

DOCTORAL-LEVEL THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION IN AFRICA FOR EVANGELICALS: A PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT

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Abstract

African Evangelicals wishing to study in doctoral-level programmes with shared theological convictions now have credible options on the continent, an observation that points to the remarkable development in the deepening and intellectual maturity of the evangelical movement in Africa. With these options available, the advantages of theological study within the African context can be realized at the doctoral level. Credible programmes now exist in Ghana, Nigeria, Central African Republic, Kenya, and a newly inaugurated programme in South Africa. The author makes several observations on evangelical theological education in Africa and then concludes with suggestions for further enhancement of these programmes.

Written five years ago, this overview would have been much shorter. It would have been limited to a discussion of the most favourable options in African national universities (with some weighting towards the more theologically conservative programmes in South Africa). Distinctly

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¹ I gratefully acknowledge the contribution of several colleagues who commented extensively on earlier drafts of this paper including Stephanie Black, Paul Bowers, Philippe Emedi, Jason Ferenczi, Bulus Galadima, Sid Garland, Steven Hardy, Judy Hill, George Janvier, Danny McCain, James Miller, and Rich Starcher. Others have helpfully responded to my specific inquiries, and their contributions are acknowledged in corresponding footnotes. I am also grateful for the contributions I received from the participants in the AIM/SIM Consultation for Theological Educators in Southern Africa (19-23 March 2007, Honeydew, South Africa), at which the major points of this paper were first presented.

evangelical programmes at the doctoral level were just being initiated, with most still in the planning stages. But, during recent years the number of options has grown fairly dramatically, particularly with regard to credible PhD programmes in biblical and theological studies in our African evangelical seminaries.² Before describing options now available (both distinctly evangelical and not), it might be helpful to underscore the advantages of doing doctoral studies on the continent. I will then offer some additional observations regarding doctoral studies within Africa before concluding with possible ways to enhance what we are already doing in these programmes.

Why Study in Africa?

It is widely recognized among us that sending our best and brightest to schools for training in the West has not always worked out as planned.³ If we took a survey of the disadvantages of long-term overseas study among senior Africans heading up our theological colleges, the following broad assessment might well result.

1. Failure of graduates to return from overseas. By pursuing advanced degrees overseas, men and women have to leave their country, organisation, and, in some cases family, for lengthy periods of time. This separation may contribute to the graduate not returning to the country of origin, the well-known "brain-drain" phenomenon.

² This paper focuses on "academic" theological studies in particular, that is, in contrast to "professional" ministerial studies associated at the doctoral level with the Doctor of Ministry degree. While the DMin is less well-known in Africa compared to the PhD, there are a few institutions which are now offering credible programmes, with others in the planning stages.

³ This is acknowledged, for instance, by Louise Kretzschmar ("Baptist Theological Education in Africa, Particularly South Africa," *Baptist History and Heritage* 36 [2001]: 207-8) and R. Paul Stevens and Brian Stelek ("Equipping Equippers Cross-Culturally: An Experiment in the Appropriate Globalization of Theological Education," *Missiology* 21 [1993]: 34-6).

(a) Perhaps the main cause of a failure to return is that the children of the student become familiar with the culture of the host country and benefit from the educational system. Students with younger children seem to be able to better overcome this problem, compared to students going overseas with children in their teens. Retaining the student's family in their own country may be acceptable for shorter periods of time (particularly with the provision of visitation by the student), but the disadvantages of this strategy over a longer period make it unwise for most cases.

(b) Sometimes graduates are offered legitimate ministry and teaching opportunities by churches and schools within the host country.⁴

(c) A lengthy period of separation often leads to loosened ties and decreased loyalties to the sending institution (which may not be the source for most of the funding for the overseas studies).

(d) I have noticed a number of cases where graduates may return, but then after a few years return to the host country, mostly due to family issues or an inability to "fit" back into their original culture or ministry.

(e) We must also admit that graduates and their wives sometimes lose their sense of calling while in the overseas context.

On the other hand, we must take note of the John Stott Ministries -Langham Scholars Programme. Uniquely, Langham appears to have an excellent rate of return among their scholars.⁵ What are they doing right? And, is it transferable to other scholarship programmes?

⁴ Of course, this can happen when a student goes for further studies within Africa as well. I have not seen any research to compare the frequency to that of students who go to the West, but anecdotal evidence would suggest that it is not as common.

⁵ Only 2 of the 100 plus Langham scholars have failed to return to their home countries after their studies. <<http://www.johnstott.org/programs/scholars/>>, accessed 8 March 2007.

Some schools ask faculty who they are sending overseas for training to sign a bond which commits the student to return and spend a stated amount of time in the sending institution after return. Scholarship programmes also regularly ask a student for a commitment to return. Some schools in the West offer scholarships upon condition of return after graduation. I have not seen any research on the effect of such agreements or bonds upon the rate of return. Anecdotal evidence suggests they are helpful, but are not without failure.

2. High cost of overseas study. It is not unusual for a single student to spend \$30,000 a year in studies and living expenses in the West. Added to this is the cost of transportation. And this figure is increased if the family joins him or her. While the cost of a doctoral programme is not inexpensive in Africa, for most programmes it would be a fraction of the alternative. Some organisations and donors are made aware of stewardship issues when they realise the difference in cost.

3. Difficulty of obtaining visas. By my observation, obtaining visas for study in the West has become increasingly difficult for many African nationalities. The rise of the threat of terrorism has perhaps contributed to the difficulty. In some cases, visas will be granted to the student, but not his or her family, leading to other sorts of undesirable results.

4. Separation from family. Due to visa or financial obstacles, it is common that the student proceed to the West for further education having to leave his or her family behind. Such separation of the husband and wife for long periods of time is neither healthy nor cultural (in traditional society). It is important in the African family for the father to be part of the family decisions at home. Often times the father or mother are at that stage in life where there are children in the home, and this separation results in absentee fathers or mothers for extended periods. Though such family fragmentation can accompany doctoral studies even within Africa, by my observation it is not as common nor, when it occurs, for such lengthy periods.

5. Problem of relevance. Men and women who do advanced degree work in institutions that are oriented primarily to one dominant culture, report that their education does not serve them well on return to their own context. Most often the programmes offered abroad are not answering the questions

that are being asked by the African church. It is not only missionaries who find it difficult to contextualise the content of their courses for a different setting than that in which the subject was learned.

6. Some have also noted the situation of those coming back who are not well received back into the life and ministry of the host church or institution. They may very willing return, but through no fault of their own, they are never re-assimilated in useful ways by the denomination or institution, apparently mostly owing to jealousy or fear on the part of older leaders.

7. We versus they. Is it possible that I have detected among some Africans who have had the opportunity to study in the West, a somewhat condescending attitude towards those holding doctorates earned in Africa? Of course, anyone is susceptible to this temptation, that is, anyone who feels that their education, experience, or financial resources make them superior to another, but perhaps we should count this as another disadvantage to overseas diplomas.

8. Ministry experience. Africans studying in the West often do not have the opportunities for significant ministry during their studies. The Provost of the Jos ECWA Theological Seminary (JETS) did janitorial duties during his sojourn at a Western institution during his PhD studies.⁶ In contrast, current JETS PhD students all teach one undergraduate seminary course a semester while being mentored in the development of their pedagogical skills.

9. Disappointment in the West. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some African students are disillusioned with their experience of Western spirituality during their times of study. Unfortunately, they can be the objects of racism (even in some churches) and some detect a colonial or paternalistic mentality on the part of their teachers and other students. While most overcome these unfortunate sides of Western culture and Christianity, a few become embittered and antagonistic.

⁶ This is not to demean manual labour, but only to point out that African students in Western study programmes do not often have the opportunity for ministry in the areas of their training.

On the other hand, a formal survey of African seminary leaders would also surface advantages of doctoral study in the West - advantages many of our leaders know through personal experience.

I outline these advantages for two reasons. While I am persuaded of the overall benefit of African alternatives, there may be compelling reasons in particular cases to strongly consider a Western PhD. Secondly, when we later consider how to enhance our current African PhD programmes, there may be ways to incorporate particular benefits of a Western doctoral programme into those now be offered in the African context.

1. People who spend their entire lives in one locale are often parochial in their focus and outlook. Probably the most important benefit of studying in the West is that it enables the African to gain a broader worldview and a depth of understanding about other cultures. The African studying in the West is exposed to different cultures, a different experience of the Church, and different expressions of what it means to be a Christian, all contributing to the student's development as a global Christian with decreased importance given to exclusive tribal sentiments.

The results of such an exposure in the West can also be far reaching in the student's future ministry. Different church and ministry models, some of which are transferable, can be observed. The visitor may be challenged with different standards of excellence. It may contribute to the development of a vision for world missions. If the graduate would be involved in communications with the West, then it could be helpful in relating more effectively (for instance, in correspondence with donors). Not least, exposure to Western culture would helpful for African scholars who will be engaging their Western counterparts in the international world of academia.

2. Not only does this exposure facilitate understanding Western culture, it may be that one cannot properly understand Africa without experiencing and understanding the West.⁷ First, this is because modern Africa itself is so highly westernized (beyond what people are normally willing to notice).

⁷ A point raised by Paul Bowers, personal correspondence, 12 March 2007.

And secondly, this is because one usually understands one's own context better by experience outside of it, by being able to view it from without and not only from within.

3. The resources for rigorous scholarship and research are concentrated in Western institutions. Libraries are larger and more current, particularly in the area of periodical resources.⁸ Ironically, the best collections of and most convenient access to Africana literature are found in Western, not African, institutions.⁹ And, some faculty in specialised departments of Western institutions are well-equipped to supervise topics relevant to the African context.

4. Some programmes of study are not being offered in Africa, or at least not in a way that is satisfactory to the student and the organisation that is sending him. The PhD in Theological Education supervised by Belfast Bible College's Institute for Theological Education (in association with The Queen's University)¹⁰ has a comparable programme in Central America,¹¹ but not Africa. The Ethiopian Church has a continued need for research in

⁸ One may think here of Pitts Theological Library (Candler School of Theology, Atlanta, Georgia). "With more than 800 theological publications from almost 40 countries, the Sub-Saharan African Periodicals Collection at Pitts is one of the world's larger collections of periodical literature documenting the history as well as social and cultural aspects of religious institutions in Sub-Saharan Africa since the 1970s" <<http://www.pitts.emory.edu/Sub-SaharanAfrica/>>, accessed 4 April 2007.

⁹ For example, the internationally acclaimed Harold Turner Collection at the University of Birmingham provides incomparable resources for the study of African Initiated Churches and New Religious Movements. "This Collection has over 26,000 documents on its first concern: the subjects of African Initiated Churches and analogous movements in other continents, particularly in Third World contexts" <http://www.olrc.bham.ac.uk/special/collection_turner.htm >, accessed 4 April 2007.

¹⁰ <http://www.theologicaleducation.org/courses_description.php>, accessed 8 March 2007.

¹¹ I am thinking here of the Doctorado en Educacion Teológica offered by the Seminario Teológico Centroamericano (<<http://www.seteca.edu/estudios/maestria.htm>>, accessed 8 March 2007).

the area of patristics, and yet the African continent has no school capable of training Ethiopian scholars in this area at the highest level. It is possible that the Trinity Evangelical Divinity School PhD in Intercultural Studies, popular among African students, still has no close counterpart among African schools.¹²

On the other hand, the number of areas of studies absent in Africa is decreasing as schools expand their programmes. For instance, several years ago one could not find an evangelical doctoral programme in Islamics. An African scholar would probably consider attending Fuller Theological Seminary for a PhD in this area. Now there is a credible programme at the University of South Africa (UNISA) (where there is an evangelical supervisor available in this subject), with others in the planning stages at the Faculté de Théologie Évangélique de Bangui (FATEB) and the Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology (NEGST).

5. While studying in the West, most students are able to gather prayer and financial support of local congregations and Christians. Sometimes this support continues as they return to ministry in their countries.

6. African students returning from the West report that one of the most significant benefits for them was the opportunity to form a foundational network with scholars from the West, from other parts of Africa, and from other non-Western countries, all of whom came for the same study programme. This network, grown in the programmes of TEDS or Fuller, for instance, provides them with an invaluable resource for future assistance and collaboration in ministry.

7. Students who study in the West are sometimes able to find major scholarship funds through the schools which are offering them admission. The Billy Graham Scholarship at Wheaton Graduate School is a well-known example at the masters' level. It is often the case that the selection of the school by the student is primarily influenced by the availability of

¹² <<http://www.tiu.edu/divinity/academics/phd/ics/>>, accessed 8 March 2007.

scholarship assistance.¹³ Due to such scholarships one may find in a few cases that study in the West may actually cost less for the student than if she were to remain in Africa.

8. From the point of view of the sending institution, it is advantageous to have faculty who have studied in a variety of settings and institutions. In developing a faculty, academic in-breeding or over reliance on the doctoral programme of one institution or on doctorates awarded by one denomination's institutions should be avoided. Thus, there may be institutional benefits to judicious use of Western PhD programmes in faculty development.

9. We may think not only of the advantage of the student to exposure to the West, but also of the West's benefit by exposure to Africa brought by a doctoral student in their midst.¹⁴

Considering these advantages, there is still a place for the unusually gifted student who can be better equipped through the incomparable resources of library and faculty in some Western programmes. However, in reality, there are very few students from either Africa or the West who can truly benefit from the academic rigor and resources found in superior Western programmes. Most students, even at doctoral level, will find the resources they need for credible doctoral research in selected African institutions.

Despite the advantages offered by studying in the West, on balance I am persuaded of the overwhelming benefit of training most students for doctoral studies within their ministry context (or as close as possible to their

¹³ Rich Starcher states, "The foremost consideration in students' choice of a doctoral program was achievability. Students would compromise on program context and content if an alternate program was deemed achievable. The most important aspect of achievability was affordability, . . ." ("Africans in Pursuit of a Theological Doctorate: A Grounded Theory Study of Theological Doctoral Program Design in a Non-Western Context" [unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Nebraska, 2003], p. 97). Accessible at <www.richstarcher.com>, using the "Rich's Ph.D. Dissertation" link.

¹⁴ Probably the most significant factor in my coming to Nigeria after seminary were the several Nigerian classmates in my American seminary.

context), if at all possible. For most potential doctoral students there are good alternatives within the African context, and it is to those I now turn.

Options for Doctoral Study

I have divided the options for doctoral study for evangelicals within Africa into six categories.

1. African evangelical doctoral programmes

It is nearly incredible to note that five years ago, this would not be a category of options. Masters level programmes on the continent were only then establishing their credibility. But, at this point I am aware of five African evangelical theological institutions which offer credible PhD programmes in biblical or theological studies.

a. Jos ECWA Theological Seminary (JETS)

JETS is a 25-year old institution located in Jos, Nigeria. The proprietor is ECWA (the Evangelical Church of West Africa), the denomination resulting from SIM's work in Nigeria, and SIM continues to participate in the institution through involvement of six expatriate faculty. It is a large school with approximately 350 students involved in full-time undergraduate and masters' degrees. It has accreditation only for its bachelors' degree (through affiliation with the University of Jos). In August 2006 it began a three-year full-time residential doctoral programme in Biblical Studies with five students. The first year is "taught" courses, the second year will be seminars, and the final year will be for the dissertation. Strong skills in both Greek and Hebrew are required for admission. JETS has a very competent faculty in biblical and theological studies (seven PhDs and more coming after study leave) with additional PhDs in Education and Intercultural Studies. JETS will likely begin with another cohort of PhD students in August 2008 - in Theological Studies. The school's current library holdings would not be considered a strength. However, the school has invested in laptops for each doctoral student, a good internet connection, and students are being taught extensively on how to use

electronic tools (including Bible Works)¹⁵ for biblical and theological research. JETS has intentionally fostered collegiality among the students and faculty, and is using mentors to nurture spirituality and promote ministry skills development. The cost per student per year is approximately \$5,000 (including room, but not board).¹⁶

b. Nigeria Baptist Theological Seminary (NBTS)

For over a century NBTS has been training church leaders on a large and beautiful campus in southern Nigeria. The seminary was begun through the mission work of the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, but little of that linkage formally remains (though they are now trying to recruit two IMB faculty). It operates at the first degree, masters, and doctoral levels with a total of 360 students. Approximately 140 of these are at the masters level, 18 are in the DMin programme, and 24 are PhD students. The PhD is offered in either Theology or Religious Education. The Theology programme is designed with two years of residential seminars (in the areas of OT, NT, Church History, Pastoral Care and Counselling, World Religions, and Christian Ethics) followed by comprehensive exams and a dissertation. The Religious Education programme is similar except that course work is scheduled for two and a half years. The school has a large faculty; almost all Nigerians; and most with doctoral degrees. Unfortunately these degrees do not demonstrate much diversity in training – almost all the masters are “in-house” and the doctorates are awarded by NBTS itself or Southern Baptist schools in the United States. The library has an impressive 54,000 volumes, but there is evidence it has not kept up in terms of up-to-date acquisitions and periodical subscriptions. Nor is there a distinctive emphasis on the use of electronic research tools. The tuition cost is quite low in comparison to other schools, about \$790 per year. NBTS is fully recognised in Nigeria,

¹⁵ ACTEA (the Accrediting Council for Theological Education in Africa) has been able to obtain free copies of BibleWorks software for post-graduate students who originate in poorer African countries.

¹⁶ The Director of PhD Studies, Prof George Janvier, can be contacted at <george.janvier@sim.org>. The JETS website is at <<http://jetsem.org>>, but, not having been recently updated, there is no information on the new PhD programme.

being affiliated since last year for all its post-graduate programmes to the University of Jos. NBTS is also a recent candidate for ACTEA accreditation.¹⁷

c. Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology (NEGST)

NEGST offers a joint PhD programme in Biblical Studies and Translation Studies. The first cohort of twelve students (half are Kenyan) began in January 2006. The next cohort intake will be in August 2008. NEGST is considering a PhD in Missions and a DMin in Pastoral Studies.¹⁸ The current programme consists of a research colloquium running continuously for fifteen months followed by a dissertation cycle of thirty months. The current research colloquium revolves around the theme of ethnicity. NEGST has a strong faculty (expatriate and African) in both biblical and translation studies. This is complemented by regular visits from scholars of international reputation (I. Howard Marshall, Andrew Walls, Christopher Wright, Gordon Wenham, Isabel Phiri, and many others). Resident faculty and students read the visiting scholars' work before they come and then dialogue with them in doctoral seminars during their visit. The NEGST library contains 37,000 books and 250 print journal subscriptions in addition to major internet journal databases (EBSCO, ATLAS, JSTOR). Library development is receiving major funding. Annual study costs are approximately \$12,000, including international study trips to a Bible land and an international biblical research institution, and one return trip to the student's home for the purpose of "theologising" the content of the research colloquium in the student's language of ministry. Annual living costs are additional and are substantial (due to the relatively high cost of living in Nairobi), resulting in an estimated total of \$23,000 annually for tuition, books, and living expenses for a typical non-Kenyan family of four.

¹⁷ NBTS has no website, but may be reached by email at <nbtssseminary@yahoo.com>. Information regarding this programme was obtained by personal correspondence with the President, Rev Prof J. A. Ilori, 5 March 2007.

¹⁸ <<http://www.negst.edu>>, accessed 7 March 2007. Further information was provided by personal correspondence with the Administrative Director of Doctoral Programmes, Dr Sue Glidden, 2 March 2007.

d. Faculté de Théologie Évangélique de Bangui (FATEB)

FATEB, also known as the Bangui Evangelical School of Theology, is located in the capital of the Central African Republic. It is the francophone counterpart to NEGST, also being owned by the Association of Evangelicals in Africa, and likewise shares a broad geographical scope - intending to serve all of Francophone Africa just as NEGST serves Anglophone Africa. The school is currently in transition between the French educational system and the new European model (i.e., the Bologna process). Students are presently admitted into the doctoral programme following their licence and maîtrise degrees and a minimum of two years' ministry experience. The doctoral programme, begun in 2004/2005, is offered only in Systematic Theology (although programmes in Old Testament and New Testament are envisioned beginning in 2008/2009, under the new model). Four students are currently enrolled. The programme is in two stages. Students are first enrolled in a two-year programme of seminars, directed-research, and a mini-thesis for which the student is awarded the DEA (Diplôme d'Etudes Approfondies) credential. Each student is also expected to do a teaching internship at the seminary. For those who perform well, the DEA is followed by the dissertation stage (one to two years, including research undertaken in a foreign country and with access to significant library resources). The FATEB library has more than 19,000 volumes, about forty percent of which are in English. The periodical collection is not strong, but was supplemented in March 2007 with a subscription to ATLAS. The annual tuition cost for each of the first two years of directed-research studies is approximately \$2,825 (plus residential fees). In the following years of the dissertation stage, the annual tuition is \$1,200 (residential).¹⁹

c. Akrofi-Christaller Institute of Theology, Mission and Culture (ACI)

“ACI is a venture in research and training in theology mission and culture, initiated by the Presbyterian Church but intended to serve the wider

¹⁹ <<http://www.fateb.net/>>, accessed 8 March 2007. Further information about the doctoral programme was provided by personal correspondence with Dr Judy Hill, 5 March 2007.

Christian and academic communities in Ghana and throughout Africa.”²⁰ It is associated with its renown rector, Kwame Bediako. Initially the Institute began as a research centre. In collaboration with the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), the Institute commenced an MTh programme in 1998, followed by the ACI/UKZN PhD programme in 2001. Currently there are ten PhD candidates at various stages of completion, all but one fully under ACI’s supervision. The PhD programme aims “at making it possible for graduates from all over the world to undertake an advanced study of the forms and traditions of African Christian life and thought emerging as a distinctive strand of non-western Christianity with the potential of contributing to world Christianity.”²¹ Although the emphasis is on African Christianity, PhD studies currently cover areas of Christian History, Biblical Studies, Christian Education, Theology, and Gospel and Culture. The areas of study aim to be integrating. PhD candidates who have not gone through the Institute’s MTh programme are required to take six taught courses in the first year which require assessment through essays based mainly on primary research material. Those who are qualified proceed to the PhD. Those who have done the MTh at the Institute do not need to do the coursework but go directly to research and dissertation writing. All PhD students take part in periodic seminars. Full-time students are expected to finish the programme in three to five years, but there are also part-time students. There are five full-time staff with PhDs at the Institute, complemented by adjunct faculty. The library has approximately 10,000 volumes and 40-45 journal subscriptions. The Institute is accredited by the government of Ghana and since January 2006 has been granted a charter to award its own degrees. Tuition is \$5,000 per annum.

f. South African Theological Seminary (SATS)

In addition to these five PhD programmes now in operation, a sixth can be mentioned in anticipation of its imminent inauguration. SATS brings to mind the image of an “evangelical UNISA” in that the school is fully non-

²⁰ <<http://www.acmcghana.org>>, accessed 8 March 2007. Further information about the doctoral programme was provided by personal correspondence with Dr Allison Howell, 2 March 2007.

²¹ <<http://www.acmcghana.org/ap.html>>, accessed 8 March 2007.

residential, offering degrees only through distance education. For its current undergraduate and masters programmes there is considerable dependence on the internet for communication between students and teachers, and for study resources (including full access to EBSCO with its million plus journal articles). It is fully government accredited at the undergraduate and masters level, one of the only evangelical schools in South Africa to have completed the process. The school has wide impact throughout Africa with a large enrolment in its current programmes. In September 2007 SATS announced that government accreditation had been extended to the doctoral programme. This opens the way for the offering of the SATS PhD. It is planned to be research-based with the only requirement being the dissertation, and will take about three to four years minimum to complete. It will cost about \$4,000 in total. Initially, the SATS PhD will focus on Biblical Studies and Practical Theology.²²

One can't help but note that all five of the currently operating evangelical PhD programmes in Africa are located in an east-west line south of Sahara. A number of reasons could be suggested for the lack of such programmes in Africa south of this line, but perhaps one of them is the availability of theology programmes in the South African universities, an option which will be considered as part of our second major category.

2. African university doctoral programmes

Beyond the evangelical circle are a substantial number of doctoral programmes offered by "secular" national universities. These universities sometimes contain superior resources (particularly in South Africa) and very competent faculty. Most offer a British style research-only degree which provides flexibility to those who are studying. Students are exposed to a broad spectrum of theological and religious academic perspectives. And, the university PhD comes with a measure of credibility both in the local environment and the international community simply because it is

²² <http://www.sats.edu.za/index_new.html>, accessed 8 March 2007. This website contains no specific information on the doctoral programme. The information in the text was provided by personal correspondence with the Principal, Dr Reuben van Rensburg, 5 March 2007.

awarded by a public university. They would be generally inexpensive and offer contextually-sensitive research supervision.²³

However, there are disadvantages to this alternative. In many countries, the professors are so poorly paid that they moonlight, leaving little time for supervision of doctoral students, and thus unduly prolonging the student's research programme. Another disadvantage is that many of these universities require government-recognised masters degrees for admission – which some students from our evangelical seminaries will not have. The main disadvantage (if it should be identified as such) is that evangelicalism may not have a strong presence (or may not have any presence) among the faculty. Hence, some students may feel wary about this option. We should note that in a research-based degree, the supervisor plays a particularly important role, and though the faculty as a whole may be classed as “liberal”, individual supervisors within the faculty may possess theological convictions with a wide range. The supervisor may, in fact, have evangelical inclinations and sympathies. Or, she may be tolerant of evangelical positions held by students. Or, she may be downright hostile to evangelical positions. It is only the third category in which the evangelical student will be frustrated in his academic progress.

Not all dissertation topics proposed by evangelical students will be strongly influenced by the supervisor's theological sympathies. Research in New Testament textual criticism, for instance, or church history, will likely be conducted along the same lines irrespective of the supervisor's tolerance for evangelical convictions.

One could also argue that earning a doctorate under a more “liberal” supervisor may not all be a bad thing, if the student goes into the programme well-grounded in his evangelical position. Such a programme could actually assist the student to more closely define and be able to defend his evangelical faith against critical scepticism, better preparing him for participation in academia outside of evangelical circles.

²³ C. Lombard and D. J. Smith describe further advantages of theological training in a university context as they describe the proposed theological courses for the University of Namibia (“Theological Training in Namibia?” *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 71 [1990]: 51-8).

I will divide this educational option into two categories: South African universities and others. In justification of this division, I will refer later to distinct advantages of the South African universities in comparison to those in other countries.

In the “old” South Africa (that is, before full democratisation associated with the election of Nelson Mandela), all of the departments of Christian studies in the public universities were aligned with the Dutch Reformed Church which used these faculties for the training of their pastors. While this did not guarantee a doctrinally conservative stance, there were many evangelicals in the departments, and many opportunities to be supervised in doctoral studies by evangelicals or those sympathetic to an evangelical approach. David Bosch in Missiology at the University of South Africa (UNISA) would have been a well-known example. Schools with notable Christian studies department would have included, besides UNISA, the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), the University of Stellenbosch (over 150 years old, and particularly strong in biblical studies), the University of the Orange Free State (now simply “of the Free State”), and the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education (now part of North-West University).²⁴

In the “new” South Africa, these universities, were forced by government policy to become more inclusive. Their departments of theological studies could no longer favour the Dutch Reformed Church (which many associated with the apartheid system). This has resulted in faculty which are much broader theologically. My impression is that, while there are still evangelical faculty members available to supervise doctoral studies, the

²⁴ In an instructive article on the state of theological education in the “old” South Africa, H. W. Turner writes it is his impression (in 1980) “that higher Christian studies, whether in theological faculties or departments of divinity, are most extensive and influential, in proportion to the white population they serve, than in any other part of the world.” He continues, “Not only is this community large, but it is also competent, well-grounded in the biblical languages and basic disciplines, aware of the distinctive nature of theological study and of its high responsibilities, and not led aside into some of the ‘with-it’ substitutes that masquerade as theology in some parts of the world (“Theological and Religious Studies in South Africa: Reflections of a Visitor,” *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 30 [1980]: 8).

number would be less, and one would need to be more selective (if the theological character of the supervisor is an important component for the student's studies). The same five schools continue to be the best known for their departments (however, now they are not just for "Christian" studies, but "religious" studies in general), and still provide some good opportunities for doctoral work. The competence and scope of the faculty in these schools is breathtaking compared to what is available in the rest of Africa. UNISA's offerings in their DTh include the following: Christian Spirituality, Old Testament, New Testament, Church History, Systematic Theology, Practical Theology, Missiology, Religious Studies, Biblical Studies, Practical Theology with Specialisation in Pastoral Therapy, Missiology with Specialisation in Urban Ministries.²⁵

We may take North-West University (NWU) as an example (though not typical in terms of theological stance) for a more detailed look. A faculty member at George Whitefield College responded to my inquiries with the following description of the NWU programme:

I would say that NWU has the most conservative reformed theological faculty of all the universities [in South Africa]. They have a contractual arrangement with the Reformed Churches of SA (Gereformeerde Kerk - GKSA) and assert that their teaching is in accordance with the Heidelberg Catechism, Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dordrecht. They no longer serve the GKSA exclusively - for a number of years now they have accommodated other denominations such as ourselves [Church of England in South Africa] and also the training programmes of dispensational Baptist groups. Of course they are no longer officially a "Christian" university and from time to time there are things we would disagree with, but I cannot recall any serious doctrinal issues in the 10 years I have been involved with them. We have an extremely cordial relationship which, they assure us, is mutually beneficial. They have a whole range of possibilities for doctorates: Catechetics, Church & Dogma History, Church Polity, Dogmatics, Ethics,

²⁵ <<http://brochure.unisa.ac.za/brochure/showlist.aspx?d=progs>>, accessed 8 March 2007.

Greek, Homiletics, Liturgics, Missiology, NT, OT, Pastoral Studies and Semitic Languages.²⁶

There are some decided advantages to doctoral studies in the South African universities which taken as a whole distinguish them from national universities in the rest of Africa. (a) The degrees have government accreditation and wide international academic recognition. (b) Costs are very reasonable compared to the West. (c) Visas are obtainable, particularly for Southern African Development Community (SADC) students,²⁷ but also for other Africans. (d) Supervisors tolerant of evangelical perspectives in student research are sometimes available. (e) The academic quality of the programmes is generally commendable. (f) Library resources are respectable, if not superior. (g) Studies relevant to African contexts can be carried out with understanding and competent supervision. (h) Students studying at UKZN and Stellenbosch would be eligible for application for Langham scholarships. (i) There is a wide range of subjects available for competent supervision. (I believe that UNISA has the largest theological faculty in the world, with over 100 teachers in the relevant departments.) (j) Many South African universities (because of the influence of UNISA's distance education model) offer their PhD's through limited non-residential supervision. One faculty member at the Theological College of Central Africa (Ndola, Zambia) obtained his PhD through Stellenbosch having only visited the schools twice, once before submitting his proposal and then for his oral defence. All supervision (although it was not extensive) was done through e-mail.²⁸ (However, this is not typical, and now the more common pattern is that doctoral students are required to visit their supervisor for a minimum of perhaps three times a year.)

In connection with the South African university option, mention should be made of what is happening at George Whitefield College (GWC), an

²⁶ Personal correspondence with Alan Beckman, 5 March 2007.

²⁷ SADC countries are: Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

²⁸ Personal conversation with John Evans, Ndola, Zambia, 13 March 2007.

institution which trains pastors for the Church of England in South Africa (CESA). GWC is located near Cape Town, close to Stellenbosch (geographically) and close to NWU (in spirit). Seeing a need to provide evangelical theology students at Stellenbosch and NWU with a supportive environment (spiritually and academically), GWC has formed the Postgraduate Research Group for students enrolled in masters and doctoral work in other institutions. GWC's facilities are made available, appropriate seminars and study groups are arranged, and the student can benefit from interaction with other evangelical students and the GWC faculty. The group aims to provide support, interaction, pastoral care and fellowship for evangelical postgraduate students. Students are invited to present their research findings at regular seminars. Some of these students live in GWC campus housing. Two students have completed their doctorates under this programme - both with Stellenbosch, with several others anticipated. In addition, the PGR group has thirteen Honours²⁹ and twelve masters students. Cost for participation in the PGR group is \$450 per year, for use of the library, computer network, etc.³⁰

Though not as extensive as the PGR group, a support group for evangelical theological students at UKZN is in its formative stages through the initiative of Bill Houston (Overseas Council) and Philippe Emedi (ACTEA). Emedi describes this initiative:

Bill Houston and I have discussed and found that evangelicals students from around Africa, involved in post-graduate programme at UKZN, are facing serious challenges. We called for a first meeting on February 3, 2007 to initiate a "Support Group for Evangelicals" and eleven post-graduate students attended the meeting (from Madagascar, DRC, Mozambique, Rwanda, Kenya and South Africa). Some of the issues raised included: (1) social and cultural problems (due to xenophobia and set-backs of the

²⁹ The BA (Honours) programme in the South African context is a one-year post-graduate degree, often a prerequisite for admission into higher masters level programmes.

³⁰ Personal correspondence with Alan Beckman, 5 March 2007.

apartheid system), (2) liturgical and life-style issues, (3) evangelical values and identity and (4) financial needs, etc.³¹

In another development, evangelical institutions are beginning to partner with South African universities to offer PhDs. For instance, Cape Town Baptist Seminary offers a PhD in conjunction with University of Pretoria. Research supervision is done jointly by a CTBS faculty and a UP supervisor.

Besides South African university programmes, there are a substantial number of other African national (and some private) universities which offer doctoral degrees in theological studies. I do not have an accurate count of African national universities which fall into this category, but am aware that they are particularly common in Nigeria and Kenya. For example, most of the federal universities and many of the state universities in Nigeria have departments of religious studies.

We have noted that the evangelical presence in the faculties in the religious studies faculties of national universities is mostly lacking. There are exceptions in some South African universities, and that may also be true of some Nigerian universities. As is true with the general population, these departments appear to be moving in a more evangelical direction. For example, at the University of Jos, out of fifteen academic staff in the Christian Studies side (the department also includes Islamic Studies), thirteen of them could be characterized as evangelicals. This is much different than what the ratio would have been fifteen years ago, and this seems to be a trend in other Nigerian universities as well.³²

I should mention one institution in particular, because of its uniqueness in the Francophone context. The Université Protestante au Congo (UPC), in Kinshasa started its doctoral programme, Doctorat d'Etat in 1991. In the mid-1990s the programme had over seven professors supervising the programme, trained in France, Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, UK and USA. This is a five year programme (two years of the diplôme d'études

³¹ Personal correspondence with Philippe Emedi, 9 March 2007.

³² Personal correspondence with Danny McCain, 12 March 2007.

supérieures with thesis; one or two years of specialisation in Strasburg, France or Switzerland or elsewhere; followed by one or two years of the doctoral thesis and public defense.) There is no equivalent doctoral degree in Francophone Africa to my knowledge except now recently with FATEB.³³

3. *Other Majority World programmes*

Some of the disadvantages of a Western context for doctoral studies might be somewhat overcome through a PhD programme in an overseas institution located in the Majority World outside of Africa. While not gaining the relevance of an African context, there may be some cultural and religious similarities which would result in a more satisfying and useful programme of studies. There may be an increased likelihood of staff returning to the sending country. And, the cost of the programme may be less expensive than Western counterparts. The thought of such South-South theological cross-fertilisation may also be inviting. Along these lines, students could consider strong, well-established doctoral programmes at the Asia Graduate School of Theology (Philippines),³⁴ South Asia Institute for Advanced Christian Studies (India),³⁵ and the Asian Center for Theological Studies and Mission (Korea).³⁶ And, Lusophone students should be aware of several PhD programmes in Brazilian national universities (which would be similar to most African national universities in terms of the general lack of evangelical presence) and a few mainline and Catholic seminaries.

³³ Personal correspondence with Philippe Emedi, 9 March 2007.

³⁴ <http://www.ats.ph/academics_agst.php>, accessed 8 March 2007.

³⁵ <<http://www.saiacs.org/Academics.htm>>, accessed 8 March 2007.

³⁶ <http://English.acts.ac.kr/international/international_2.html>, accessed 8 March 2007.

4. *Distinctive Western programmes*

Though not meeting our criterion for programmes within Africa, brief notice should be given of programmes in the West that are particularly geared to non-Western students.

Several programmes comes to mind that are particularly relevant for African studies. The University of Edinburgh's Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World was for many years under the leadership of Prof Andrew F. Walls.³⁷

Also based in England, the broadly evangelical Oxford Centre for Mission Studies offers PhD programmes through affiliated universities by linking the student's dissertation topic with appropriate supervisors. Awarding universities are usually the University of Wales and the Open University. Residential studies are minimal, requiring only three months initially and then six weeks annually during the six years of part-time studies the degree is expected to take. "Mission studies" is understood broadly, meaning that a wide range of academic subjects can be supervised. While the Centre has students from the Majority World at large, the African Studies Research Group is of particular interest for those students with research topics in this area.³⁸

5. *Western modular courses offered in Africa*

Another option which might be considered, if it was available, would be Western programmes offered in Africa on a modular basis. However, I am unaware of doctoral programmes in theological or biblical studies currently offered by Western institutions following this paradigm.

There would be advantages to this paradigm. The cost would probably be less, as it would eliminate the cost of travel to the West and the high cost of living. The courses offered in Africa would presumably be more contextualised. The visa problem would be eliminated. And, the

³⁷ <http://www.div.ed.ac.uk/worldchristi_16.html>, accessed 4 April 2007.

³⁸ <<http://www.ocms.ac.uk>>, accessed 5 April 2007.

programme could be offered through brief modules over a period of time, and thus appropriate for those who wish to remain in their ministries during their course of study.

Eastern University (Philadelphia) offers such a programme at the masters level in South Africa in the areas of Economic Development, International Development, and Organisational Leadership. Students attend a two to three week residency annually in South Africa and the remainder of their coursework is completed via online discussions and distance education.³⁹

Asuza Pacific University (California) offers a similar programme in certain locations in Africa, again at the masters level. "The Operation Impact (OI) Program provides educational support internationally to leaders of mission, government, nongovernment, and nonprofit organizations by delivering the Master of Arts in Organizational Leadership Program in a distributed-learning approach to global-learning groups worldwide. One- or two-week intensives held throughout the year are followed by semester-long study projects contracted for each course with professors via the Internet, including email and APU Library resources."⁴⁰

6. *Internet programmes*

One would think that with the proliferation of the use of the internet for educational delivery, programmes would begin to appear at the doctoral level for theological studies using this mode of delivery. UNISA, of course, was the pioneer along these lines. And, SATS, according to information they have provided, is soon to follow. One might suppose that a number of Western institutions have also initiated such programmes, but my brief internet search was fruitless. It may be that accreditation

³⁹ <<http://www.eastern.edu/academic/international/sld/FAQs.shtml>>, accessed 8 March 2007.

⁴⁰ <<http://www.apu.edu/bas/highered/operationimpact/>>, accessed 8 March 2007.

standards of the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) in North America have hindered this development at the doctoral level.⁴¹

It may also be that for some time for this sort of programme there will remain a basic hesitancy in credibility within the wider educated public, whether deserved or not. Despite the record of UNISA, one might exercise some caution in recommending this mode of delivery for those who come from a culture where relationships, face to face contact, and a collaborative learning style are important. It may be that most Africans best learn within communities of learning that are more than “virtual.”

Additional Observations

1. International Consortium for the PhD in Theological Education

This consortium of PhD granting institutions worldwide is an attempt to mutually benefit from the strengths of other institutions in the offering of a PhD in Theological Education. The consortium, though first considered in 2003, is still in its infancy. The main participating schools are Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (Linda Cannell, formerly at TEDS, is the driving force behind the consortium), the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Prague, the Bible College of New Zealand, and the China Graduate School of Theology. I refer to this consortium because NEGST was involved in preliminary discussions (but now their future involvement is uncertain), and JETS is considering involvement. The PhD would be organised around three areas of concern essential for leaders: intercultural capabilities, educational design and management, and critical reflection

⁴¹ ATS standards for accreditation of Doctor of Theology and Doctor of Philosophy state, “Courses, seminars, and colloquia for research doctoral degrees shall normally be completed on the main campus of the institution offering the degree” (Standard L 3.2.0.) <<http://www.ats.edu/accrediting/standards/DegreeStandards.pdf>>, accessed 8 April 2007).

grounded in theological reasoning. Students would be able to undertake portions of their studies at any of the consortium institutions.⁴²

2. *Western scholarship support*

Doctoral education is expensive. Extensive library and electronic resources are essential for a credible programme. And schools are paying salaries at the highest level for qualified and experienced professors.

Most evangelical doctoral programmes in Africa are now receiving some funds for library development and student scholarships, specifically targeted at improving doctoral programmes on the continent. In past years, Western funding organisations mostly provided scholarship assistance for students in Western schools. It is notable, then, that three of the major Western scholarship agencies for evangelical theological studies are re-directing their funds towards the developing African doctoral programmes.

Langham Partnership International has stated that it “is committed to assisting Majority World-based doctoral programs and will further investigate opportunities to support doctoral students resident at Majority World institutions.”⁴³ Within Africa Langham now provides scholarships for doctoral students in theological and biblical studies at KwaZulu-Natal, Stellenbosch, NEGST, and Akrofi-Christaller. They may be adding additional students enrolled in other evangelical African doctoral programmes as well.⁴⁴

Similarly, the Christian International Scholarship Foundation (CISF) states as one of its four strategy points that it will, “Support scholars for education at in-context schools when possible.”⁴⁵

⁴² Linda Cannell, “International Consortium for the PhD in Theological Education,” unpublished paper, January 2007.

⁴³ “Langham Partnership International Protocol,” unpublished paper, 2003.

⁴⁴ Personal correspondence with Merritt Sawyer, 3 March 2007.

⁴⁵ <http://cisf.org/strategic_focus_insures.html>, accessed 4 April 2007.

Overseas Council has directed development funds specifically for the upgrading of library resources and internet capacity for evangelical doctoral programmes. And, faculty development scholarships are being given to OC partner schools that wish to train their faculty in African doctoral programmes.

These three organisations are to be commended for leading the way in this encouraging development.

3. *ACTEA Standards for Accreditation at Doctoral Level*

At its Council meeting last year, ACTEA approved revised standards for accreditation of doctoral level programmes.⁴⁶ NBTS is now a candidate for accreditation at doctoral level, and NEGST has indicated its interest in adding doctoral level accreditation to the existing accreditation of its post-graduate programmes. (JETS, ACI, nor FATEB have yet moved forward in this direction.) Besides the external international credibility that accreditation offers, the process of ACTEA accreditation is designed to result in a higher measurer of institutional excellence.

4. *Consultation on Faculty Development and Doctoral Training for Theological Institutions in Africa (DOCTRATA 07).*

Organised by NEGST, FATEB, and ACTEA, forty scholars, seminary administrators and representatives from donor organisations gathered together in August 2007 on the campus of NEGST to discuss issues relating to evangelical doctoral level training in Africa.

The objectives of the Consultation were to:

- a. Create an ongoing collaborative network of theological institutions offering doctoral level training and sponsoring agencies with a common knowledge base concerning theological educational needs and strategies in Africa.

⁴⁶ Available at
<http://www.theoledafrica.org/ACTEA/Standards/Doctoral_EN.pdf>.

- b. Spearhead a plan for providing faculty development and doctoral level training in Africa for theological institutions.
- c. Document creative and innovative solutions for doctoral level theological training in Africa and for Africa in a published 'Blueprint for Evangelical Doctoral Training in Africa', encompassing keynote addresses and consultation resolutions.⁴⁷

Perhaps as an initial instalment of a more comprehensive "blueprint", the Consultation released a consensus document expressing its findings.⁴⁸ This brief statement gives an overview of the context, assesses the current situation in the format of a SWOT analysis, suggests what "excellence" in an African doctoral-level programme might look like, describes an ideal "graduate profile", and lists factors which need attention in order to produce such excellence and outcomes including: on-going faculty development, new faculty development, resources, and collaboration.

Enhancing Doctoral-level Evangelical Theological Education in Africa

Doctoral theological education for evangelicals is still in its infancy and, despite the credible initiatives already launched, is in a phase of needing intentional support and creative ideas for improvement. I offer below a few suggestions of my own.

1. Scholarship funds directed toward African programmes.

It is noteworthy to observe that Langham, OCI, and CISF have kept pace with the developments in doctoral education in Africa in terms of their scholarship programmes. A few years ago SIM Nigeria intentionally

⁴⁷ "Proposal: Consultation on Faculty Development and Evangelical Doctoral Training in Africa," unpublished paper. Available from Sue Glidden, <Sue.Glidden@negst.edu>.

⁴⁸ "Consultation on Faculty Development and Doctoral Training for Theological Institutions in Africa," unpublished paper. Available from Sue Glidden, <Sue.Glidden@negst.edu>.

stopped awarding scholarships for students beginning overseas programmes, and rather is redirecting those funds to assist students enrolled in the JETS PhD programme, both providing needed financial assistance to the students, as well as building into a local programme. (However, one needs to remember the caution against in-breeding of faculty or overly relying on one doctoral programme for faculty development.) Given the credible alternatives that now exist and the advantages to training in-context, it may be that other relevant scholarship programmes should redirect the majority of their funds to assist students intending to earn their doctorates within the African context.

2. Work towards accreditation of these programmes

One of the six evangelical doctoral programmes in Africa is now working towards ACTEA accreditation with another to soon follow. While two of the others have governmental accreditation (and SATS apparently soon), all could benefit from the self-study process which leads to ACTEA accreditation.

Along these lines one might express dismay over what may soon become a proliferation of evangelical doctoral programmes on the continent with low academic standards. Schools that seem unconcerned with peer accreditation and international standards (such as ACTEA provides) nor are constrained by their country's governmental regulations may soon expand the ranks of those offering doctoral programmes in Africa. However, in reality only very few African evangelical schools have the qualified personnel or resources to sustain quality programmes at the doctoral level. It is therefore worrisome to hear of numerous institutions thinking of initiating such programmes.

3. Collaborative efforts

Rather than proliferate programmes and dilute our limited resources, would it not be preferable to concentrate them in a fewer number of schools which could then offer superior programmes? Is it possible for evangelical schools in one locale to cooperate, rather than to compete, in providing options for doctoral studies? This would allow schools to specialise in terms of their faculty and library resources, rather than engage in the

expensive habit of duplication. The Asia Graduate School of Theology, for instance, a project of the Asia Theological Association, draws together into a consortium eight evangelical, post-graduate seminaries in the Philippines in order to offer a variety of doctoral programmes (EdD, PhD, DMiss, and DMin) which no one school could credibly offer on their own. At the very least, why not resist the effort to begin a doctoral programme in a certain subject area when a comparable programme exists close by? Should JETS really consider beginning a PhD in Education when NBTS, a one-day drive away, has capably offered this degree for the last five years? Denominational pride and perceived institutional status coming from doctoral programmes are formidable adversaries.

4. Use of electronic resources

Schools in Africa do not equal those in the West in terms of hard-copy library resources. (However, evangelical schools should do better, and NEGST is to be commended for its recent remarkable efforts.) But, where we can do as well as Western schools is in the area of electronic resources, complementing our meagre hard-copy resources and compensating somewhat for their lack. And, this strategy may be more important in the long run, as an increasing proportion of information is shifting from hard-copy to electronic form.

Significant archival collections of journals are now available at reasonable prices. JSTOR contains about 50 different titles that are significant for theological, biblical, and African studies (among the 500 or so titles in the total collection). Beginning July 2007, access to the entire JSTOR archive is being offered at no cost for all African schools through the Open Africa Initiative.⁴⁹ It is both inexplicable (while acknowledging that broadband internet access is not inexpensively available for all African schools) and disappointing that only a few theological schools are benefiting thus far:⁵⁰

⁴⁹ <<http://www.jstor.org/about/Africa/openafrica.html>>, accessed 8 March 2007.

⁵⁰ <http://www.jstor.org/about/participants_intl.html>, accessed 8 March 2007.

Akrofi-Christaller Memorial Theological College⁵¹ (Ghana)
Catholic University of Central Africa (Cameroon)
ECWA Theological Seminary, Igbaja (Nigeria)
Ghana Christian University College
Jos ECWA Theological Seminary (Nigeria)
Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology (Kenya)
Pan African School of Theology (Kenya)
Scott Theological College (Kenya)
South African Theological Seminary
University of Malawi - Chancellor College⁵²

The American Theological Library Association Serials (ATLAS) collection is also available online, which contains approximately 80 journals, all relevant to theological studies.⁵³ While the institutional rate is fairly expensive, is it not possible that each of our doctoral students could pay the US\$99 annual access fee for individual users?

For its doctoral programme, JETS has purchased a laptop computer for every student (as has NEGST). The doctoral studies room has wireless access to broadband internet. Students each have a copy of Bible Works software (one of the premier packages for biblical studies – available through ACTEA at no cost for students in certain countries). JSTOR is available online, and JETS is planning to soon subscribe to the ATLAS database. During the first semester of classes a course was taught on “Electronic Resources in Biblical and Theological Research”, introducing them to this new and increasingly important world of resources.

⁵¹ The original name of the Akrofi-Christaller Institute of Theology, Mission and Culture.

⁵² Chancellor College is the campus of the University of Malawi which includes its theology faculty.

⁵³ <http://www.atla.com/products/titles/titles_atlas.html>, accessed, 8 March 2007.

5. *Support groups for students*

I have mentioned the innovative Post-Graduate Research group at George Whitefield for students at Stellenbosch and North-West. Could similar groups be started by evangelical schools where students are undertaking doctoral theological studies in national universities? Certainly there would be a need for such in Nairobi, and probably other centres of learning as well. Perhaps this would be the most effective way to use the established resources found in a number of national universities while assisting the students to retain their evangelical identity as well as to address contrary views in a scholarly fashion.

6. *Linkage with institutions in the West*

Is there value in some formal linkage of African doctoral programmes with institutions in the West? In particular, there could be substantial benefits from doctoral programmes scheduling times abroad for their students. By this means they might gain some of the benefits which we identified above from studying in the West without the disadvantages of a prolonged sojourn. Students would broaden their horizons, gain networking opportunities, and benefit from significant library resources. And, Western academics would become acquainted with a few of the rising evangelical intellectual leaders of Africa. There is some encouraging evidence that Western scholarship agencies (like Langham Partnerships) are willing to sponsor students who are enrolled in African PhD programmes for brief trips for concentrated research to Western study centres such as Tyndale House, Cambridge.

Along these lines, NEGST has sent its students for a study trip to Israel (the JETS PhD programme is planning the same) and intends to send some of its students to Tyndale House, Cambridge, to provide further interaction with Western scholars and access to those superior resources. FATEB has formal linkage with two evangelical seminaries in France, Vaux sur Seine and Aix-en-Provence. (However, in this case the benefits of such linkage are yet to be seen.)

Are there Western institutions which could regularly provide an institution with teachers for modular courses or seminars? Or, even stronger ties could

be explored. The Open University (UK) and the University of Wales seem to be willing to explore such possibilities. The DMin organised by SETECA (Guatemala) is actually awarded by Dallas Theological Seminary, which provides a number of the teachers. The collaborative linkage being initiated by the International Consortium for the PhD in Theological Education mentioned above might be another avenue for useful international collaboration.

While such linkage could prove beneficial, one must also admit the difficulty in practice of healthy, interdependent relationships between African and Western institutions. Do Western institutions really think that their African counterparts have anything to contribute to the relationship? Are they willing to grant appropriate control to the African institution? Genuine, give-and-take relationships need to be negotiated that will not compromise the goals and identity of African PhD programmes.

7. *What are the non-negotiables of a credible doctoral programme?*

What does it take to offer an internationally acceptable doctoral programme, which at the same time is appropriately contextualised to meet the needs of the African Church? Or, as drafted (in rough form) by the organisers of the Consultation on Faculty Development and Evangelical Doctoral Training in Africa,

What constitutes 'excellence' at the doctoral level – coming to some agreement across the north-south divide as to what are the generic and non-negotiable aspects of doctoral excellence - that are independent of cultural factors; and then what are the local and cultural distinctives that can be built alongside such 'deep - down' elements. - with a view toward programmes and degrees that have recognizable and internationally accepted academic credibility, and yet are clearly and deliberately and unapologetically African in flavour, and address the African context, issues and needs.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ "Proposal: Consultation on Faculty Development and Evangelical Doctoral Training in Africa," unpublished paper, p. 2.

ACTEA has made a decent start on identifying the essentials of a credible doctoral programme for Africa in its standards for accreditation. And, this document might well serve as the starting point for this discussion.

Conclusion

There is no doubt the third stage of development has begun in evangelical post-secondary theological education on our continent. When I first came to Africa in 1981, the number of competent programmes at the bachelors level was minimal. In the early 1990s, a few credible masters level seminaries began to be noticed, but they could be counted on one hand. And, now in this decade, we have seen the establishment of nearly a half-dozen new doctoral level programmes. This significant upward movement in the academic capacities of seminaries may be among the most significant trends in African evangelicalism over the past quarter century. African evangelicalism has reached a milestone in its intellectual maturity.⁵⁵ It has come of age. African Christianity is being heard with increasing volume throughout the world and its intellectual foundation is now being strengthened, widened, and deepened on African soil at the highest academic levels for the cause of Christ and to the praise of God.

⁵⁵ Confirmation of this is also seen in the recent publication of the *Africa Bible Commentary*, written entirely by evangelical African scholars (Nairobi: WordAlive Publishers, 2006).