



world.

The United Church believes in the validity of the courses of liberal arts at our Universities as a good foundation for Ministry within our Church.

This is not necessarily true for every Church or Sect. Some might feel that the Church itself can do all the educating needed for someone to be in ministry. That a detailed knowledge of the Bible itself is sufficient. But that is not true of the United Church of Canada. Here is the preferred foundation of education for a member of the Order of Ministry of the United Church:

10.3.1        3.        (1) the attainment of a B. A. degree including Greek, to be followed by three years in the study of Theology, is strongly recommended by the Church. Before ordination every candidate shall spend twelve months in preaching and pastoral work.

10.4.1        4.        Suggested Curricula:

(1) Course of Study in Arts under (2)(a). English Language and Literature, three years. Two language, one of which must be Greek, two years in each.  
Philosophy, including Psychology, Logic and Ethics, two years.  
Two other subjects from the Arts curriculum at the option of the student - one in each.

If I might dare to interpret for the writers of these sections of the Manual I would say "the United Church of Canada wants educated and trained leadership". And here the word educated is used in the broadest possible meaning.

Ideally the candidate for ministry will come to the study of theology with a good sense of themselves, a good understanding of the world, and with a demonstrated ability to understand the liberal arts. The preference of the Church is that the "University Experience" be truly that - not study of courses in the home, or one by one over the years, but by "total immersion" in the University environment. Only after that experience will "theological education" begin.

There is nothing of the "cloister" feeling in this approach. The risk of the "cloister" approach is that the person has developed no intimate relationship with the world and nothing to say in and for the world.

The risk of the approach of the United Church is that the person will be so enamoured of the world that they will be swallowed up by the world and will not hold out for what is distinctively Church. It is the second risk which the United Church is prepared to take.

When the candidate comes prepared by a liberal arts course they will be enrolled in a United Church theological college -

The Atlantic School of Theology in Halifax, the United Theological College in Montreal, Queen's Theological College in Kingston, Emmanuel College in Toronto, Centre for Christian Studies in Toronto, St. Andrew's College in Saskatoon, or the Vancouver School of Theology in Vancouver.

Each of these institutions was founded, in part at least, by the United Church of Canada or its predecessor Churches. Each is located on, or close to, a campus of a major secular University, and most are part of a consortium of theological colleges of other denominations. Many of the schools are inter-denominational.

Here is what the Manual prescribes for the theological education of its candidates:

10.5                    5. The following is suggested as a comprehensive course in Theology, from which may be selected subjects sufficient to constitute the three years' course in Theology as under 3 (1) and (2) (a):

Old Testament Language and Literature, including Textual Criticism, Exegesis, Biblical Theology, Introductory, Old Testament History and Old Testament Canon; New Testament Language and Literature, including Textual Criticism, Exegesis, Biblical Theology, Introduction, New Testament History and New Testament Canon; English Bible, Church History, including Symbolics; Systematic Theology; Apologetics, including Philosophy of religion, History of religions, and Comparative Religion; Christian Ethics and Sociology; Christian Missions; Practical Training, including preparation and delivery of sermons, preparation for and conduct of public worship, administration of the Sacraments, Church Law, the art of teaching and Sunday School work, public speaking and voice training. Practical Training is to be understood to include not only instruction in these subjects but actual drill wherever the

subject admits of it.

I would like to comment on one aspect of the above: Old (New) Testament Language and Literature, <<including Textual Criticism>>

There would be many Churches in North America which would not include "Textual Criticism" in their curriculum.

Textual Criticism is a scientific study of the words and phrases of the Bible which attempts to separate out the various strands of the biblical passages based on their language and style. These scholars try to ascertain the time period in which each aspect was written, and if possible, the authors.

For many new candidates to the Order of Ministry this is when the first of many shocks which theological education delivers.

I think I was typical of many theological students in that my view of the Bible was based primarily upon some private reading of the Bible plus many hours of Bible study with warm caring groups who studied it together. We did not study the Bible from a "critical" point of view. We studied the Bible for fellowship, for direction for our lives, and for seeing a connection with our own experiences.

Our tools were the various versions of the Bible which we owned plus a Concordance to help us find similar passages.

Bible study was a warm, intimate time of caring and sharing, followed by coffee and cookies. We felt better prepared for the coming week.

But when I entered my Introduction to Old Testament course with Dr. Vernon Fawcett, we were asked to answer the question: "Did Moses write the first five books of the Bible [the Pentateuch]?"

This was a question I had not thought about, and didn't the Bible itself say that he did? And didn't New Testament people commonly give him credit for writing the "Law"?

We were plunged into a quest which has never stopped for me. Because the first five books of the Bible are a compilation of so many different styles of writing that the more one investigates it the less likely it is that they will conclude that Moses wrote all these books.

We were presented with the a theory of J E P and D - strands of writings which are seen as distinct based on the word they have used for God or the Lord, or on Priestly and Deuteronomic code words which brought a totally different perspective to the Old Testament.

For many theological students it felt like an assault on their faith in the Bible - it seemed not only "critical" but "Hypercritical" and it felt like their faith in the Bible was being undermined.

The scientific study of the Bible by the "critical" study of its texts is not new in this century. In some ways it has been going on for 1900 years. Erasmus, the Greek scholar of the early 1500's is credited with being the "Father" of the historical critical method but its present form owes more to German and English scholars of the mid and late 1800's.

There are many crises of faith in the first year of theological training. It is one of the most difficult experiences for a candidate for ministry. By comparison when we are finally ordained and have a placement - many candidates view this as a relief. They are finally where they are "supposed" to be. With ordinary people, doing ordinary Bible study, warm, caring, with coffee and cookies.

I believe that among our finest ministers are those who were able to bear what at times felt like an assault on their faith in the Bible - and come out the other side - learning to appreciate the faith and contribution of the Biblical Scholars.

The United Church of Canada believes in having its members of the Order of Ministry go through that experience - our Church wants people who can not only survive what feels like an assault on their faith in the Bible - but can learn and grow from it and come to appreciate the patient work of scholars down through the centuries. Our Church wants its leadership to understand and appreciate scholarly work and to use the benefits of scholarship.

I believe this fact is very important to understand when "The Report" is criticized for "undermining the Bible".

Your ministers have been educated to understand that interpreting the Bible must be approached with great seriousness and perspective.

It is not sufficient to make a conclusion "Here is what the Bible says" based on a single passage, or a single chapter of a book.

There is great satisfaction in being able to say: "The Bible Clearly states that..."

And what we commonly see on the television may lead some to believe that that is all there is to it. Just to stand at the microphone, in front of thousands of people - holding a large, worn, black Bible in one hand, and say [in a dramatic and loud voice] "The Bible says....."

It has the ring of authority, but it is a very hollow ring. Because the Bible cannot be controlled that way.

We are not to control the Bible. We are to allow the Bible, increasingly to invade our imagination. To control us.

And that is a very different and troublesome matter.

At Theological College we learned the difference between Exegesis and Isegesis.

Exegesis - is a matter of taking a scriptural passage and let it "speak its message" to us.

In my experience this is best done in a group - because there is something about the gathering "of two or three in the name of Christ" which transforms Bible study into a shared experience of the Holy Spirit.

To be truly involved in Exegesis - we must prepare ourselves, in prayer. We must be very open to the Word of God. We must say something like this to ourselves:

"Let me be very open. Let me come to this passage of scripture without any of my past history. Let me hear it as if I had never heard it before. Let me have a sense of "being there" with the first hearers of this passage."

Isegesis - is quite the reverse. This means starting with an idea of ours and going to the Bible to back it up. When we start with the idea - "Doesn't the Bible say this is right?" - and look up the passages of scripture which support our argument. Or we start with "Doesn't the Bible say this is wrong?" and sure enough with diligence we can find enough passages which see it our way.

Exegesis is clearly what we should try for. But it is not at all an easy task.

Exegesis tries to keep perspective on where this passage of scripture fits with the rest of the New Testament and the Old Testament. So that, for example, we

don't make a case that "Women Should not speak in Church" from

I Corinthians 14:34 ff "As in all the churches of the saints, the women should keep silence in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as even the law says. If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church."

I don't know how female evangelists handle this true excerpt from the Bible. How do you handle it?

I would guess that most of us have decided - check me if I am wrong - that we have to be very careful about how we use any passage of scripture. And there are even some passages, like the one above, which should be put out to pasture as far as any of us actually following those directions in daily life.

I have not said everything about the Bible and Ordination. The topic could go on forever. But perhaps I have said enough to suggest these conclusions:

1. People offer themselves as candidates because they are responding, in one way or another, to that Call of the Bible to "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature"
2. The United Church of Canada believes in leadership which is educated in the scholarly thought of the world and the Church.
3. Our Church has a positive view towards scientific study and analysis of the Bible.
4. Your clergy are very deeply trained in many aspects to do with the Bible. In fact virtually all their courses revolve around the Bible.
5. It is very difficult for anyone to say "The Bible Clearly Says...."
6. We should not come to the Bible expecting it to support OUR deeply held convictions. We must all try to be more open to what the Bible is saying to us, in its context and in our time.

My concern for some of the critics of "The Report" who felt that it was undermining and destroying the Bible is that these critics have not acknowledged centuries of biblical scholarship or the work of our theological colleges to provide

an educated clergy. Their arguments often falls back on "The Bible Clearly Says..."

And finally some confessions and wonderings:

1. This was a topical sermon, and I really do not prefer topical sermons. I want now to return to the pattern of exegetical preaching based on the texts which are presented each week by the Lectionary.
2. I believe we at Ellesmere should seriously question the type of Bible study we have been sharing together over the years I have been your minister. I believe we should question whether it has demanded enough of us in the way our theological colleges demand much of our candidates. We may need some more "testing, challenging and upsetting" Bible study along with the warm, caring and supportive Bible study.

Acts 2 1-21

Romans 8 22-27

John 15 26-27, 16: 4-15

Acts 2 1-21

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews [omit], devout men from every nation under heaven. And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. And they were amazed and wondered, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabian, we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God." And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" But others mocking said, "They are filled with new wine."

But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed the, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day; but this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

'And in the last days it shall be, God declares,  
That I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,  
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,  
and your young men shall see visions,  
and your old men shall dream dreams;  
yes, and on my menservants and maidservants in those days  
I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.  
And I will show wonders in the heaven above  
and signs on the earth beneath,  
blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke;  
the sun shall be turned into darkness

and the moon into blood  
before the day of the Lord comes, the great and manifest day.  
And it shall be that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'  
John 15 26, 27, Ch. 16 4-15

But when the Counsellor comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, even the spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness to me; and you also will bear witness to me; and you also are witnesses, because you have been with me from the beginning.

'But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told you of them.

"I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. But now I am going to him who sent me; yet none of you ask me, 'Where are you going?' But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts. Nevertheless I tell you the truth: It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Counsellor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will convince the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in me; of righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

"I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

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SUNDAY, MAY 22, 1988 10:30 am

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PENTECOST

ORGAN PRELUDE  
CALL TO WORSHIP  
PRAYER OF APPROACH (Unison)

HYMN RED 50 "Holy Holy Holy"  
Please remain standing

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (Unison)

ASSURANCE OF PARDON  
First lesson...Acts 2 1-21  
PSALM 104 (Responsively)

CHOIR:

Second lesson. Romans 8 22-27  
John 15: 26-27  
Ch. 16: 4-15

HYMN.Red 253 "Be thou my Vision"

SERMON: The Bible and Ordination

HYMN Green 108 "Spirit, Spirit of Gentleness"  
PRAYERS THE LORD'S PRAYER  
ANNOUNCEMENTS  
THE OFFERING AND DEDICATION

HYMN 269 "Guide me, O Thou Great Jehovah"  
THE COMMISSIONING  
THE BENEDICTION AND CHORAL AMEN  
ORGAN POSTLUDE

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Tuesday 9:30 am Christian Education [Anna please confirm with Bobbie]

Wednesday, 3 pm Church School Party - last day

Friday, 12 noon at the Church - Canadian Theology - Greg McIntyre, Religion  
Reporter for the Province Newspaper