



Brethren Training Network 2018

Workshop

The synergistic relationship between the biblical institutes and the local churches.

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In the current Christian map, the biblical institutes occupy an almost unchallenged place. The question is: What kind of institutions are they? Do they meet the expectations of church leaders? What kind of contributions do they make to local churches? Is it possible to design a kind of relationship that builds both the churches and the institutes?

We consider it possible to build a dynamic relationship ("by reason of giving and receiving", Phil.4:15) between the local churches and the biblical institutes, that substantially improves the final result of the biblical formation of the brothers.

Introduction

Before getting into the subject, it is well worth explaining some definitions here to avoid confusion and clarify ideas.

1. Local Churches.

1.1. More than a definition, we give a description of what a local church is:

- It is a congregation of people.
- Those people have experienced the new birth.
- Those people have been separated from the world.
- Those people have been united in one.
- These people show that unit externally following a well-defined program.
- These people are endowed with the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Essential characteristics of a local church according to Acts 2: 40-47.

1.2. Like all human organizations, local churches go through a life cycle:

- stage of foundation or establishment
- stage of maturation or growth
- stage of full development or fruition

Sometimes the presence of other situations is verified:

- stage of threat or lethargy
- declination or decline stage

The definition and description of a local church and the life cycle in which it is located, has the purpose of locating us for the purposes of speaking after church-institute relationship.

2. Biblical institutes.

2.1. A biblical institute (sometimes also called a school or seminary, or perhaps a faculty) is an educational institution or center of formation based on Christian values whose mission is to impart biblical, theological and ministerial training to believers. It can take several modalities and different types of organization, but its main characteristic is that it teaches biblical teaching and accompanies the churches in that function.

The existence of the biblical institutes and the attitude of the Assemblies of Brothers before them, is treated by Brother David J. MacLeod (Adapted by Joel Hernández), in "Are Bible colleges and seminars contrary to the teaching of the New Testament?" With translation into Spanish by Ken Russell under the title "Are the colleges and seminaries against the teaching of the New Testament? ".

Nothing says the inspired text about biblical institutes but it does not reject them either. It is a void to be filled by us, and this under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. So, now it is legitimate to ask ourselves, what is expected of a biblical institute? What is your reason for being?

2.2. Like all human organizations, biblical institutes go through a life cycle. This is similar to that of the local churches.

3. Relationship, link, interconnection.

There are several ways in which the institutes and churches are related, but the one that is usually presented in our Open Brethren environment is the recognition of several local churches: explicitly the heads of the churches support the existence and activity of the institute, enabling that the brothers who are members of the churches attend for their biblical formation.

The set of local churches is possible to take it as a subsystem of another major, the work of God. Another subsystem is the set of biblical institutes. Other elements or subsystems also appear, for example, publishers and bookstores, biblical societies, mission agencies, camp centers, and other ministries associated with churches. All of them make up a great system, within which we are interested in the relationship of two subsystems: the one formed by the local churches and the biblical institutes.

Relationships are the links that link together the objects or subsystems that make up a complex system.

The synergistic relationship

The synergistic relationship is a relationship that is not necessary for the operation but that is useful, since it substantially improves the performance of both the church and institute subsystems. Synergy means "combined action". However, for systems theory the term means more than cooperative effort. In synergistic relations, the cooperative action of semi-independent subsystems, taken together, results in a total result greater than the sum of their results taken independently.

The synergistic relationship is a relationship that is not necessary for the functioning of the churches but that generates a high added value, since their performance substantially improves the overall course of the Lord's work.

Synergy means cooperation, and is a term of Greek origin, "*synergia*" or "*sunergeo*" (Strong

4903-4904), which means "working together", "collaborating", "cooperating". The prefix "*syn*" (Strong, 4862) means "together with" or "attached to". This preposition expresses "association with". The noun "*ergon*" (Strong, 2041) means "to work, to act, to do".

Synergy is a job or an effort to perform a certain very complex task, and achieve success in the end.

We find in the apostle Paul a use of synergy. That is, it appears for the first time in the religious sphere (eg, 1 Corinthians 3:9). He uses it by indicating that synergy is the result of work between man and God. Paul uses the metaphor of the body as an organism to explain the functioning of the local church, the application of the concept of synergy is seen. Also in the work of the Holy Spirit and the action of the believer (John 14-16), he introduces us to the same concept.

Expanding the definition, we can say that synergy means, "that two or more churches-institutes work together to achieve results that otherwise could not be achieved alone," "means that several church-institutes are working together to produce an improved result," "its result is more than the sum of its parts". When the synergistic parts work together, they achieve more than they could on their own. The synergy can well describe the cooperative efforts of various churches and institutes working together towards a common goal. We still have not seen what can happen if we achieve the real synergy in the cooperative activity between churches and institutes.

It is necessary to have "**the attitude of God's grace**". That is, take the initiative, do it with the attitude of a servant.

We must think of this relationship as a cooperative association whose desirable characteristics should be:

- Explicitly proposed.
- Publicly agreed.
- Scripturally designed.
- Spiritually developed.
- Rationally structured.
- Actually committed.

When specifying a synergistic relationship it is advisable to be clear about the following:

- Your priorities
- Be objective, rational and creative
- It is a process that demands time and effort
- Open and honest dialogue
- It must be a simple and simple proposal

Using the language of the figure we are using, "healthy churches", we mentioned some beneficial effects by the application of the synergistic relationship.

- They provide food
- Remove inhibitory elements
- They stimulate each other

- Increase beneficial aspects of its constitution
- Balance interests in the work of the Lord
- Create a favorable environment for the growth of churches

Some advantages of establishing a synergistic relationship:

- mutual benefit
- shared goal
- overcoming solutions
- the non-competition, not the mutual depredation, not the parasitism

4. Instruction, training, teaching.

Profile that the institutes could have to adapt to a model of synergistic relationship.

Undoubtedly we will not exhaust the subject here. First, because each country or region has certain characteristics that prevent generalization. Then because the contextual situation varies from one place to another. But even so, it is necessary to be aware of the need for adaptation that the institutes must have in the face of permanent changes at all levels and the need to follow a synergetic relational model.

Some current sources of Christian formation:

- Institutional or formal
- Familiar surroundings
- Ecclesial or normal
- Casual or informal
- Official educational system

Each institute must know that it is not the only source of formation for the believer.

5. Biblical institutes in synergistic relationship with local churches.

Characteristics that are desirable that the institutes exhibit to establish a synergistic relationship with the local churches;

- Institutes "pro-ecclesiastical or at the service of"
- Institutes "mirrors"
- Institutes "organisms"
- "Glocal" institutes
- Institutes "power plants"

Accreditation of the institutes:

- Official
- Associations
- Ecclesial or ministerial

The seminar does not qualify you for the ministry. The success of the ministry depends on the strength of the call. Biblically speaking, it is the last of the three that interests us but attentive to the fact that we must move in our current context, it is also important to consider the others.

Our approach to biblical-theological-ministerial (BTM) Christian formation is that it covers several areas of student life:

- • His person: in terms of character in order to transform himself in the image of Christ;
- • His knowledge: refers to the intellectual or academic formation;
- • Its doing: points to the ministerial knowledge and practices to be applied in the work of God.

The third aspect, the ministerial, is always to be used in the field of God's work, mostly in the local churches.

The seminars are actually a recent development, established less than 500 years ago to prepare those called to the ministry.

Four premises underlie the fascinating history of Cuban theological education. The American historian Justo L. González relates in his book: 1) theological education is part of the very essence of the church, 2) it has been in crisis for the past centuries, 3) Some progress has been made, and 4) Studying your history will provide guidance for the future.

In almost all Christian history, Gonzalez points out, only a small percentage of church leaders had some form of formal theological training. However, this does not mean that the church was wandering aimlessly and without a way of classifying candidates for the pastorate. The churches provided some form of theological education to all believers, including, among others, candidates for ecclesial work.

In this vision, the whole Christian life is, among other things, a life of study and theological reflection. To avoid what Gonzalez calls "the canonization of ignorance" and "biblical imperialism," theological education today must prepare candidates to enter into dialogue with all areas of human knowledge, and to respond to contemporary contexts in theological and religious evolution. Biblical

Among the new challenges facing theological education is the "expansion of knowledge and its consequent specialization, a dangerous emphasis on separation from the world during the years of the seminar that makes it difficult for the candidate" to return to the broader community in the that the ministry takes place, and the tendency for the theological training became "a matter of instruction and not of formation." In addition, the arrival of the Internet has radical changes forced not only in the theological curriculum, but also in the pedagogical processes.

These are times for a "total reorientation and redefinition of theological studies". Seminars continue to adapt or risk being left behind.

6. Techniques that help the management of the institutes in their relationship with the churches.

Theological education is vital for the transmission of the Christian tradition from one generation to the next. Theological education is essential for the renewal and continuity of the church and its

leadership. Theological education is a matter of survival for an authentic and contextual mission of the church in contemporary contexts. Theological education is crucial for the interaction between the church and society where many issues demand a more acute position and position of Christianity.

We can visualize a future of theological education in which we find greater fragmentation of the Christian world, growing trends of religious fundamentalism and a serious lack of proper training of the Christian leadership of many rapidly growing churches in the southern hemisphere.

The following points that have been formulated in the context of the WOCATI meetings are intended to serve as a starting point for orientation and discussion for a process of reformulating our common mandate by considering key challenges and main tasks for education in the 21st century.

- 1) Adjust the institutional capacities of the theological faculties to meet the demand for theological education.
- 2) Question and reshape criteria for spending on education in churches, agencies and governments.
- 3) Facing the continuous proliferation of theological colleges and the need for a common community with standards and theological curricula.
- 4) Expand the circles of ecumenical dialogue in theological education, building bridges, rather than dividing, between Evangelical and Pentecostal institutions of theological education.
- 5) Improvement of quality in theological education. What are the common standards for the assurance and evaluation of quality in theological education in the 21st century? The definition given here was: "Quality in higher education is a multidimensional concept, which should encompass all its functions and activities: teaching and academic programs, research and scholarships, staffing, students, buildings, facilities, equipment, services to the community and the academic environment, internal self-evaluation and external review, conducted openly by independent specialists, if possible with international experience, are vital to improve quality "(Article 11).
- 6) Understand global migration, the changing ecclesial landscape and the consequences for inter-contextuality in theological education
- 7) Diversification of theological education with respect to changing patterns in the context of global ICT.
- 8) Strengthening regional centers of excellence in theological research and postgraduate studies.
- 9) Explore new models of faith-learning interface for theological education.
- 10) Promote new systems of global solidarity associations for theological education.

An event scenario theory helps to confront the uncertainty of permanent changes. Within the wide variety of tools that can be used within strategic planning, scenario planning has become today a methodological approach to predict and / or build a future. Through the identification of key trends, scenarios can be built with the purpose of improving the decision-making process and reducing the risk to organizations.

We trust in the hands of God, since everything depends on his grace and the work of his Spirit.