



The Big Picture

Murray Capill
Principal

It's easy to lose sight of the big picture. We can get so close to what we are doing, that we forget why we are doing it. A mother can be so caught up with the demands of feeding babies, changing nappies, disciplining children or running kids around that she loses the big picture of what raising a child for the Lord is all about.



A factory worker can be so wearied by the dreary repetitiveness of his job that he loses sight of what it means to work for the Lord wherever He has placed us. Similarly, in theological education, we can get so caught up with preparing lectures, marking assignments and complying with government regulations that we forget what theological education is really all about.

So what is it all about? Perhaps it's helpful to start with what it is not really about. It is not chiefly about offering degrees and diplomas. It is not about running a viable business enterprise in the competitive theological education marketplace. It is not just about providing courses in Bible, theology and ministry. It is not fundamentally about academic integrity, educational excellence or professional performance in the tertiary education sector. Any one of these can easily dominate the thinking and focus of theological educators.

To understand what it is all about we have to step well back. Theological education is a subset of something far larger. It really fits within the church's work of forming people in Christ so that by the power of the Holy Spirit they are equipped to serve with their God-given gifts for God's glory alone. That's a bit of a mouthful, but each part of the mouthful is important.

First, it is important to view theological education as a specialized aspect of the church's work. The Bible never mandates the establishment of theological colleges. Rather, it charges churches, and especially pastors and teachers, with equipping the saints for works of service (Eph 4:11-12). There are many ways churches do this, but given the limited resources of most churches in some areas of specialized

knowledge (like Greek, Hebrew, in-depth exegesis, serious theological reflection, and so on), they often benefit from accessing the specialized resources of a theological college for some of their equipping work. A theological college is therefore a servant of the church in its equipping role.

But the church's work of equipping people also has a wider context. Today the focus is often on the practical aspects of equipping. We want to see people develop skills for ministry. But there is a more foundational training that must take place. The church's task is to help form people in Christ. Only as people live in Christ, and He in them, are they enabled by his indwelling Spirit to serve God in a biblical and life-giving way. Skills are simply ways in which life in Christ is expressed.

That means training ministries and theological education are sub-sets of the greater work of spiritual formation – the work of seeing people formed in Christ to live for God. We need to remember that at the RTC, just as churches need to remember that in all their teaching and training. Our foremost concern should be to see people growing in Christ. That means all teaching and training must take place in the context of godly example, prayerfulness, modelling of the faith, absolute dependence on the Holy Spirit, and faith-filled reading of and reflection on the Word of God. Imparting head knowledge or teaching practical ministry skills is never enough. We need to help cultivate a heart knowledge of the triune God. All theological study must have an utterly God-ward focus. In studying theology, exegesis or church history, the aim is not so much to know about those subjects, but to know God by means of understanding what He has said and how He works. Such heart knowledge of God is the great goal of theological education.





As men and women mature in Christ, they are enabled by the Spirit to serve God with the gifts He has given them. That is where practical training comes in. It is an outworking of our knowledge of God and our desire to serve him. But again, this cannot merely be done by putting people through a course. It involves the more significant work of helping people identify and cultivate their gifts and deploy them in God-honouring ways, with his strength.

To return to my earlier mouthful: theological education fits within the church's work of forming people in Christ, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit they are equipped to serve him with their God-given gifts, for God's glory alone.

Providing such training is an awesome privilege and responsibility. A university can put someone through a course, and, if they pass, give them a degree at the end. Technically a theological college can do the same, but then we would miss the entire point of theological education. Our great challenge is to partner with churches in the work of helping people know God through Spirit-enabled relationship with Christ, and in knowing him, love and serve him with spiritual vigour and godly skill, according to the gifts and opportunities He gives.

It's good to step back and see the big picture.

Deputation to WA

John de Hoog
OT Lecturer



Having begun a new life as a lecturer at the RTC at the beginning of this year, I was assigned to Western Australia as my deputation "patch" for 2011. I was privileged to be able to visit WA for ten days in July, which allowed me not only to visit several of the churches but also to attend my nephew's engagement party.

My very generous hosts during my stay were Laurie and Alie Kruize, who enhanced the visit immeasurably through their warm hospitality. The only "hitch" was being attacked by a dog as I was out walking one day, which resulted in wrecking a pair of tracksuit pants but only a small loss of skin from my leg. The dog was on a leash, and when the owner

saw what had been done she was momentarily horrified, then quickly ran off.

Sundays

I was able to lead services at four churches on the two Sundays I was there: Gateway, Gosnells, Willetton and Perth. I found the sense of welcome and the general atmosphere of the services at all the churches very encouraging. The gathering of the Lord's people for enthusiastic worship and for spiritual conversation afterwards is a sure sign that the Lord is at work, and it was good to experience the work of the Holy Spirit in that way. All the churches I visited clearly demonstrate a desire for reaching out with the gospel in different ways; may the Lord continue to press that desire into us and give us many opportunities in the coming days.

After the service on the first Sunday we were invited to have lunch with Mrs Smit, Peter's Mum, whom I've known for more than twenty years; it was very special to hear her speak so highly of her pastor, who is her own son. After the morning service on the second Sunday it was good to meet with Ross Patterson and to hear of his ongoing ministry in Kalgoorlie.

Besides the Sunday services I was also generously hosted for meals (or coffee) and conversation by John and Nicky de Jongh, Peter and Sugi Kossen, Ben and Kate Murphy, Ollie Heggens and Joe Vermeulen. (The meeting with Joe was at Koorong, which is such a dangerous place to be for a bibliophile. The coffee was good.)

Other Highlights

One highlight for me was to be able to visit Australind, have lunch with Peter and Sugi, see the new church building and its very strategic location, and hear of exciting plans for the future. Since then Craig van Echten has received and accepted a call to Australind; may the Lord richly bless that congregation in the years ahead.

Quite different but also very encouraging was some time spent with Ollie Heggens in Forestville. The new church planting work there, using a gospel community, home church type model in these early days, seems to me to have the right people in place in Ollie and Nadia. Their contacts with and their ability to interact with community people is a wonderful asset for the work; may the Holy Spirit be at work to change people's lives.

Public Lecture

On the Wednesday evening I had the daunting task (a privilege really, but still daunting) of giving a public lecture at Gosnells on the topic "The Land – Israel, Palestine or what?" The lecture was an attempt to briefly outline some of the history of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians and then to give a biblical assessment of the importance and place of the Land today. My emphasis was on Jesus

Christ as the fulfillment of all Old Testament institutions, including the Land as the “place” for the people of God to live with God. Laurie and Alie had taken the initiative to create some fliers for the event which were distributed in the churches beforehand. The lecture was very well-attended, with about 100 people there; I was very grateful for the Lord’s enabling.

Training for Ministry

One of the encouraging facets of the trip was to hear of the number of people doing further training for ministry, either at the local church level through BILD courses and other initiatives, or through attendance at Trinity Theological College at Leederville. I pray that some of those who are training in this way (and many others) will spend some time in the east at the RTC as well.

Prayer

- Give thanks for the vitality and desire for gospel work that the Lord has planted in the CRCA churches in WA. Pray for new initiatives in gospel work – a new church planting work from Gateway, the community work at Forestville, working towards greater evangelistic impact at Australind and Perth and many other plans for the future.
- Pray for the people who are relatively “new” in WA or in “new” work there finding the Lord’s plan and direction for them: David and Leonie Groenenboom at Gateway, Ben and Kate Murphy at Willetton, Ollie and Nadia Hegggers at Forestville, Craig van Echten at Australind, and Peter and Suzanne Smit in their new direction from Gateway.
- Pray that the Lord would continue to give vitality to the churches in WA and continue to raise up new people for gospel ministry.



Interdisciplinary Studies Week

Alastair McEwen
OT Lecturer (emeritus)



At a theological college, while good material is being given in each section of the overall curriculum, it can be too easy for the different subjects not to be seen as relating to one another. Thus, there can be a failure to apply what each has to offer in a coherent way to practical issues of the Christian life. There is

generally very good interaction between the lecturers at RTC, including cross disciplinary contributions, but to seek even greater cohesion, from 16 - 20 May this year, the RTC held an Interdisciplinary Studies Week. The topic: Dealing with the Alien and Stranger. All students and faculty were involved.

The purpose of the week was to seek to apply Scripture truth to current situations and also to examine a relevant topic with input from the different disciplines taught at the College – Old and New Testaments, Pastoral Theology, Missions, and World-views. Monday was allocated for students to do preparatory reading, while Friday was for assignment work, pulling together insights from the other three days. Examples of the talks given were *Do Jews have dealing with the Samaritans?* (NT), *A Biblical Understanding of Nations and Citizenship* (World Views), *Dealing with Strangers in the Church* (Pastoral Theology) and *Strangers, an Opportunity for Outreach* (Missions).

With respect to the topic, the scope for application was wide. How does the Lord want us to relate to so-called boat-people? How should we interact with the subcultures of our society – ethnic, socio-economic and/or religious? How are we to deal with strangers who come into our services (and sit in ‘our’ usual pew)? What does the Lord want us to do about our cliques that unconsciously exclude new people or those who may be somewhat different from our usual circle of friends?

To increase our awareness of important issues, as well as keeping us grounded in current realities, two guest speakers, both from the CRCA, provided informed perspectives on Australian politics and refugees. Senator Eric Abetz, of the Liberal Party, defended the opposition’s stance on off-shore processing of asylum seekers, setting it in a context wider than boats and TV images. Rev Ben Aldridge challenged this position with an emphasis on accepting more of those who



flee hardship in their countries of origin. These contributions were robust, as would be expected, but without any sacrifice of civility or Christian charity. They added a new and useful perspective to the usual college program.

Success? There is no doubt that awareness was raised at many levels. Discussions over shared meals were often vigorous, hopefully producing light as well as heat. Assignments were dutifully completed – and successfully. But ultimate success of such a venture will depend on the extent to which the insights gained become realities in our lives. May we all be more obedient to that second great commandment to love our neighbours, whatever their origin or life circumstance, as ourselves.

Student Reflection

Mary Marchesi
RTC Graduate



My years at the RTC have been the most challenging and fulfilling years of my Christian walk. It was a period of great spiritual and personal growth marked with many, many challenges. Initially, I didn't have any clear direction of where this would all lead but I knew that the biblical and theological grounding I received would prepare me well for any ministry work.

Through the SEBL (Supervised Educational Based Learning), in the Bachelor of Ministry course, I had the opportunity of gaining knowledge and skills in the areas of school chaplaincy, court chaplaincy, and chaplaincy work at the Geelong Withdrawal Unit; working with people who struggle with substance abuse. Through these experiences the Lord placed a burden on my heart for the marginalized; especially those afflicted through drug and alcohol addiction.

Last year I had the great privilege of working with 'at risk' young adults who are experiencing difficulties such as substance abuse, homelessness, unemployment or involvement with the Youth Justice System. Currently, I am working for the Salvation Army as the COATS (Community Offenders Advisory Treatment Service) Counsellor. In this role I provide Drug and Alcohol Counselling to clients referred by the Department of Corrections. Apart from Drug and Alcohol counselling, the area of spirituality and

meaning of life questions often arise and are explored. At times I feel totally inadequate and overwhelmed by some of the challenges that I am faced with and I often wonder if I am making any difference to the lost souls who are in bondage to their addictions. I continue to pray and try to be a living example of our Saviour's love and grace.

The ministry of 'presence' is not only a theological concept, it is a pastoral skill. It is something we do because of what we believe in. Paul uses the word 'ambassadors' in 2 Cor. 5:20-6:1 to define what it means to live incarnationally. It means to represent Christ our King to those around us. The Word may not always accompany the deeds, and ultimately people need to receive Jesus as their Saviour to find a relationship with God the Father. He is the only one who can give them purpose and meaning, but I continue to trust in the Sovereignty of our God in the lives of my clients and those that I come into contact with. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the faculty, and all those who have walked beside me, prayed with me and for me, encouraged and mentored me and equipped me for His Service.

Preaching Conference 2011

Steve Voorwinde
NT Lecturer

"Preaching and the Work of the Holy Spirit" was the theme for the RTC's tenth annual Preaching Conference held at the end of September.

The topic was of interest to a wide range of people representing different denominations and Christian traditions and coming from most Australian states as well as from New Zealand. Once again the event proved to be encouraging in-service training for preachers. It also provided an insightful glimpse behind the scenes for interested laypersons and encouraged them to pray more fervently and listen more discerningly.

The opening address came from Principal Murray Capill who preached on Paul's claim that his preaching did not come "simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit, and with deep conviction" (1 Thess 1:5). This message, entitled, "More than Words," set the tone for the entire conference. Time and again the audience was made aware that our preaching is nothing without the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. To be effective our preaching is





totally dependent on the work of the Spirit. Later in the conference Murray spoke on "Preaching on the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit." Not only should the Holy Spirit be the power behind our preaching, he should also be the subject of our preaching. Particularly when it comes to application people need to be constantly reminded that they can obey the message only with the help of the Spirit.

Old Testament lecturer John de Hoog spoke for the first time at one of these conferences. His maiden speech was on "The Holy Spirit's Work in the Old Testament." John's focus was on the Spirit's work in the ordinary believer. He concluded that the Spirit transformed the lives of his people as much back then as he does today. Since Pentecost, however, God is doing throughout the world in a deeper and clearer way what he had been doing in Israel before Pentecost.



"The Illumination of the Holy Spirit" was the subject of Steve Voorwinde's lecture. Based on 1 Cor 2:6-16, 1 John 2:18-27 and Eph 1:15-22 his argument was that the focus of the Spirit's illumination is on the message of the cross, the person of Jesus, the hope of glory, the church as God's precious possession and the power of God. After

his lecture Steve was interviewed by Murray about the recent release of his book *Jesus' Emotions in the Gospels*. After this official book launch many copies were sold, and they are now readily available in Australia.



Our guest speaker was Dr Andrew Young, the former Principal of Grace Theological College in Auckland. He spoke on openness and responsiveness to the Holy Spirit in preaching, a subject with which he was greatly familiar not only from personal experience but also from his extensive reading. In his presentations Andrew sought to steer a clear

path between the rationalist tendencies of some and what he called the "super-supernaturalist" tendencies of others. This proved to be a daunting challenge, but being a man of deep spirituality with a profound knowledge of both the teaching of Scripture and the history of doctrine, Andrew gave helpful insights that were true to both Scripture and experience.

Our missions lecturer, Phillip Scheepers, spoke on "The Spirit and Evangelistic Preaching." He emphasised the vital role that the Holy Spirit has in evangelism. In such settings the Spirit's presence can neither be manufactured nor assumed. Calling people to faith, regenerating them and enabling them



to confess Christ is the work of the Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit evangelism is a hopeless enterprise. Hence evangelistic preaching should be done in full dependence on the Holy Spirit.

In line with the consistent emphasis of this conference a prayer meeting was held for the reviving work of the Holy Spirit. Our prayer was not only for the revival of preaching but also for revival of all the churches represented at the conference and for a great outpouring of God's Spirit in Australia and New Zealand. May such ongoing prayer for revival be the ongoing legacy of this conference!



Special Announcement

The Board of the Reformed Theological College is delighted to announce that Rev Dr Martin Williams has been offered the position of Lecturer in New Testament and Greek at the College.



Following discussions with the Faculty, the CRCA and RPCA Deputies, and with input from the RCNZ Deputies, Dr Williams was interviewed by the Board. The Board was unanimous in agreeing that he is well suited to the position. His theological views, ministry experience and gifts fit very well within the RTC context and the Board believes he will be a great blessing to our work of ministry training and theological education.

Dr Williams holds a BMin, a MTh and a PhD in New Testament, with his doctoral dissertation on "The Doctrine of Salvation in the First Letter of Peter: A Theological-Critical Study." As well as being a competent scholar, he has previous lecturing experience, has been engaged in a mission context in French speaking Cameroon under the auspices of a Korean Presbyterian Church, and is currently engaged in pastoral ministry in Milton, New Zealand.

Martin is married to Joy and they have three children, Jonathan, Sarah and Hannah.

The Board is deeply thankful to God for answering our many prayers for a suitable Faculty member. We anticipate that Dr Williams will begin at the College in January 2012.

Task3: The Next Phase

Phillip Scheepers

Missions Lecturer/ Task3 Coordinator

We are now in the position to look back on the first two years of Task3 and we can do so with a great deal of gratitude. Here are some brief highlights from this part of our ministry:

- BILD training sessions are being run in CRCA churches all across Australia. It is our hope and prayer that many of the participants will eventually 'upgrade' to full participation in Task3.
- We hope to welcome the first student who went through the church based phase of Task3 to the College at the beginning of 2012.
- There is sustained interest in Task3 from across Australia and it has the potential to develop into a significant pathway for those seeking to enter the ordained ministry of the CRCA.

We have now run training for all four required BILD units here at the RTC. To make sure that we give as many individuals and churches the opportunity to participate in this training we will be conducting the second round of training in a slightly different way:

- Training for the Acts course (which is the 'feeder' course into the rest of the BILD units) will be rotated among the state capitals. This will give local pastors the opportunity to attend the training without having to travel to Geelong. Pastors from other states would obviously still be welcome to attend these decentralized training sessions. The first such training session will most probably take place in Brisbane in February 2012 (Lord willing).
- Faculty decided to consolidate the training for the next three BILD Modules (Pauline, Leadership and Shepherding) into a single week long session. This means that pastors will only have to come to Geelong once, instead of the three times that was previously required, leading to obvious time and cost savings. The first combined Pauline, Leadership and Shepherding training course will take place from 13-17 February 2012 here at the RTC (Lord willing).



Steve Voorwinde farewelled in style

John de Hoog



2011 marks the end of an era in the life of the RTC – the end of Steve Voorwinde’s 27 years of service as Lecturer in New Testament (as someone pointed out, one year for each NT book). The College community celebrated and gave thanks to the Lord for Steve’s considerable achievements; the occasion was the 2011 College Dinner held on 21 October.

The evening was marked by thankfulness to God, speeches, musical items (including two from Steve himself, a new record) and much gentle humour as colleagues, family and students expressed their deep affection of and respect for Steve. Some of the highlights were:

Steve’s wife Nancy laid out her considerable retirement plans for Steve in great detail. Steve won’t have a moment to spare to reconsider his decision to retire.



Steve’s children Lisa and Michael made wonderful contributions. Lisa and her husband Matt, with Steve and Nancy’s grandson, were present and exposed several unknown truths about Steve, including a demonstration of his daily exercise routine. Michael and his wife Becky had sent a video tribute from New York which contained ten things they love about Steve, including his daily lunch diet of Vegemite and lettuce sandwiches.



Alastair McEwen, who officially retired at last year’s dinner after even longer service at the College, reflected with love and humour on the many years during which the “Steve and Al Show” dominated College life.



Students and friends presented several items which honoured Steve, Tony Deenick represented the RTC Board in presenting Steve and Nancy with parting gifts and then Murray Capill, who had been our master of ceremonies, handed over to Steve for his “right of reply”. Steve graciously bid the College farewell (except that on Monday morning he was back since the Semester wasn’t quite over).



The joy and thankfulness that characterised the 2011 College Dinner befitted the gratitude we have to the Lord for his gracious provision for the College community and for Steve over the last 27 years.





PRINTED MATTER ONLY

POSTAGE

PAID

AUSTRALIA

If undeliverable, return to:

Reformed Theological College
125 Pigdons Road
Waurin Ponds Victoria 3216
Australia



www.rtc.vic.edu.au

RTC FOCUS

November 2011



raise...equip...support

The College's vision is to *raise, equip and support a generation of leaders for the advance of the Gospel*. In order to do this some very real needs have to be met and each year the College's expenses grow; the 2011 budget is about \$1.2M. Currently, 45% of our income is generated from the utilisation of our property, 20% from

student tuition fees, and 30% comes from the supporting churches and membership dues. For the balance (5% or \$60,000), we rely upon God's providence and the generosity of faithful supporters.

The RTC faces constant financial challenges as we expand our programs and seek to continue providing quality educational and vocational training. Upgrades to computer and IT requirements, new websites, additional staff, and the ever-increasing cost of compliance and accreditation, place a heavy load on the annual budget.

Will you consider partnering with the College to continue the work of training and equipping people for Christian ministry in Australia, New Zealand and many other countries?

Will you encourage men and women to prayerfully consider enrolling at the RTC?

Finally, would you pray for God's guidance, provision and wisdom for the College's Board, faculty and staff?

Without the leading, grace and favour of Almighty God, nothing of value will result.

Solo Dei Gloria

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

2 Timothy 2:15 (niv)



Yes, I would like to help the College...

All donations over \$2 are tax-deductible in Australia

Name Date

Address State Postcode

Telephone Email

I would like to support the RTC with a one-off donation \$50 \$100 \$500 \$1000 other

I would like to be a Monthly Donor \$25 \$50 \$100 other

I authorise the RTC to debit my credit card (please tick) MasterCard VISA

Name on Card CCV Expiry Date

Card Number

Signature

Please send me information about leaving a bequest to the RTC in my Will