

- a) All the ingredients for international instability seem likely to remain. Ever improving communications make the world a more dangerous place.
- b) I see militant Islam as an even greater force. Indonesia with 140,000,000 Muslims is on our doorstep, and it has the largest Muslim population in the world. Also by then China's status as a mega-power will be becoming more obvious.
- c) I think that Christianity will grow as the ideology of the oppressed in Africa and South America but that generally in the world the opportunities for western missionaries will be limited. The real problems of underprivileged societies will not be met by voluntary organisations and it is doubtful if governments - unless moved by effective Christian and humanitarian pressure groups - will do much.
- d) Within Australia the R.C. Church will become the dominant religious institution. The charismatic movement may continue to grow and blur the denominational barriers. I suspect that its influence will extend in many ways well beyond its committed groupings. But society as a whole will be more pluralist and strident secularism is likely to be the ruling ideology. The possibility of relative economic decline may serve to sharpen the divisions and tensions in our community.

This is the context, as I see it for any reflection on future patterns of and needs in ministry:-

1. There is no future for vague religious and cultural Christianity. Leadership - and I take this to be both ordained and lay - will need greater professional training in the central disciplines of Biblical study, theology, and church history. This will be different from the past in that it would be more firmly and precisely articulated within the context of Australian culture.
2. As society sinks into ever deeper ignorance of the Christian faith, so the need for clear instruction and conversion will be greater than ever. I believe we will need more specific training for a preaching and teaching ministry with new styles appropriate to the more intimate approach of the media. What will be the future form of evangelism?
3. The protestant principle is that the gospel must reform the church, its traditions and practices. I suspect that the high-low polarisation of the church will not diminish. What I suspect may happen is that as evangelicalism continues to grow so it may become more diffuse and diluted as in the past. However I think clerical dress, robes etc., will become the exception. So much will depend on the kind of leadership which emerges. As this is so closely related to the levels of parish life I am glad to see some signs of renewed vigour and commitment.

4. There will be a rapid decline in establishment privileges in our society. Future church property may well be rated. Perhaps there will be greater competition from the cults and other religious groups. Do we need to think much more about the shape of ecumenical relationships particularly with the Uniting Church? Such issues will require qualities of resourcefulness and imagination in our leadership.
5. The training of Christian leadership will be in the context of an increasingly participatory society. Leadership will have to be trained to cope with constant and rapid change. This implies that our major field of endeavour will remain the middle classes and will involve greater adaptation to flexi hours, job sharing, early retirement etc. It may well accelerate a greater freeing up of the concept of ordination.
 - a) Parishes may be larger and fewer.
 - b) Ministry teams will be widespread.
 - c) Every member ministry will be normal.
 - d) There may need to be specialist ministries for the elderly. This may bring a resurgence of traditionalism to the church. On the other hand it will bring about a radically different style of ministry to the elderly brought about by a vastly longer period of life in retirement and the fact that they will be a new elderly without any formal background of basic Christian knowledge.
 - e) Women will be ordained and in places of leadership.
 - f) Non-stipendary forms of ministry will be widely acceptable.
 - g) A major challenge will therefore be for the ministry to be trained to hold diverse groups together and to create a sense of community.
6. It would seem likely that we will be an increasingly deeply divided nation - 2 nations on one continent: the rich and the poor. The unemployed may be heavily over represented in some racial groupings and there is potential for the most serious problems. This could well be our greatest evangelical challenge. We must ask ourselves how a theological college needs to change to prepare people for this task.
7. I see no way in which extension or correspondence courses will do other than supplement the need for strenuous full-time training in theology and evangelism. Because individual parishes do not have the resources to meet all the training needs of their members I believe that institutions like Ridley will continue to grow with an additional role of equipping the parishes as training centres.
8. Future leadership will need to be trained to understand other cultures and religions. To be effective this will require the interchange of personnel in theological colleges - graduate students from abroad, visiting lecturers etc.

9. The christian community will expect high standards for its trained leadership. I believe four years full time training is essential for adequate and imaginative leadership. It may well be that the model of medical studies may be followed by which the students have significant field placements followed by a return to full-time study in the course of their preparation for leadership. Such a system might well replace the present college and curacy pattern.
10. From the business world we will learn that it is essential for Christian leaders to have a continuous programme of theological education as a regular and professional requirement. Again I see much greater flexibility in our attitudes to training and acquiring skills. However, I believe it will be important that continuing education programmes stress new biblical and theological insights as well as practical skills. For all this theological colleges must grow in order to provide for the church at large the necessary resources.

*Paper read at discussion between Moore College and
Ridley Staff at the conclusion of the Australian College
of Theology Conference - on Friday, May 17, 1985.*