e., chairperson, secretary, treasurer, etc. Not all of these Sunday school committees meet as often as they should.

There is indeed a great need to revamp some of these committees. In those churches where there are no Sunday school committees, volunteer teachers meet only when there is a need to take up with the church committee or so. Under normal circumstances they do not operate. Where there are no standing Sunday school committees, concerned individuals have had to run Sunday school alone, often without the help from the church committee at all. Only well organized Sunday schools have committees which meet regularly. However, these too, are few. In the main it is the volunteer teachers who constitute these committees. The general picture purported for the Sunday school and family Bible hour is one that needs special attention.

The Christian education programme as a whole – I am referring to the teaching ministry in general, going beyond just Sunday school and family Bible hour – is lacking in the area of leadership. One would expect that in view of the New Testament's five fold leadership ministry, which includes teachers as well (Eph. 4:11-15), churches should at least have Christian education directors who have this gift of teaching. If the author of the book of Acts could go so far as mentioning a teacher as being one of the members present in the church at Antioch (Acts 13:1), then the teaching ministry and the leadership thereof, may not be taken lightly. There are few Sunday school or family Bible hour superintendents, but there is only one or two Christian education directors that I know of. The absence of Christian education directors (or superintendents) in churches demonstrates the low regard accorded to the teaching ministry as a whole.

The picture was quite different during the missionary era; there were Sunday school organizers and committees. They would go from place to place, ensuring that Sunday schools are set up and teachers are trained. Then there was the Christian education committee comprised of missionaries and representatives from among native pastors (TSABHB, 1965:112). This tendency however, soon waned with the fading away of missionaries from the scene.¹⁰⁸ It has to be said however, that the fading was not overnight. For some time the Convention still had regional and national Sunday school organizers and leaders. I am reminded of the 'Go Teach' ministry team that continued well beyond the missionary era. With the Union and the Convention engaging in merger talks, and the consequent standing alone of the latter, the spotlight moved from the Sunday school to leadership meetings and debates. Christian education leadership was finally dealt a deathblow in 1994, when it was left out of national executive committee talks. From that time on, not much was said or done about Christian education in the denomination. Each church continued as it saw fit.

A commendable move however, is the fact that a national committee was put in place for the children's ministry in December, 2000. Regions are being urged to follow suite. Pretoria and Johannesburg have started already, and committees were being put in place for regional children's ministries. It is hoped that all regions will fall in line soon.

7.2.2.2.3 Volunteer workers (teachers).

Another shortcoming in the total ministry of Christian education, or specifically Sunday school and family Bible hour, is that of volunteer workers. I call them volunteer workers

¹⁰⁸ The missionaries left the scene as from the early eighties. They were still partly involved in some regions as coordinators. However, they finally disappeared from the scene in 1987, when the Convention resolved to be on its own.

as they are recruited on voluntary basis. Initially missionaries were responsible for the teaching ministry in churches. As time went on, they brought on board native teachers to carry on the task, in preparation for a complete hand over when time was ripe. They did admit how difficult it was to recruit native teachers for Sunday school work (TSABHB, 1945:29). What propounded the problem further, was that not all teachers recruited understood salvation, let alone being born again themselves (ibid, 1955:59).

That not all Christian workers were born again can be deduced from the remarks of missionaries themselves. In one business assembly meeting of the Baptist Union, one of them complained to say that lay preachers were in a fog regarding the doctrine of salvation and they had little knowledge of how to lead someone to Christ. According to this missionary, a great need existed for teaching the way of salvation and holiness of life among church members (ibid).

Recently, a praiseworthy feature about recruiting teachers is that only those who have been born again are taken on board to teach. However, while others may be saved, not all of them have teaching skills, hence poor Sunday schools in many places. The problem is aggravated further by the lack of support from the leadership of local churches. In many other cases, volunteer teachers are good; they undergo special training and are under strict supervision of their leaders. I know of a case where Sunday school and family Bible hour leaders are very particular in their choice of suitable teachers; this is particularly so where potential teachers are in abundance.

The irregularity of volunteer teachers and their lack of purpose in some instances, hampers the teaching ministry in the Sunday schools. Due to lack of purpose, support,

and teaching material, teachers are discouraged and therefore tend to be irregular. In time the attendance of children is also affected by this irregularity. In other cases topics are pounced upon or a verse is chosen at the spare of the moment without proper preparation.

Still in other instances, memory verses and singing are the order of the day. The teacher has no clue of what he or she should teach about. Moreover, volunteer teachers in all cases, teach for as long as they are available, regardless of how good or bad they may be. New teachers are recruited only when one teacher leaves or decides to stop teaching or when the number of learners increases and another group or class has to be set up. On a whole it is remarkable that some Sunday school teachers undergo training and refreshers courses, especially in urban areas where there are facilities. Of the 27 churches consulted, 13 have training or refreshers courses for their teachers. It is hoped that in due course the situation will get better, especially in the affected areas.

7.2.2.2.4 Curriculum development.

Another area of concern in the doing of Christian education in the Transvaal Baptist Convention churches is curriculum development. Over the years missionaries have formulated curricula for Sunday schools and the family Bible hour without taking into consideration the actual context of black people. Catechisms were merely translated into vernacular languages without looking into whether the content would make sense to the people. The question of translation is a commendable one. However, one would imagine that whatever material was taught, should have been brought to bear upon the circumstances blacks were going through.

Describing patterns of church education in the third world, Gerson A. Meyer (1976:233) argued that in Sunday schools which were adopted from America and Europe, missionaries translated lessons “...into vernacular without too much concern for a really good adaptation...some materials for the teaching mission of the church just change John for Juan, and that is that.” In this instance, as in that of Baptist Union missionaries, nothing was done to adapt the material to the situation of natives. One would expect that under apartheid conditions subjects such as the making of humanity in the image of God; the identification of God with the poor and down trodden, would be appropriate. Natives needed to be affirmed that they were just as equally human as whites who came to live with them, but who were in privileged positions because of their colour.

What is more, missionaries were aware of the political turbulence pastors were going through in the townships, but they did not do much about it. Their report states, “...*They (pastors) are constantly surrounded by political tension. They need the earnest prayer of all God's people*” (TSABHB, 1980:116). The situation should have compelled them to design relevant curricula that would address the political climate of the day, instead of recommending prayers of God's people only.

I have to commend the missionaries though, for all the efforts that went into the compilation, printing and publishing of material for the Sunday school and family Bible hour. The using of books like *Genesis*, *Who is Jesus*, *Incwadi yemibuzo* (The book of questions), etc, as well as the preparation of teachers' manuals for the family Bible hour have underlined the high regard they had for the church's teaching ministry.

What constituted a problem was that with the phasing out of missionaries and the standing alone of the Convention, churches no longer used curricula. Even those that used curricula, did not change it or adapt it to their particular situation. Only five churches designed their own curricula without necessarily putting them down in writing. These churches have designed lessons that have arisen out of various needs prevalent within their ranks. Due to lack of facilities, they may not have been able to put these into printing. All in all, time has come that the Convention or the individual churches, as the case may be, design their own curricula, which will take into account the context, needs and goals of the Convention churches. Granted that the use of other curricula give a sense of direction for the churches in terms of the teaching ministry in a given year, this should serve as no excuse for not designing their own unique curriculum.

The issue of the curriculum was (and still is) a matter of Sunday school and family Bible hour only. As it relates to mid-week Bible study lessons, where they did occur, pastors taught according to needs at hand. The same thing can be said of youth and adult ministries as well as regional and national meetings.

The relevance of a curriculum for a given context is underlined among others by the Old and New Testament Scriptures, the Reformation and modern literature on Christian/Religious education. In the Old Testament God dictated to Moses what he was supposed to teach the Israelites. The Pentateuch, especially from the latter half of Exodus to Deuteronomy, abounds with instruction material God gave to Moses at different stages of the journey to Canaan, to teach the Israelites. The same held true for priests, prophets and kings of Israel. God Himself, determined the curriculum to be followed. His teachings for the Israelites were always suited for the time and context at



hand. For example, during the journey to Canaan, children of the Israelites were to be taught about the great acts of God; how He delivered them from Egypt and what other great things He did for them. The command to take twelve stones from the Jordan river where priests stood with the ark of covenant, as a memorial for children in the future of how God dried up river Jordan, is but one example (Joshua 4:1-9). There are many more other similar instances of relevant teaching.

In the New Testament Jesus addressed the problems of the day. His main theme was the Kingdom of God (Mark 1:14, 15; Matt. 13); however, He structured His teachings in the language, style and context that His hearers understood so well. He made use of parables so He could be understood. He addressed the problems of the Pharisees, Sadducees and the Scribes as He did the concerns of individuals who came to Him for help. He used healing episodes as the occasion for teaching. His disciples followed suit, teaching the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:20) and ensuring that everything would be remembered long after they had left (II Pet. 1:12-15).

The same thing can be said of the Reformation. The concern of the reformers at this time was to combat Roman Catholicism by introducing right Biblical teachings on salvation and the Church of Jesus Christ. Martin Luther's concern was justification by faith in Jesus Christ alone, not by any human effort whatsoever. The teachings thus developed, all had to do with what the Bible teaches about God, humanity, salvation, the Church, government, etc. The Bible was translated into languages that people understood. Catechisms were written which were intended to prepare new Christians for

church membership. John Calvin and Ulrich Zwingli are noted among others as having written extensively on Christianity.¹⁰⁹

What are we to say of the modern literature on Christian education as it relates to the curriculum to be embraced by denominations or churches? Something has already been said above as to the importance of a contextual curriculum. A substantial amount of literature has been written on this subject some of which will be alluded to in the following chapter.

In light of this background, the Convention churches should cultivate the habit of coming up with their own curricula. These curricula will find expression in not only the Sunday school or family Bible hour. Rather they will take shape in youth, women and men's ministries, in mid-week Bible study classes, membership lessons and regional and national gatherings. This can only be possible with the analysis of times and contexts of our people and with proper planning. In the next chapter, the issue of the curriculum will receive full attention as a way forward is paved for effective Christian education.

7.2.2.2.5 Attendance and record keeping.

Along with other administrative hurdles, there is the problem of attendance of Sunday school classes, the family Bible hour and mid-week Bible classes. Attendance has not been that consistent in many churches, especially among adults. In the case of children attendance has always exceeded the adult attendance by far, except that where teachers were irregular, children were affected and attendance would drop. The poor attendance in mid-week Bible classes – at least where they are being held - can be attributed to the

¹⁰⁹ Chapter five deals extensively with which books were written by these reformers.

lack of purpose of the whole teaching programme, the distance to be traveled in the night, and poor preparation on the part of the teacher concerned. Added to this problem is the keeping of records of attendance. Many churches do not keep such records. By implication it does not matter if people attend or not. In such cases Sunday school is held for the sake of it; not because it is a very important part of the church's ministry. Where Sunday school and family Bible hour are taken seriously, attendance records are kept and updated regularly.

7.2.2.2.6 Christian education budget and facilities.

Still another impediment that has rocked the Christian education boat in the Transvaal churches is its exclusion from the general church budget and the appalling lack of facilities to make Sunday school and family Bible hour much easier. Only four churches accommodate children (Sunday school) in their church budget. In other cases, in the event of some incident coming up for the Sunday school, special contributions have to be made for that sole project or else Sunday school teachers have to fend for themselves.

As it relates to facilities, it is surprising that among churches interviewed, even those whose Sunday school and family Bible hour programmes were viable, only a few of them had plans for setting up a hall or classrooms for Christian education or Sunday school. Ten churches have expressed plans to extend the existing building in order to accommodate Christian education. Two had plans of extending the church building, but this had nothing to do with Christian education.

Sunday school is usually held in the church, the parsonage, vestry or in members' homes. Teaching and learning resources like overhead projectors, chalkboards, special

writing boards, maps, work manuals etc, are not catered for at all. It is only in places where Sunday school for children is carried out in full swing that some resources for children have been bought. Churches are yet to be awakened about the importance of Christian education accommodation and other teaching and learning resources.¹¹⁰

7.2.2.2.7 Evaluation of the Christian education programme.

A healthy Christian education programme has to be subjected to continuous evaluation. At the end of each year a general meeting is to be held where the entire Christian education programme should be assessed; successes determined and failures uncovered and remedied accordingly. Four churches indicated that they did practise continuous evaluation on a weekly basis when teachers come together to prepare new lessons for the coming Sunday. One church conducts a monthly evaluation, while another does so after every three months. Still another church evaluates its youth programme only, three times a year. Of the four churches just mentioned, one has pointed out that it conducts yearly evaluation of the Christian education programme. While the few churches mentioned should be commended for their effort in this regard, the majority of them need special attention.

Lack of a suitable purpose statement and long and short term goals accounts largely for the lack of evaluation at the end of the year. Surely, there can be no evaluation if there were no goals set. Whatever aims churches might have had or still have in Sunday school lessons and other teaching programmes, were immediate. The matter of goal setting is of utmost importance. On a whole, evaluation of Christian education is very important and should never have been taken lightly. As will further be argued in the next

¹¹⁰ Granted that in other cases funds may not be enough or even available. Most churches are simply not concerned or ignorant.

chapter, evaluation is very essential for a successful and effective teaching ministry in a church. It may not be ignored in any way.

During the time of missionaries learners were evaluated by way of Scripture examinations. Many regions participated in these exams. Certificates were awarded to those who had passed (TSABHB, 1959:51). However, these examinations tested Bible knowledge only, and not the application of that knowledge. Such evaluation, good as it may seem in that it tests knowledge and understanding, is cumbersome; adults do not like it. Not as though knowledge is not important; Jesus would not have withstood the devil's temptations had He not had knowledge of Scripture (Matthew 4). Moreover, God complained through the prophet Hosea, "*...my people are destroyed from lack of knowledge*" (Hosea 4:6 NIV). Knowledge helps Christians from being "*...tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming*" (Ephesians 4:14). Examinations only test how far someone knows. Some people may fail such examinations because they take time to remember; but they may be good in the implementation of knowledge acquired. What is more, some may pass Scripture examinations with exceptionally high marks, while they are not Christians at all.

Rather, in evaluation, among others, it is the teacher, the lessons, methods, learners' response or change and classrooms that are to be assessed. The purpose of teaching is to change lives not just to impart knowledge. Of course knowledge is important, but only in so far as it helps to change a way of life and be helpful in the maintenance of that new way. The changing of lives is so important that Dr. Howard Hendricks has devoted a whole book on "*Teaching to change lives.*" In this book, Hendricks gives seven laws or

principles to be observed if we are to teach to change lives. These are, the law of the teacher, education, activity, communication, heart, encouragement and readiness (Hendricks, 1987:23).

Bruce H. Wilkinson, a president and founder of Walk Thru the Bible Ministries, Inc. and former student of Howard Hendricks, has this to say about Hendricks in the foreword to this book, “...he would do whatever it took to get ...one student back on track in the learning process. That’s dedication. No, that’s teaching...it’s a kind of teaching we don’t see much of these days. In schools, churches, sanctuaries, seminars – whatever the teaching situation may be, the name of the game these days seems not to be teaching, but covering material” (Ibid, 17).

Dr. Richard Osmer echoes a similar concern in terms of the purpose of teaching. He (1992:15) cautions teachers in the church to be clear about one thing, that “...the basic purpose of their teaching is to create a context in which faith can be awakened, supported, and challenged. Their teaching is for faith.” Thus change in the learner is one element that should underlie all of Christian education whether it is faith or growth. It should not just be for knowledge only.

While this aim of changing lives may have been there in principle during the missionary era, nothing much seems to have been done to ensure that it becomes the case. The same weakness holds true for the teaching ministry in the Transvaal Convention churches today in all the various modes of teaching. What happens is that teaching takes place on local church and regional levels, but nothing is done to ensure implementation of same. Evaluation would have been helpful in this regard, in that part of its goal is to assess the

effect of teaching in the lives of learners. This observation does not mean there is no change at all in the lives of learners; the Holy Spirit is always at work once the Word is taught, whether the teacher is intentional about it or not. Some measure of change does take place. The holding of workshops in recent times, after every teaching, especially at regional and national levels, is an attempt to address the implementation problem. This process still has a long way to go as it still has to filter down to local churches for actual implementation.

What has been said under the administrative hurdles above, underscores the urgent remedial attention Christian education in the Transvaal Baptist Convention churches (virtually the whole of the Baptist Convention of South Africa) has to be given, if the teaching ministry in the churches is to be properly and effectively carried out.

7.2.2.3 Weaknesses inherent in age group ministries

One inherent weakness in the Christian education of Transvaal Convention churches has been highlighted, namely, that of lack of an overriding goal that would underline the church's entire educational ministry. This has been characteristic of age group ministries as well, namely the Sunday school (for children), family Bible hour, youth, and adult ministries; hence the lack of direction and continuity as well as the overlapping of topics in local and regional meetings.

For the Sunday school ministry, one major drawback is that it was confined to children only. Sad to say that to date in many churches in the Transvaal and in the Convention as a whole, this is still the case. The focus on children continued for so long that subsequent measures to change from Sunday school to All Age Sunday school and then

to family Bible Hour, with a view to attracting youth and adults to the pre-Sunday service lessons, did not bear much fruit. The impression has already been created that Sunday school, whether it is called by different names, belongs to children. Indeed some women responded to the all age Sunday school and some men followed suit when the concept of 'Family Bible Hour' was substituted for the all age Sunday school, however, this was not as expected. The wrong impression alluded to above, stayed on.

Further, in some places Sunday school for children is still at its lowest ebb, especially since the missionaries left the scene. This is particularly so partly due to the lack of a budget, facilities, committees, and moral support from the church, as described above under administration. This position underlines the low status accorded to Sunday school in these churches.

What is more, some pastors have not shown any interest whatsoever in Sunday school work, relegating the responsibility to women or interested individuals¹¹¹. In such cases, Sunday school does not feature on the church committee agenda. Volunteer teachers have had to attend Sunday school teacher training seminars out of their own pockets, unless they were able to convince the pastor and the committee about the importance of such teacher training. The problem of lack of pastoral involvement in the Sunday school has been highlighted by many Christian educators, among others James Smart, Stanley Glen, Jim Wilhoit and Richard R. Osmer¹¹². One missionary in the Southern Transvaal

¹¹¹ Pastoral involvement in Christian education in general and in Sunday school in particular receives attention below, under sub-heading 7.6, 'The pastor and Christian education'

¹¹² See pages 27 and 28 of chapter one for more details on this problem from these four Christian educators.

also complained that pastors were too busy to teach or to follow up on new converts (TSABHB, 1980:116).¹¹³

Whereas the introduction of the all age Sunday school and subsequently the family Bible hour has triggered response in some quarters, it has to be said that in many cases attendance was hindered by lack of good preparation and commitment on the part of teachers. This was demonstrated by teachers coming late for classes or being absent, without giving notice to that effect. In this way many members were discouraged from attending.

The negative picture painted above does not mean nothing is being done to remedy the situation. As it relates to children, a children's ministry component has been set up and it is gradually taking root in many churches in the Transvaal. The creation of a National children's ministry committee and regional children's ministry committees, underscores the positive direction Sunday school is taking, so that it will no longer just be Sunday school, rather it will be a fully-fledged children's ministry, going beyond Sunday school and ministering to children in a very special way. On a whole, much still has to be done to bring the Sunday school, the family Bible hour and the children's ministry to generally and conventionally acceptable levels of operation.

The youth ministry has been described as the second if not the most viable component of church ministry in the Transvaal Convention churches. However, it is also plagued by some limitations. The one problem is the lack of direction as alluded to earlier, so that topics are pounced upon at whim, without continuity. Another problem is that some

¹¹³ The problem of lack of pastoral involvement receives attention later in this subsection. The notion of the missionary complaint is referred to for the second time due to its relevance.

youth ministries are not as viable as they are supposed to be. Moreover, on a regional and national level, youth are plagued by the problem of finances. Though some of the young people are working, they have not designed a mode of supporting themselves financially. While the Convention as an umbrella body may be expected to foot the bill in many instances, they too have to raise money for themselves

Not all churches have viable youth services going on. Some are there in name only; they need sponsors or leaders who take interest in them and are capable of developing them further. On a whole, youth fellowships are alive and well. They are one component of which Convention churches have to be proud as they are generally full of activity.

Women's meetings have been disturbed by working women getting employment. Traditional Thursday meetings go on, albeit on a weaker note since working women meet only on Saturdays. In most churches women meet to preach and pray. Only on a regional level are there any viable teaching programmes at all. Women also have many regional and national meetings that tend to cloud and delay the work of the local church. The one drawback is the lack of direction that is characteristic of not only women but all ministry components mentioned so far. The lack of direction has led to an inconsistency in the choice of themes to be handled in their meetings. The themes lack continuity. The theme for the following year may be something else, completely detached from the previous year's theme. This is one area that has to be sorted out among all the ministries and churches so as to avoid overlapping of topics and to enhance continuity.

Men have always had a serious problem when it came to attendance, especially locally. To date only few churches have men's meetings going on. There is a general feeling of



despondency among them. Some do not understand why they have to meet. The regional and national men's meetings are also plagued by poor attendance. With regard to themes, men may be as good as women and youth, however, they too lack direction, typical of all others. Of all churches interviewed, three are very strong in numbers and attendance. Nine are very weak, few are moderate, and eight do not have men's ministries. On a whole men's meetings are slow, needing a thorough revamping.

Another adult component worthy of note is the marriage and family life ministry, which is also a component of Christian education. This is one area in which the Convention churches in the Transvaal are aware of but do not devote as much attention as should be the case. This weakness is evident from what is going on in churches today. Among churches interviewed only one church had a couples' meeting once a week with a 50/60% attendance. Two churches hold their marriage seminars once every three months, while five churches have a family gathering or couples' meeting once a year. Some have confessed that their once a year meetings are very weak. One church has indicated that couples' meetings are held occasionally. Four churches have pointed out that they had such meetings in the past, when they still had a pastor. Still another five churches said that at least there is teaching going on about marriage, though it is not often. Most churches said they do have premarital counseling sessions for their youth, but they are not as effective as befits a qualified marriage counselor. The rest of the churches do not have anything, except for being invited by other neighbouring churches to such marriage and family sessions.¹¹⁴ From the picture painted, one can deduce that a substantial amount of work remains to be done in this area to ensure that proper planning and implementation of good, well structured, and relevant marriage and family

¹¹⁴ Much of what is said here has been mentioned under adult ministries in the preceding chapter. The repetition is made for the purpose of painting a genuine picture for evaluation.

life programmes is enhanced at all costs. On a whole there is a great awareness of the huge implications such a ministry can have for the enrichment and stability of families and for church growth.

7.2.2.4 Discipleship.

Discipling is one dimension in which Christian education finds expression¹¹⁵. It includes such components as presenting Christ to an unbeliever, nurturing the new believer, training him in Christian life and service and allowing him to make other disciples as proof that he has been properly disciplined. It should be borne in mind though, that presenting Christ only is not discipling, until the unbeliever has believed and undergoes a process of nurturing and training. In the final analysis all teaching is discipling, for it is aimed at building the believer so he becomes a better Christian. In one of His last injunctions to His followers, Jesus commanded that they make disciples of all nations; baptizing them and teaching them to be obedient (Matt. 28:19, 20). This makes the question of discipleship a very important component in the evangelization of the world.

Discipleship includes such tenets as follow up visits, membership classes and Bible study sessions. The concern of this subsection is first, the meaning of the term, *disciple*, second, how the Transvaal Convention churches fared in the whole discipleship process, with particular focus on follow up, membership classes and Bible study sessions.

A disciple is a follower of someone else. It is a person who learns from his master or teacher and seeks to be like him in his entire way of life. In the New Testament context a disciple is a person who has received Christ as His Saviour (John 1:12); who follows

¹¹⁵ This subject has received attention earlier in the dissertation, especially what discipleship entails, in chapter four.



Him by way of reading the Word and obeying it. Jesus Himself urged that if His followers abode in His Word, they would be His disciples indeed (John 8:31, 32). That a disciple is someone who learns from his master, is also evident in the invitation Jesus extended to crowds that came to listen to His teachings, *“Come to me, all whose work is hard, whose load is heavy; and I will give you relief. Bend your necks to my yoke, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble-hearted; and your souls will find relief. For my yoke is good to bear, my load is light”* (Matt. 11:28-30 NEB). From the invitation it is clear that there were other masters who had their own disciples; whose laws were heavy to bear. Jane L. Fryar (1992:15) argued, *“Many rabbis of first century Israel had disciples; Greek philosophers also drew disciples into their sphere of influence – but neither the rabbis nor philosophers touched the lives of their followers in the powerful way Jesus did.”* It has to be mentioned that Pharisees had their disciples as well; this is implied in their criticism of Jesus’ disciples (Matthew 12:2; 15:2)

The understanding and practice of discipleship as espoused by Jesus differed radically from that of His day. He chose His disciples (John 15:16); disciples of rabbis, on the other hand, chose their own rabbis. His calling to discipleship was a lifetime commitment. Moreover, his discipleship was free; while on occasion the disciples of philosophers had to pay for the privilege of learning from them (Fryar, 1992:15). Briefly, discipleship entails four elements, namely conversion, nurturing, training, ministering or serving. It means to reach someone for Christ, to build him up in the faith so that he matures, to train him in Christian life and service and to send him off to serve or to bear fruit (John 15:8).

This was Jesus' approach to making disciples. He called them to Himself, taught them God's Word, trained them in evangelism and other forms of service, and then sent them off to do what He did. It was because of this calculated and effective discipleship programme that even after He had left to His Father in glory, His followers could wield such powerful influence that they were branded as having been with Jesus (Acts 4:13). This is precisely what He expects of all believers, that they call unbelievers to Himself, nurture them in the Christian way of life, train them in evangelism and service, and give them an opportunity to serve and make other disciples.

The Baptist Convention churches are noted for talking much but doing very little about discipleship. Granted that salvation preaching became effective under the preaching of black ministers, they did not follow up their new converts. The Baptist Convention was and is still good at making converts or leading someone to a saving faith in Christ, but very poor at following up those they have shown the light. I have alluded to a missionary earlier on, who was concerned that pastors were too busy to teach or give necessary attention to new converts. This missionary went further to say churches make converts not disciples, as a result they were not growing (TSABHB, 1980:115).

The issue of discipleship was a subject that enjoyed a great deal of mention and teaching about. Missionaries and other white Baptist ministers had taught about it, emphasizing its importance in the evangelism process; however it was never fully carried out. Maybe this was partly because missionaries themselves did not do a good job in this area; they may not have been good disciples themselves, especially as they worked during the apartheid era; conforming to the dictates of their times instead of obeying God fully

(Acts 4:19, 20; 5:29). Discipleship is not only about teaching facts; it is mainly about a way of life that has to be emulated.

To date Convention leaders and followers are complaining about their failure to disciple new believers. The Southern Baptist missionaries have tried this process by introducing¹¹⁶ such teachings as “*Master life*’ *Discipleship*’ and *Follow the Master.*’ This too did not go far as it was confined to certain churches only. Moreover the missionary policy of the Southern Baptists has always been unacceptable to the Convention pastors and churches, making it difficult for them to penetrate Convention churches. Today there is a general outcry that new believers have to be followed up until they can live independently of matured Christians. The accusation leveled against the Hebrew Christians to the effect that they ought to have been teachers already, instead of being fed with milk, holds true for the Transvaal Baptist Convention churches as well (Hebs. 5:12-14).

The question of membership classes also comes into focus when we consider discipleship as a component of Christian education. Whereas missionaries may have been involved in membership classes, I have already indicated that their approach was shallow and hence they missed out many people in the process. At least they understood the importance of membership classes.

The history of Christian education, especially from the New Testament times, demonstrates a trend that was prevalent in the teaching ministry of the church, namely, the preparation of new believers for full church membership. The early church displays

this feature vividly. When about three thousand people received the Word at the preaching of Peter on the day of Pentecost, they were baptized and added to the church (Acts 2:41). The book of Acts does not end here; it goes on to say, “*They met constantly to hear the apostles teach, and to share the common life, to break bread, and to pray...*” (Acts 2:42 NEB). This practice must have been carried out in fulfillment of the great commission to make disciples, to baptize them and to teach them to observe Christ’s commands (Matt. 28:19, 20). Teaching continued in houses and in the temple so that new members came to be grounded in the Word (Acts 5:42).

This approach is typical of what came to be known as confirmation or membership classes. Of course there are noticeable differences between then and now. The confirmation classes in most churches, especially among black congregations, do not lay emphasis on the salvation of the individual to be confirmed. Physical growth seems to be the determining factor as to who should be confirmed.

The Pauline letters also abound with this phenomenon of membership teaching. On the occasion of the new churches he brought into being through God’s help, Paul spent more time in teaching than in preaching (Acts 18:11). He taught so much that when he left the scene, some of his followers were able to take over the leadership of the church as elders (Acts 14:23). They could never have been leaders of the church if they were not well grounded in teachings of Scripture. How could they be expected to teach others if they still needed to be taught? (I Tim. 5:17; II Tim. 2:2). In other instances Paul used letters to ground members in the Word and in Christian faith.

The second century church was even harder on its new members, grading them into three categories, namely the hearers or listeners, the kneebenders or kneelers, and the chosen or the elect. The hearers were in the first category and were Christians who received elementary instruction in the fundamental doctrines and practices of the church and were allowed to listen to Scripture reading and sermons in the church. They had to conduct themselves well so as to be ready for the second stage. The second category of Christians, the kneebenders, remained to pray after the hearers had gone. They also received more advanced instruction and had to prove readiness for the next phase. The third category of Christians, the chosen, underwent intensive doctrinal, liturgical and ascetical training in preparation for baptism (Eavey, 1964:85). No one would be accepted into membership of the church if he did not go through these three stages.

The period of Constantine the Great (CA. A.D. 325-529), branded the period of the Western Church by Chester O. Galloway (1978:60), and the Middle Ages (CA. A.D. 529-1350) saw the downplaying of conversion before membership. The teaching then was that Jesus died for all people; all they needed was to accept that He died for them. Chester O. Galloway (1978:60) observed, “... *when Christianity became recognized by the Roman Empire, many were baptized into the faith without personal commitment to its ideals or precepts...these masses of people were unchanged in faith and conduct...*” As a result the church was filled with unconverted people. With the dawn of the Reformation the notion of justification by faith in Jesus Christ occupied central place in the churches. It was no longer taken for granted. Catechisms and other forms of Christian literature were published and prospective members taught the way of salvation.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ Much of the material on the Reformation is covered in chapter five, under the historical development of the Reformation.



With this background in mind, the spotlight turns to the situation in the Transvaal Baptist Convention churches. During the missionary era new members were prepared for their membership. In one report they were called '*hearers*' in line with the second and third century church practice (TSABHB, 1938:38). One is not sure of the content of such lessons. However, in the course of time, a membership booklet was compiled by missionaries and was used in churches of the Convention. It was known as "*Incwadi yemibuzo*." (The book of questions). Subsequently, another membership book was put in place, and it was entitled '*Church membership*' The latter book came to be used by Convention ministers for a long time. Recently, except for older ministers, many pastors do not use the book anymore.

While I can safely say the Transvaal Convention churches still have membership classes, I have to emphasize that such membership classes are not properly planned for; they are merely rushed into because some people have to be baptized and be accepted into membership. One church has eight weeks of membership classes. Another church has four to seven such lessons, seven churches have four weeks lessons. Still another four had membership classes in the past, when they still had a pastor. Now it is no longer the case. Eight churches have no membership classes at all. The situation shows that a great deal of the leveling of the ground has to be engaged to ensure consistency. What is more, membership lessons do not continue after baptism and acceptance into membership. One would expect that like in the early church (Acts 2:42) teaching should continue, even after baptism.

Membership classes which are of a good quality include among others, lessons on the way of salvation, the doctrine of the church, steps to church membership, the role of the church member, the statement of faith, stewardship, the doctrines of God and Jesus Christ, normal Christian life, and the new member as the salt and the light of the world. Churches will obviously vary from the one to the other concerning what is regarded as important teaching material for new members, however, some key lessons have to be included which will be common to all churches. Quality membership classes will enhance good teaching background for the church's Christian education ministry.

Mid-week Bible study lessons have always had poor attendance. The general practice has been that there are mid week Bible classes in some churches. In this case members would come together on a given day in the evening for an hour or so. Some Bible classes were very weak while others were moderate. Bible study classes were rife in the late 1960's and 1970's as the salvation message was preached clearly for the first time then. Mention is made in a missionary report of a church in Natal where midweek Bible study classes were held (TSABHB, 1970:115). The belief was that new Christians in general needed teaching. In some instances it was these Bible study classes that hampered effective Sunday school attendance. The feeling of many was that Sunday school was for children while Bible study was for adults during the week. Even so, they did not all attend.

Midweek Bible study attendance was weakened by poor quality teaching, coming out late, transportation problems and lack of proper planning on the part of the leadership and the focus on one topic, namely salvation. Moreover, not all churches had these midweek Bible classes. On the part of pastors, the Bible classes were hampered by the

fact that pastors were unable to read, analyze, interpret and compile material from Christian literature, systematically.¹¹⁸

Presently, cell groups are gradually dealing a deathblow to midweek activities, taking pride of place among all other church ministries. Not all churches have caught this home cell vision yet; however, it seems to be the trend that is being embraced by all evangelical churches today. The home cells are by far the most effective way of teaching. Whether such midweek Bible classes are still to be held in the face of home cell invasion remains to be seen.

7.2.2.5 Preparing believers for the ministry.

Along with the problem of discipleship above, was the training of laity for ministry. This may as well be called discipleship for in it, laity are trained for life and ministry. However, preparing the saints for ministry in this respect is focused mainly on training Christian workers in evangelism and follow up skills as well as other ways of ministry. This is what I call Christian workers' training, where believers are equipped in counseling, evangelism, follow up work, preaching, leadership, teaching, etc. Whereas this process entails discipleship, in my opinion it goes beyond it in that it is concerned with skills training specifically. It assumes that discipleship has taken its course and that believers are ready to do ministry in a much broader sense.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ It should be remembered that with the low kind of education the pastors entered their ministerial training, and with no help of upgrading same in one way or the other, most pastors could read, yes; but they could not read analytically. They were not trained in this area

¹¹⁹ I have to admit that it is not so easy to draw a line between discipleship and equipping the saints for the ministry. There is such a great deal of overlapping that similar Biblical texts may be used to defend the two positions.

Preparing the saints for the ministry is a Biblical mandate, as is the making of disciples of all nations. This is precisely what Jesus did with His apostles. He prepared them for the ministry, so that when He left, they could continue with the work of bringing souls into the Kingdom (John 20:21). Paul followed suit. In His missionary journeys he went around with his co-workers, among others, Timothy, Silas, Luke, etc. Equipping believers for ministry is further attested to by his letter to the Church at Ephesus, in which he enumerates the leadership gifts that the Holy Spirit has given to the Church; namely, apostleship, prophecy, evangelism, pastorate and teaching. All the five gifts are intended for the edification of the Church and the preparation of the saints for the ministry so the people of God may grow to maturity in Christ (Eph. 4:11-15). Further, the injunction to Timothy to pass on what he has heard from Paul to other faithful witnesses, who will in turn pass it on to others, underscores the preparation of believers for ministry (II Tim. 2:2).

During the missionary era such training was deliberate, being held regionally and nationally. Since the missionaries left the scene, this training was confined only to those churches whose pastors were better equipped to train in those areas. One area that seemed to have enjoyed regional attention (not all regions though) was the counselors' training. Each time a youth camp was to be held, few matured Christians would be called for counselors' training in preparation for those young people who would be born again during the occasion of the camp or who would need spiritual guidance of some sort while there. Other forms of training were undertaken by individual churches as they saw fit; inviting specialists from other denominations to carry out such training.

Recently, there is training for preachers, Sunday school teachers and personal soul winners, church leadership, and programme directors. The Convention is now taking it upon themselves to teach and train their believers in these areas. This too, however, has just taken off. It will need to be properly entrenched into the Convention's routine operational life.

Notwithstanding the efforts of missionaries in the past, as well as recent developments in the area of training Christian workers, equipping the saints for the ministry is a dimension of Christian education that has not received the attention it deserved. That this is the case is evident from the gap that opens up when a minister moves from one church to another. The remaining congregation turns to be at a loss of what is to be done to keep the boat afloat. In an Easter regional conference held in Mpumalanga, it came out loud and clear that the training of laity was not attended to at all. The general complaint was that pastors had not done their work of preparing saints for ministry.¹²⁰ Even leaders who seem to have worked so closely with their pastor, do not know how to pick up from where he has left off. This is indicative of a serious weakness in discipleship and in the preparation of the saints for the ministry so prevalent in Convention churches today.

The various modes of Christian education as described above, reveal that the teaching ministry in the Transvaal Convention churches has not been as consistent and as effective as was supposed to have been the case. In other instances, the departure of missionaries and the subsequent severing of ties between the Convention and the Union

¹²⁰ I was invited to this conference to speak on '*The Church growing and glowing.*' The training of congregants was identified as one of the hindrances to church growth.

in 1987, spelt the decline of Christian education, while in other cases it opened the way for further development and self-determination.

7.2.2.6 The pastor in Christian education

The role of the pastor in the teaching ministry of the church is, of all other known factors, the worst that has dealt a deathblow to Christian education in the Convention churches in general. Through the years missionaries have been involved with Sunday school and Bible classes and other modes of Christian education in the Baptist Convention. The hope has always been that church pastors would then take ownership of the process of teaching in due course. In many cases this has not been the case. As a matter of fact, missionaries complained that pastors were too busy to do Sunday school work. To understand the poor or no involvement of Convention pastors in Christian education, it will be necessary that attention be focused on the preparation of pastors for ministry and their consequent role in Christian education.

7.2.2.6.1 Preparation for pastoral ministry.

The poor quality of pastoral training for ministry accounts for the relatively weak performance of pastors in Christian education in their churches and in the denomination as a whole. Lack of Christian education as a subject in the Bible school curriculum has compounded the problem further. Recently however, ministerial training has been improved greatly, having been brought to the level of a diploma in theology and a degree for those who so desire. This state of affairs merits further explanation.

Back in the nineteen forties, a training institution was set up for native Christian workers who desired to be trained for church ministry within the Baptist Convention. One of

such institutions was set up in 1940 in Orlando and it was known as Millard Bible Training Institute (TSABHB, 1940:14). Twenty years later, it was moved to Debe Nek in the Ciskei. It came to be known as the Baptist Bible Institute and it was opened on the 14th of February, in 1960 (ibid, 1960:41). The pastoral training given was of a very poor quality; bearing in mind that white Baptists had their separate place of training in Johannesburg and Cape Town. The quality of training for the two theological institutions was of a high quality while the one for the aspirant native ministers was extremely low.

The reason for the low quality of training was that most of the aspirant ministers were not so educated. All they needed was basic training to work among their own people; hence the low quality type of curriculum. What this meant was that they would be admitted into the training programme with a very low standard of education. They would then struggle along for the three years of training and then be awarded diplomas in ministry. Back in the ministry they would only reproduce that which they have been taught. The case was different for those who were better enlightened as they would study independently during their free time. Some have had to leave for other better institutions, in the main, the Baptist Theological College in Johannesburg (now situated in Rand burg).

As much as the Baptist Union was able to set up a Bible training institution for black ministers, one wonders why they did not deliberately embark upon the campaign of raising the standard of education of pastors, even before exposing them to pastoral training. Baptist Union missionaries themselves admitted that the education of pastors was low and could not match the rising standard of education in the townships



(TSABHB, 1980:116). Why they did not do anything about this shortcoming is symptomatic of the low regard they had for blacks in general, thus underscoring their support for the government of the day, that is, in relegating blacks to a lower class than themselves. One of the Baptist Union's 1955 Assembly resolutions supports this notion. The resolution goes, "*This Assembly deplores the proposal made by high state officials that light wines should be supplied to Natives. It sees in this proposal a departure from the traditional policy of withholding European liquor from natives, who will subsequently demand stronger spirits, thus leading to a very dangerous situation*" (ibid, 1955:114). Clearly, there was a dividing line between black and white (Europeans and non-Europeans) even within the Baptist church circles. This is especially so because the Union of South Africa, under British rule, did not allow Blacks to participate in parliament; hence the formation of the African National Congress in 1912.

What compounded the problem was the fact that Christian education did not form part of the school curriculum for a long time. When the Baptist Bible Institute was opened at Debe Nek, the following main subjects were offered, Doctrine, Biblical Survey, Church History, Baptist Principles, Homiletics, Personal Evangelism, and Exegesis (Ibid, 1940:41). Christian education, or at best, Sunday school ministry, was left out as a subject from the outset. This is surprising, bearing in mind the high esteem accorded to Sunday school work by missionaries through the years. It was only in cases where the lecturer involved took interest in Sunday school that a Sunday school subject or course would be introduced. When he left, there would be no Sunday school teaching in the training institution.¹²¹ What compensated for lack of Christian education as a course,

¹²¹ Ministers who have qualified for the ministry before some of us, assert that there was Sunday school training during their time. They mention the lecturer who was in charge of the subject, and who, by the time we came for training, was gone already. His departure meant the end of Sunday school training.



was the training that one would attend independently of the Bible school or church. During the time of my training at the Bible institute, Christian education was taught only once, on the occasion of what was called a pruning week, which took place once a year, a week before the closing for holidays. Other pruning weeks of succeeding years focused on other subjects.

The poor quality of training I have argued for so far, is marked by a few factors. First, most of the aspirant ministers admitted for training did not have good education. Some had gone as far as grade 3, others grade 5, while still others had gone as far as grade 8. A few had gone up to grade 12. By implication, the educational background of Bible students varied from the one to the other. Therefore, it came as no surprise to find a grade 3 Bible student being in the same class with a grade 12 student. As time went on, more and more better educated students came on board, especially in the nineteen eighties. Such are faring better in the pastorate in terms of Christian education, as they are capable of doing their own research and compiling their own notes. However, they are not doing enough either. They have a potential to do much better.

Second, qualifications of some of the lecturers who taught at Bible school were also questionable.¹²² They had come from a few years of ministerial experience, with only the diploma in ministry that they obtained from the same or other similar institutions. What this implied was that the only good element they brought along was their ministerial experience which did benefit the students any way. As it related to the compiling of notes from a wide range of literature, they were not competent enough. This led to the use of one mediocre textbook for a given subject, leaving the students

¹²² Needless to say that better qualified lecturers were white ministers who were exposed to better education and ministerial training.



with views from one untested author only. One can well imagine what kind of ministry such Bible students would wield in churches. I have to say, however, that when it came to practical training, i.e., Homiletics, leading a church programme, dedication of children, solemnization of marriages and other such like routine church practices, these lecturers were excellent, hence the high quality preaching characteristic of Convention pastors.

Third, the quality of the content taught in each case may have been good for one or two lecturers or so. However, the rest was very weak, being comparable to ordinary family Bible hour material. In the fourth instance, the acceptance of only those students who had passed grade 12 in white dominated Baptist Bible institutions further underscored the low quality training given at the Baptist Bible Institute. In the latter, all aspirant ministers were accepted, while in the former, only a certain category of students were admitted. Moreover, the missionaries themselves confessed that native pastors needed better training, especially those in urban areas (TSABHB, 1980:116).¹²³

Finally, the general complaint among congregants to the end that pastors need to upgrade their training, underscores the low regard with which the ministers are viewed due to their poor pastoral training. Some have complained that their pastors could not teach, while others have objected to the continuous salvation preaching, even when the members needed the kind of preaching which would nurture them for growth. To date, only certain ministers are invited for teaching sessions in various churches and regional

¹²³ I need to say that whatever I have said about the quality of training at our Bible institution, flows both from my personal involvement with the Institution and my knowledge of what is going on and what is being said in churches. I trained in the institution myself.

meetings. The general feeling is that other ministers cannot teach, therefore, they may not be invited to do so.

It is encouraging to note that subsequently, the Southern Baptists bought the Baptist Bible Institute property and converted it to being a Baptist International Theological Seminary in 1989, thus raising the standard of theological training to a Bachelor's degree level. Pastors who trained at this institution are doing well in terms of ministry in general, although they have not done that much in Christian education. In 1995, October, the Baptist Convention of South Africa opened its first theological college in Johannesburg. The curriculum followed is of an exceptionally high standard, being recognized by the South African Accreditation Board. The college offers among others, a diploma in theology and a bachelor's degree through the University of South Africa. What is more, Christian education forms part of the curriculum; at least the introductory course. There is a need to expand this course, if the pastors are to be effective in Christian education in their future pastorates.

7.2.2.6.2 Pastoral involvement in Christian education.

The condition described above accounts largely for the lack of involvement of pastors in the teaching ministry of their churches, especially in the Sunday school and family Bible hour. This may not be said of pastors who trained at the Baptist International Theological Seminary and the Baptist Convention College in Johannesburg. Their training was up to standard and still is. Notwithstanding their better training and their doing of Christian education in their seminary or college training, these pastors have also fallen prey to doing very little in Christian education. Like all others they need to be



awakened to this ministry. At least they are capable of reading literature on their own and compiling necessary material.

In the event where older pastors engaged in mid-week Bible study classes, in most cases the textbook method was used; so that the pastor would read from the textbook and explain, without doing in-depth study himself and coming up with well researched material. This tendency would discourage some members from attending; after all they could also read for themselves at home.

Three reasons explain why pastors were not involved in Christian education of their churches or why the performance was so weak. First, the exclusion of Christian education as a subject from the Bible school curriculum. How else would they be expected to teach it if they were not trained as to how to go about teaching? Second, the misconception that Sunday school was not important; pastors had other things to do which mattered more. Hence so little or no support for Sunday school in their churches. Third, the inability to compile notes on their own, has led to them not participating in Sunday school or family Bible hour. Some hid behind the notion that they had no gift of teaching, forgetting that they could not have been pastors if they could not teach; one of the pastoral duties is to feed the flock of God. Teaching is an integral part of pastoral ministry; these two may not be separated (John 21:15-17; I Tim. 5:17; I Pet. 5:1-4).

This indifference to Christian education has led to some congregants beginning to complain about the teaching role of their pastor. It has also led to strained relationships between some pastors and their members. More and more, a need is being felt that pastor teachers are needed in Convention churches. One would hear of a remark like this, *"We do have a pastor, but more than anything else, our church needs teaching; we*

need a pastor who can teach.” In one of the national executive committee meetings that I presided over in the latter part of year 2000, one of the members of the committee, a pastor of one of the Convention churches, frankly argued that there was no teaching in our churches; a substantial amount of work still needed to be done in this area of the church’s educational ministry.

Not all ministers were not involved in Christian education. It should be remembered therefore that some pastors, though very few, were indeed involved in family Bible hour in their churches, especially those who comprised the ‘Go Teach’ ministry team. In the rest of the cases church members were on their own, while pastors “devoted themselves to the preaching of the Word.” It was especially those who were enlightened who involved themselves in Christian education. The appointment of Sunday school and youth organizers among the ranks of Convention pastors during the missionary era, was a commendable feature which characterized growth on the part of African church leaders.¹²⁴ Looking closely at those who were appointed in these positions, one notices that they were better educated than others, and could therefore wield formidable influence during their time.

As indicated earlier, lack of involvement of Convention pastors in the Christian education programme of their churches, has, more than anything else, hampered the doing of Christian education drastically. Unless the situation is remedied, the condition will grow worse as the newer and younger pastors may inherit the legacy.

¹²⁴ See Growth indicators above for examples of appointments.

7.3 CONCLUSION

This chapter has been an attempt to reflect critically and in greater detail on Christian education in the Transvaal Baptist Convention churches. The picture thus painted reflects the condition of the Baptist Convention of South Africa as it relates to the church educational ministry. It warrants serious attention from Convention leaders. Of course it is not as though the Convention has to start from the beginning; at least something has been going on; more than ever before, there is an awareness that Christian education is an integral part of Church ministry. With the high standard of pastoral training in the Baptist Convention College, there is every reason to be hopeful that the situation will change for the better. The next chapter will be devoted to the laying down of strategies for effective Christian education in future; in so doing it will address most if not all of the problems outlined so far.



CHAPTER EIGHT

STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE CHRISTIAN EDUCATION IN FUTURE

8.1 INTRODUCTION

8.1.1 Background

The position of Christian education in the Baptist Convention of South Africa, as portrayed in the preceding chapters, especially chapters six and seven, warrants remedial attention as a way forward. In chapter seven a detailed evaluation of Christian education in the Convention has painted the true picture of the situation as it is; leaving the Convention with questions and challenges to face up with. Whatever remedial measures to be put in place will be focused on the Baptist Convention and the Church of Jesus Christ as a whole. What is clear from what has been said in this research project is that in a general sense, Christian education is beset with problems in one way or the other the world over. A substantial amount of Christian education literature points to this reality. It is for this reason that remedial measures to be raised below be focused on the Baptist Convention of South Africa and the Protestant and Catholic denominations the world over.

In this chapter it is my thesis that given the situation of Christian education as described so far, some measures have to be put in place to correct the status quo in Christian education in the Convention to the extent that it is humanly possible. Thus, as the title suggests, the aim of the chapter is to come up with strategies for effective Christian education for the Convention and the Catholic Church.¹²⁵

However, the title should not be misconstrued as implying that nothing has been done in Christian education. Going through Christian education literature one notices the vast amount of work that has been done in this area by various denominations, especially in the United States of America.¹²⁶ In varying degrees, Protestant and Catholic churches the world over, have been involved in Christian education. Whatever will be suggested here, is intended to remedy the situation in the Baptist Convention educational ministry, to evoke Christian education awareness in those who may not have been that involved; to revive the educational ministry in those churches whose enthusiasm in Christian education has dampened; and to improve the status quo in churches which are already involved in Christian education. In itself, the title implies that something is being done, but needs to be more effective.

8.1.2 The meaning of ‘Effective Christian education in future’

Two aspects of the title, namely, ‘Effective Christian education’ and ‘in future’, need further clarification. Effective Christian education means the kind of education that will be of such a nature as to be what true Christian education should be all about. It means the kind of church educational programme that will satisfy the requirements of what it means to be an attractive and viable church educational programme. Christian education is effective if it is based on Scriptures, addresses the whole family (from childhood to adulthood); when it is contextual, and has goals that it pursues. It is effective if it has good leadership, skilled and hardworking teachers, adequate teaching resources, appropriate building facilities, and a relevant curriculum that meets the needs of learners.

¹²⁵ By Catholic I am referring to the Church of Jesus Christ as a whole.

¹²⁶ I am looking at many volumes of Christian education literature authored by Americans, the many Christian education organizations and the doctoral programme offered in theological seminaries for the position of director of Christian education in local churches. Surely, that is proof enough of how much of Christian education America has already done.

Its effectiveness is further judged by the way in which it is properly administered and is subjected to continuous evaluation, being of such a standard as to be matched with good Christian education programmes of other denominations. Effective Christian education programme does not imply that it will be a perfect programme. On the contrary, it points to a constant striving towards being the best of what it is capable of being; there is always that potential of being better than what it was yesterday, simply because it is a *human* programme. Effective Christian education is what I have come to call '*Authentic Christian education*' in the preceding chapter.

The second aspect of the title which merits attention, is 'in future.' Why in future and not now? Will the future ever come? When will it come and who will be there in future to ensure that desired effectiveness is attained? I have adopted the interpretation of James Michael Lee, in responding to these questions about the future. He (1977:1-2) argues that if religious education is to fulfill its mission, it must not so much bring the now into the future, as to bring the future into the now. He maintains, "...*the educational experience is not one of preparing the learner to live in the future but rather of helping the learner to live the future right now.*" The future is unpredictable; it may be risky to prepare for it as it may turn out to be something else. "*The future is for those who make it, not those who wait for it*" (ibid, 2).

My understanding of the future therefore, based on the interpretation above, is simply from now onward. Whatever strategies are being put forward, are intended for now and tomorrow, if tomorrow does indeed come. In this case the future is not detached from the present; it is linked to it and proceeds from it so that it is not so easy to draw a dividing line between the two. It is in this context that I want the title to be understood; that if the strategies are found to be appropriate, they should be applied from now onward. They will be refined with the course of time, thus serving the future.

The strategies thus espoused are in themselves nothing new; it is something that the churches should have been doing. For example, administration, curriculum, process,

leadership, etc, (which are some of the strategies to be discussed), are important components which should be brought to bear upon Christian education as a whole. They are not new phenomena. However, they have been referred to as strategies for effective Christian education in future, for it is only in employing them to their fullest potential, that effective (authentic) Christian education can come about.

8.1.3 Why strategies for effective Christian education in future?

A question can be asked as to why going to such pains of coming up with strategies for effective Christian education in future. Is the effort worth the salt? Why not just take Christian education for granted, especially as Christianity no longer enjoys sole attention and publicity? These questions in themselves are legitimate, seeing that in South Africa for example (of course in America and Britain as well) religion is being confined to individuals as being a private matter. It has been left in the hands of churches and other religious organizations to nurture and develop. What is then so special about Christian education, that its effectiveness in future should be the subject of discussion?

Christian education is an integral part of the whole of the church's ministry. If 'church' is regarded as an important component in the total fabric of society or what constitutes a society, all that which goes with the church must be considered important as well. Christian education gets at the heart of the moral fibre of any Christian society,¹²⁷ despite the back seat religion in general has been confined to by government, especially in academic pursuit; preferring science, technology and economics instead. In South Africa, Christianity ranks first in terms of the religious affiliation of communities. Hence it may not be ignored simply because the new dispensation has a different agenda. The importance of Christian education cannot be overemphasized. It is against this background that remedial measures have to be brought to bear upon Christian education in the Convention and the entire Church community.

¹²⁷ By Christian society I mean that society which is Protestant and Catholic in outlook, though not necessarily Christian in the strictest sense of the word.

The situation described above, where some governments (including South Africa, Britain, America, etc) are removing (or have removed) religious education from the school curriculum as a school subject in an attempt to give equal opportunity to all religions in the country, and to focus more on science, technology and economics, compels the church to take full responsibility for the doing of Christian education. Moreover, problems already raised in the preceding chapters about Christian education, make it imperative that special measures be taken to remedy the situation. It is for this reason that *strategies for effective Christian education in future* will be an appropriate venture to pursue.

8.1.4 How the chapter unfolds

The strategies described below, will go a long way in bringing about effective Christian education in the Baptist Convention and in the churches of all Protestant and Catholic persuasions. Churches and denominations¹²⁸ have to engage in some vigorous promotional activities for Christian education. Sound administrative structures have to be put in place to level the ground for the practice of the church's educational ministry. The question of who and where the learners really are, has to be taken seriously. The designing of relevant and contextual curricula also becomes an important factor in an attempt to bring about high quality Christian education.

In the same wavelength, the process of Christian education, the recruitment and training of leaders for Christian education, and the implementation of an effective discipleship programme also feature as important measures in a move towards effective church educational ministry. Further, pastoral involvement in Christian education and the evaluation of the educational ministry in general, are all strategies geared toward the enhancing of effective Christian education, hence the consideration of each of these strategies below.

¹²⁸ The two designations, churches and denominations, will be used together from time to time to mark the difference between those churches which do not have denominations, but are entities in themselves, e.g., the so called ministries.

8.2 THE PROMOTION OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION IN CHURCHES

One of the strategies (perhaps the first) for effective Christian education in future is that of engaging promotional activities with a view to conscientizing churches about the importance and the way of Christian education. Such promotional activities have to be carried out at all levels of various denominations and churches, i.e., nationally, provincially, regionally, at district level, and eventually at local church level.

Christian education has not enjoyed the full attention it deserved or it has not been carried out to its fullest potential, both in the Baptist Convention of South Africa and the Church of Jesus Christ in general. This has been demonstrated in the first, second, sixth and seventh chapters of this thesis, where instances of authors were quoted as saying Christian education suffered from lack of purpose or that it was under fire. Some expressed the problems faced by Christian education in various other ways that may not be repeated here for purposes of progress. What comes out clearly from the Christian educators is the fact that notwithstanding the vast ground already covered in the Church's educational ministry in various denominations, there is much room for doing it better, it can still be improved and it must be improved. It means a few more things can still be done to make it more effective.

It is only proper therefore that the Baptist Convention and the Catholic Church take as one of their strategies for effective Christian education, the promotional dimension. What is being referred to here is that everything should be done to make churches aware of the importance of Christian education as an integral part of the Church's total ministry and to assist them in making their educational programmes effective. Thus, such promotions will focus on two areas in the main, namely, urging churches to take Christian education seriously as a mandate from Jesus Christ, and ensuring that this educational ministry is carried out in the best way possible.

8.2.1 The importance of promotional activities for Christian education

First, I have already pointed out above that Christian educators have expressed serious concerns about the plight of the Church's educational ministry today. A survey conducted by the Search Institute in 1990, in the United States of America,¹²⁹ (see chapter one, page 24 for more details on the findings of the Search Institute) justifies the promotional measure for Christian education. Second, the poor attendance, especially among youth and adults in Sunday school classes, warrant intentional and well planned promotional measures for Christian education in churches. Dr. Hestenes (1991:82) asserts that in one instance she came to a church where only 5% of church members attended Sunday school. Within a short time frame she was able to bring Sunday school attendance to 25% of the total church membership. Some promotional work has had to be done to enhance better attendance.

Third, the widespread Bible ignorance among church members and leaders leaves much to be desired. One Christian openly confessed that as much as he was willing to do witnessing, he did not know where to begin. He needed some training in this respect, *"I am ready to spend an evening a week calling; but beyond inviting people to come to our church, I don't know what to say. I wish our Bible School has classes in effective Christian witnessing. I think quite a number of us would enroll"* (Arn and McGavran, 1980:119).

It is a sad thing when such ignorance should be displayed by lay leaders as well. In the final analysis they are expected to fill the gap when the local pastor is away. As a result members are rendered vulnerable in the face of doctrinal error or some fundamental Biblical question. The ignorance of this nature was evident even in Biblical times. The author to the Hebrew Christians, for example, upbraided them for lack of spiritual

¹²⁹ It may be said that such a survey was not representative of Christian education in other countries. I argue that at least a survey has been conducted by a leading country in the doing of Christian education. Principles can be drawn from the findings which will be applicable to many countries.

understanding. He claimed that they ought to have been teachers of one another by then (Hebs. 5:12-14).

Fourth, the pre-eminence of Christian education during Biblical times as purported in the Old and New Testaments, as well as the revival thereof during the Reformation period, warrants that Christian education be promoted anew. Throughout the two testaments, the notion of teaching sticks out so glaringly that it cannot be ignored. To fail to do Christian education in our churches would be a failure on our part as disciples of Christ. In the New Testament, the title '*Rabbi*' features very importantly and was used of outstanding Jewish teachers. It was soon used of Jesus as being the best teacher around (John 6:35). This position put Christian education on a very high pedestal within the Christian church ministry. Promotional activities can only do justice to such glaring importance of Christian education.

In the fifth instance, the Christian religion deserves to be known and understood in its entirety. It is within the context of Christian education sessions that even those who have scanty information about Christianity can learn what it is all about and make informed value judgments.

Moreover, Christians themselves have to take their religion very seriously, as much as Jews, Muslims and others, regard their religions so highly. Convention members, Christians and others, should know about the origins, history, survival, destiny, stability and the teachings of Christianity. In addition, "*...the inundating wave of secularism, naturalism and materialism, not to mention outright atheism, threatens to bury 'the faith once delivered unto the saints'*" (Boettcher, 1975:xvi). Only promotional activities can restore the vibrancy of Christian faith and entrench its teaching among the followers of Jesus Christ.

8.2.2 Who should engage in promotional activities?

Theological institutions should be the first to promote Christian education in the Convention and other Christian churches. This they can do by introducing Christian education as a subject in the institution (if they have not yet done so), by underscoring among others, the history, theology, process and imperative of Christian education. Over and above taking Christian education as a school subject, theological institutions may hold special seminars for church leaders, aimed at conscientizing them about the importance and the way of Christian education. There will obviously be those who are already involved in Christian education in their churches. There will also be those who stopped teaching in their churches or whose teaching programme has grown cold. The third strand will be those who are not doing anything at all, for one reason or another. This status quo will have to be borne in mind throughout the promotional exercise.

Theological students may be deployed in various churches to help in setting up the full programme of Christian education and in training prospective teachers. Para-church (inter-denominational) organizations may also be used in this regard. In South Africa such organizations as Scripture Union, South African National Sunday School Association (SANSA), and other such like organizations, will be helpful in this regard as they have been involved in Christian education for a long time. They may be invited by those church leaders who are aware of the situation in churches and therefore are persuaded that something needs to be done to improve the doing of Christian education. It is true that some leaders (especially pastors) need help in this matter, and that therefore, promotions have to be done among them first, so it will filter down to lay leaders and the church membership as a whole.

Radio ministries may also be used to promote Christian education in churches. Christian education teachers (pastors) may be used or may take advantage of the radio ministry opportunities available to them, and use them to illustrate the importance of having

viable teaching programmes in churches. Christian Television stations may also be used for this purpose, calling upon Christian church leaders to take Christian education seriously.

Christian magazines, journals, and newspapers may be employed to publicize and popularize Christian education. Churches may use these media to report on their activities and progress in their teaching ministry. They may further publicize good lessons taught in various contexts during the course of the year.

The Baptist Convention and other denominations may have to do promotional activities in their national conferences. They can devote one day during the conference to Christian education and then invite experts or other Christian educators to give papers or run workshops on the importance, the method and the Biblical imperative for Christian education. This may be done nationally, provincially, regionally and locally as the case may be.

In local churches pastors may do it themselves, preaching it from the pulpit. They may use the members themselves to promote Christian education among fellow members. The Convention and the Church as a whole may also set aside a week in their calendar, for the promotion of Christian education among their constituencies; it will be called, *The Christian education week*. At the end of the year special awards may be given to those who were the best in attendance during the course of the year, as a way to attract others for the following year.

Promotional activities should be well planned for and be properly carried out so they make an impact among people for whom they are intended. Some kind of follow-up work has to be put in place for those who show interest. They should be helped along and know who to contact in time of need. As it appears, on other levels promotions may not be an easy undertaking at all.

For effective Christian education to come about in future, a great deal of promotional activities have to be engaged on a continuous basis on various levels of Christian ministry. Care should be taken that everything is done to enhance good and effective promotions.

8.2.3 Characteristics of good promotions

Good promotional activities are not rushed onto at the spare of the moment as they may not yield desired results. Calculated time and effort have to go into the planning and the preparatory stage, depending on what type of promotions they are and when the promotions will be done.

Effective promotional exercises should display the quality of daily promotions or advertisements in radios, television, marketing, etc. In other words such qualities as are characteristic of other business promotions. Promotions are promotions, whether they be done in the business or spiritual world. This basic principle has to be upheld even in promoting Christian education.

All promotional activities must be targeted at a given audience. Nothing should be done just for the sake of it. It should be known as to who is being targeted. Is it the youth, children, adults or Christian leaders? The targets will determine the shape of the promotion at hand. Various promotions will be aimed at various categories of people. Some may be targeted at youth, while others are aimed at adults.

Promotions should be affordable. They should fall within the church budget. What this means is that in so far as it is possible, they should be simple. Only affording churches can engage expensive promotional ventures.

Promotional activities must be simple and relevant. They should be such that they are easily understood by the targeted audience. They must further be contextual, using language that people will understand, and employing illustrations relevant to the culture

of the audience. Sophisticated promotions may miss the mark. They must also be continuous and be subjected to continuous evaluation. They should be done at the beginning of the year, during the year and at the end of the year.

In the local church setting, promotions may be done at the opening of the Sunday school or when a small group Bible study begins. It may take the form of presenting to the congregation the sort of Christian education programme to be followed for the year; what lessons will be taught, which material will be used and the objectives to be reached. Church promotions must be preceded by thorough preparations and planning of what is going to be done for that year. Facilities (buildings, chalkboard, etc) as well as lessons should have been prepared beforehand.

All in all, promotional activities aimed at church pastors, leaders, and members at all denominational levels, must be employed as one of the strategies to enhance effective Christian education.

8.3 EMBRACING A SOUND ADMINISTRATION OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

8.3.1 The meaning of 'Administration'

The second major strategy that makes up for effective Christian education in future for both the Convention and the Church of Jesus Christ in general is the embracing of a sound administration of Christian education in churches. Administration refers to *'the guidance, leadership, and control of the efforts of a group of individuals toward some common goal'* (William H. Newman in Barnard and Rice, 1978: 375). *'Administration ...is the muscle of the organizational body. It is the functioning, managing, and achieving side of Christian education. Administration includes all processes by which the policies of the organization are carried out...It is the means of making the organization work'* (Ibid, 367). Administration has to do with the running of a given programme. It embraces such components as planning, policies, goals, budget, daily

operations, who should do what? evaluation, etc. It means doing things properly and orderly.

‘Sound administration’ simply means good administration. It means the kind of administration that measures up to what it is to be good administration. By implication, in many instances there is some form of Christian education administration in churches that is not so effective. It is usually a kind of administration not so properly taken care of. In the preceding chapter, I have painted a picture of a poor Christian education administration prevalent in Baptist Convention churches. Many well-intended Christian education programmes have failed due to poor administration or lack of it. If the educational ministry of the church is to reach fullest potential in terms of being effective, its administration has to be viewed in a serious light.

Administration enhances orderliness. It is in the nature of God to be orderly. He is orderly in all His dealings with humanity and with creation as a whole. Nothing is done per chance. Everything else has been planned beforehand, so that what is happening in history is the fulfillment of a plan that has long been in place. When He created everything from nothing, He had a purpose. Even after the fall of humanity He still had other plans in mind (see Gen. 3:15). The laws He gave to the Israelites of old, the leaders He appointed from time to time, all underlined the good administration model God went by. God’s plan of salvation in Christ, for example, is a matter that was settled before the foundations of the earth (Eph. 1:4). Jesus came to the world in the fullness of time (Gal. 4:4). It is against this background of God’s orderliness that Paul urged “*Let everything be done decently and orderly,*” for God is a God of peace, not confusion (I Cor.14:33, 40). Sound administration guarantees orderliness and will thus lead to an effective Christian education programme.

Sound administration is comprised of various components. For Christian education and the enhancement of its effectiveness, the following components of administration need

consideration. They are, planning, the setting up of goals, putting a committee in place, adequate resources and facilities, organizing, budgeting, coordination or controlling of operations, and evaluation. All of these should, however, be preceded by the consideration of the church's purpose statement.

8.3.2 The church's mission statement as a point of departure

Whereas Christian education should have its own mission or purpose statement, it is part of the church's entire ministry. It may not be viewed in isolation from other ministry components of the church. The church must have a direction towards which it is moving, for Christian education to be effective. The church must have a mission statement that underpins what it stands for and seeks to pursue in its ministry efforts. For a long time the Convention and other churches and denominations have operated without a guiding principle that is called a mission statement. This has led to the same achieving little or nothing in terms of ministry as they operated without a purpose statement that spells out what they are about. Christian education cannot be adequately effective in a situation where there is no purpose and vision. What this amounts to is that such Christian education will be a unit in its own right, overshadowing all other ministry components, thus resulting in an unbalanced church ministry.

Once a mission statement has been formulated, a vision for a given period will then be thought through by the church leader, in line with the church's mission statement. In this case Christian education becomes part of the fulfillment of the church's vision. If for example the focus of the church for a given time frame is evangelism, the educational programme of the same church for that period will focus primarily on evangelism, by way of giving lessons on evangelism and personal soul-winning, as the case may be.

This does not however, mean that Christian education may not go beyond the church's purpose and vision. There will be instances where the educational ministry of the church

will address a given need. A case in point is the new believers class, which will focus mainly on normal Christian life, baptism and the Lord's Supper, the status and responsibilities of new members, the doctrine of the Church, etc. What is being argued for is that for all practical purposes, Christian education should align itself with the purpose and vision of the church.

It may be argued that the Bible lays down principles for Christian education, so that whether churches have clearly worked out purpose statements or not, Christian education can still operate within those Scriptural principles. Indeed, both the Old and New Testaments abound with content, method, and reason for the teaching ministry of the Church, making it unnecessary for any other factor to determine how Christian education should be done. This is quite true, especially as one takes into account Christian education literature, much of which does not say much or anything at all about the total mission of the church. Many authors have gone directly to the point, mapping out the theory and practice of Christian education without linking it to the total purpose and vision of the church. One can only hope that where such a mission and vision statement is not mentioned or alluded to, it is implied in the back of their minds.

Notwithstanding Biblical principles of Christian education as outlined above, so that Christian education can be run independently from anything in the church, I contend that it is very important to have the mission and vision of the church clearly articulated – part of which will obviously embrace Christian education – so that the church's ministry is conceived of and carried out in its entirety. The purpose statement is good in a number of ways.

It captures the total ministry of the church in a few sentences or so, spelling it out in a more organized way. The various tenets or dimensions of the church's ministry are enhanced in a short sentence or paragraph. The purpose statement and the resultant vision, ensure that no one dimension of ministry (e.g., evangelism, counseling, teaching,

prayer, etc.) will be emphasized at the expense of other ministry dimensions. Each dimension of ministry is analyzed and given due attention in light of the total picture.

The mission statement embraces the interrelatedness and interdependence of different aspects of the church ministry. In the mission statement, each aspect of the church's ministry is seen as part of the whole, not in isolation. Social ministry is related to teaching, counseling, mission, etc. So is evangelism, praise and worship, prayer, family life ministry. Each of these ministries is related to and in some way dependent on the others.

The purpose statement imbues the members with a sense of purpose for existence as a church. When asked what their church stands for, they are able to answer in the form of a mission statement. They know where they are coming from and where they are heading. The mission statement is the springboard from which the vision statement emanates. The vision divides the mission statement into implementable chunks, so that for the next five years or so, this part of the mission statement will be the focus of the church. The mission statement does not change, but the vision changes as each part of the mission statement finds fulfillment.¹³⁰

In light of the picture painted thus far, I strongly contend that every church (or denomination, as the case may be) must have a mission statement around which all activities of the church will revolve. The mission statement will lead to a vision for a given period, and the vision will underlie the doing of Christian education in that affected church. The mission and vision of Christian education will be informed by the total mission and vision of the church.

¹³⁰ Admittedly some mission statements may be so short that they do not specifically spell out various components of the church's ministry; the components are all embraced in the one or two sentences. In that case the vision statement will unravel the purpose statement so as to identify the said components.



8.3.3 Planning

Planning is a very important aspect of administration. It has to do with deciding in advance what will be done and in what order (Barnard and Rice, 1978:376). In its broadest context, planning entails examining purposes, setting goals, choosing methods, establishing target dates, determining the persons responsible for carrying out duties, setting the plans in motion, and evaluating the results. Initial planning is thus needed for what is to be done and when it has to be done and by whom it will be done if Christian education is to be effective. Such planning has to be thorough in all respects. Some of the aspects of planning are treated as separate units below.

8.3.4 Setting goals for Christian education

Setting goals is the first phase of any planning process. Needless to say, *'goals are desired results toward which money, leadership, and time are allocated'* (ibid, 377). Underlining the importance of goal setting, another author put it this way, *"To improve the quality of church education in the future calls for much more than the identification of individual problems...It calls for consistency and high quality within several interrelated systems fundamental to church education. More especially it calls for clarity and agreement about our central objectives. When we know where we are going, we can get all the subsystems working in line with these objectives"* (Browning, 1976:138). Goals are very important for any undertaking. Before any Christian education enterprise can be entertained, goals have to be set of what must be achieved. As has been pointed out above, the total mission and vision statement of the church, should inform such Christian education goals, so that all efforts are channeled in the same direction.

Commenting on the plight of Christian education in this respect, William F. Case (1976:205) pointed out that *"We not only do not know how to reach our goals, we are not at all sure, what are our goals"* This comment underscores the importance of goals in Christian education. While there is the comprehensive (Biblical) purpose of Christian education as spelt out in chapter four of this thesis, such a purpose has to be broken

down into chunks that can be achieved within specific time frames. It is important to mention however, that there will always be the standing goals of Christian education, namely, that of the converting of unbelievers, initiation of new believers into the church, and the discipleship of such believers so that they will take their responsible places within the entire spectrum of the church's ministry (see Acts 2:38-42).

It is the pastor and other church leaders (or an adhoc committee, as the church may see fit) who will be tasked with the setting up of goals and the entire planning process. Other Christian educators have suggested that learners be part of the process of setting goals (especially youth and adults) so they can participate in Christian education classes with enthusiasm (Campbell, 1991:255-257). There is no doubt that lack of clarity on goals in many Christian education programmes has led to the downfall of those programmes or their ineffectiveness. This is the case with the Baptist Convention. The setting up of objectives, in line with the total goal of the ministry of the church, is the priority of church leaders, if effectiveness is to be enhanced in future.

8.3.5 Putting in place the Christian education committee

The formulation of goals should be followed by the establishment of a Christian education committee or a board of Christian education as circumstances of each church setting will determine. Some churches may be so small that it may be inconceivable to even think of a board of Christian education. In such cases, a committee of three to five people may be constituted. In cases of large churches a board of Christian education may be formed, comprising the pastor as the ex-officio member, the director of Christian education,¹³¹ Sunday school superintendent or leader, one leader from youth, children, men, and women ministries as well as representatives from other church ministries. All in all the Christian education committee shall be tasked with carrying out

¹³¹ The issue of director of Christian education is contingent upon whether the church already has a trained personnel for this position. In other cases an individual may be appointed for such a position by virtue of his longstanding involvement with Christian education or Sunday school ministry. A well trained Christian education director should be the aspiration of every church.

the Christian education programme as espoused by the planning committee and endorsed by the church.

A Christian education committee, however small, is necessary to get things going. It should not be taken for granted that anyone or the pastor alone can take charge of Christian education.

8.3.6 Curriculum designing

The designing of a Christian education curriculum is mentioned here for the sake of indispensability and sequence. Curriculum development receives separate focus later in this chapter. However, it has to be noted that it forms part of the administration of Christian education. Either the same committee above or another group selected according to its expertise in this area may be charged with the formulation of a suitable curriculum for Christian education in the church. The curriculum thus espoused, will depend on the direction the church is taking during that time in its mission and vision.

8.3.7 Allocating a special budget for Christian education

Some of the Christian education programmes have failed because there was no special budget set aside for them by the church. The Baptist Convention is no exception in this case. If the church or denomination understands that Christian education is a Biblical imperative and an indispensable unit within the broader ministry of the church, then there should be no hustles in allocating a special budget for it, along with other ministry units in the church. It may not be easy to buy all resources needed for Christian education at once, but in the initial stages, basic resources like writing and flannel boards, books, chalks, pictures, maps, learning aids (for children), etc should be acquired. Other resources will be bought with time. Before a budget can be allocated, the Christian education committee shall have done its homework in respect of what will be needed for what purposes.



8.3.8 Organizing learners, personnel, and resources

The next step in the administration process is the organization of learners, personnel (teachers), facilities and resources for Christian education. Organization has to do with who should do what and how people should relate. It has to do with “...*dividing and grouping the work into individual jobs and defining the established relationships between individuals filling those jobs*” (Newman in Barnard and Rice, 1978:378). Here learners are organized into age groups and categories. In this case children are divided up according to their ages and then grouped together according to their number, and according to teachers and classes available. The same thing can be said of youth, who should be grouped into teenagers, youth and young adults, while adults may be grouped into young¹³², middle, and senior adults, as the case may be. There may be a special category of single adults who may need separate attention.

Teachers are now appointed and allocated learners according to their abilities and interests. This is not an easy process. Initially Christians may be called upon to volunteer for this teaching position. However in places where there are more than enough willing volunteers, advertisements should be made and prospective teachers interviewed and carefully selected for the various age groups and categories. In small churches it may be necessary to do head hunting, that is, going out of ones way to look for and to recruit suitable leaders.

Once this has been done, classes have to be identified and prepared, resources acquired and put ready for the teaching/learning experience.

8.3.9 Controlling and evaluating¹³³ the Christian education event

At a given time, the Christian education programme has to be set in motion and proper control systems be put in place to ensure orderliness and effectiveness. Attendance

¹³² There will always be the overlapping of young adults, who are both youth and adults, so that they will feature as youth who have grown to be adults, and adults who are still in their youth stage.

¹³³ Evaluation is mentioned here for purposes of its administrative significance.; a whole section is devoted to it under 8.10 below, as a strategy for effective Christian education in future.



registers have to be compiled and records kept of how learners attend classes. Lists of teachers have to be kept, while special files will be opened for each one of them. Dates have to be set for various events, that is, committee meetings, the launching of the Christian education programme, teachers weekly meetings, etc. Proper control measures will be of much assistance when the whole Christian education programme will be evaluated. The director of Christian education¹³⁴ will ensure that he coordinates the entire programme, working hand in glove with the pastor and the church executive committee, as the case may be.

Along with the controlling of the Christian education event, there has to be the evaluation thereof, from time to time, to assess its effectiveness in achieving desired goals. There are various levels of evaluation. Evaluation of the teaching programme can be done monthly, quarterly, and yearly. Each time it is done the aim is, among others, to improve on the method of teaching, approach, the use of resources, and the correction of errors that occur during the course of teaching. The teachers, learners, methods, facilities, and the curriculum are all among the elements to be evaluated with a view to improving the entire educational process. The importance of evaluation for Christian education cannot be overemphasized. It is only in evaluation that problems can be unearthed and remedial measures put in place to improve on the teaching endeavour.

Sound administration has to be brought to bear upon the doing of Christian education in the Baptist Convention churches and in all Protestant and Catholic persuasions, so as to enhance effectiveness. Admittedly good administration of Christian education is a rare quality in many Christian circles. Some do not have any administration at all. Others do have, but it is of a poor quality. Whatever may be said, quality administration is what is needed for effective Christian education now and in years to come.

¹³⁴ It may not be possible to have a director of Christian education in a small church. The pastor may have to coordinate the teaching programme, unless there are capable leaders who can be entrusted with the task.

8.4 LEARNERS IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

The effectiveness of Christian education in future also hinges upon the pride of place given to learners in the Church. In other words, another strategy that will make up for effective Christian education programmes in Convention churches and other denominations is that of taking learners seriously. In any church setting, there are three basic levels of learners, namely, children, youth, and adults. Each of these may be broken down into other categories (as will become evident below), however, the three levels are basic and must be regarded highly if the educational ministry is to be of a high quality.

Part of the drawback in Christian education in general, can be attributed to the low regard accorded to some of these levels. For example, in some instances children's education would be regarded so highly that youth and adults would rather be kept busy instead of receiving full attention. In other cases youth would be elevated to the point of completely ignoring children and adults, or at best, giving scanty attention to them. In such cases children would be kept busy with memory verses, singing, and playing games, while concerned adults would be engaged in impromptu discussions of Bible topics. The conviction among some adults themselves and those who are supposed to be responsible for them, are that they have grown up; their time has passed; it is time for children and youth (Hestenes, Howard, and Palmer, 1991:81-82).

It is my thesis that these three age groups should receive equal attention with regard to the educational ministry. Each group should be approached differently from others, bearing in mind that each of them learns differently from the other two. For example, children learn more effectively through play and concrete objects; young people can learn abstractly for as long as what they are learning is relevant to them; where they were involved in the planning of their curriculum, and when their learning has to do with the welfare of others. Adults, on the other hand, learn better when they participate in the lesson, when they form part of the planning process and when their experiences are brought to bear upon what they learn (*ibid*, 89; Campbell, 1991:255-257).

Taking learners seriously therefore, means that children, youth, and adults are equally respected as learners; that they receive equal attention in the teaching and learning situation, and that each of them is approached in a way unique to themselves only. Whatever is to be taught should be adapted to the level of each age group. Underlining the imperative to teach children, youth, and adults, Esther L. Megill (1976:3) put it thus, *“There must be education of children, youth, and adults, whether new converts or second or third generation Christians, in the fundamentals of Christian faith. If the church is not only to grow in numbers, but lead its members to commitment to the Christian faith in all of life, there must be continuous education”* The three categories of learners receive special attention below.

8.4.1 Taking children seriously in Christian education

It may sound obvious that children have to be taught in the Sunday school class; however, it may not be as real as it sounds in a practical situation. It is therefore necessary that the matter of teaching children receive more emphasis, so that deliberate efforts are harnessed and put to operation for their education. It may be that some have to start afresh in taking the teaching of children seriously. Others may only need to revive what they used to do in the past, while still others may have to be even the more serious about what they are already doing for children in their churches.

8.4.1.1 The importance of taking children seriously in Christian education

Teaching children is a Biblical imperative and challenge that the Baptist Convention, along with all other denominations and churches, will have to face up squarely if their educational programmes are to be effective. Some factors underscore this matter vividly.

First, to teach children is a Biblical imperative that poses a challenge for action on the part of the church. The imperative is to be obeyed without question by those who love their Lord and Saviour. Jesus said, *“If you love me, keep my commandments”* (John

14:15). In the same vein, James (1:22) urged that we should be doers of the Word and not hearers only.

In the Old Testament children were to be taught by their parents, especially their fathers (Deut. 6:6, 7). In the New Testament Jesus and apostles have much to say about the importance of teaching children. To the apostles who were intolerant to children Jesus said they should not bar children from coming to Him as the Kingdom of God belonged to such as themselves (Matt. 19:14). What we notice about Jesus and children is that children were very special to Him. Valerie Wilson (1991:221) observed, “...*the Lord Jesus elevated early childhood to a position of respect and importance. Those who are concerned about the educational ministry of the church must not develop the attitude of the disciples, namely, that ministry is only for adults.*”

Responding to the bewildered and convicted crowds on the day of Pentecost, Peter indicated that they should repent and have their sins forgiven, and be baptized; they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. He went on to say the promise belonged to them and their children and to all those whom God would call to repentance (Acts 2:37-39). In this way Peter underlined for all time, the place of children in God’s plan of salvation; making the educational ministry of children an imperative exercise. Paul urged parents at Ephesus not to provoke children but rather to bring them up in the way of the Lord (Eph. 6:4). By implication Christian education for children must begin at home and proceed to the church.

The Biblical imperative to teach children is summed in the words of Valerie Wilson, (1991:221-222) “*A church that wants to be New Testament in every sense of the word must care about and provide for even the youngest individuals who come through its doors.*”

Second, from childhood children are usually empty, ready for anything that comes from their parents or the one with whom they come into contact often. The first childhood

encounters are very important for later years of adolescence and adulthood. Franklyn Wise (1978:216) argued that *“Preschool years hold special challenges for Christian educators because they introduce the child to his first non family contacts; for the first time, he is confronted with strange faces, an unfamiliar environment, and other children. The emotional quality of these early experiences leaves its imprint upon his attitudes”* Such experiences will account for their positive or negative attitude in later years. Whatever they will become in later life, will largely be the product of early childhood experiences. As a consequence, the teacher who deals with children must be careful what he plants in those children from their early age.

Third, the move of present governments (America, Britain, South Africa, to quote a few examples) to remove religious education from the school curriculum necessitates that the church takes seriously its responsibility of teaching children God’s Word. If the church does not, who will? Moreover, with the passing on of the older generation, it is expected that the remaining generation will hold on to the fundamentals of Christian faith, so that they in turn pass it on to successive generations. Unless children are given a good background now; unless they are taken seriously; they will not be able to wield any significant spiritual influence to those who will come after them or to their counter parts.

The challenge of taking children seriously in the educational ministry of the church cannot be expressed in better words. It behoves churches through their teachers to rise up and put action to the word.

8.4.1.2 The objectives in teaching children?

Whichever those objectives may be, they should always be consistent with the general objectives of Christian education. In turn, Christian education objectives must be in line with those of the church. F. Franklyn Wise (1978:217, 242-244) ventures a few objectives for teaching children, that they should be taught foundational truths about



God, Jesus, the Bible and the church, relating these to things or persons children are familiar with. Further, the objectives of teaching children should be to enlarge Christian attitudes and knowledge, to increase knowledge of the Bible, to broaden perspectives of Christian truth, introduce the missionary enterprise, give opportunities to accept Christ as Saviour, involve them in the life of the church and provide opportunities to serve God and others. I cannot agree with Franklyn more on these objectives for teaching children. All these will be done with a view to preparing children for salvation and for later adulthood years.

8.4.1.3 The process and the interventions in the Christian education of children

What is being raised here is the manner in which children should be taught, and the occasion where they can be instructed. Process has to do with the teaching event and all it involves. Interventions are occasions for the doing of Christian education, e.g. Sunday school may be called a Christian education intervention because here Christian education finds fulfillment; teaching takes place.

Children learn best when the lessons are couched in concrete terms. Their mental capacity is such that they may not learn abstractly. Care should be taken therefore that concrete objects and pictures be used to drive truth home in children. Children learn better where they get an opportunity of being involved themselves. Everything should be done to ensure that methods used involve them in one way or the other. Among others the story telling and dramatization methods, games, song, and poetry, may be appropriate modes of teaching children.

Further, children are usually dependent on their teachers for their needs. Teachers should be sensitive to such needs (Wise, 1978:217). Since children cannot concentrate for too long, it is advisable that teachers introduce a variety of programmes so as to sustain their attention (Wilson, 1991: 231). Those who teach children must ensure that they model Biblical truths that they seek to teach. Children learn more by example than

by what they hear. They are prone to imitating their teachers. Teachers should perform their task with love and skill. They should maintain a spirit of calmness, coolness and collectedness, taking care not to harm children with their attitude or words.

Children are unique. Each child differs from another. As a result, they should not be expected to perform on the same level. Moreover, teachers should be aware of the average expectations of different age groups. Robert E Clark (1991:244) put it thus, *“We should be aware of how elementary-age children think and learn...children are not able to think abstractly until they reach the age of eleven or perhaps not until age fourteen. They think in literal, concrete, and specific terms but are beginning to relate to symbols, generalizations, and abstractions.”*

Teachers of children should work hand in glove with children’s parents. Parents wield more influence on their children than any other person. They should visit the homes of children occasionally. The church in turn, should deliberately offer support to parents, guiding them in how to teach and raise their children in the Lord. Robert Osmer (1990:216) tasks the church with this responsibility of working with the family, *“One of the most important tasks facing congregational education today is gaining a deeper understanding of the various ways that the congregation and the family can attend to the formation of the affectional dimensions of the religious life, focusing on the heart as well as the mind.”*

In the main, there are two prominent interventions for the Christian education of children, namely the home and the Sunday school. In other quarters children’s ministry is becoming a popular trend to follow. What happens is that in such cases, children have their own pastor and they run their own Sunday programme, over and above the usual Sunday school routine. Children’s ministry means that special care will be given to children as though they were a church in their own right. It is the recommendable option to pursue, so that children are not only catered for during the Sunday school period.



It is a given that children, like the rest of the church members, learn indirectly from all activities performed at church in the name of Christian ministry. However, the home and the Sunday school are deliberate efforts of parents and the church to reach children with the Word of God. It is not the purpose of this research to engage the home; it is only mentioned to the extent that it goes hand in hand with the church efforts. The church cannot nurture the child alone; parents also have to be involved. As a matter of fact, parents have to set the pace for how and what the child should learn by the active role they play in the teaching of the child as espoused in Scriptures. The church should go out of its way to help parents fulfill their God given task of nurturing their children. It is for this reason that teachers must work hand in hand with parents in this regard.

Sunday school is the age long traditional intervention for the educational ministry of the church. It may not have been decreed by Scriptures but it has played such an important role over the years, that it does not seem to have a good replacement at all, at least not anytime now. Its prominence as an intervention for Christian education in a church context, is underscored first by having passed the test of time. Ever since Robert Rykes founded it in 1786 in Gloucester, England, it has spread like wild fire, and to date it remains the most effective way of teaching families (especially children) in the church. Further, much of the Christian education literature has been written with Sunday school in mind. Its importance cannot be overemphasized.

In *New Life for your Sunday School*, Iris Cully (1976:15) contends that “*Sunday school is the only way to reach children whose parents are not themselves interested in church, but who want some religious education for their children*”. Findley Edge (1956:vii) affirms that, “*The Sunday school has become an important and integral part of the life of our churches. It is one of the most powerful forces for good in modern society. In churches of various sizes and types all over the land, teachers lead children, young people, and adults in a study of the Bible, seeking together to understand its meaning and significance for Christian living.*” As it appears, Sunday school is still the best intervention for Christian education of the whole family. Churches and the Convention

will do well to take advantage of Sunday school and teach their children Bible truths that will help them through life.

8.4.2 Youth must be taken seriously in Christian education

Any Christian education that seeks to wield effectiveness in its exercise, should take young people seriously as well. It has to be understood that young people are part of the church and are therefore fellow learners along with children and adults. The situation is that while the Baptist Convention and other denominations have done something about their youth, there has not been that much of effectiveness in other quarters. One notices the discrepancy in the way in which youth live today. There exists a temptation to ignore youth in the name of human rights or the youth themselves are rebellious to gospel truth in the face of worldly pleasure (Eccl. 11:9ff). I am personally not convinced that the Convention churches and other denominations have done or are doing enough in the area of youth spiritual development. Some of the questions young people ask on Television say much about the emptiness they bring along from churches. Granted that some do not go to church at all.

Another instance is the way in which many churches are taking a while to familiarize themselves with youth and their problems, and to put a social action programme in place for youth with HIV/AIDS. The government is calling on the church to be involved and to help by whatever means available. It does not look like the church is responding quickly enough. That says a lot about the nature of youth programmes one can expect in churches. What remains is that a huge challenge hovers over the Church of Jesus Christ with regard to youth. They are just as important as children and adults and therefore need to be regarded highly. Such a move will help in enhancing a successful Christian education programme.



One thing is sure, youth ministry is important for the success of church education. To minister to youth, their characteristics must be known. Moreover, in dealing with youth, the Convention churches and the Church as a whole must take note of some hints. Further, not everyone can work with youth; certain qualities are necessary. The Church should take advantage of existing Christian education interventions for young people.

8.4.2.1 The importance of youth ministry

Youth ministry is important as a strategic factor towards effectiveness in Christian education because of some reasons. First, young people are part of the church. The Bible abounds with references to youth and how they should be taught. For example, they are to remember their Creator in the days of their youth (Eccl. 12:1). They are to respect parents and elders for it the will of God (Exod. 20:12; Eph. 6:3). Young people are to be brought up in the way of the Lord and not be provoked (Eph. 6:4). The book of Proverbs abounds with instruction to youth. Therein they are urged to take advices from adults; to be wise and to fear evil, and a lot more other issues pertaining to good living. Kenneth Gangel (1968:31) has pointed out that *“Biblical theology is the basis on which all evangelical youth work must be founded. The written Word of God is the authority for our educational work with the young people.”*

Second, as much as youth are part of the church today, they will still be members in adulthood. It is only fitting that they be prepared for ministry now and for adulthood years. During the adulthood years they will be expected to take full responsibility for the church ministry in general. They will have youth and children to look after and to instruct in good Christian living. With good preparation during their youth years, they

will be better positioned to wield effective and high quality ministry for youth in their adulthood life.

Third, questions youth ask about themselves and about the reality surrounding them, call for special educational attention. The dilemma they face is shown by the questions they ask about themselves and the world. In the main, they struggle with questions of identity, namely, Who am I? Why am I here? What should I be doing with my life? (Wise, 1978:263-266). Their mood is mainly that of seeking, searching and probing. What they had previously accepted as obvious from parents, they now bring to questioning; it must make sense to them as youth.

The teenagers especially, face more destiny dictating choices, and pose more critical challenges for the church. Teen years are years of spiritual and moral decisions (ibid, 263). Robert Browning (1966:187) made the observation that *“Youth in every socio-economic situation, are much more serious about their quest for a faith than we may have assumed.”* The church should take advantage of this situation, taking as a point of departure, the questions they ask and respond to them from both the Scriptures and daily experiences. It is for this reason that Christian education among youth also has to be effective, being sensitive to where youth are in their spiritual, emotional, social, physical, and mental development.

8.4.2.2 Characteristics of young people

Dealing with youth demands that we know some of their characteristics as well. Some characteristics have already been mentioned above. It is essential however, that other characteristics be touched upon, so as to further underscore the importance of ministry

among them and to know how to help them. Warren Benson (1968:10-11) argues that youth are concerned about “...*the existential now. They are not concerned about the past and its solutions. The future grows more remote and uncertain. What matters is the existential now; pleasure seeking today and a rush into meaninglessness. They do not care about consequences of what they do today. They live in an existential world.*” Youth workers will have to bear this characteristic in mind as they seek to wield an effective ministry among youth.

Youth like to minister to others. They enjoy a life and work of service. Robert Crandall (1968:334-338) describes youth craving for service in a much more detailed manner. He contends that youth basic needs in relation to service, are that they need a sense of purpose; something that will demand their fullest effort. They need a sense of participation; they do not want to be spectators who do not have anything to do in church. Youth need practice so they can engage in service on their own. They need to be praised. They would like to be recognized when they have achieved something. Unless the church does something about youth service both in the church and in the community, they run the risk of losing them.

In their quest to be recognized and accepted by their own peers, youth tend to fall into many traps. Some of the things they do are driven by the desire to be and feel accepted. It is against this background that the church has to help youth find, appreciate, accept and live with themselves. They have to be reminded that God made each one of them in His own image; thus they should be happy about who they are; not seeking to be someone else.



8.4.2.3 The church ministering to youth

In light of what has been said under the importance of youth ministry and the characteristics of youth above, a way forward has to be forged for addressing youth concerns. The church through its youth workers, will so minister to the youth that they will meet the needs outlined so far. By implication the church has to be geared for the kind of ministry among youth, which will be appropriate, relevant, and effective. A few things need to be said about how the church can minister to its youth. However, that will have to be preceded by the goal of youth ministry.

In the whole of the youth ministry, an overriding goal is needed to underpin that ministry. Browning (1966:182) sketches out what the goal of youth work should be in the following words, *“The goal of our work with youth is to nurture them in Christian community so they will hear the gospel experience its meaning, become aware of God’s love in their lives and respond in faith and love. This objective is to be reached by helping them ‘explore the whole field of relationships’ they are expressing as adolescents ‘in the light of the gospel,’ discover, personally appropriate, and assume responsibility for the meanings and values which become clear to them as they identify themselves with the purpose and mission of the church in the world.”*

William R. Goetz (1968:164) sums it up thus, *“The basic function of the adult worker with youth is to guide toward spiritual maturity those youth entrusted to his care....Spiritual maturity involves not only knowing Christ conceptually but also growing daily in Him through His Word and prayer, and being equipped to render effective service in the will of God.* In short, the goal of youth ministry is to lead youth to become Christians, to nurture them in the faith and to acquaint them with service for



God in the church and in the community. The purpose is that in the final analysis they should take their rightful places in the church and the community around them.

As the church through its youth workers braces itself to minister to youth, it will do well to heed the tips given by Pamela T. and Stanton D. Campbell about Junior and Senior Highers, that those who minister to youth should “ *understand teenagers’ characteristics, needs, and life transitions. They should keep their teaching fresh and contemporary, familiarize themselves with the world in which teenagers live. Further, they must offer a personal relationship of acceptance, forgiveness, and unconditional love. They should develop a comfortable style of leadership and teaching that is enthusiastically accepted by their particular students...They must set measurable goals and be thankful for small victories*” (Campbell, 1991: 249).

Further, (ibid, 255-257) for ministering to youth, leaders must develop their own style, regarding themselves as experts in their own right. They should involve youth in the planning of the curriculum so they will participate with enthusiasm, knowing that they have been part of the planning process. Youth leaders must not be afraid of failure; it will lead them on to higher levels of performance. Young people also, must be allowed (but not be encouraged) to fail. They should be reminded that failure helps them to better sharpen themselves for other encounters. When they do come back after failure, they should be welcomed back to the fold, without any hurting remarks.

Those who are charged with youth work must ensure that they make time for devotions, so they can be spiritually prepared to minister to youth in their spiritual needs. They should not be afraid to try old tactics or teach old doctrine. Some of the old staff is still



needed today for young people. Their old questions still stand and need appropriate answers. In the same vein, they should not be scared of trying new ways. It is in trying new ways that new ideas will come about and creativity will be nourished. New ways also enhance variety, a feature that is so important for youth programmes.

The adult youth workers must work hand in glove with parents as they nurture youth for growth and involvement in God's mission. Moreover, they should serve as guide and counselor, allowing the Holy Spirit to work things through them. They must serve as watchmen and watchwomen, warning youth of danger (Ezek. 33:7-9) and exercise strict discipline among youth, so they learn to take God seriously.

In ministering to young people, youth workers should seek to answer questions that young people ask about God, creation, death and after life, just to name a few. Unless some of these questions are answered it will not be easy to reach youth. Theology does have answers to these questions; youth workers will do well to take advantage of these questions and answer them from theology. In this way they will be able to reach youth with other gospel truths.

Youth workers must provide opportunities for young people to be engaged in some project as a way of service to God, the church and the community. Young people like being involved in some way. Whatever young people do should be regarded as part of the church's total ministry; they should not do anything in isolation from the church. Jenkins (in Crandall, 1968:338) advises that, "*...their service activities should always be seen as an important part of the church's ministry.*" Recreational facilities and the

resultant recreational programmes should also be brought to bear upon youth work. This will make up for a relevant youth programme.¹³⁵

8.4.2.4 Christian education interventions among youth

The last tenet to deal with about youth work, as a way of enhancing effectiveness in our Christian education, is the Christian education interventions within the youth ministry. I am referring to occasions where Christian education can find fulfillment within the context of youth. Several of these occasions can be mentioned, namely the membership class, Sunday school, mid-week or weekend youth services, special youth projects, youth week, and personal evangelism training. These are some of the interventions within the youth ministry that provide for the educational ministry of the church among young people. It may not be possible to do justice to all these interventions, however, somehow, they should each be tried, and suitable ones pursued.

By way of conclusion, youth ministry is a very important aspect of the church's entire ministry. It has to be engaged in all seriousness by all God loving believers so as to enhance effective Christian education. Everything possible should be done to start youth ministries where there are none; to revive those that had already died out, and to revamp those that already exist. In so doing, the Baptist Convention churches and all other concerned churches and institutions will be well on their way to high quality educational ministry.

¹³⁵ For qualities of good leadership turn to page 313.

8.4.3 Adults in the Christian education programme of the church

The third level of learners in the Christian education programme of the church is that of adults. Taking them seriously as a component of learners in the church will enhance the effectiveness of our Christian education programme. Adults need as much attention as children and youth. It can never be said Christian education of any given church is effective if it ignores one of these three levels of learners.

In the past Sunday school¹³⁶ was confined to children only; largely because this was how it came to be understood. For a long time adult education in the church was out of the picture. Ruth C. Hangcock (1970:143) reminds us, "*Sunday school was not always for adults! During the first 110 years of its history this agency limited itself to the instruction of children and youth. In 1890 and 1893 respectively the Baraca and Philathea Bible class organizations began to promote the establishment of men's and women's Bible classes, first in Syracuse, New York, and then more broadly.*"¹³⁷ As can be noticed, the impression carried by many adults was that Sunday school was meant for children and youth only, until adult classes began as described above.

In the Baptist Convention of South Africa and the Baptist Union of South Africa, the name Sunday school was changed twice, in an attempt to attract adults. It was first changed to the '*All Age Sunday School.*' (TSABHB, 1962:75; 1965:81). Subsequently it came to be known as '*Family Bible Hour*' (ibid, 1971) so that all members of the family could attend. To a great extent this move did bear fruit, though not of a lasting nature. In Nigeria, Baptists still call it the Sunday school and it is well attended by children, youth,

¹³⁶ Sunday school is not the only educational intervention for adults. It is cited here because it is the most important Christian education intervention, since it was founded in 1786, in England. All other modes of Christian education in the modern times followed from this one. To date Sunday school is still the most important occasion for Christian educational ministry.

¹³⁷ The Baraca and Philathea Bible class was quoted from Marshall A. Hudson, 'The Philathea Bible Class'

and adults. In America and elsewhere the name Sunday school still holds sway and adults are in attendance, though not to a satisfactory degree.

There are reasons why adults do not attend Sunday school. First because many consider themselves as unsuited for it. They still think it is meant for children and youth, who still need to grow and assume adult responsibility in due course. They maintain it is rather too late for them to learn; they should have learnt in their childhood and youth years, so they could practise whatever they had learnt in their adulthood years (Hestenes, Howard, and Palmer, 1991:81-82). Another reason for poor attendance of Sunday school by adults is the fact that some feel the Christian education programme of their congregations leaves much to be desired. David Ng (1990: 88) observed, "*In many cases, people have correctly judged that their congregation's educational programs are not worth attending.*" This could be due to being poor in administration, organization and teaching.

After everything has been said and done, adults still need special attention in Christian education; regardless of whether it will be in a Sunday school, marriage and family life, or men and women's ministries contexts. Baptist Convention churches as well as other denominational groups must do something about adult education in their ranks. The tendency of adults not attending Bible study lessons has led to many of them remaining ignorant, long after they have been born again. They cannot assume leadership of the church all on their own; they still need the help of the pastor to interpret Scriptures. Such a situation needs a drastic turn around (Hebrews 5:12-14).

In an attempt to enhance adult education in our churches, it is important that we understand what kind of people adults are. We need to know why it is important that adults be taught in their churches; how to be successful in adult Christian education and what forums provide for the doing of Christian education among adults.

8.4.3.1 Understanding adults

Adults are classified into three categories, namely, young adults (21-40), middle adults (41-55), and older or senior adults (56 onwards)¹³⁸. Understanding adults will assist in designing curricula for them and teaching them in a way that they will be in a position to learn.

Adults bring along a wealth of experience with them to the teaching forum. They learn better if what they are learning can be related to part of their experience. They are more concerned about what works for them in their situation; what they can learn to resolve existing problems. Wickett (1991:46) coined the concept *andragogy*, which means that adults learn more from their own background experience, so that in teaching them, this background experience must be borne in mind and used as much as possible. He maintains that *“The principles upon which the andragogical model is based stress the amount of prior experience adults bring to the learning situation, the mature self-concept of orientation to learning which looks to immediate application and problem centeredness.”* This briefly explains what andragogy is all about. It emphasizes that the experience of adults must be brought to bear upon their learning situation at all times. It will facilitate their quick and enthusiastic learning.

¹³⁸ The question of exact age demarcation between categories is not so rigid. It is fluid as it differs from author to author and from church to church. Let it suffice to say that there are three age groups in our churches.

Young adults are usually found in universities and tertiary institutions. They have different concerns. Some are concerned with social life in the campus while others are career oriented. Usually young adults are non-conformists, rebellious and critical of authority and the status quo. They differ in religion, sexual orientation and companionship (Anderson, 1970:37-38). They are aware that adults have not solved the problems of their world, though they spoke and acted (ibid, 39). Certain things are still outstanding. Young adults are usually in search for meaning in life; and for friends. In order to minister to them, the church must view them as liberated, skeptical and searching (ibid, 38). They are liberated from home, school, college, etc. They want to be relevant in all they do. They want to do something.

In order to effectively minister to young adults, the church must seek to understand their world. Their needs must be ministered to. An atmosphere should be created where they will make friends easily, as they like making friends. Moreover, they should be allowed to come up with their own topics for discussion, become part of the curriculum formulation team, be allowed to lead their own age group and to take initiative. They should be made to be involved beyond the walls of the church. What should however be borne in mind is that essentials of Christianity may not be compromised when dealing with young adults. Briefly, the church must take them seriously, allow them to be themselves and to lead and take initiative, and involve them in the activities and mission of the church.

Middle aged adults range from 35 –60 or 40 – 65. A whole lot of changes characterize this category. They no longer have as much strength as they use to have; they are prone to illness, they grow sexually weak and want to remain physically capable. For some of

them, children leave home, so they have to learn to live without them. They work to find satisfaction, have to adjust their direction or careers as they may get bored. Some care for their aging parents; they prefer a quieter life. They are interested in service; they want to be involved in committees and boards and volunteer work, as this makes them feel wanted and useful. Emotionally they may be depressed, insecure and feel useless. They are encompassed with self-abasement, especially women (Wright, 1970:48).

With regard to ministering to middle aged adults, the church should take care to teach the Bible creatively and relevantly, allowing for maximum participation and interaction. Guidance and instruction should be provided on potential issues of adult life, e.g., marriage, adolescence, stewardship, leadership, evangelism and other life's techniques. They should be helped to understand how middle-aged adults should adjust in various situations of life, e.g. death, loneliness, discouragement, depression, bitterness, and how God deals with these problems. Let them participate in adult social and recreational activities. (see Anderson, 1970:51-54). The pastor must remember to deal with their individual needs.

The old age category, ranging from 56 or 60 onwards, usually feels neglected and being burdensome to the pastor and the membership as a whole. They are bound to old traditional ways of doing things. They misinterpret the present, saying that people have grown cold in the Lord. They attend church less due to ill health, but they become more concerned with the spiritual things, reading the Bible often, praying, and listening to religious radio programmes. David Moberg (1970:65) has this to say about them, "*The fear that their church is departing from the faith of its founders is common among the aged, for they fail to realize that adjustments in music, modification of worship patterns,*

the use of new Bible translations, changes in the techniques of evangelism, and innovations in lesson plans may be made without departure from the fundamentals of the faith.”

The pastor and the church can minister to the aged by taking advantage of their religious inclination in old age. During this time they are ready for spiritual truths. Moreover, time is very precious to them; every day counts. Such texts as “...*teach us to number our days...*” (Ps. 90:12) are appealing to them and should be used in encouraging them (Moberg, 1970:66). Another way of helping the aged is by attending to their individual needs. The church should stop at nothing to reconcile youth and old age. Special services can be held in honour of the aged with a view to appreciating the work they have done; making them feel they are still wanted. In a Sunday school setting, senior adults should get lessons that are best suited for them.

8.4.3.2 The importance of adult Christian education

Notwithstanding the imperative nature of the Christian education of adults, various other factors characterize the importance of teaching adults in the church. Conventionally, the church is a church of adults. Indeed young people are part of the church, but it cannot be denied that adults are leaders in the church. “*It is adults who shape the world for good or ill, and it is adult Christians who are called to be salt and light in a dying world. It is adults who vote...work...control the governments, schools, corporations, unions, ...decide the church’s priorities and budgets. To teach adults is to be on the firing line of Christian ministry and social change*” (Hestenes, Howard, and Palmer, 1991: 82, 83). The success of the local church hinges upon “...*the degree of effectiveness obtained in educating adults in Christian living and service*” (Sisemore, 1970:9).



It is contended that while Jesus loved children, “... *he did not call children. He called adults...We have no example in the gospels of Jesus teaching children. But we have many stories of Jesus teaching adults*” (Hestenes, Howard, and Palmer, 1991:82). It is for this reason that Roberta feels strongly about adults in the church, that they are the heartbeat of the church (Ibid, 82). Sarah Little (1993:99) underlines the importance of Christian education for adults in this way, “*Unless adults have some clarity about who they are and what they are about, no age group will have educational effectiveness.*” Clearly, adults are a very indispensable component in the church’s ministry. There can never be an effective Christian education if the adults are not catered for.

The responsibility of adults in the church, that is, that of making disciples of all nations and nurturing them in the commands of the Lord necessitates Christian education for them. *Adult Christians are in need of continuing education not merely for the sake of acquiring more information about the faith. They are summoned to be the church among the pressing problems of our day. The aim of adult Christian education is to produce dedicated, capable and active Christian disciples*” (Boettcher, 1975:vi) It is only as adults are taken through Christian education training that they can be effective witnesses for Christ, and make disciples as per the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20).

Gilbert A. Peterson (1984:8) sums up the importance of adult Christian education, “*Although the future of society and the church is with its young, the life of society and the church today, as well as the direction for tomorrow, lies in the hands of today’s adults. We must courageously strive for the upgrading, promotion, and the proper development of the educational programs and opportunities for today’s adult learners.*”

Learning is fun, exciting, and fulfilling.” By all means adult Christian education should be accorded the high esteem it deserves and be embarked upon as a matter of urgency.

Over and above factors cited above, Christian education of adults is important because the Bible demands it for every Christian, young and old, so as to enhance good Christian living (II Tim. 3:16, 17). The problems of life demand that Christians be engaged in some form of Bible study so they may not be tossed to and fro by every passing doctrine, rather, that they may grow to spiritual maturity; to the full stature of Christ (Eph. 4:11-15; I Pet. 2:1-3). It is only as adults study and abide in the Word that they can become true disciples of Christ (John 8:31, 32). It is only as they themselves are disciples indeed that they can make other disciples (John 15:1-17). Adult Christian education is very important and may therefore not be accorded low regard. The Convention and other churches and denominations will do well to embrace adult Christian education; in this way, other components of learners, namely, children and youth, will be well catered for.

8.4.3.3 Successful adult Christian education

Outlining the importance of Christian education for adults does not mean it will necessarily be successful. Other deliberate measures and efforts have to be observed to make up for the successful adult learning programme. Other factors may have been mentioned under *understanding adults*. They may be repeated here for the sake of coherence and emphasis.

It has already been said that adults must be involved in the planning of the curriculum and in the learning event. Along with this factor, their background experience must be

brought to bear upon the lesson in question. The lessons taught should be Biblical but also relevant to their everyday experiences. Adults believe in applying what they have learnt in real life. Ruth C. Haycock (1970:145) gives other suggestions, to the end that *“The teacher must be one who has the respect of the class in Bible knowledge, use of teaching methods, and personal life.”* Further, that adults must be made to assume the class responsibilities, not the teacher alone. For example they must do follow up work of absentees, etc. This involvement will give them fulfillment.

Hestenes (1991:86-89) makes the following additions, namely, that adults should be treated as adults. They should be allowed to think for themselves as such and not be spoonfed beyond limit. They will appreciate being respected for who they are. It will give them a feeling of being in control. Classrooms in which learning takes place must be neat, having no funny smell whatsoever. Their needs should be diagnosed and attended to individually by way of personal interviews. Effective adult Christian education is possible; all that is needed is to observe hints provided and to think through other creative ways of making adults learn quicker.

8.4.3.4 Adult Christian education interventions

There are various ways in which Christian education can find fulfillment among adults. They are, the Sunday school, membership class, men and women’s meetings, marriage and family life seminars, special vacation classes which may be arranged by a local church, the Bible Training Institution of a given denomination or other special come togethers of adults which are geared at addressing a particular problem in the church or the society. Mid-week Bible study groups or home cells can provide another important intervention for Christian education among adults. Care should be taken that suitable

interventions be identified and put in place, for as long as the church does not find itself focusing on Christian education alone at the expense of other church ministries.

I would like to put special emphasis on Sunday school, membership class and marriage and family life seminars as being of such an important nature that they may not be taken as optional; rather, I recommend very strongly that they be taken as compulsory educational interventions for the church, because each one of them has an important role to fulfill. The Sunday school has a long history of bringing the family together just before the church's main service. It has proved to be successful as a Christian education intervention.

The membership class is both a Biblical mandate (Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 2:42) and an important necessity. There is no way that new members can be accepted into the church without some form of initiation. They need to understand the way of salvation, the church, membership, duties of church members, baptism, statement of faith, winning others to Christ, etc.

The marriage and family life seminar is needed for a few reasons. It embraces both youth about to be married as well as those in marriage. Young adults preparing to marry take counseling sessions so as to know what to expect in marriage life. Norman Wright (1968:445) advises that *"Youth, parents, and, in fact, the entire family can be educated by the church for better marriage preparation. A total marriage preparation program must include instruction for parents of children and youth of all ages and direct teaching to the youth within the church."* Married couples come together to be taught and to discuss issues that pertain to their daily marriage experiences. These three

interventions, when catered for to the full, will go a long way in enhancing an effective church educational programme.

As the church begins to take all three learning components (children, youth and adults) seriously, especially the Baptist Convention, giving them due and equal attention, going out of its way to prepare an appropriate Christian education programme and putting it into action, the total teaching ministry is bound to be effective both now and in future.

8.5 CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION¹³⁹

Curriculum development can be used as another strategy for effective Christian education in the Baptist Convention churches and in the Church of Jesus Christ in general, though it may be regarded in other quarters as a routine imperative. The state of affairs in Christian education is such that the designing of a good curriculum for Christian education in many churches can serve as another factor for bringing about effective church educational ministry. The designing of a curriculum is bound to bring about orderliness and direction in a given Christian education programme, hence I refer to it as being another strategy for high quality Christian education, along with all other strategies mentioned so far, and still others to be raised later.

8.5.1 The meaning of a curriculum

A curriculum has to do with “...*all of the lesson materials, resources, and activities that relate to the objectives or the total experience of the learner...*” (Galloway, 1978:161). It “...*may therefore be seen as the planned educational program of the entire church for the development of its constituencies*” (ibid, 162). In a literal sense the word *curriculum*

¹³⁹ The curriculum was alluded to under ‘administration’ above. It is being discussed here in greater detail.

means “*running*” or “*race course*.” Just as a runner in a 200 metres race runs along a designated route toward a finish line, so curriculum includes a defined course of action leading toward a specific goal. Defining it more narrowly, Lin Johnson (1991:495-496) contends that a curriculum is “*the written courses of study generally used for religious education*.”¹⁴⁰ A curriculum is a document that specifies what is to be taught for a given category of people within a specific time frame.

8.5.2 The historical background of curriculum development

In many cases in the past, curricula have been taken up or borrowed from other Christian organizations and churches without taking due consideration of the context in which they would be used. “*In Sunday schools that were adopted from America and Europe, missionaries translated lessons into vernacular without too much concern for a really good adaptation...Some materials for the teaching mission of the church just changed John for Juan and that is that*” (Meyer, 1976:233). To date this is still the practice in many churches and denominations. I am tempted to ascribe this tendency to uncritically take over other curricular partly to the poor training of pastors who were left incapable of drawing up their own curricula.

Another reason may be that some Christian leaders (especially pastors), do not view Christian education in a serious light; it is, as it were, not worth the effort; there are other aspects of ministry to be concerned about. In such cases, where there were cries from the congregants for some educational programme, the pastors have merely borrowed curricula from other churches without pausing to adapt them to their context. In other instances Sunday school enthusiasts have all on their own, gone out of their

¹⁴⁰ I argue that this definition confines curriculum to religious education only; whereas curriculum may be used for secular education as well.

way to seek for curricula that could be used in their churches for Sunday school classes, with no training whatsoever to make necessary adjustments.

The 21st century demands that the Baptist Convention and its counterparts design their own curricula, suited for their goals and contexts, if they are concerned about enhancing effective educational programmes. Admittedly, designing a curriculum is not an easy task, but this may not be taken as an excuse for not formulating relevant and contextual curricula for churches. Taking over other people's curricula may seem helpful at the beginning. Nevertheless, in truth, it betrays the lack of consideration of the situation and context at hand. It shows how circumstances and conditions facing various denominations and churches are being overlooked and how learners themselves are not taken seriously. This observation does not however, condemn the using of borrowed curricula, for as long as such curricula have been tested and adapted to the contextual situation. In other cases a given curriculum may have been found to be suitable for a given context, without having to make any adjustments whatsoever. Such conditions are obviously acceptable.

8.5.3 Designing a good Christian education curriculum

Factors to be borne in mind when designing a curriculum include among others, the objectives to be achieved by following it; the personnel involved, that is, teacher and learner; the scope of what is to be taught or content; process, meaning all elements that facilitate learning, that is method, teacher, learner, etc.; the context or environment where it will be applied, describing the people and their social make up; finally, the timing, when it will be implemented (Schaefer, 1972:25-26). The curriculum must be in line with the mission and vision of the church or denomination, as the case may be.

In drawing up a curriculum, there must be a desire to come up with an exceptionally good document. A good curriculum should be characterized by the following qualities, it must be based on Scriptures as the only rule of faith and living; it must revolve around the person of Christ; it must relate to the pupils for whom it is intended. While indeed the whole Bible is the Word of God, yet not all of it is necessarily suited for every age group; “...*effective curriculum is age-graded. Appropriate truths and stories are selected for each group’s level of understanding and needs, thus facilitating the internalization and practice of God’s Word by students*” (Johnson, 1991:497). A good curriculum is application oriented. It is not just focused on truth and knowledge, but it seeks to change lives.

Michael Lee (1977:125-126), arguing for the same behavioral quality, states that the religious education of the future must involve Christian doctrine that will have a bearing on the whole way of life. He describes Christian doctrine as “...*an operationalized pattern of life. Christian doctrine in its authentic form is Christian living. Christian doctrine is a lifestyle...The emphasis in the religion curriculum of the future, then, must be on lifestyle outcomes, the education of persons who will live a saintly life. The goal of religious instruction in the future ought not so much to be the production of Christian thinkers as of Christian doers...*” The ultimate goal of Christian education is to change lives.

The curriculum must be comprehensive, covering content for new and old believers and specify methods to be used for different age levels, as well as lessons graded according to various age groups. A good curriculum must be theologically sound, being able to

stand the test of theology. It must have educational integrity, meeting the standards of education in general. Objectives set must be attainable (Galloway, 1978:170). Lee (1977:127-128) contends that the starting point for any curriculum should be the learner, not the content. To do so "... is to recognize that the learner learns according to rules of his personality and not according to the logical rules of doctrine or of the bible or of liturgy..." Relating the curriculum to children, Ellis D. Evans in Wilson (1991:231) contends that "*Curriculum planning begins with an analysis of children's developmental characteristics, consistent with their unique needs, interests, and modes of thinking.*"

The curriculum thus espoused must be prepared by learners, teachers and parents who will in turn modify it according to local needs. It may then be referred to curriculum experts so as to make it teachable. It may not be prepared by a group of selected curriculum experts or textbook writers. The whole body of Christ must be involved in the preparation. Moreover, parents back home are faced with the challenge of teaching their children; deliberate efforts should therefore be engaged to design a curriculum for the home, so parents know what they ought to teach their children about. Teaching back home will go a long way in reinforcing the teaching ministry of the church.

New curricula should be drawn because churches need competent instructional material which changes with theology for relevance. Such curricula permit response to ecumenical concerns. Denominational effectiveness is renewed when new curricula come into play. The problem is that old curricula go stale at some point, so that new teaching material becomes an indispensable necessity (Nelson, 1966:157-158).

The designing of new and contextual curricula will go a long in enhancing the effectiveness of Christian education in the Baptist Convention of South Africa and the Church at large.

8.6 THE PROCESS OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Along with all other strategies discussed so far, is the component of process. Process has to do with how teaching unfolds. It refers to everything involved to make learning possible; the dynamics by which learning and teaching experience happens. In other words, it has to do with the how of teaching and learning. Process includes among others the teacher, the learner, and the method of teaching. Process has been referred to in some way under 'Learners in Christian education' especially as it related to developmental stages in learners.

8.6.1 The background of process in Christian education

For a long time process was not a very important issue in Christian education, at least where Christian education was being carried out. What mattered most was the fact that teaching went on. Most volunteer teachers were not necessarily qualified for the work in terms of skills. Meyer (1976:235) reports that in third world countries, due to the unavailability of pastors, laymen and women were used in Sunday schools, though they were insufficiently prepared; they learnt from their mistakes and shortcomings. As indicated much earlier in the dissertation, volunteers came forward and took over the teaching work out of love for God and the learners, especially children. It is only in very few cases that Christian education was taken seriously; where special training was designed for teachers.

David Schuller (1993:3) gives an account of the responses of congregational and national leaders of churches in America, during the occasion of the Search Institute Study. He states that “...when asked to focus on how well the church was teaching and nurturing the faith, leaders from one denomination after another described the same pattern of apathy, disinterest, and irrelevance of many approaches...” Against this background, the problem of process or method of teaching becomes a conventional one.

What is clear therefore, is that, with some pastors having distanced themselves from the teaching ministry in the name of being too busy with other *important* aspects of ministry, as outlined earlier in the dissertation, interested laity had to fend for themselves as they took over the teaching responsibility. One can imagine what a pitiable situation it should have been. In places where pastors were interested and involved, the method followed was the traditional ‘banking model’ of teaching, where the learner knew nothing and the teacher knew everything. The learner opened his ignorant mind passively, while the knowledgeable teacher poured information therein.

8.6.2 The teacher in Christian education

The question of process raises another question. Who should teach? Is it a particular category of people or just the pastor or those who have been employed to teach? The picture painted in Scriptures is that of the whole church being involved in teaching. “We’ve got a mandate to teach. It’s not an option to the church. It’s essential. It’s not nice; it’s necessary. Because the church that ceases to educate, ceases to exist” (Hestenes, Hendricks, and Palmer, 1991:9). James Smart added, “It is the church then, that has the responsibility for education – the whole church, not just a few specially chosen teachers...It is utter folly for church members to think that they have no

responsibility for Christian education because they hold no office in the church school”
(Smart, 1954:113).

The Bible supports the notion that in principle, all Christians are supposed to be teachers. The concept of making disciples with a view that they will also make other disciples is a Scriptural norm. The command to make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:19-20) has great implications for all Christians being involved in winning unbelievers for Christ, building them up in the faith, training them in the ministry and then sending them out to make other disciples. Paul had something to say about this too. He urged Timothy to pass on to others those teachings he heard from him, so they could in turn teach others (II Tim. 2:2).

Then there is the notion of the priesthood of all believers, in which case all Christians are said to be priests, part of their work being to teach the oracles of God (I Sam. 12:23; I Pet. 2:9). The writer to the Hebrews sums it up in his words, *“For indeed, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the ABC of God’s oracles over again; it has come to this, that you need milk instead of solid food...”* (Hebs. 5:12 NEB). What the author implies is that Hebrew Christians should have grown to the point where they could teach one another and teach others. Thus in principle every Christian is called upon to be a teacher.

Notwithstanding the principle outlined above, there is a certain sense in which only certain people can be tasked with the duty of teaching in church. Not all people have a gift of teaching (Eph. 4:11-12; James 3:1). Not all people have the teaching skill, but all should be so grown up in their salvation, that they should be able to guide new

Christians into normal Christian life (Matt. 28:19-20) and be in a position to instruct and admonish one another (Col. 3:16). Only certain people will be assigned with the duty of teaching in the church.

8.6.3 A key to successful teaching

Teaching is said to be effective when it attains to its goals; when it is carried out to its fullest extent and when desired results are achieved at a high degree; something next to perfect. When teaching is effective in this way, it is usually described as being successful teaching. Howard Hendricks (1991:71-72) observed, “*Successful teaching not only opens the mind but also stirs the emotions, fires the imagination, galvanizes the will. If I did not embrace that I would despair, for I live not just to teach truth but to change people.*” This is successful teaching; teaching that yields desired results, namely, the change of mind and character on the part of the learners.

Successful teaching hinges on a few important factors that are interrelated. Among others, the objectives set, the teacher himself, the learner and his circumstances, the approach used, the relevance of content, and the social implications of the Christian education programme.

One of the factors that make up for successful teaching is the setting of objectives. It is very important that objectives of any teaching undertaking are known beforehand. No teaching is effective if it is not aimed at a given target. The aim of Christian education is to impact upon the learner’s life so it changes for the better. James Smart (1954:108) sees the programme of Christian education as aiming at “*leading people from their earliest to their latest years, ever more fully and in the most definite way into the faith*

and life of the church of Jesus Christ.” Randolph Crump Miller has entitled his book *Education for Christian living*, to underscore the purpose of all Christian education. Once this purpose is known, it will guide the teaching enterprise and give it direction.

In the second instance, the teacher himself is the key to successful teaching. *“He is the nerve center of the instructional process because it is the degree of expertness with which he exercises his skills that largely accounts for the extent to which a learner acquires the desired outcome. Since the teacher is so terribly important in determining the quality of religious instruction, it is imperative for the entire people of God, and in particular religious education administration, to make sure that in the future both the teacher and his instructional competence will be of that caliber demanded for service in the pedagogical ministry”* (Lee, 1977:135). Lee continues to say *“Effective Religion teaching comes about basically from the pedagogical competence of the teacher, and not primarily from other factors such as the teacher’s holiness or the Holy Spirit”* (ibid, 131-132). The notion of skills for the teacher is very essential for successful teaching.

It has been said earlier on in this chapter that teachers should model what they teach; their character is very important for the behavioral change of learners. A good character makes up for successful teaching; *“...the character and devotion of the leaders is of even greater importance. All the expert techniques in the world do not channel the Christian faith unless there is the faith in the teacher or leader to be channeled. Unless there is a contagious enthusiasm for Christian living, it will not be attractive to the learners...”* (Miller, 1956:345). Moreover, he must cooperate with the Holy Spirit; he must remember that he teaches in partnership with the Holy Spirit. It is He who makes the learner understand and He changes his character (II Cor. 2:14; 3:18).

Successful teaching issues from taking learner's circumstances seriously. Teaching should take place according to the developmental stages of learners. Children learn differently from adults, while youth learn differently from both. The teacher must be sensitive to where learners are in terms of their emotional, mental, physical and spiritual development. Robert Browning (1976:139) contends that a great deal of research has been done about "*...the structures and capacities of persons in their mental and personality development.*" There is now available, "*...a body of findings about the basic structures of knowledge and how core ideas can be structured for persons at different age levels; a body of research concerning patterns of teaching and learning which are effective at different ages and stages of growth.*" Various educational psychologists have come forward with valuable information in terms of how people learn at various levels of their growth and development. Among others, Jean Piaget, James Fowler, Ericson, Kohlberg, etc. The teacher will do well to use these valuable insights in his teaching.

The approach of the teacher or the method he uses, determines the extent to which teaching will be successful. Whereas in the past, the 'banking model'¹⁴¹ of education was characteristic of all teaching, recently there is a move to equal participation of learner and teacher in the teaching – learning process. This approach has been found to be very successful as it involves the learner in the process of his learning. Paul Freire condemned the banking model in strongest terms, saying it is an oppressive view of education. In his model, "*The experience, knowledge, and skills of all parties to the learning activity are recognized...The key to the situation is mutual recognition and*

¹⁴¹ The banking model advocates that the learner is ignorant and the teacher knows everything. In a teaching situation, the learner merely opens their empty mind and the teacher pours knowledge into the empty mind of the learner. The learner assumes a passive role while the teacher does everything.

respect” (ibid, 139). It is argued here that both teacher and learner are teachers and learners; both approach the process of learning humbly, acknowledging that each comes with his knowledge.

Linda Vogel (1991:65) branded this approach as learning by dialogue; that is, where the two parties, teacher and learner, are involved in an interactional process. She argued, *“Learning by dialogue begins with what people know, rather than what they do not know. It encourages participants to draw on their past experiences and their future hopes as they attempt to share their insights and questions and listen to the insights and questions of others.”* This kind of learning calls for humility, openness to learn, and willingness to be criticized on both teacher and learner, so as to arrive at collective insight. *“This kind of knowledge does not consist of right and wrong answers. Individual contributions are offered, considered, and set aside, or they are affirmed and corrected as the process continues”*(ibid, 65). By implication, the learner will be involved in the planning of his curriculum or teaching material as well. There is no doubt that this approach to teaching and learning will go a long way in enhancing desired behavioral results in the learner.

Still another hint for embracing successful teaching is the relevance of the content or material taught. Adults, for example, learn easier when the lesson concerns something of their immediate everyday experience; when they can apply their learning to a real life situation. Hendricks (1991:72) supports this assertion, *“People want to see themselves: their dreams, their needs, their problems, and their heartbreak. Nothing moves listeners more than their reality, their experience, their emotions, their struggles. They don’t*

*want to hear something brand new as much as something relevant to them. They want to feel, **This teacher understands me.***”

Relevance also means taking into account the perspective of a given people. In the case of blacks, for example, relevance may also imply taking the issue of human rights and racism seriously. It means listening to the call of Black Theology, though not necessarily agreeing with all its ideas. *“Black Theology suggests a felt need to the end that a world view be reconstructed which will take into account the fact that blacks are beautiful, human, free and proud...An educational program with an effective liberation component would increase the church’s outreach and mission”* (Shockley, 1976:86). Relevance also means taking women seriously, so that they are affirmed and encouraged to take their rightful places in the community of faith, as being part of the body of Christ. It means the curriculum must have something to do with being human and equal, where black or white, slave or free, male or female, no longer matter, but all are one in Christ (Gal. 3:28)

Finally, Christian education that does not take into account the social status of learners, will not be successful. Teaching will be effective if it takes seriously the social conditions of those who must be taught, especially unbelievers. *“One cannot teach anything in the area of religion to those who are denied the bodily requirements of food, clothing, and shelter. It is true that Christianity has provided hope for the oppressed throughout the ages, but they need at least a minimum sense of worth even to respond to teaching about God”* (Miller, 1977:44-45). Social ministry is a Biblical mandate; it may not be alluded to only in specialized cases, but it has to be the life of the church. It is

only as the church practices social ministry that its voice can be heard (See James 2:14-17; I John 3:18).

To this end, Marianne Sawicki lashed at the church for failing to live out its faith. She (1991:377) observed, “*Christian educators often are better at retelling the memories of the past than at coming up with evidence that the Lord is still living within us today.*” What she is arguing for here is the kind of Christian education that gives. She is concerned about social action for communities, “*To get the attention of the world, we have to catch it with its shoes off, as it were, in a teachable moment.*” It is as we begin to minister to needs of communities, that Jesus will be seen in us. Johannes Fullenbach (1995:19) adds to Marianne’s observation thus, “*The crisis of religious life is real and cannot be avoided or escaped. If religious communities are to survive, ...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.*” J. van der Ven (in Hennie Pieterse, 1994: 77) contends for the same component of Christian ministry. He expresses the concern that the church has failed in this regard¹⁴². Clearly, as James (2:14-17) has it, “*...faith without works is dead.*”

These and other factors that may have been left out here, will make up for successful teaching and learning in a church situation, hence enhancing the desire to wield effective Christian education in our churches from now onward.¹⁴³

What has been said so far in this section, underlines the important role played by process in the success of Christian education in future. Like all other strategies thus far

¹⁴² See page 25 for a full quotation of J. A. van der Ven.

¹⁴³ Qualities of good leadership are handled on page 313.

described, process is also essential and should be borne in mind and catered for from the outset, if the Convention in particular and the Church in general are concerned about an attractive and balanced church educational programme.

8.7 THE RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING OF LEADERS

The recruitment and training of leaders for Christian education is one of the major strategies in the enhancing of effective Christian education in the Convention and other denominations. It has to be admitted here that the issue of leadership or teachers has been dealt with in many ways under 'process'. The subject of leadership is however, of such a nature that it merits separate attention as a strategy in its own right. Caution will however be exercised in ascertaining that nothing is repeated.

It is generally agreed that the recruitment and training of leadership for the church educational ministry is very important. It cannot be replaced by any other component of ministry whatsoever. The Bible supports the recruitment and training of leadership. Further, the leadership thus espoused must fulfill certain conditions. Such leadership should, however, be equipped for the educational ministry of the church.

8.7.1 The importance of recruiting Christian education leadership

I have indicated under process earlier that the teacher is the key to the success of any teaching and learning experience. This is one way of underscoring the importance of leadership for the educational ministry of the church. The pastor can simply not do the work alone. Christian educators and authors are agreed that the leadership of Christian education in the church is a critical component of the ministry of education. Christian

education stands and falls by its leaders. As a matter of fact, leadership is important in all realms of life; in politics, sports, finances, religion, etc.

Mark H. Senter III (1991:469) had this to say about the importance of Christian education leadership, *“No matter how many other things I do well in my role as minister of Christian education, If I fail to obtain and develop capable teachers and leaders to do the work of discipleship throughout the educational ministry of the church, everything else is window dressing.”* This principle applies to all churches, whether large or small. *“The church that recruits and develops good leadership will have a significant ministry no matter what the other circumstances are in the learning environment.”* (ibid, 420). Mark stressed the importance of leadership recruitment further, *“The challenge of leadership recruitment in the closing years of the 20th century and beyond may be the most significant single factor in determining the direction of age-group discipleship ministries of the church”* (ibid, 478).

Paul E. Loth (1970:179) contended that *“...already overburdened pastors can seldom do all they desire in serving their people. Personal counseling and interchurch involvements further restrict a pastor’s time. If he is to accomplish his task he must multiply his outreach by lay leadership. He must train others to serve.”* Quoting Louis E. LeBar, he argued, *“Before the church can be effective it must have trained teachers and officers to minister the Word of God to those who will respond. This is a realistic approach”* (ibid, 179).

The recruiting and training of leaders is regarded as being the most important thing to do in the church. It has been named *“...the greatest thing in the church”* (Patterson,

1984:138). Patterson went further to say, *“Leadership development, recruitment, and training must be a conscious and concerted effort on the part of the church”* (ibid, 138).

R. C. Miller (1961:19) referred to the 1954 Evanston World Council of Churches Second Assembly report, to the end that *“...in daily living and work, the laity are not mere fragments of the church who are scattered about in the world and who come together again for worship, instruction and specifically Christian fellowship on Sundays. They are the church’s representatives, no matter where they are. It is the laity who draw together work and worship; it is they who bridge the gulf between the church and the world, and it is they who manifest in word and action the Lordship of Christ over the world which claims so much of their time and energy and labour. This, and not some new order or organization, is the ministry of the laity. They are called to it because they belong to the church...”*

J. Ottis Sayes and K. S. Rice (1978:396) stated that *“Christian education is the task of leaders: pastors, associates, Sunday school superintendents, department supervisors, teachers, and class officers. The task is big enough to employ every worker now on the job – and we could minister to twice as many persons in any local church if we could enlist and train new leaders equal to our present force.”* Paul H. Vieth (1957:189) pointed out, *“...the enlistment and training of workers was the church’s number one problem.”* Space cannot allow us to quote all Christian educators on the matter of leadership for the educational ministry of the church. Suffice it to say that, clearly, the question of Christian education leadership is of critical importance and should therefore be embarked upon by all churches so as to reach effectiveness in their educational ventures.

8.7.2 The Biblical basis for the recruitment and training of leaders

It has already been said the pastor cannot do the work of ministry alone. He can only do that which he is capable of doing; the rest should then be left to the church members to do, each on the merit of his gifts. As to who should recruit leaders will depend largely on the church leadership and polity. It may be the pastor, an adhoc committee, or the Board of Christian education. What is important in this recruitment exercise is that certain Biblical and other agreed upon recruitment principles should be brought to bear upon the process of recruitment. Whichever way the recruitment is done, it must be done well.

Indeed, the Bible is in support of the recruitment and training of leadership. Much has been said above under ‘the church should teach,’ underlining the role of all church members as teachers of one another and of unbelievers. The fact that the church must teach, obviously characterizes the involvement of members in the teaching process, for the church is comprised of members, not just the pastor. It has been indicated however, that only certain people can be appointed to teach while other members can be fulfilling other ministries. What is being implied by the notion that the church should teach, is that all members should have been so disciplined, that they would be able to help others or be in a position to make other disciples as well.

In the book of Exodus, the 18th chapter, we read about Jethro, who, on the occasion of his visit to Moses, his son-in-law, warned Moses that he would tire out quickly if he did not appoint other leaders to help in judging the nation of Israel. He (Moses) would deal with issues of major importance, while other leaders dealt with those of minor significance. This is the recruitment of leadership at its best. In the book of Acts, the 6th

chapter, apostles felt they could not serve at tables at the expense of the ministry they were called to fulfill. At the approval of the Church, 7 men were appointed to do administrative work, while apostles devoted themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:1-6). The church of Jesus Christ has been imbued with gifts of the Holy Spirit, so each member can edify and serve the church with his gift in a way that others cannot. (I Cor. 12: 6-11).

Leadership gifts are also among the gifts of the Holy Spirit to His Church. They are intended for the edification of the body of Christ and for the preparing of the saints for ministry (Eph. 4:11-12). Timothy's passing on of what he has heard from Paul to other faithful witnesses who would in turn pass it on to others, underscores the recruitment of leaders in vivid terms. Timothy could not do it alone; he needed the help of other witnesses (leaders) to fulfill the ministry of Christ in the Church (II Tim. 2:2). There is no doubt that the Bible is in support of leadership recruitment and training. There should be no reason why this is not done in churches, especially if a high quality ministry of Christian education is the desired result for the future.

8.7.3 The director of Christian education

The director of Christian education is also known in other quarters as the minister of religious education. This is a specially trained minister who oversees the educational ministry of the church and serves as one of the pastors. He is a supervisor, minister, educator and curriculum planner. In 1930, in the USA, he was defined as *"a technically trained religious educator employed by a local church to have general charge of the educational aspects of its total program and standing beside the minister as a professional member of the church staff"* (Munro in Shelton, 1966:117).

John T. Sisemore (1978:139), of the Southern Baptist Convention, uses the title, *minister of education* for the same vocation and defines him as “...*a person called of God to help a church find and reach persons for Bible study, seek to lead them to Christ, and help them grow and develop in his likeness.*” Further, in his description of the minister of education, Sisemore does allude to the fact that he serves alongside the pastor in that he is also an assistant to the pastor. “*It is not a degrading concept at all to say that the minister of education helps the pastor. He is, in a sense, the pastor’s “right arm”*” (ibid, 140).

The vocation of director of Christian education is through and through American. It is a new 20th century vocation that appeared in 1909 in America, “...*when several larger eastern churches employed directors*” (Shelton, 1966:117). The concept grew with time though it was affected by the depression years of the 1930’s. By 1965 already almost 11,000 people were employed as Christian educators in local churches in America (ibid, 117). Kenneth Gangel (1970:89) highlights the fact that because of “...*the newness of the vocation and, the total lack of training in Christian education on the part of the majority of church membership,*” it was often misunderstood in most local churches.

It may still be said that in the 21st century the vocation of director of Christian education is just as important for the Convention and all Protestants and Catholics, the world over, as it was when it was first introduced. In our day, due to the busy schedule that pastors find themselves in, and owing to the importance of the church’s educational ministry, the appointment of a director of Christian education would be the most appropriate move.



For all I care, the Bible does support the notion of a director of Christian education. The mention of the presence of teachers (and prophets) in the church at Antioch (Acts 13:1), to the exclusion of other church leaders, and the reference to the gift of teaching, alongside the pastoral gift (Eph. 4:11-12), directly or at least indirectly support the matter of director of Christian education. It may also be said that mention of the teachers in the two passages, form the basis for the appointment of a director of Christian education. This is argued on the grounds that for all practical purposes, the pastor himself, is a teacher, (as I have tried to prove earlier on). If teaching is a separate gift from that of a pastor, then surely, the ground has been prepared for the appointment of a director or minister of Christian education. The pastor is a teacher, but the teacher is not necessarily a pastor. At least the teacher can focus on teaching, while the pastor remains the overseer, fulfilling other pastoral duties. This is precisely what directors of Christian education are doing; hence my contention that the position of director of Christian education has Biblical support.

It has to be said though, that not all churches can afford to employ a full time minister in this post due to financial and economic constrains in some countries and individual churches.

In light of circumstances outlined thus far, where some churches may not be able to employ full time Christian educators, I suggest that keen, able and well tested lay leaders who have served as teachers in the local church, be trained to execute this task on a part time basis, working alongside the local church pastor for guidance, leadership, and for doctrinal matters. Such lay leaders should remain fully employed in his secular

work. In my opinion, the same person may be called a director of Christian education, for as long as he will undergo special training for this purpose. Is it not true that the fivefold leadership gifts were given mainly for this purpose of preparing believers for the ministry, one of which is the ministry of Christian education (Eph. 4:11-12)?

I have not doubt in my mind that a move of this nature in churches that are not ready to employ a full time Christian educator, will assist in bringing about a lively, viable and successful Christian education programme. I am also encouraging that other countries, not only America, look into this vocation as a matter of urgency; and that all theological training institutions be tasked with a special curriculum to prepare Christian workers and ministers for this purpose. The local pastor will be relieved in his ministerial duties, though he still stands to be responsible as an overseer, guide and support person.

8.7.4 Qualities for good leaders of Christian education

A leader (teacher) must have been born again. This may sound obvious, however, it is important that it be mentioned to underscore the importance of the position in question, and to lay the foundation on which other qualities will be built. The leader must be spiritually and emotionally matured – not a new convert, lest he be puffed up (I Tim. 3:6) - such maturity will help him in dealing with problems that followers bring along, especially youth. Moreover, he must know and understand the Bible as he will for most of his teaching role, be dealing with Biblical questions. He will be able to handle questions from the perspective of Scriptures (II Tim. 2:15); in this way he will also be able to disciple his followers accordingly (John 8:31, 32). Further he must believe in the Word of God, being firmly established in it. To know the Bible does not necessarily mean he should be a Bible college student, but at least he should be familiar “...with the

truths, doctrines, and precepts of the Bible”(Goetz, 1968:166). He should hold intelligent beliefs, that is, those that are not in error, but are held by the denomination and the Church of Jesus Christ in general as being truth. In other words, he must be theologically sound. *“Every teacher is impressing a theology of some kind on his students, and therefore theological ignorance is inexcusable”* (Miller, 1956:333)

The leader must maintain a balance between communicating (or being in touch) with God and being involved (in touch) with the world. What this implies, is that he must have time to withdraw from people and be in touch with God and then come back to the people to be involved with them (Vogel, 1991:95). It is further envisaged that he leads by example (I Pet. 5:3). Paul exemplified this notion in his challenging words to the Corinthian church, *“Be ye imitators of me as I am of Christ”* (I Cor. 11:1 KJV). Good leaders lead by example, thus making it easy for followers to model their way of life. Another quality that goes with being exemplary is that of producing leaders in those who follow you; it is reproducing oneself in others. This is the aim of discipleship; it is what we have learnt from the Master leader and Teacher, Jesus Himself.

It is required that a leader be strong, understanding, faithful, dependable and spiritual. It has been said of youth that they always need someone to depend on, *“Strong, spiritually healthy youth groups, classes and organizations can be attributed, in large measure, to strong, understanding, and spiritual adult leaders. Experience has shown that the adult leader is the key to success of the youth organization which he guides”* (Goetz, 1968:164). He should have genuine love for those under his care; demonstrating sympathetic understanding for his followers in their various circumstances. By

implication, he must set the pace for a warm, friendly, loving and caring relationship between himself and those he oversees.

While he should take care to remain himself, he should have the quality of being flexible, adapting to various situations as conditions will dictate. To the youth he will be young, to children he will condescend to their level, while to adults he will remain an adult. As Paul has put it, he should become all things to all people (I Cor. 9:19-22), in so doing he will attract many to himself. In the case of youth (as in all cases) he must be tactful and yet firm in discipline, so he will be able help young people to sort out their problems and get back on again. He must be a guide and companion. *“Being a guide and companion is both a gift and responsibility. It requires us to listen to God (through the reading of scripture, prayer, worship, and dialogue with others) and to those who travel with us. It requires us to be willing to reframe questions and to be open when our assumptions about the best way of journeying are challenged”* (Vogel, 1991:118). In the same vein, a conscientious leader will work hand in glove with parents of youth, interpreting parents to youth and youth to parents.

As it relates to his work, he must be a capable leader and hard worker (II Tim 2), equipped with teaching techniques and skills, having a clear insight into the problem of his followers (learners). These qualities have implications on the recruitment of good leaders. They must be recruited prayerfully; nothing should be taken for granted. When Jesus chose His disciples (whom He named apostles) He spent the whole night in prayer to His Father (Luke 6:12, 13). In the same breath, He urged His disciples to pray to the Lord of the harvest to send harvesters (Luke 10:1, 2). Granted that such leaders still

need training, they should however, already manifest basic qualities that befit their caliber.

In *Leadership for Church Education*, K. O. Gangel (1970:162-164) gives a few guidelines as to the recruitment of leaders for Christian education. He argues that leaders should move towards a given goal with their learners; *“Groups want leaders who can lead them to an announced goal.”* The leader must have initiative, being capable of starting new ideas and projects, coming up with ideas which will later emerge as suggestions to his followers. *“A genuine leader is a constant evaluator who keeps in proper perspective the ultimate and immediate goals of the group and the progress which it is making in moving toward those goals.”*

Finally, a mature and good leader will demonstrate a willingness to learn. This includes reading books, attending leadership seminars, taking advices from the church leadership and being open to counsel from those he leads. This calls for the undergoing of continuous training so he can update himself on new methods and approaches to teaching, as well as understanding the Bible better. In this way he will maintain a good standard of performance throughout. Miller (1956:335) advises that, *“Necessary help for teachers and leaders should be provided through a program of supervision, observation, assistant teachers, and conferences. Adequate resource material should be purchased as needed.”*

These are some of the qualities of good leaders that should underpin the recruitment of leaders for Christian education. The list is not necessarily exhaustive, but serves as a

guideline of what should be expected of leadership in the initial stages of recruitment and training.

8.7.5 Equipping leaders for the ministry of Christian education

Recruiting leaders is not complete until such leaders have been properly equipped for the ministry. Sad to say that some leaders were recruited to serve as teachers and leaders, but were never really trained for the ministry. Many have fallen by the wayside, while others are still holding on with the hope that some day they will be trained. Others have gone out of their way, spending their own money to receive special training for their ministries. The church, through its leadership, has a responsibility to equip and train leaders for the educational ministry of the church and for other areas of leadership within the broader church ministry.

We should distinguish between the training and equipping of potential leaders. In the past, training was geared to preparing leaders to fulfill a given task, without really being concerned about their personal spiritual development. Richard Patterson (1991:481) pointed out that *“The development of staff for church ministry as contrasted with the training of staff for church ministry is a fresh concept that deserves considerable attention from church leaders today.”* He argues further that there is a resistance to this training model and a preference of the developing or equipping model of leaders. *“Thus, the development of the church worker for personal ministry in the local church carries much greater scope than simply the training of workers to be able to complete a ministry task, such as a Sunday school teacher”* (ibid, 482).



The church should clothe itself with this mind, as it seeks to prepare leaders for Christian educational ministry. All Scriptural references point to this model of developing the individual believer. *“Equipping is the plan of God for each believer, the primary purpose of Scripture, and the intent of the God-given gifts to believers. Equipping is the primary end of God’s plan for each believer: ‘That the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work’”* (ibid, 483, II Tim. 3:17). The 4th chapter of Paul’s letter to the Ephesians also embraces this notion of developing believers, because here the saints are to be equipped for the ministry so the whole church may reach the adulthood of Christ (Eph. 4:11-15). The idea of training for the sake of the task at hand only, is out of question as it is foreign to the New Testament teaching.

For the purposes of this chapter, equipping believers will mean the development of personal spiritual lives of the leaders and their training for the teaching and soulwinning ministry. Equipping will mean discipling in its totality; that is, winning souls to Christ, building them in the faith, training them to win others and sending them out to win people for Christ. It will also mean training in teaching skills, counseling, community involvement, and in whichever other skill that may be of use to church ministry. The church should use whatever expertise is available to equip potential leaders for Christian education. The implementation of a full discipleship programme is what the church in general and the potential leaders in particular need as the initial way of being equipped.

8.8 IMPLEMENTING AN EFFECTIVE DISCIPLESHIP PROGRAMME

The implementation of an effective discipleship programme in churches and in the Convention is another important milestone en route to an effective Christian education programme. A discipleship programme is the starting point for all Christians and leaders. No single leader can be effective in his leadership if he has not been properly disciplined. In the final analysis all Christian education programmes must begin with discipleship. This is where the Christian journey begins. Jesus also began His journey with the disciples at this point, before He could entrust them with the task of making disciples of all nations. It should come as no surprise therefore to see Jesus commissioning His followers to the whole world, while He returned to glory in heaven to be with His Father (Matt. 28:19-20). He had prepared the apostles to the point where they could assume the ministry responsibility without Him; except for the fact that He was with them in the Holy Spirit. The bottom line is that they were now in a position to make disciples of all nations as He had trained them to do.

A few things need to be explained about the process of discipleship. The meaning of discipleship needs to be unraveled so as to have a better perspective of what it is all about. Something has to be said about the imperative to make disciples. Moreover, a closer look at how Jesus Christ went about the discipleship process will serve a good purpose as the churches brace themselves for effective Christian education.

8.8.1 The meaning of discipleship¹⁴⁴

A disciple is a learner, a pupil, someone who learns from his master. According to II Tim. 2:2, "*The discipling process is one of reproducing in others what the Holy Spirit is*

¹⁴⁴ The meaning of discipleship received attention under chapter 7, on evaluation (see page 230).

developing in a discipler, so that they will reproduce it in a third generation” (Benson, 1968:199). In discipleship, a given believer (discipler) is engaged in a process of reproducing himself in another person (disciple), so the person concerned may become like him without becoming himself. Hendrix and Householder (in Sisemore, 1978:83) define Christian discipleship as “...the Christian’s lifelong commitment to the person, teaching, and Spirit of Jesus Christ. Life under the Lordship of Jesus Christ involves progressive learning, growth in Christlikeness, implementation of biblical truth, and responsibility for sharing the Christian faith.” Warren Benson (1968:199) reminds us, “Making disciples includes both evangelism and edification.”

This was true of Jesus as it was of Paul. Jesus called the 12 disciples and named them apostles because He wanted to build them up spiritually and train them for ministry, after which He would send them off to fulfill that ministry (Mark 1:17; John 20:21). His aim was that they should be like Him in life and ministry. In one of His sermons, He invited those who were weary and heavy laden to come to Him to find rest. He urged that they should learn from Him for His yoke was easy and He was meek and lowly in heart (Matt. 11:28-30). The notion that they learn from Him underscores His discipleship programme; it meant that they should be like Him. There came a time when He sent them out to do what He came to do, going from house to house, preaching about the Kingdom that had come (Matt. 10; Luke 10:1-24); what Bible scholars called ‘Trial ministry.’

8.8.2 The imperative to make disciples

Notwithstanding the fact that discipleship has been cited as another strategy toward effective Christian education, if it is properly adhered to and efficiently carried out, it is

imperative for the church to make disciples. Jesus commanded it (Matt. 28:19-20; John 15). Paul reminded Timothy about it (II Tim. 2:2). It is not an optional extra; it is important; it is necessary. Warren Benson (1968:98) made an observation to the end that *“The grammatical construction leads one to the conclusion that the central goal of the great commission is to make disciples. Going, baptizing, and teaching are contributory means to that end.”* *“Church members are to be disciples or learners and should be ready to perform the personal task of discipling. This task should be a major concern of today’s Christian”* (Sisemore, 1978:83). Josef Sudbrack (1996:23) warns that in the process of making disciples and becoming disciples ourselves, we should depend on the Holy Spirit. He points out that *“...the Spirit’s power is always at work in the call to radical discipleship...Without the Spirit’s charismatic impetus “from below” the church’s life would diminish and much suffering and distress would not be alleviated.”*

The church that takes its Master seriously will obey the command to make disciples (John 14:15). Any church that does not make disciples is guilty of disobedience and rebellion against God. As a way of enhancing effective Christian education, churches have to be more intentional in their discipleship programme. All church Christian education must be preceded by a deliberate and well thought out discipleship programme for new believers. New converts must be taken through lessons that are geared at initiating them into the normal way of living a Christian life. They should then be trained in Personal evangelism and follow-up work; being exposed to real life evangelism encounters for practical training. Then they should be given a chance of reaching out to unbelievers on their own, following up on those who have received the Word, and nurturing them to maturity. All other agreed upon curricula can follow the discipleship cycle.

The question that remains to be answered is about how discipleship as described above differs from equipping for ministry. In my opinion discipleship goes as far as training in personal evangelism and follow-up work, while equipping the saints for ministry embraces discipleship and goes beyond it. Equipping may mean preparing believers in social ministry, counseling, leadership skills, preaching, HIV/AIDS awareness programmes, etc., over and above the discipleship programme. Thus, equipping believers for ministry, in my opinion, is much broader than the discipleship programme that is more confined to Christian life, nurture of new believers and training for evangelism. Discipleship is just a part of the equipping ministry.¹⁴⁵

8.8.3 Learning from Jesus about discipleship

The discipling process of Jesus was underscored by some factors. First, He called the 12, saying He would make them fishers of people (Mark 1:17). Clearly, His mission was to prepare them for ministry in later years. During His stay with them He also called other people to repentance in their presence so they could see how He went about with His ministry. Secondly, He taught them God's Word; that is, what was to become the beginning of the New Testament, as recorded in the four gospels. In so doing He built them up and strengthened their faith. The apostles had their human problems though, but He did not give up on them; He continued to build them up and prayed for them so they could stand (John 17:9-20).

Third, He trained them for the ministry; giving them practical work, so as to affirm them (Matt. 10; Luke 10:1-20). In His training, He reminded them about the kind of people

¹⁴⁵ Admittedly this distinction is open to debate, and rightly so.

they would meet, what they would do, and how they needed to respond to various challenges. For example, He said He was sending them out as sheep among wolves; urging them to be as humble as doves, but to be as wise as serpents (Matt 10:16). Fourth, when He rose from the dead, He sent them off into the world to preach the gospel to all nations; promising them His presence in the Spirit, and signs and wonders that would confirm their message (Mark 16:15-20). He commissioned them to make disciples of all nations, just as He had made them disciples. As proof that they were His disciples indeed, they were to bear fruit, that is, make other disciples as well (Matt. 28:19-20; John 15:8, 16).

Four phases are noticeable in Jesus' discipling process, winning people to Christ or calling men and women to repentance and conversion; building them up and establishing them in Christian faith; training them for the ministry to win others and to nurture them; finally, sending them out to make other disciples themselves, who would in turn, be in a position to make other disciples as well. Paul sums up the process of discipleship in his words to Timothy, "*And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also*" (II Tim. 2:2, KJV). Four generations are involved in this line of passing the message on, namely, Paul, Timothy, reliable witnesses, and other faithful witnesses. Paul was a disciple of Christ. He made another disciple of Christ in Timothy. Then he urged Timothy to do the same. If he did, those he disciplined would disciple others as well.

Such is discipleship; winning, building, training and sending. As may have been noticed, however, in many instances discipleship is spoken of as though it begins with the

nurturing phase. There is obviously nothing wrong with this approach, especially if the people to be discipled are Christians already, as has often been the case.

What needs to be said though, is that discipleship does not end with the discipling of others, so that those who make other disciples are presumed to have arrived already. Paul made it very clear that though Christ had apprehended him, though he might have looked so spiritually powerful, he had not arrived as yet; that is to say, he was not yet perfect. One thing he did was to forget what was behind and press towards the mark of his calling in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:12-15). Those who are discipling others are themselves still on the discipleship journey; they are being made better every day as they work out their salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12). Briefly, discipleship is a lifelong experience that will end at the coming of Jesus Christ.

A well thought out and properly formulated church discipleship programme will go a long way in setting the tone for other church lessons and in enhancing an effective church educational ministry for many more years to come.

8.9 PASTORAL INVOLVEMENT IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Pastoral involvement in Christian education is very critical. In my opinion it ranks first in importance among all other strategies for effective Christian education in future. No Christian education will be effective without the blessing of the pastor. If he does not support Christian education, it will not be easy to win the support of the church for the same. Much of the failure of Christian education programmes in churches can be attributed to lack of pastoral involvement, for whatever reason. In the preceding chapter, I have attempted to cite reasons why many pastors were not and are not involved. I will

not repeat it here. Suffice it to say that as a leader, the pastor will either influence the church for or against Christian education. This makes pastoral involvement in Christian education an indispensable undertaking. Pastoral leadership is the key to the growth and success of church ministry in general and to Christian education in particular.

Pastoral involvement in Christian education in the church warrants further discussion. Its importance cannot be overemphasized. The Bible presumes that the pastor will be involved in the teaching ministry of the church. In his involvement as pastor, he has specific roles to play as against other role players in the teaching enterprise. This involvement in the church's educational ministry has implications for his theological training at seminary.

8.9.1 The importance of pastoral involvement in Christian education

Various Christian education writers are agreed that pastoral involvement in the educational ministry of the church is both imperative and indispensable. Donald M. Geiger (1991:411) asserts that *"...in the majority of our churches, the pastor is the key to developing Christian education ministries that genuinely reach our own people and effectively penetrate our increasingly secular society with the gospel. Even in churches large enough to have a pastor of Christian education, the leadership and support of the senior pastor is essential if Christian education is to enjoy the prominence it deserves. This has always been true, but never more so than now."*

In *Leadership for Church Education*, Kenneth O. Gangel devoted a whole chapter to the role of the pastor in the educational ministry of the church. He stated that the pastor's role is so important that he may as well be ranked as a *"top executive"* (1970:81), like in



large corporations, where those who occupy distinctive positions are referred to as top executives. The pastor may accordingly have little training for the task of Christian education. He may regard some aspects of ministry as being unimportant, however, *“none of these things changes the fact that the pastor is the key to the properly functioning program of church education. Even in churches which require the services of a professional director of Christian education, the success of the ministry still rests upon the shoulders of the pastor.”* He argued further to the end that *“...no amount of ignoring or even pleading of ignorance can change the fact of responsibility and relationship that the pastor has to the program of education in his church”* (ibid, 81, 82).

Esther C. Megill assigns to the pastor even much greater responsibility. Notwithstanding the priesthood of all believers as taught in the Bible, she (1976:152) argues that *“...the clergyman is the overseer, caretaker, guide, and leader...He is also prophet (preacher), an administrator; and last but not least, a teacher, or a teacher of teachers. The pastor may teach a class or lead a discussion group of adults. Confirmation classes are the primary responsibility of the pastor in many churches. He should regard himself as a teacher of various boards and committees, as he guides them in the reason and methods of their work; and finally, the pastor will often take the responsibility of training the teaching staff of the church (Sunday school), if the church is to have an adequate programme of education.”*

Among weaknesses identified by critics with regard to Sunday school work, according to H.W. Byrne, was the one of lack of pastoral involvement. *“Many pastors are too busy for Sunday school. Many pastors do not participate”* (Byrne, 1977:2). Opening the



fourth chapter by William H. Willimon, entitled, *Pastors as teachers*, in the book he edited, *Rethinking Christian education*, David Schuller, 1993:42) observed that “*A major weakness in too many mainline Protestant denominations is the failure of the minister or senior pastor to make education a ministry priority. During the past generation few graduates have left seminary with “teacher” as a major description of their intended ministry. Preacher, counselor, social change agent, church planter, but not teacher.*” Dr. William Willimon (1993:47) contends that “*Pastors must rediscover their role as teachers – as rabbis – if they are to address the concerns raised by the study and embodied in the contemporary church.*”

While working on a book for the Methodists, William and Robert L. Wilson were asked by a certain Bob to include, “*Insist that the clergy teach in the parish*”, as one of the chapters. When he was asked why this was so, he replied, “*I can think of few factors more important for congregational growth, particularly growth that is sustained and solid, than the necessity for the pastor to be the chief educator in the congregation*” (Ibid, 50-51). This fact was subsequently validated by the Search Institute, “*...pastors must perform many important acts of ministry for their congregations, but few are more important than the ministry of teaching*” (ibid, 51).

John T. Sisemore (1978:123) also has something to say about the importance of pastoral involvement in the educational ministry of the church. He pointed out that “*...the churches are haunted by the quality of the educational program; that the pastor ought to think of religious education as the most significant part of the life and work of the church, and that more than anything else, the pastor has to give more time and attention to the educational aspects of the church.*” With these observations in mind, it will not be



possible for any pastoral leader to ignore the fact that he is the chief role player in the Christian education programme of his church. Everything should be done to restore pastors to their rightful place in the church's educational ministry. It is only after this has been done that churches can begin to speak of effective Christian education in their ranks. Be that as it may, such observations will assume the status of opinions, until they can be supported by Scriptures.

8.9.2 The Biblical basis for pastoral involvement in Christian education

For all practical purposes, Scriptures view the pastor as a teacher of his congregation. Being a pastor goes hand in glove with being a teacher. In the Old Testament, the image of a pastor that best portrays him as a teacher is that of *shepherd*. As a shepherd his duty is to protect the flock, to lead and guide the flock to greener pastures. He must feed the flock and feed it well (Psalm 23). The people of God are called the flock. In this context, leading, guiding, feeding and protecting the flock have everything to do with the teaching role of the pastor. He can only lead or guide or feed or protect by teaching, whether that is done on an individual basis or in a Bible study class or behind the pulpit.

In the book of the prophet Ezekiel, (34:1-16), God reproves the shepherds of Israel who ignored the flock and looked after themselves, leaving the flock to be *scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search and seek after them... my flock became a prey...and meat to every beast of the field, because there was not shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not the flock*" (6, 8). That these shepherds played the role of pastor in Israel is evident from the book of the prophet Jeremiah, where God promises Israel, "...I will give you *pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding*"

(3:15). The priests in the Old Testament may well be regarded as pastors of their day by virtue of their work in the temple and their subsistence. Among others, their duty was to teach the flock of God and to pray for them (I Sam. 12:23).

The New Testament most glaringly purports the pastor as the teacher of the flock of God. When Jesus called Peter to pastoral ministry, He commanded him to feed His lambs, to tend His sheep, if he really loved Him (John 21:15-17). In later years Peter regarded himself as a fellow elder along with those elders who were in dispersion. He urged them, *“Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof...when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory...”* (I Pet. 5:2, 4). That Peter and the fellow elders were also shepherds is implied by calling Jesus the chief Shepherd. Elders are pastors or overseers of congregations. In many places where they are mentioned in the New Testament, they are associated with their teaching task (cf, Acts 20:28; I Tim. 5:17).

One of the qualifications of being a pastor is that he be apt to teach (I Tim. 3:2). Timothy himself was reminded that he would be a good minister if he reminded (taught) the brethren these things. He would demonstrate that he himself was well nourished in the faith and in good doctrine (I Tim. 4:6). *“Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine (teaching)”* (v13). In the second letter to Timothy, Paul wrote, *“...but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach...”* (II Tim.2:24).

I can go on and on, citing instances to prove that pastors are teachers. The Old and New Testaments are very clear on this notion that pastoral ministry goes hand in glove with teaching; to be a pastor is to be a teacher. In the words of Kenneth Gangel (1970:81),



“The pastor as shepherd and teacher is constantly concerned for the nurture of the flock, including both lambs and sheep. The ultimate goal of the true pastor is that people come to a mature relationship with Jesus Christ. This kind implies spiritual growth which, in turn, implies instruction.” William Willimon asserts that according to Mark 6:34-42 and 8:1-21, *“The one who feeds is the one who ought to teach. Altar pulpit and classroom are inextricably linked “ (1993:47).¹⁴⁶*

Clearly, from the Biblical perspective, *“Christian education is the specific domain of the pastor. If the pastor is not apt to teach, he is unqualified for his calling”* (Wolfenbarger, 1978:146). John Sisemore (1978:125) adds, *“To fail to assume the educational role along with the proclamation role is to be unresponsive to the full scope of God’s call. Furthermore, the neglect or disparagement of education is to guarantee an incomplete if not an ineffective ministry and to short change a church in its most basic approach to its God-given task.”*

There is to be no doubt therefore as to the educational implications of pastoral ministry. Teaching is inextricably bound to pastoral ministry; they cannot be separated just as evangelism cannot be separated from an evangelist. Pastors who understand their calling and are set on pleasing their Lord and God, will do everything possible to take the teaching ministry seriously and to be in the forefront of promoting Christian education in their churches and wherever Christian education is offered.

¹⁴⁶ The two chapters of Mark referred to, concern the miracle of the feeding of multitudes by Jesus.

8.9.3 The role of the pastor in the church's educational programme

It has so far been established that the pastor plays a critical role in Christian education; that Christian education is an integral part of pastoral ministry, so that no one may talk about pastorate without alluding to teaching as being a pastoral responsibility. In the same vein, it is appropriate that the role of the pastor in Christian education be broken down into understandable units. Some of the roles may have been referred to in one way or another above.

The pastor is responsible for the formulation of a Christian education mission statement. Geiger (1991:413) pointed out, *"The pastor must lead in establishing a clear, Biblical, focused mission statement from which the Church's objectives and goals derive."* What this implies is that the pastor must be a visionary and a goal setter. Sisemore (1978:128) observed, *"Many churches do not have a formal statement of their educational objective. This absence of objectives may account for the fact that many church members have little or no idea why their church exists or what it should be doing."* It is from this mission statement that objectives for Christian education will derive.

The pastor may not be directly involved with the actual formulation process, but he is the one to ensure that this is done; in the end he is the one to account for the formulation of the statement of purpose and the resultant objectives. Once objectives have been thought through and put down in words, the pastor will ensure that they are upheld at all times. Much has been said earlier about a statement of objectives under 'The Administration of Christian education,' so that any further detail will be uncalled for.

The pastor must “...develop a strong sense of educational commitment” among his members (Sisemore, 1978:129). In other words, he must promote Christian education the best way he knows how. This he can only do if he is committed to the educational ministry of the church. If he regards Christian education as an unnecessary extra, and not as an integral part of being a church, his members will not give any regard to it.

Another role of the pastor is to equip believers for ministry (Eph. 4:11-12). His priority in this regard is first to develop believers spiritually so they grow in knowing and serving Christ better. While he may want to use other Christian experts for other aspects of ministry, e.g., for community involvement, counseling, personal evangelism, leadership, etc, in the final analysis, he is the one responsible for this task and must therefore see to it that it is done. It is advisable though, that he be seen involved in the larger part of the equipping ministry.

Still another role is to teach and preach. Preaching is mentioned here for the sake of striking a balance, so that he is not tempted to do much teaching at the expense of preaching; both are important. The Bible emphasizes that he must teach. Though others may help him in this task, after everything has been said and done, he is the main teacher. Further, he is to work cooperatively with the director of Christian education (whether trained or lay), the Board of Christian education, Christian educators, as well as other church ministry leaders.

His role is that of coordinating the efforts of the church staff, integrating various workers who may have differences, thus serving as a unifying factor (Gangel, 1970:83). He should be seen supporting and inspiring them in every way possible, ensuring that

where necessary, they undergo training for their various tasks. Moreover, he should delegate responsibilities to others while he concerns himself with what he can do best. Admittedly, much can be said about the role of the pastor in Christian education. It will not be possible to say everything at this stage, except to say he is the leader, the pace setter, and the overseer of Christian education. Even in places where there will be a director or minister of Christian education, he still remains the overseeing pastor, though he will obviously delegate most responsibilities to same for purposes of efficiency, coherence, and focus. This pastoral responsibility in Christian education has implications for theological training institutions, be they Bible colleges, institutes or seminaries or universities.

8.9.4 Implications for theological education

The pastoral obligations for Christian education as mapped out so far, will not leave theological training institutions unchallenged. Theological institutions have to admit that in the past, they had little or no room for Christian education in their curricula, partly due to the stigma created by the way Sunday school was founded and run. *“Not only has the history of the Sunday school perpetuated the marginality of Christian education in our churches and in theological education, there is also a general lack of respect within universities for ‘education’”* (Zikmund, 1993: 117).

Another observation about seminaries is that *“Theological education, especially in seminaries rooted in Protestant practice, has a tendency to focus unduly upon intellectual skills to the detriment of spiritual formation”* (ibid, 118). Henri Nouwen and others (in Zikmund, 1978:118) have contended that *“...critical study of the Word will not necessarily help students and future pastors live the Word more fully... If indeed, the*



word we study is the word of life, we cannot study it from a distance. Just as we cannot judge the quality of bread without eating it, so we cannot speak with authority about God's word without letting that word touch our heart, that is the core of our being." What is being argued for here is that theological institutions should not only focus on skills training and intellectual academic discourses, but they should deliberately provide for the spiritual formation of students and pastors that are being prepared for ministry.

Theological seminaries have a challenge to face up to, namely, that of contributing to effective Christian education programmes in churches. This they can do by working hand in glove with the church, listening to the church's problems and designing curricula which will address these problems. In the case of Christian education, seminaries have the task of removing Sunday school from the periphery to the center; that is, stripping Sunday school of the disrespect and low esteem accorded to it in the past, and giving it the respect and place due to it. In a more general sense, theological institutions are faced with the task of taking Christian education seriously; giving it its rightful place in their curriculum, and preparing fully for the educational ministry of the church.

In their interaction with churches, theological institutions should not only listen to what the churches are saying, but they should undertake constant researches on what is going on in churches and their immediate communities; to what extent their preparation of pastors has been effective in enhancing desired Christian education results. August (2000: 1) suggests that "*...the people-centred participatory development approach in theological training will essentially equip the church to be an effective agent or catalyst for social transformation.*" He is opposed to the traditional managerial approach of

training, which is aimed at maintaining the congregational ministry. The church must take “...cognizance of the challenges of global developmental issues in order to understand the environment of its life and witness.” Kritzinger and Kretzchmar, (1999:240) could not have agreed with him more. In their article on *Transforming the undergraduate teaching of theology at the University of South Africa*, they contend that “*The Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies...needs to transform and reposition itself in relation to the fast-changing African context, the new South African Constitution, the Higher Education Act, the economic challenges of globalization, and the dawning of a third millennium*” It is for this reason that seminaries and churches should work together, critiquing each other on occasion, as the case may be. Theological institutions have the advantage of getting best Christian education literature around.

Added to this advantage, lecturers should also go to pains in writing books on researched information, so as to enhance relevance and contextuality. While overseas literature may be good, it is couched in different languages and contexts, which may not always be applicable to other contexts. In short, a fully-fledged Christian education programme should be introduced in theological institutions; not as an optional extra which may be taken or left out at will; rather a compulsory course, along with other theological concentrations. As a matter of fact, Christian education in churches is a matter of must; it is Biblically imperative. The church that does not have Christian education as an integral part of its ministry, is failing in its being church, and consequently incurring judgment for itself. If this is truly the case then seminaries have the task of assisting churches in preparing men and women for the full educational programme of the church. The culture of all trainees should be born in mind when engaging in theological training. Dr. Reg Codrington argues that for a long time, the

approach to College education was pro-English speaking groups, so that their culture and point of view mattered above all others. He is now calling for Bible Colleges to be multicultural in approach.

George Brown Jr., (1997:31) proposes a new model in theological education for pastoral candidates, namely, that candidates for the ordained ministry should be provided “...with a parish-based, in-ministry experience as part of the ministry preparation process.” This model is called ‘Teaching Church Programme.’ *It places candidates in local congregational settings where there is a mutual effort among the candidate, pastoral staff, laypersons, and seminary faculty to equip and prepare the candidate.*” This model has been proposed as an alternative to traditional seminary approach of emphasizing academic subjects and scholarship, thus losing touch with the church. Graduates leave these seminaries unequipped to face contemporary challenges (ibid, 27)

Pastors, should, in turn, do everything in their power to take relevant Christian education courses during their training; they should seek to acquaint themselves with all that which concerns Christian education; attending seminaries and conferences, read literature independently, over and above what is offered at seminary. Pastors who are already in the ministry, should take it upon themselves to *work out their Christian education training with fear and trembling*, learning from others and from books, how best they can make their church educational programmes effective. The late Professor Heyns (1994:163) argued for the pastors acquainting themselves with being both teachers and learners as well, to fit into the new societal approach. Patriarchal leadership must be replaced by a learning role as well.

Seminary and personal efforts of this nature, when engaged diligently and in full awareness of the imperative nature of Christian education for churches, will enhance the effectiveness of our Christian education programmes, a feature so much sought after by the Baptist Convention and the Church of Jesus Christ the world over. Pastors must accept that they are the key to successful Christian education programmes in their churches. Seminaries should take it upon themselves to intentionally design a comprehensive Christian education course to meet the needs of the Church for today and for the future.

8.10 THE EVALUATION OF THE CHRISTIAN EDUCATION PROGRAMME¹⁴⁷

In the last instance evaluation of Christian education, though a component of administration, is so important that like other aforementioned strategies, it warrants special treatment. In some of the instances where Christian education was done, lack of proper evaluation of the total programme might have partly led to poor performance or the ultimate collapse of the programme, as the case might have been. Many articles devoted to the evaluation of Christian education in many books testify to the importance of evaluation for the success of Christian education in churches. What is evaluation anyway? To what extent is evaluation important for Christian education? Is there any Biblical imperative for the evaluation of the educational ministry of the church? What should be the frequency and the manner of evaluation? Answers to these questions will assist in determining the worth of evaluation in an attempt to make the Christian education programme effective.

¹⁴⁷ The subject of evaluation has enjoyed attention already in the first and the seventh chapters. It is merely repeated here as one of the strategies for authentic Christian education.

8.10.1 The meaning of evaluation

Evaluation has been defined earlier in this discourse. It will be defined here for purposes of clearing the way for further discussion. Evaluation “...is a systematic comparison of some aspect of Christian education practice with the standards that should characterize operations in that area, looking toward the identification of points at which improvement, is needed” (Wykoff, 1966:144). “Evaluation is concerned with the scope and quality of the goals, purposes, functions, and programs of the total church educational program and the extent to which needs are being met in keeping with one’s philosophy of church education” (Byrne, 1979:87).

Kenneth O. Gangel (1970:63) defines evaluation as “...the process of getting answers to the question, How are we doing it? ...the evaluation step is a measurement of the success or failure and the degree of success or failure in the achievement of educational objectives. Information gained as a result of evaluation lays the basis for changes in the program which may result in reidentification of needs, reclarification of objectives, and restructuring of forms and methodology.” It can be deduced from the definitions given that evaluation has to do with checking whether objectives set are being met by the educational exercises engaged from time to time; it is the way of determining the extent of success or failure of the church’s educational endeavours; after which remedial measures can then be employed to effect needed change.

8.10.2 The importance of evaluation for Christian education

Evaluation is important for Christian education as it is important for any other undertaking, whether it be business, religious, social, political, etc. Even in sport, clubs have to undergo continuous evaluation of their performance in the field, so they can

work on their weaknesses. In the same manner, the educational ministry of the church ought to be evaluated continually so as to identify shortcomings, and to prescribe the remedy. Howard Hendricks (1991:106) underlined the importance of evaluation in Christian education in his words, *“Teaching without evaluation can erode my effectiveness in many ways. Poor methods become engraved habits. I can assume I am doing better than I really am and become complacent. I can conclude something works when it actually doesn’t. I can lose touch with my audience teaching in a vacuum...without anything to keep me on my toes, I can get sloppy.”*

He pointed out further to say, *“A leader who is vulnerable, realistic, and committed to personal security and strength...in our society, leaders who are open with others gain respect”* (ibid, 106). Thus, when a teacher invites evaluation, he gains respect and support from his audience. He is outwardly inviting them to his team. *“Evaluation has been a critical part of the educational process for many years. It provides the basis for decision making about progress development for new activities and change for existing activities. It is a vital tool for a practicing adult religious educator”* (Wickett, 1991:66). *“This is a task which must be done, and done well, to provide appropriate programming”* (ibid, 66). Harold J. Westing (1991:456) is surprised that *“Some Christians are satisfied simply to be involved in God’s greatest task without ever stopping to consider if they are making the greatest impact possible.”*

Byrne (1979:66) contends that *“The church should feel the importance of evaluation...There is a great need in the church to discover what kind of evaluation can and should be done, to shed light on what aspects need appraisal, and to guide and coordinate the work of evaluation systematically...The function of evaluation... is to*

discover and identify strengths and weaknesses upon which effective changes can be made. The process of evaluation thus contributes a factual basis for cooperatively determining the policies and practices that should be developed and improved or discontinued.”.

Evaluation of Christian education is indeed essential. Any serious minded church will seek to evaluate their teaching programme from time to time to ascertain the meeting of set objectives and to see if any changes in method and approach can be introduced to enhance more effectiveness. Evaluation is aimed at checking the outcome of our ministry efforts. A few things can be known through evaluation. *“We can know if God’s Word is being taught to more people this year than last year. We can find out if our students are living God’s Word more vitally this year because of our teaching ministry. We can know if our teachers are more actively involved with their students this year than last year”* (Westing, 1991:456). No major or minor changes should be introduced in an educational programme before a thorough going evaluation has been conducted to warrant such a change. *“Many tragedies occur in churches and simultaneously in the lives of church goers because changes are made without exploring all the facts in given situations.”* (ibid, 456)

Randolph Miller (1956:360-361) reiterates the purpose of evaluation as seeking to determine *“... whether the major objectives have been translated into concrete ways of behavior for individuals according to their age groups, whether students actually have learned to think and behave as expected, whether one aspect of the curriculum is more effective than another...”* All Christian educators quoted so far, underscore the

importance of evaluating the church's Christian educational programme, in the pursuit of effectiveness.

8.10.3 The Biblical imperative for the evaluation of Christian education

Evaluation of Christian ministry in general is a Biblical imperative. Every phase of our Christian life, whether it be life, relationships or service, stands to be evaluated. The Bible abounds with instances to the need to evaluate Christian life and service. The Psalmist pleaded, "*Search me oh God and know my heart today. See if there be any wickedness in me...*" (Ps. 139:23, 24). This is another way of saying, 'God, evaluate me and tell me what I look like.' (similar inferences found in I Chron. 28:7; Ps. 17:3; 44:21; I Sam. 2:3; Prov. 15:11). In Daniel 5, with the writing on the wall, God had evaluated the leadership of king Belshazzar and found it wanting. The changes thus introduced were the uprooting of his empire by the Medes and Persians.

In the New Testament, those who would like to be pastors are to fulfill certain requirements. The notion that they should not be new converts suggests that they must go through a maturing phase to the point where the church or leaders are satisfied about their lives. This can only be the result of sustained monitoring of the lives of the Christians in question, and the final evaluation that determines whether they have matured in anyway (I Tim. 3:1-7). Towards the end of his life, Paul evaluated his journey, and his findings are summed up in his closing words to Timothy, "*I have fought a good fight; I have run the race; I have kept the faith*" (II Tim. 4:7). He knew that at a certain point in his life, he had to look back and take stock of his own spiritual journey.

Christians are called upon to subject their lives to constant evaluation. Paul urged the Corinthians to examine themselves and see if Christ was in them; whether they were still in the faith. If they were not, they would be rejected (II Cor. 13:5). The probing question of Jesus to His disciples, namely “*Who do people say that I am? ... Who do you say that I am?*” (Matt. 16:16-18), should prompt every Christian to continually subject his life to evaluation by fellow Christians and unbelievers. How can spiritual growth and change for the better come about if there is no evaluation of ones own life?

Shortly before He was handed over to be crucified, Jesus made what came to be known as a priestly prayer, in which He was giving a summarized report of His mission to the world to His Father. Indeed He was praying, but one can read a sense of reporting in His prayer (John 17). For example, He said “*I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do...I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world...*” (John 17:4, 6, KJV). This can only be said by someone who has evaluated himself and came to a conclusion of who he really was.

The accusation by Paul to the end that “*you have been running well, who bewitched you*”¹⁴⁸ (Gal. 3:1-3) or the complement that “*...your faith in Jesus Christ and your love for the saints is spoken of throughout the world*” (Rom. 1:8) is nothing else but an indicator that the lives of Christians are being evaluated, whether directly or indirectly by those who live and interact with them. He is not wise who does not take stock of his Christian walk from time to time, so as to ensure that his life and service are in keeping with the dictates of Scriptures. So is a Christian education programme that is not subjected to constant evaluation.

¹⁴⁸ These are my own words as interpreted from the text in question; granted that some words may be from the text.

8.10.4 The way and the frequency of evaluation

A standard or set of criteria has to be put in place for the evaluation of Christian education in the Convention and in the Protestant and Catholic churches. It should be known beforehand what is going to be evaluated and how that is going to be done. In the event where Christian workers (leaders and teachers) are to be evaluated, it is proper that they know beforehand in which areas they will be evaluated. Evaluating without a set of guidelines to that end will be defeating ones own purposes. *“A standard is a written guide or measure to help maintain excellence in the operation of the Christian education program. It is the worker’s target”* (Westing, 1991:457). In the case of Christian workers, the job description constitutes the standard by which they will be evaluated.

The Christian education programme, the board of Christian education, teachers and learners, the curriculum at hand, the resources and building facilities, the administration of Christian education, etc., should all be evaluated in light of goals and objectives set. Nothing should be evaluated in isolation from the objectives to be achieved and according to a given set of rules. For example, the following questions may be asked, “Was the Christian education programme in line with the total mission and vision of the church? Did the curriculum meet the purpose for which it was intended or should it be changed? Was it flexible enough to be adapted to the situation of learners? Were teachers effective in their teaching effort? Were methods used appropriate? How did they relate to learners? Were there enough resources for use by teachers and learners? How about classrooms and building facilities in general? Did learners change behaviorally as was desired? These, and other like questions, will be of assistance in the enhancing of a good evaluation process.

To make evaluation bearable for teachers, a form should be designed which they or workers will fill in, evaluating themselves first, before they can be evaluated by the board or whoever has been charged with this task. In this way the evaluator's task will be easy as he will refer to the workers' evaluation of themselves. Evaluation may also be done by way of interviewing individuals or groups. A positive spirit should be maintained throughout the interview, so participants can open up and share their strengths and weaknesses freely.

The learners can be given a chance to evaluate the lessons, by filling in specially designed forms that will be easy to complete. They may have to cross the word which best represents their opinion about the lesson in question. Successful evaluation can only come about "*...within the context of a warm, friendly relationship, and the persons being evaluated must perceive the process as enriching their lives...It should be a supportive experience that will help the workers see their strengths and come to appreciate the great things that are being accomplished through their work*" (Westing, 1991: 462)

Evaluation is to be carried out throughout the process of teaching. It is usually conducted during the lesson, at the end of the lesson, weekly, monthly, quarterly, yearly, etc. The frequency may differ from church to church and from denomination to denomination. What is at stake is that evaluation should be continuous and comprehensive. There must be evaluation at the end of a given period so as to see if changes cannot be brought about. Basically, three periods of evaluation are identifiable,

namely, “...*the period when the course is being planned, the period when the course is running, and the period after the course has been completed*” (Wickett, 1991: 68 – 69).

Evaluation should lead to steps towards improvement in areas that warrant such a move. No evaluation programme should be done merely for the sake of doing it. It must have implications for change, in one way or the other. It must determine what course of action to take next as remedy for the existing situation. It must stipulate what is to be improved and what is to be discontinued. “*The full cycle in evaluation and appraisal is the recognition of a problem or need, the examination of the existing situation in order to analyze and describe it accurately, the setting of standards or criteria by which to judge the existing situation, comparison of the existing situation with the standards in order to ascertain points at which the standards are met and points at which they are not met, and the identification of implications for... and corresponding steps toward improvement*” (Wykoff, 1966: 151).

Byrne (1979:66) suggests three steps to go through in evaluation, namely, to examine the situation and get the facts, to pass judgment on them cooperatively, and to make plans for revision. These three steps are based on the premise that “...*evaluation involves making changes.*” Whatever value judgments are made, should be based on concepts, values, standards, and goals accepted. Objectivity should be the order of the day (ibid, 67).

Evaluation therefore is, in my opinion, a strategy for effective Christian education in its own right. It has to be carried out by all those who take their work seriously; doing it as unto the Lord (Eph. 6:7). Evaluation reminds us that we are only human; as such,

vulnerable. We therefore need to look back time and again, to see if we are still on course. Along with all other strategies discussed so far, evaluation of Christian education is a milestone en route to effective Christian education for the Baptist Convention and for all churches and denominations which subscribe to Christian faith.

8.11 CONCLUSION

Much has been said already about strategies for effective Christian education in future, as can be deduced from the substantial amount of Christian education literature in circulation. It was necessary though, within the context of the research in question, to venture into strategies for high quality educational ministry in the churches, especially those of the Baptist Convention of South Africa. Otherwise the research would have been incomplete. Moreover, the strategies or remedial measures thus suggested, are couched within the context of problems as spelt out in the dissertation. If there are problems, then there must be solutions. Admittedly, there may be more other strategies towards the intended goal; these have been given to ensure that basic steps are taken to address the problem at hand. They will serve as a springboard for further discussion.



CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSION

Earlier on, I indicated that several factors prompted the research into Christian education in the churches of the Baptist Convention of South Africa. Among others, the level of Christian education in the Baptist Convention, i.e., the way in which it was done, and the impact made by American churches and seminaries in their approach to Christian education. The aim of the research was to bring to light limitations and strengths in the educational ministry of the Convention churches and thereupon prescribe remedial measures for the way forward. The research was triggered by the desire to see a fully-fledged Christian education programme in Baptist Convention churches, such as the one seen in the Old and New Testaments. Throughout the essay, whatever I said was with a view to meeting this goal. The discourse has spanned eight chapters.

In the first chapter, I have stated the problem at hand, namely that while Convention churches are involved in Christian education in varying degrees, there is a great need to improve on what is being done or to start all over again for those who were not so involved. I have explained the purpose of the research, in light of the problem already stated, and how the research would unfold. In the second chapter I have focused on the methodology I followed in the research discourse as a whole, as well as bringing to light what Christian literature in general has to say about the investigation at hand.

The third chapter was devoted to the origin, growth and spread of the Baptist Convention of South Africa. In the process I zoomed into the Transvaal churches of the Baptist Convention as a point of reference for this research exercise. Admittedly, I have not said as much as needed to be said about Transvaal churches, except to give statistical growth and a few pertinent facts. In the fourth chapter, I dwelt on the meaning and purpose of Christian education as espoused in Scriptures and in Christian education

literature in general. A research of this nature would not be complete without the systematic explanation of what Christian education was really all about.

The fifth chapter dwelt on the historical development of Christian education from the Old Testament, down through the ages, to the Reformation. I have devoted my attention to three areas mainly, the Old and New Testaments, and the Reformation. The aim of this chapter was to give an overview of Christian education through the years, so that whatever is taking place now in Christian education, is in large measure, the product of history. In the process, I have had to trace the origins of the Baptist denomination from the time of the Reformation to the time when the Baptist Convention came into being in 1927.

In the sixth chapter I have related the historical development of Christian education in the Transvaal churches, as well as describing the current situation in respect of Christian education in the same churches, based on the interviews held with church leaders and members, as contrasted to the period of the missionaries from 1927 to 1980. The evaluation of Christian education in the Baptist Convention of South Africa, with special reference to the churches in the Transvaal, followed in the seventh chapter. It is here that some analysis of the facts at hand was engaged; weaknesses and strengths of the educational ministry of the Convention churches were raised and causes thereof identified. The conclusion reached was that something had to be done to remedy the pitiable condition Christian education was in, in the Convention churches; and indeed in the global Church of Jesus Christ as a whole. The evaluation process in the seventh chapter, led to chapter eight, which was concerned with strategies for effective Christian education in future for the Convention churches as well as the Church of Jesus Christ the world over.

The entire research exercise was interesting, challenging, worth a while, and yet not so easy an undertaking. First, the discourse was an interesting exercise in that it brought to light facts that should otherwise have been taken for granted or they should never have

been known at all. What I mean is that as I went through available literature, a great deal of information surfaced, which I should never have known, or even if I did, I should have taken for granted. It was interesting in that it offered an opportunity of conducting interviews with people, and having first hand information about what actually took place in the Convention churches. The interviews in themselves were a fascinating experience. Further, the tracing of the historical development of Christian education was also an exciting feature. The different turns and shapes Christian education took over the years, and how it came to be what it is today all make it an interesting research project.

Second, the research exercise was a challenging experience. What made it challenging was that it took into account what was going on in other parts of the world. It was not confined to the Convention only. The conventional trends in Christian education came to bear upon the evaluation of the educational ministry of the Baptist Convention churches; so that the Convention was evaluated in light of what was going on in other parts of the world. In this case what was needed was a discerning, critical and analytical mind that could assess the facts properly and make appropriate value judgments. It was an effort to move from being subjective to being objective, as the facts unfolded. I do not claim that the evaluation in itself was 100% perfect; surely, there could have been some loopholes or so in the way it was done; but the very fact of it, posed a real challenge.

In the third instance, the research effort was worth a while. Notwithstanding the fact that there may be some scholarly and theological discrepancies in the discourse, I argue that in a general sense, the exercise was worth a while. It sharpened my knowledge and understanding of the global scene in so far as Christian education is concerned. In some indirect and yet significant way, the evaluation was not only focused on Christian education in the Baptist Convention of South Africa, rather, it was global, especially that remedial measures proposed in the preceding chapter, were directed to all Protestant and Catholic denominations the world over. My own view of Christian education in general

will be informed by not only what goes on in the Baptist Convention, but by the conventional and global perspectives of Christian education.

Further, I am persuaded that the definition of Christian education in chapter four, the historical background of same in chapter five, the evaluation in chapter seven and remedial measures in chapter eight will go a long way in being of assistance to budding Christian education programmes and to those church educational programmes which needed revamping. I believe the research will help in ensuring that Christian education is taken seriously as a practical theological discipline. For the Baptist Convention churches in particular, I pray and hope that the research should serve as an eye opener to existing limitations, discrepancies, and inconsistencies in the doing of Christian education, and as a springboard for further church educational discussions and developments.

Finally, interesting, challenging, and worthwhile as the research might have been, it was not so easy an undertaking. Several factors threatened to disturb the integrity of the research discourse, so that if not careful, the findings would easily be branded as biased and unrepresentative of the world of Christian education in general. Among others, subjectivity on my part, lack of Christian education literature in the Baptist Convention and in South Africa; the apparent and consequent domination of American Christian education literature, and the choice of a model for the entire discourse; all posed a threat to the validity of the dissertation as a whole.

The element of subjectivity on my part as a longstanding member, pastor and leader of the Baptist Convention of South Africa posed a serious threat. The background that I bring along from my youth days being a member of the Convention threatened to cloud my judgment of the facts, so that in the back of my mind, there were unverified problems and answers already; there was, as it were, no need for research; after all, having been brought up as a member of the Baptist Convention and having served in pastoral and leadership positions over the years, I have come to know the Convention

denomination very closely. However, the personal interviews with leaders and members of the Convention churches, the South African Baptist Union Handbooks, and Christian education literature in general, kept my subjectivity in check. As a consequence, my reflection of the facts was informed by these three sources, thus ensuring the painting of a balanced and verifiable picture of Christian education in the Baptist Convention of South Africa. Not as though my background of the facts was completely wrong. On the contrary, the interviews and the South African Baptist Union Handbooks partly confirmed my already held viewpoint of the situation at hand.

The second factor that posed a threat to the integrity of the research exercise was the lack of Baptist Convention Christian education literature and the scarcity, if not the unavailability of same in the South African context. To date, there is nothing in terms of Christian education literature in the Baptist Convention; nor is there much of other theological literature unique to the Convention as a predominantly black denomination; except for very few recent publications. For the historical development of Christian education in the Baptist Convention of South Africa, I have depended largely on The South African Baptist Union Handbook. This is not to undermine the information I obtained from the Baptist Union sources, rather, the desire has been that at least the two perspectives, namely, that of the Baptist Convention and the Baptist Union, should have been equally represented in the historical development of the educational ministry of the Convention churches, not just the Baptist Union perspective only, as has been the case. One thing is sure, that the Baptist Union in their reporting, were doing so from their own perspective. They reported the facts as they unfolded among Convention churches from their particular context; so that the likelihood of a bias, may not be denied, especially as the events reported took place during the Apartheid era, in which they were also affected.

I wish that there should have been records based on the Convention perspective so as to maintain the balance of the facts. Be that as it may, I drew comfort from the fact that much of what has been recorded in the Baptist Union Handbooks was confirmed by

black pastors and members who were eyewitnesses of what took place in the Convention over the years. This does not imply that such eye witnessing goes back to the early beginnings of the Baptist Convention of South Africa in 1927, but at least much of what took place recently and was recorded in the Baptist Union Handbook found support from Convention witnesses, thus giving a guarantee that most of the facts which date back to the early beginnings of the Convention, can be true.

Added to the problem of lack of Baptist Convention literature for Christian education, is the pitiable situation of the South African scene, that is, lack of enough (if any at all) literature on Christian or religious education. For all I care, there was not enough literature on Christian education, written by South Africans, which should also have formed the basis of my source reference. Either than a few articles from journals, most of which were devoted to Christian education in the secular school system, there was not much to depend on. Granted that a few South African based dissertations were helpful in the research venture, most of which were geared on catechesis in the Dutch Reformed Church. The larger part of my research discourse has been drawn from American Christian education literature, as will be evident from the bibliography. Very few books were British.

I will not be surprised if one scholar who goes through this research can protest that it is purely American in outlook and content. I can only take little of the blame, as there was not much to refer to in the South African context. This position casts doubts as to the importance and esteem accorded to Christian or religious education in South African universities and theological training institutions. I sense that in South African institutions, Christian education is so much part of pastoral or practical theology that it actually dwindles into insignificance in the face of the larger pastoral or practical theology picture.¹⁴⁹ A big challenge hovers over South African universities and theological training institutions to do more contextual work in Christian education; in so

¹⁴⁹ I stand to be corrected here, but this is the sort of impression I gained even as I did practical theology at undergraduate level. May be much research is underway as I am writing; much is probably yet to be done.

doing to push same from the background to the surface, so it can be seen and heard. Churches will benefit from these efforts.

Notwithstanding the limitations outlined above in respect of South African literature on Christian education, we derive solace from the fact that while American literature in this regard may be couched in American language and context; while Christian education practices may differ, principles will always be the same the world over. For this reason there will always be something to learn from other contexts in other countries like America. For all practical purposes Christian education is based through and through on God's Word, whether it be American, British, or Australian. There is therefore to be no fear of American or other church education contexts. In the final analysis we'll only sift what is appropriate for our context.

What is more, the American authors themselves admit that their Christian education is beset with problems; hence it is far from being a perfect model. This acknowledgement only serves to underline the conventional trend in Christian education, namely, that no Christian education is without problems; just as we South Africans complain that our Christian education programme leaves much to be desired, and therefore, needs to be improved. The borrowing of American literature says to us South Africans, we should do something about our own Christian education; we should also take it as seriously as they (Americans) do; reflecting continuously on what is going on in our churches and coming up with new ways and means of remedying our own problems. After everything has been said and done, we still have much to learn from the problems, research and findings of American Christian educators.

Still another factor that I have had to grapple with in the initial stages of this research exercise was that of finding a suitable model for my discourse. It was not easy to determine which model was going to be suitable for the research, given the fact that I

did not do any research methodology course previously¹⁵⁰. Did it have to be my own model or someone else's? Whatever model I was going to adopt, I had to explain in greater detail. I am persuaded that coming up with my own model would have been the best option as it would not involve as much explanation as in the case of a borrowed model. Nevertheless, the model adopted for this research, though underpinned by much explanation, was very helpful in helping me to shape my thesis. The route I followed, as spelt out by the model, namely, that of being descriptive, systematic, historical and strategic,¹⁵¹ made much sense to me; giving the research discourse the coherence and sequence it needed. Of course, I have had to modify the model slightly, by making my own addition. All of this is explained in the second chapter of this dissertation.

As I conclude, it is my prayer and hope that the research discourse at hand will, notwithstanding its limitations, trigger in other practical theologians, especially those focused on Christian (Religious) education and other church leaders, a genuine desire to reflect more on what is going on in the educational ministry of churches in South Africa; to interact meaningfully with churches in this regard and to come up with new ways of enhancing effectiveness in Christian education. It is my wish that the Baptist Convention of South Africa will take time to study the evaluation critically, that they will make use of the strategies put forward in so far as they will be helpful in revamping Christian education in their churches. May it be that the research findings and recommendations will not only prompt new discussions and researches, but that they will be embraced by churches and denominations in so far as they will be applicable, in their pursuit to fulfill their teaching mandate to the extent that our Master, Lord and Saviour would want it to be.

¹⁵⁰ I strongly recommend that for Masters and Doctoral programmes Research methodology be a compulsory requirement.

¹⁵¹ As I have explained in the first chapter, I have adopted Browning's model as described in his *Fundamental Practical Theology*. For further explanation of the various stages in the model, see chapter one of this thesis.