

Migrants, mission and theological education

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Abstract

The Christian Church has faced problems of mission and migrancy from its inception. This paper, however, is limited to southern Africa in the last fifty years, using examples from the Anglican and Orthodox Churches, based mainly on the personal experiences of the author. It begins with the story of a migratory cattle herder in northwestern Namibia who became an evangelist and was trying to plant a church among a nomadic people. There have been other patterns of migration in Southern Africa, including migratory labour, forced removals, refugees, and immigration, both legal and illegal. Theological Education by Extension (TEE), which developed about 40-50 years ago, had the potential to meet some of these needs, though emphasis was often put in the wrong places, so that it did not fulfil the promise of meeting the needs of migrant ministries as well as had been hoped. Materials and resources often had to be improvised, but in many ways much has been achieved.

Introduction

In this article I shall try to look at historical Christian responses to migration and mission, and to the challenges to theological education that these have posed. That is a pretty broad field, and so I shall limit the scope in time mostly to the last fifty years, and in space mostly to Southern Africa. One reason for those limitations is that that is largely the scope of my personal experience, and my personal experience has been primarily in the Anglican and Orthodox Churches, and, to a lesser extent, some African Independent Churches.

I have used an anecdotal, narrative approach to try to show how attempts to provide theological education to aid mission to migrants have often failed, and I have drawn together a number of examples, mostly from my own experience. I believe that there are things that can be learnt from these examples.

Since it is based mainly on personal experience, it may be helpful to the reader if I put this experience into a time frame.

From 1969-1972 I worked in the Anglican Church in Namibia as a self-supporting deacon and later priest. For money I worked in a newspaper office. Among other things I was responsible for ministry among Herero-speaking Anglicans, and also liaison with some African Independent Churches, the Oruano Church and the Church of Africa, which the Anglican Church had previously helped with theological education.

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In February 1972 I was deported from Namibia, along with the bishop and two other church workers, and spent the next four months travelling around South Africa trying to promote the concept of Theological Education by Extension (TEE). At the end of that period I was banned by the South African government, and prohibited from engaging in any educational activities for the next four years.

In 1976 my ban was lifted and I went to work in the Anglican Diocese of Zululand, where I was responsible, among other things, for training self-supporting deacons and priests.

In 1983 I moved to the Anglican Diocese of Pretoria as director of mission and evangelism, and in 1985 left the Anglican Church and subsequently joined in the Orthodox Church. From 2002-2009 I was involved, with others, in training people for ministry in the Orthodox Archdiocese of Johannesburg and Pretoria.

This brief summary should give an indication of the scope and the limitations of the account that follows. One of the limitations is in the literature cited. Most of the works cited are those that were available at the time, and which influenced the theory and practice of what we were doing back then. I hope that this paper can help to show what worked, what did not work, and what could have been done better.

Case study: Thomas Ruhozu

I offer as a case study Thomas Ruhozu, a man from northwestern Namibia, the region known as the Kaokoveld. It has a dry climate, and most of the people were migrant cattle herders, following their herds to find grazing and water. Their main diet was omaere — a kind of yoghurt, and wild vegetables and bulbs.

In the late 1960s Thomas Ruhozu and two friends of his decided that they wanted to go to school, so they walked about 300 kilometres to the east to St Mary's Anglican School at Odibo, in Ovamboland, which was at that time the only English language school for blacks in Namibia.

They suffered from culture shock. Ovambo food was vastly different from Ovahimba food in the Kaokoveld. The climate was different, the language was different, and the culture was different. Thomas's two friends gave up and went home after a few months. Thomas stuck it out for four years, and then his father died, and he had to go home to look after the family's cattle.

While at Odibo, Thomas Ruhozu had also joined the Anglican Church. He had been baptised and confirmed. On his return to the Kaokoveld, however, there was no Anglican Church within 150 kilometres.

In June 1971 I was a self-supporting priest in the Anglican Church in Windhoek. I worked as a proof-reader at a local newspaper, the Windhoek Advertiser, and visited various congregations to celebrate the Eucharist and

teach at weekends. Most of these congregations were composed of migrant workers, mainly from Ovamboland. Some were isolated at mines, or road and railway workers' camps, while the largest was St Michael's at Katutura township in Windhoek. My main pastoral ministry was among the Herero-speaking Anglicans, who were few and scattered.

I spoke to Abraham Hangula, an Anglican evangelist who had been brought from Ovamboland to work among the mainly Ovambo migrant workers in Windhoek. He told me about Thomas Ruhozu, and said we should consider him as a possible evangelist in the Kaokoveld, where the people spoke the Herero language. I went through files in the church office, and found some correspondence relating to Thomas Ruhozu in the time of the previous bishop, but the church seemed to have lost touch with him. I wrote a letter to him at the last address I found for him, asking how he was and what he was doing, and if there were any people in the Kaokoveld who might be interested in the Anglican Church. There was a Dutch Reformed Mission in the Kaokoveld, but Abraham Hangula had told me that the people there did not trust the Dutch Reformed Church, and though they were anxious to hear the Gospel, they would rather hear it from Anglicans.

The answer to my letter arrived in person. Thomas Ruhozu appeared on my doorstep in Windhoek. Having received my letter he did not write back, but travelled 1000 kilometres to see me. In some ways it was not a good time. It was on the eve of the Anglican diocesan synod, which I had to attend. But it was good in that he would be able to see the gathered church from all over Namibia. I arranged for him to attend as an observer, and for Abraham Hangula, who knew a little Herero, to translate for him. But the proceedings were largely irrelevant to him and boring, so on the subsequent days of the synod I set him up in our kitchen with a bunch of Herero catechetical books produced by the Roman Catholic Church for children of about his reading level. I asked him to read them, and make notes, and notes of any questions he had.² In the evenings after the synod sessions I sat with him, and we tried to communicate, he in his broken English and me in my broken Herero. I was not sure how much he understood.

When the synod was over, I took him to see the Herero chief, Clemens Kapuu, who acted as interpreter. And Thomas explained his plans to me. He was going back to evangelise, which he now felt confident to do. He would begin with his own family, and he would talk to others as they travelled around with their herds looking for grazing. It sounded like a pretty good mission plan to me.

After the synod, a bakkie taking synod representatives back to Ovamboland overturned. Two were killed and several were in hospital. The remainder who were well enough to travel now had no transport, so I took

² The books were the "People of God Catechetical Series", published by Geoffrey Chapman, 1969-1973).

them. We first drove to Kamanjab, the closest town to the Kaokoveld, and left Thomas Ruhozu there, but to enter the Kaokoveld one needed a permit, and I did not have one, and nor did any of the others travelling with me. I didn't have a permit to enter Ovamboland either, but when we reached the border I hid among the luggage in the back of the bakkie covered by a tarpaulin and sneaked in that way.

Since it was my one and only opportunity to visit Ovamboland, I spent much time as possible with Father Lazarus Haukongo, the Archdeacon of Ovamboland, who spoke a little Herero. I arranged with him for him to visit Thomas Ruhozu in Kaokoveld, which he managed to do about six weeks later. He told me he had admitted about 20 catechumens. After another couple of months he visited again, baptised the first 20, and admitted another 35. In the mean time I was reading Ralph Winter's book on *Theological Education by Extension* (Winter 1969) and wondering how we could set up Theological Education by Extension for Thomas Ruhozu and others like him.

Soon after that I was deported from Namibia, and lost touch with most of the people there, so the anecdote must have a truncated ending, as such anecdotes often do.

Reflection and analysis of case study

The point of this case study is that it combines the three themes of this article: migrancy, mission and theological education.

There is migrancy, in the sense that most people in the Kaokoveld were nomadic cattle herders, moving from place to place to find grazing and water. I was only beginning to think of the consequences of this for the kind of church we were trying to plant in the Kaokoveld before I was deported.

My thoughts went roughly along these lines: that as soon as there were enough baptised people there to form a church, Thomas Ruhozu should be ordained as a priest to serve them. Such a thing was almost unthinkable in the Anglican Church in Southern Africa forty years ago. I was a self-supporting priest, working as a proof-reader, but I had a university degree in theology, and had been trained in a full-time seminary. I was self-supporting because the church didn't have money to pay me. The Anglican Diocese of Zululand had a training scheme for self-supporting clergy, but one of the criteria for training was that they have a fairly high level of schooling, at the very least Grade 10 or 11, and not Grade 4, like Thomas Ruhozu.

But sixty years earlier Roland Allen in his book *Missionary methods: St Paul's or ours* (Allen 1979) had advocated exactly what I was thinking of, though at that stage I had not heard of Roland Allen. He advocated ordaining people like Thomas Ruhozu. And as a nomadic priest among a

nomadic people, Thomas Ruhozu would follow the people around. Perhaps they could construct a tabernacle like the ancient Israelites.

So instead of the then current pattern of university or seminary training before ordination, the training would follow ordination. It would be Theological Education by Extension. But very few people were developing materials for the theological education of people at the Grade 4 level, so we would have to improvise, as I had done with the Roman Catholic catechetical books intended for children.

Whether it would have worked or how well it would have worked I can't tell because we were deported before we had the opportunity to try it. Migrancy among nomadic peoples was not very common in Southern Africa at that time. But there was also the other sort of migrancy, which was much more widespread: migrant labour. There was also the migrancy of the forced removals that took place as a result of the ethnic cleansing demanded by the apartheid policy of the South African government.

And those also applied in Namibia.

There was widespread ethnic cleansing as a result of the implementation of the Odendaal Report, which laid out a blueprint for the application of apartheid to Namibia, but I shall deal with this more in relation to South Africa in a later section of this paper.

There was also a contract labour system that applied especially to Ovambo from the north who went to work in the south of Namibia (the police zone). Recruitment of workers was the monopoly of Swanla, the South West Africa Native Labour Association. Prospective employers would "order" their workers from Swanla, as they would order other materials necessary to carry on their business. The Ovambo workers were seen, quite literally, as "human resources", reified and commodified for sale.³

The workers would be recruited and assigned to employers by Swanla, regardless of aptitude, skills or experience. A labour unit was, after all, just a labour unit. If they were underpaid or abused there was very little the workers could do except leave, and then they could be charged with breaking their contract. In the last few months I was in Namibia there was a strike against the contract labour system.

It was with these conditions in mind too that we proposed the use of Theological Education by Extension.

TEE in Southern Africa

After I was deported from Namibia I went straight to a meeting of the Anglican Church's Department of Christian Education (which I had been

³ The term "human resources" has become quite common nowadays, so that people don't think twice before using it, but I can still remember the shock I felt on first seeing it, about 30 years ago, in a newspaper advertisement for a "human resources manager", at how dehumanising it was.

due to attend anyway), and there met Richard Kraft, who was running the self-supporting ministry training programme of the Anglican Diocese of Zululand. The students met for a weekend once a month, and for a 10-day annual meeting in January. Most of the training was by guided reading based on whatever books were available.

What seemed to be needed, both in Namibia and Zululand, were study materials designed for this kind of training. Louise Walker had written about ways in which such texts could be developed, using programmed instruction methods (Winter 1969: 340, 546), but the only place we knew of that was even thinking of doing such a thing was a course being developed by the Christian Institute in conjunction with the African Independent Churches Association (AICA).

The AICA course had began some years before when a group of African Independent Churches (AICs) approached the Christian Institute, asking for help in training their ministers. The Christian Institute said they could help, but the AICs needed to set up an association that would be responsible for such a project, and so AICA was set up. The government felt threatened by this, and attempted to disrupt the movement, and a rival organisation, the Reformed Independent Churches Association (RICA) was set up, and supported by the Dutch Reformed Church, which then supported the government (Molobi 2011: 4-5). The Christian Institute helped to get financial support from overseas, but four changes of director between 1969 and 1972 did not help much, and the fourth director, under great pressure to produce, issued badly planned and almost unusable course material.

Richard Kraft, John Aitchison and I believed that if the Christian Institute and AICA could spend half a million Rand and not produce a theology course, we could produce a theology course and not spend half a million Rand. We started by producing a twenty-page summary of Ralph Winter's book, explaining the difference between a residential seminary and an extension seminary, and how they could be developed to work in South Africa. It was distributed to existing theological institutions and to church leaders, including all the Anglican bishops. We set up a pilot project called the Khanya Theological Correspondence Course, and John Aitchison began preparing a pilot course in the Book of Amos, designed for people of Grade 4-6 education. This was illegal, because he was banned at the time. It also caused some difficulties, as some people were very suspicious of what we were doing, and accused us of being vague and secretive about who was behind it. We could say little other than that it had the approval of the Christian Education Department of the Anglican Diocese of Zululand. The project ground to a halt when I was banned, and the three main movers could not meet together.

Eventually the Khanya project joined with two other projects, one run in the Transkei by Robin Briggs, and one run in Johannesburg by Louis

Peters, to form the Theological Education by Extension College of Southern Africa (TEEC), which still exists today. The three founding projects dealt with three different levels of education, and these were continued with the TEE College. Louis Peters was then a Dominican priest, and his course was at tertiary level, mainly for people in the Roman Catholic Church who had passed Matric. This became the TEEC Diploma course. Robin Briggs in the Transkei, based at St Bede's Theological College, had a course aimed at people with a Grade 9-10 education. This became the TEEC Certificate course. And the Khanya course, aimed at people with a Grade 4-6 education, became the TEEC award course.

There were other attempts to provide suitable course materials for such courses. The Theological Education Fund of the World Council of Churches produced a good series of relatively affordable text books in the 1970s, though I am not aware of their being used much in Southern Africa. I myself used two of the church history ones, *The first advance* and *Setback and recovery* in the Orthodox catechetical school in Johannesburg some 30 years later.

One of the thoughts in the minds of those who were promoting TEE in the early 1970s was that Christianity was facing persecution from an increasingly totalitarian government. Several of those involved in promoting TEE were banned. The forced closing of the Federal Theological Seminary in Alice in 1973 seemed to confirm this, made some of us think that theological education and training for ministry would need to go underground, and would need to be much more broadly based. Things never got quite as bad as we envisaged, but at the time such thoughts made it seem urgent.

Mission and ministry

In my experience much discussion on the topic of mission and ministry has been obscured by language and the unspoken assumptions or hidden presuppositions that lie behind it.

For example, many have assumed that the main purpose of “theological education” is training for “the ministry”. Much has been written and spoken about this, but very often important distinctions have been obscured.

The ministry and the ministries

One of the distinctions is the distinction between “the ministry” and “ministries”. All too often there has been a “one man band” model of ministry, where one person is expected to lead in everything. In Pentecostal churches this person is usually called “the pastor”, whereas in episcopal churches – Anglican, Roman Catholic and Orthodox, it is usually called “the priest”.

Here I describe the distinction mainly in terms of the ministries in Anglican and Orthodox Churches, but the same kinds of distinctions apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to other Christian bodies.

There are ordained ministries of bishops, priests and deacons. People are ordained to these after a formal process of training and selection. All are involved in leading worship, and in addition bishops have the responsibility of ruling, priests of teaching and deacons of serving. In practice, however, the ministry of the priest is often seen as the ministry.

There are also other ministries, some mentioned in the New Testament – apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, healers etc. Generally no training is given for these, and people in these ministries are not formally ordained or appointed, they are simply recognised after the fact. In the Orthodox Church, for example, St Mary Magdalene is called “equal to the apostle” and “apostle to the apostles”. No one ordained her to be an apostle, and she received no training. She was a witness to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and was sent to tell his other disciples, which she did. An apostle is one who is sent, and she was sent and did what she was sent to do.

These ministries are sometimes called charismatic ministries; they are given by the gift of the Holy Spirit. But though they may often be exercised spontaneously, if they are exercised regularly within a parish, then, in the Orthodox Church at least, the parish priest must give a blessing for it. If the ministry is wider than a parish, the blessing of the bishop must be sought, and the bishop would want to know that a teacher, for example, had sufficient knowledge to teach others. And so for these ministries too, some training is often needed.

Theological education and training for ministry

For a couple of years (2002-2004) I was involved in the work of the Standards Generating Body (SGB) for qualifications in Christian theology and ministry of the South African Qualifications Authority SAQA). This was when the government believed that Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) was the panacea for the educational problems of South Africa.

One thing that that exercise made clear to me, at any rate, was that it would be much easier to specify desired outcomes for training for ministry than it would for theological education.

I once attended Mattins in a rural Anglican church at Groenvlei, in Northern KwaZulu-Natal, and watched the Reader take about 10 minutes to read from the Bible, leaning out of the window to get more light, squinting to see the text through badly-scratched glasses, and reading the words one at a time, with many pauses to puzzle out the next word, often saying each word three times to correct previous mispronunciations. Much of the time it was inaudible, because his head was in the window alcove.

In training for ministry it is easy to set an outcome: that the text must be read in such a way that it can be heard intelligibly by someone sitting at the back of the church. And it is measurable because a person at the back of the church either hears it or does not hear it.

In this case, training for ministry would be training people to read the text in an intelligible manner. Theological education goes a step beyond this, and deals with the understanding of the text, expounding it, and possibly applying it. But all too often theological education is putting the cart before the horse: before you can interpret or expound the text, you must be able to hear it. And Jesus in the Gospels does not emphasise the interpretation or exposition of the text. That is the task of the scribes and the Pharisees. The important thing about the word of the Lord is that we should hear and do it (Matt 7:24-27).

In both the Anglican and the Orthodox Churches, in leading worship priests, deacons and other ministers have certain things to say and do when leading worship. Whether it is reading from the Bible, or preparing the bread and wine for communion, they need to be able to do these things competently and well, and to know what they are doing. Training for ministry enables them to do that. Teaching them to give a detailed exposition of the theology behind it all is theological education.

In some ways the Orthodox Church has, at least in the past, observed the distinction better. In Greece, especially, most of the parish priests had little theological education; they had training for ministry, usually by being apprenticed to and learning from another priest. The professors of theology in the universities are, even now, usually not ordained, and most of those studying academic theology are not preparing for ordination. In the Russian Orthodox Church there are seminaries where the clergy are trained, and there is some theological education as well, but the main theological education, as distinct from training for ministry, is done in theological academies rather than in the seminaries.

In the Anglican Diocese of Zululand TEE proved quite difficult to implement in practice. A training meeting was held one weekend a month, when all would gather at the diocesan conference centre at KwaNzimela. Some were taking courses with the TEE College, while others were taking courses with Unisa. We tried to get people to register for courses in the same general subject area each year, so that there could be tutorial groups where people were doing roughly the same course. But in practice many could not manage this, and were studying a course that no one else was doing. And there were widely varying academic levels, from a student who had left school at the end of Grade 6, and could not speak English, to one with an engineering degree who could speak no Zulu.

There were also many who found difficulty with the materials produced by the TEE College. They needed to learn to read before they

could read to learn. That was in part a deficiency of Bantu Education, and showed up the education problems in the country. A Grade 7 Maths teacher himself had a Grade 6 reading level, and could not cope with written study material from the TEE College. In the end we found that we could spend the time together more fruitfully by discussing practical ministry problems brought up by students, and, in a way, acting as a support group.

Self-supporting clergy in the Anglican Church

In the 1970s the Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference produced a booklet called *The transformation of the ministry* in which they considered six models of parish ministry. Model 5 was what they called the Anglican model of one self-supporting priest in a congregation, while Model 6 was the one that they were proposing (still not implemented) – each local congregation having several-self-supporting priests, deacons, readers, evangelists, pastors, teachers and other ministries, with church-supported leaders visiting them for training and encouragement.

The actual Anglican practice fell far short of the ideal picture presented in *The transformation of the ministry* booklet. Roland Allen had advocated ordaining priests (elders) shortly after a church was planted, to provide the new parish with the sacraments. This required training for ministry rather than theological education. The idea was that they should be local.

In many rural congregations in South Africa, however, a priest visits once every month, or sometimes at longer intervals. So most rural congregations experience the Eucharist only rarely. But where self-supporting priests were ordained in the Anglican Church, instead of serving in the local congregation where they lived (outstations, in Anglican terminology) they were treated by the church-supported clergy as unpaid assistants, expected to travel around to all the congregations, but at their own expense. As a result their local home congregation was almost as neglected as before. The vision was put before the Anglican Diocese of Zululand, but was modified in such a way as to undermine it.

Roland Allen observed this back in 1927, when he had spoken to Bishop Azariah in India about it. Allen said of objections to the notion of self-supporting clergy in the Anglican Church:

When we got back I propounded to (the Bishop) the question which I put to Bombay, whether we ought not (if we decline to ordain voluntary clergy) to teach our people to act for themselves, and he surprised me by saying that the Bishop instead of ordaining priests, might license men to celebrate, without any ordination. I answered that men so licensed would be in effect priests and a new order would be created of unordained priests, against which there would be far more serious opposition than against voluntary clergy. He said that I ought to take that line. It seems to me just a cheap way

of avoiding a difficulty, the difficulty which arises from the jealousy of the present clergy for their position" (Paton 1968:129; Hayes 1985).

Fifty years later the same objections were being raised by the church-supported clergy in the Anglican diocese of Zululand, and even now, 80 years after Allen wrote, some Anglicans are still debating "lay presidency" at the Eucharist, which now, as back then, still arises from "the jealousy of the present clergy for their position."

Another case study comes from an Anglican priest/evangelist in the Anglican Diocese of Pretoria. He was an enthusiastic evangelist, and within a short period had planted about 25-30 churches, and then stopped. He no longer travelled around evangelising, he travelled to those same 20-30 churches celebrating the Eucharist, which took up all his time. If he had followed Roland Allen's method, there would have been at least 2-3 local self-supporting priests in every one of those congregations, as well as other ministries, and he might have continued to visit them to train them, but not to celebrate the Eucharist.

A later attempt was made to do something similar in KwaNdebele, with a clearly articulated intention of following the Roland Allen model. Though no one consciously and explicitly argued against the Allen model, it failed to follow that model either because many did not actually grasp the model, or because they obstructed it without articulating their objections (Hayes 1993).

Mission, migrancy and pastoral care

I mentioned earlier some of the working of the migrant labour system in Namibia 40 years ago, when it was still under South African rule. There was similar migrant labour in South Africa, with workers coming from all over the subcontinent.

Davies (1983:119) notes that "the church has a main duty to see that migrants do not get the worst of both worlds, being treated as real members and not mere 'appendages', both in the home church and in the church in the work area."

That is the negative side of mission relating to migrants, where migrant workers are seen as either objects of mission, or else as pastoral problems – when they go to work, they are out of range of their home parish, and the church in the place where they work is not in a position to receive them, and often unaware of their existence. One of the ways in which this tension manifests itself is in the question of who gets the church collections. Migrant workers are expected to support their families back home, and implicitly their home parish, but when they go to churches in the places where they are working, they usually make their contributions to the local church there.

There have been some interesting exceptions to this. When I was a self-supporting Anglican priest in Namibia, I and other church members in Windhoek travelled to isolated mines, and road and railway workers' camps, usually on Saturday afternoons.

At one mine a colleague reported that the miners, most of whom had come from the same parish in Ovamboland, were six months into their contract, and had been holding services every Sunday, and presented him with six months of collections they had taken at these services, to take to the church office in Windhoek. The priest of their home parish was the same Lazarus Haukongo who had gone to the Kaokoveld to visit Thomas Ruhozu, and the miners were a testimony to his ministry. He had clearly taught them that they all had a ministry that did not cease when they were out of range of the parish church. Whether TEE courses would have made any difference, I do not know. The most important factor seems to have been the vision and attitude of the parish priest, in setting others free for ministry.

But that was an exception. In most such places, people had been brought together for work from many different places, and they belonged to many different denominations, and were out of reach of all of them. When we visited one mine, we held a service for the Anglicans there, and they told us that there were more contract workers across the valley, working on the electrical installations. We called on them, found most were from South Africa, and as we usually did, offered prayer books, hymn books and Bibles for sale. Their white foreman came and told them that anyone who bought any of those books would be instantly sacked. They were communist Bibles, he told them. So sometimes the employers could be discouraging as well.

But Davies (1983:119) also points to a positive side.

The Anglican Church in Mozambique owes its origin not to European missionaries from far away but to black mineworkers on the Witwatersrand who were touched by the Christian faith during their mine contract who took their faith home with them. And in a place like a mine compound, very rural and un-cosmopolitan men from a great variety of areas can meet and discover a fellowship that crosses divides of nationality and language, a fellowship of a common identity as a black working class.

And this applies equally to many African Independent Churches. In some cases returning migrant workers started churches at their homes. In others, Mozambican workers in South Africa who belonged to various denominations thought their needs were being neglected, and banded together to form an ethnic church for people from Mozambique. One such denomination was founded in 1918, but we can find others started by immigrants from other countries, such as Nigerians, Congolese etc. A paper read at a conference on migrancy and theological education in Pietermaritzburg in June 1912 pointed out that there were more than 30 French-speaking churches in Pretoria. This applies to immigrants from

beyond Africa too – most of the Orthodox parishes in Gauteng were started by immigrants from a particular country, Greeks, Serbs, Russians etc. Among Roman Catholics there is a Maronite Church for Lebanese and a Croatian parish in Johannesburg.

An Orthodox experiment

Until the 1980s the Orthodox Church in South Africa had shown very little interest in mission. It had been established mainly to care for immigrant communities, the so-called Diaspora. These were mostly from Greece, with smaller communities from other Balkan countries. As I have pointed out elsewhere (Hayes 2010), diaspora is not conducive to mission. The apartheid regime imposed visa restrictions on expatriate religious leaders and journalists, and one of the conditions it imposed on expatriate Orthodox clergy was that they should confine their ministry to their own ethnic communities.

In about 1990, however, this began to change. Leaders of a number of African Independent Churches with an Orthodox tradition, mainly factions of the African Orthodox Church, asked for theological training, and in 1993 an attempt was made to set up a TEE scheme, the St Moses of Ethiopia Theological Course. This proved difficult to run, as there were only two part-time people running it, and there were students with at least four different academic levels scattered all over the country.

In 1997 leaders of the African Orthodox Episcopal Church (AOEC) asked to be united with the Orthodox Church. I had some reservations about this, as I thought there had not been sufficient consultation with the members in their congregations. I suggested that the leaders should gradually introduce more Orthodox forms of worship to their congregations, and that leaders from the different congregations be gathered at regular intervals, every 2-3 months, for training seminars, where the basics of Orthodox theology could be explained, and where they could experience Orthodox worship. This would not be academic training, but something much less formal. After 2-3 years, the members of the congregations could then decide whether or not they wanted to join the Orthodox Church.

What actually happened was that a committee, most of the members of which had never seen an Orthodox service, made the decision at one meeting, and wrote a letter to the Orthodox Archbishop of Johannesburg asking to be received into the Orthodox Church.

Six years later, in 2003, under a new and more mission-minded bishop, the first, and last, training meeting took place. It was held at the Orthodox Cathedral in downtown Johannesburg, where the 25 people attending the course had to stay in a nearby hotel, which was quite expensive.

Three months later the Archbishop decided to establish a residential seminary. There were several problems with this. One was that several of

the students were expatriates, including two refugees from the Congo and a Zimbabwean. Most of the local congregations of the AOEC had no representatives there, and those that did were deprived of leaders at a critical point of their development – which was one of the very things that TEE was designed to avoid.

Another problem is that most of the leaders who were trained were not used by the church for effective ministry after their training. The Congolese students, for example, could have had an effective ministry in some of the more cosmopolitan areas of Johannesburg, where there are numerous immigrants from French-speaking countries in Africa. This could have been a useful response to another form of migrancy, but nothing was done about it. Once they had completed their training the students were left to fend for themselves, with no recognised ministry.

I am not saying that the presence of the expatriate students at the school was a problem; the problem was rather the absence of South African students, and especially students from the African Orthodox Episcopal Church. The AOEC approached the Orthodox Archdiocese of Johannesburg and Pretoria to ask for teaching in Orthodox theology in 1995. In 1997, they asked to be united with the Orthodox Church, yet 15 years later their leaders have received no theological training.

The seminary closed in 2008 after it had run for six years, and had had two groups of students who had been there for 3 years each. I believe its establishment was premature, and that it did not succeed in its aim of training leaders for the Orthodox Church in Southern Africa. At the time that it was established, none of the South African students who attended had been adequately catechised.

But it did succeed in ways that were unintended.

Some of the former students still remember the school as a place of community and acceptance. Two of them were former “street children” who had grown too old for the shelter they were staying in before.⁴ Though there were occasional quarrels, there was a sense of fellowship and community between the South African students and the expatriates. The Dean of the seminary was himself an expatriate, a priest from Kenya, Father Athanasius Akunda, who while he was in charge of the seminary also studied for a doctorate in missiology at Unisa, and it was largely due to him that the school developed a sense of community that caused former students to look back on their time there as a time of happiness and community.

The school was in Yeoville, one of the more cosmopolitan areas of Johannesburg, and the students were amused when the police stopped some students walking to the shops in one of their crackdowns on illegal

⁴ I use the term “street children” because it is widely used and well-understood. The students rejected the term “street children” because, as they put it, “streets don’t give birth to children”.

immigrants, and it was one of the South African students that they picked on for questioning. Yeoville was not much affected by the xenophobic violence that broke out in 2008, but I believe that one of the things the school did achieve was to equip the students to deal with xenophobia, and to oppose it, not so much because of the teaching they had received, but because of the very nature of their community.

Conclusion

What lessons can be learnt from these case studies, and from the way in which Theological Education by Extension has been applied in Southern Africa?

One possibility, which would apply particularly to Anglican ministry in rural areas, is that church-supported ministers should not be ordained. Many rural Anglican parishes consist of a central parish church, with anything from 5 to 50 “outstations”, where the parish priest, and occasionally an assistant priest, go to celebrate the Eucharist according to a rota of visits. If, however, there were 2-3 self-supporting priests (and a similar number of deacons) at each outstation, the itinerant minister would not need to be ordained (and if not ordained would be preserved from the temptation to travel round celebrating the Eucharist). Instead the church-supported minister would be a travelling pastor/teacher, going primarily to train the local leaders in the congregation.

Instead of arriving for a service, haranguing the congregation in a sermon, taking the money, and dashing off to the next place, the pastor-teacher could stay for a whole weekend, teaching the leaders and the people, knowing that in the other congregations the Eucharist would be celebrated by the local self-supporting priests and deacons.

This would be possible in the Anglican set-up because in most Anglican diocese the church-supported ministers are paid by the diocese. It would not be possible in the Orthodox set-up in southern Africa, as presently constituted, because most clergy are paid by their parishes. But it is something that could be considered for the future.

Another important point, and related to this, is that in-service training is often better than pre-service training. With in-service training learning can be immediate, and can be applied when and where it is needed. This has been applied in the Methodist Church in Southern Africa, where students spent a year in a practical ministry situation before attending seminary. In the Methodist tradition, especially in its early stages, the ministers were actually itinerant pastor/teachers, as proposed in the preceding paragraphs, and the sacramental ministry was left to the local Anglican parish clergy. But recently the Methodist model has been moving closer to the one of the presbyter/priest rather than the pastor/teacher.

One of the points that was emphasised by the early advocates of TEE was that extracting leaders from their congregations to train them in a residential seminary often deprives those congregations of leadership at the very time that they need it most. This was certainly true in the Orthodox example that I gave. In addition, there were many leaders in the local congregations of the African Orthodox Episcopal Church who were untouched by the training, apart from those who were able to attend the one training meeting that was held.

Another lesson to be learned is that theological courses are not necessarily best designed by people sitting in offices.

In the development of TEE in South Africa one of the things that has been seen as important, and that I myself saw as important at the early stages, has been the development of written course materials. Looking back, I would say that that is not nearly as important as regular gatherings of students. Written course materials are designed by people who have lots of books in their homes. But very often the people for whom they are designing the courses do not have books in their homes. Fifty years ago J.V. Taylor wrote in his book *The primal vision* that Christianity in Africa had tended to become a “classroom religion”. My experience in Zululand showed that while many of the self-supporting ministry trainees were literate, in the sense that they had learned to read, they had not made the transition from learning to read to reading to learn.

It was a pity that the Orthodox Church, whose worship is much less literate, should have fallen into the same trap. In the one training meeting for leaders that we did hold I think the students learnt far more by going round the church hearing stories about the ikons and the people depicted in them than they did sitting in formal rows, classroom style, listening to formal lectures, or from written materials. The leaders of worship, such as the clergy and the choir, do use a lot of books, but members of the congregation generally do not need books, nor do they need projectors and screens, But this is a different kind of reading. It is fluent reading aloud that is needed, rather than the ability to read and understand abstract theological texts.

The important question for TEE in training people for mission and ministry is to ask: who are the leaders in this community, and how can we train them and help them to become more effective without extracting them from the community and so depriving the community of leadership? The extractive form of training also leads to a further problem: that while the extracted leaders are away, either the community falls apart, or they are replaced by other, less qualified leaders, who, when the extracted leaders return, regard them as rivals, which again can lead to the community falling apart.

I have written quite a lot about failures in the application of the principles of Theological Education by Extension, failures in mission and failures in ministry to migrants. But the picture is not all gloomy.

In some ways some visions from 40 years ago have been fulfilled. From the Anglican Diocese of Namibia came the news that in December 2011 forty deacons had been ordained, trained by TEE. It was forty years, almost to the day, since a proposal had been made to and accepted by the diocesan standing committee that TEE be used to train and rapidly extend various ministries in the church, and forty years later, that is what happened.

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