

DELIVERING THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION FOR CHURCH PLANTERS IN CANADA

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Introduction

There are some who doubt that formal theological education has anything worthwhile to offer aspiring leaders for today’s churches. As early as 1984, John Frame proposed that “we dump the academic model once and for all.”¹ Although Roger S. Greenway grudgingly acknowledges seminary may have some value, he asserts that it is such a poor fit for an urban context that it should be cast off like Saul’s borrowed armor:

. . . [I] propose that urban churches set the academy aside, with everything it entails—degrees, accreditation, Ph.D.’s credit hours, and traditional curriculum—and focus unrelentingly on the needs of the churches, the skills required for ministry, and the biblical standards for leaders of God’s people. [T]he marriage of the academy to ministerial preparation has produced too many unhappy children, who have been foisted on churches everywhere as though there were no other way to train leaders.²

¹ John M. Frame, “Proposals for a New North American Model” in *Missions and Theological Education in World Perspective* (ed. Harvie M. Conn and Samuel Rowen; Farmington, Mich.: Associates of Urbanus, 1984), 377. Interestingly, Frame advocates “not less Christian scholarship, but more,” believing that those preparing for ministry should still study the traditional subjects—biblical languages, exegesis, theology, and history—but in a “de-academicized” setting that integrates learning and practice (377–85).

² Roger S. Greenway, “Getting David out of Saul’s Armor,” in *The Urban Face of Mission: Ministering the Gospel in a Diverse and Changing World* (ed. Manuel Ortiz and Susan S. Baker; Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R, 2002), 233.

In place of seminary, Greenway suggests that urban churches “develop alternative programs of leadership training, contextualized to their needs.”³ Unfortunately, he does not explain the nuts and bolts of how struggling inner-city churches or fledgling church plants can accomplish this.

On the other hand, there are those who are more hopeful concerning the future of theological education. Not surprisingly, included in their ranks is Daniel Aleshire, the executive director of the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada (ATS). Well aware of the changing nature of global Christianity as well as the increasing complexities of life and ministry in North America, Aleshire presents a case for the continuing significance of seminaries, noting that “[t]he Christian movement needs theological guidance, ministerial skill, sociological analysis, and congregational resources as it moves through these changes.”⁴ Of course, seminaries themselves must be willing to embrace change in order to prepare leaders for the future they will face.

One such area where change is already upon us is the relatively new field of preparing church planters.⁵ There is considerable debate over whether theological schools can actually provide appropriate training for church planters. This paper will survey church-planting literature to identify what church planters need in order to be effective. Then it will describe the particular needs of the Canadian context. Next it will explore current opportunities for theological training for church planters focusing on other Southern Baptist seminaries and Canadian schools. Finally, this paper will evaluate the ability of the Canadian Southern Baptist Seminary to deliver effective theological education for church planters in the Canadian context.

³ Ibid., 234.

⁴ Daniel O. Aleshire, *Earthen Vessels: Hopeful Reflections on the Work and Future of Theological Schools* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 156.

⁵ A quick analysis of ATLA Religion Database reveals that the 1970s produced a trickle of articles/books on the subject of church planting; by the 1990s, it had increased to a steady flow.

Definitions

According to J. D. Payne, “biblical church planting is evangelism that results in churches.”⁶

Following the leadership of the Holy Spirit, church planters seek to share the gospel in a way that is both faithful to the Bible and suited to the cultural context, to lead new believers to become followers of Jesus Christ, and to draw them together into a community that embodies the essence of the church as it is seen in the New Testament.⁷

This paper will use the following definition of church:

A local church is an organized body of baptized believers, led by a spiritually qualified shepherd, affirming their relationship to the Lord and to each other by regular observance of the Lord’s Supper, committed to the authority of the Word of God, gathering regularly for worship and the study of the Word, and turned outward to the world in witness.⁸

Although a church could be described in many other ways, the above definition outlines the irreducible elements of a biblical church.

What Church Planters Need in Order to Be Effective

A survey of church planting literature reveals that there are many things that church planters need in order to be effective. Charles Brock, one of the early gurus of church planting, bemoans the plethora of new ideas, fads, and paradigm shifts purported to be the latest panacea for church planters. He remonstrates that “[c]hurch planting does not need to be redefined,” and “[t]he New Testament is still fully adequate to give us direction.”⁹ Brock distills church planting down to

⁶ J. D. Payne, *Discovering Church Planting: An Introduction to the What’s, Why’s, and How’s of Global Church Planting* (Colorado Springs: Paternoster Press, 2009), 4. Payne is a missionary appointed by the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention and is an Associate Professor of Church Planting and Evangelism at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁸ Tom Julien, “The Essence of the Church,” *EMQ* (April 1998): n.p. [cited 29 Aug. 2011]. Online: <http://www.emisdirect.com/emq/issue-248/1442>.

⁹ Charles Brock, “What Are the Absolute Essentials in Church Planting?” in *Church Planting Institute Online*. (15 November 2009): n.p. [cited 20 August 2011]. Online: http://www.cpqa.org/index.php?option=com_

four absolute essentials: the Spirit, the Seed, the Sower, and the Soil. He cautions that adding any excess baggage may prove “detrimental to healthy church planting.” Brock also suggests that the one ingredient that is most likely missing today is “spirit-filled church planters with a burning message from God.”¹⁰ While Brock’s observations are undoubtedly astute, there are certainly several other skills necessary for church planting. Payne offers the following list of “eight essential practices of a church planting team member”: He or she 1) walks with the Lord; 2) maintains an outstanding character; 3) serves the local church; 4) remains faithful to the call; 5) shares the gospel regularly; 6) raises up leaders; 7) encourages with speech and actions; and 8) responds appropriately to conflict.¹¹ It seems that everyone has his or her own list of what is absolutely indispensable. Most of these essentials for church planting can be divided into three categories: knowledge (knowing), skills (doing), and character (being).¹² Interestingly, the ATS standard for theological curriculum contains each of these:

In a theological school, the overarching goal is the development of theological understanding, that is, an aptitude for theological reflection and wisdom pertaining to responsible life in faith. Comprehended in this overarching goal are others such as deepening spiritual awareness, growing in moral sensibility and character, gaining an intellectual grasp of the tradition of a faith community, and acquiring the abilities requisite to the exercise of ministry in that community.¹³

Seminaries aspiring to train effective church planters must give careful attention to all three.

Knowledge

content&view =article&id=151:what-are-the-absolute-essentials-in-church-planting&catid=34:qaa-for-church-planters&Item id=65.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ J. D. Payne, *The Barnabas Factors: Eight Essential Practices of a Church Planting Team Member* (Smyrna, Del.: Missional Press, 2008).

¹² Several authors have noted three levels of development. One of the best explanations of them is found in the *Church Planter Manual* by Timothy J. Keller and J. Allen Thompson, (New York: Redeemer Church Planting Center, 2002), 151–2.

¹³ Commission on Accrediting, Standard 4, “The Theological Curriculum,” Section 4.1, “Goals of the Theological Curriculum.” In Aleshire, *Earthen Vessels*, 29–30.

“The role of theology has been suppressed in the last decades because of our love for the pragmatic and technique-oriented leadership of managerial missiology,” charges Canadian missiologist, Gary Nelson.¹⁴ In the headlong rush to outline the latest hands-on how-to’s, many books on church planting brush past this need for theological understanding and biblical grounding.¹⁵ Church planters follow them to their peril. A huge proponent of practicality, Ed Stetzer still wisely recognizes, “We’d be wrong to send out planters with organizational strategies and marketing tools but not the fundamental truths of God’s Word and the principles of Scripture from which to work.”¹⁶ Likewise, although Craig Ott and Gene Wilson advocate “decentralized theological education . . . punctuated by practical experience,” they agree that biblical and theological equipping of leaders is crucial: “A failure to attend to theological grounding of . . . leaders ultimately would make even the most dynamic movement susceptible to instability and false teaching.”¹⁷ Timothy Keller observes that most church leaders tend to fall into one of two camps: traditionalists and practitioners. Focused on being relevant and effective, practitioners “are not theologically grounded and reflective enough to tell the difference between the principle and the application.”¹⁸ Clearly, church planters need a thorough understanding of the biblical and missiological bases and theological framework for church planting.

Payne provides an excellent exposition of all three of these in *Discovering Church Planting*. This biblical, missiological, and theological grounding results in a balanced perspective

¹⁴ Gary V. Nelson, *Borderland Churches: A Congregation’s Introduction to Missional Living* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2008), 84.

¹⁵ Richard Hibbert opines that of the scores of the church planting books published in recent decades “[v]ery few of these texts . . . provide anything approaching a satisfying theological basis for church planting.” Richard Yates Hibbert, “The Place of Church Planting in Mission: Towards a Theological Framework,” *ERT* 33/4 (2009): 316.

¹⁶ Ed Stetzer, *Planting Missional Churches* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 37.

¹⁷ Craig Ott and Gene Wilson, *Global Church Planting: Biblical Principles and Best Practices for Multiplication* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 356. The authors’ commitment to biblical principles for church planting is exemplified in their table outlining twelve such principles found in the New Testament (59–61).

¹⁸ Keller, *Church Planter Manual*, 93.

that is immediately apparent in the opening sentence of this book: “It is not about planting churches.”¹⁹ After all, as Payne points out, there is no biblical command *per se* to go plant churches. Jesus did, however, commission his followers to go *make disciples* of all nations. Payne observes that “church planting is a biblical, effective, and efficient method of carrying out the Great Commission.”²⁰ In fact, the “New Testament mission was designed to bring people into relationship with Christ and with other believers in responsible churches.”²¹ Jesus said that he, himself, would build his church; he loved the church and gave himself up for her. At Pentecost the Holy Spirit birthed the church, and he indwells the church today. The church is the body of Christ who is its head, and the church brings glory to God through all eternity. A canonical survey squarely places the church at the center of God’s mission throughout history.²²

In addition to a strong biblical and missiological foundation, the missionary practice of planting churches must also have a solid theological framework. According to Payne, this framework should at least include an understanding of the *Missio Dei*, the Incarnation, and the kingdom of God. Because church planting lies at the intersection of missiology and ecclesiology, the church planter must have a biblical understanding of the nature and functions of the church. Noting that “[s]adly, few church leaders work from a solid definition of the church,” Darrin Patrick observes, “If we do not understand what it is that we are serving or leading, or what it is that we are starting, not only are we unlikely to be successful, but we will not even know what success *is*.”²³ John Hammett argues that “the doctrine of the church is especially important to

¹⁹ Payne, *Discovering Church Planting*, 3.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

²¹ David J. Hesselgrave, “Essential Elements of Church planting and Growing in the 21st Century” *EMQ* Vol. 36. No. 1 (January 2000): 24–32. Cited: 20 August 2011. Online: <http://www.emisdirect.com/emq/issue-127/472>.

²² John S. Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2005), 13.

²³ Darrin Patrick, *Church Planter: The Man, The Message, The Mission* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2010), 182.

contemporary North Americans, because their pragmatic approach to church life, their concern to be relevant to their culture, and their desire to see their churches grow leave them vulnerable to the danger that their churches will be shaped more by those concerns than by the design of the Lord of the church.”²⁴ In light of these strong winds of culture, church planters desiring to utilize critical contextualization must find an anchorage in the Scripture. They must also develop an understanding of the principles of hermeneutics in order to interpret the Bible properly.

Perhaps surprisingly, some of the strongest affirmations of the benefits of biblical and theological grounding for church planters come from those who have experience in the trenches of ethnic, urban church planting. For example, Ray Bakke notes that he resonates with the following comment by David Hansen: “I discovered that spending a day reading thirty pages of Karl Barth’s *Dogmatics* helped me more in my pastoral work than reading a hundred pages of how-to literature.”²⁵ Bakke also relates the following story which highlights the importance of a traditional theological education. A student asked John Fry (a “with it” urban pastor), “What does it take to be a really ‘with it’ pastor?”

[Fry] replied, “Unless you can read Hebrew without the vowel points and translate any passage in the Greek New Testament inside fifteen minutes, you have no business in the ministry.” He paused for a moment while the students went into shock, then continued, “Because if you can’t tell me where the church has been, you have no business telling me where it ought to go.”²⁶

Bakke sees the primary challenge of urban ministry as theological. His book, *A Theology as Big as the City*, is a theological reflection on the uses of the word “city” found 1250 times in Scripture. Bakke’s profound insights into how the biblical text informs his urban setting are a valuable resource for any church planter in a similar urban context. They also serve as a potent

²⁴ Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches*, 11.

²⁵ Ray Bakke, *A Theology as Big as the City* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1997), 117fn. Bakke read Hansen’s comment in *The Art of Pastoring* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1994), 10.

²⁶ Bakke, *A Theology as Big as the City*, 26.

testimony to the importance of the authority of the Scripture and its power to speak into life and ministry.

Church planters must know the Bible and how to interpret it properly; they must be grounded in biblical doctrine and adept at theological thinking. They need to understand the character and mission of God, the uniqueness of the person and work of Christ, the role and gifting of the Spirit. All of this will help them develop a biblical ecclesiology so that they might be able to plant biblical churches. The best church planting literature clearly reveals that theological education has much to offer church planters in the area of cognitive knowledge and wisdom gained from theological reflection.

Character

In Christian ministry, closely related to knowing and doing is being. For example, Paul recognized that even if he could “fathom all mysteries and all knowledge” and perform all sorts of ministries and yet be without love, he was nothing. Along the same lines, Keller concludes that “[t]he single most important thing a leader needs in order to lead is holy, loving, Christ-like character.”²⁷ He even suggests that godliness can even compensate for areas where the Christian minister has deficiencies. Unfortunately, he also observes that “[i]t is relatively easy to give knowledge, more difficult to affect behavior, and most difficult to transform character.”²⁸ Ott also maintains that leadership stems from character, not technical competence. He observes that leaders tend to fail, not because of a lack of knowledge, but because of a weakness in character

²⁷ Keller, *Church Planter Manual*, 61.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 151.

or because of relational issues.²⁹ Surely it is noteworthy that Paul’s lists of qualifications for an elder consist solely of character qualities with the exception of one skill—the ability to teach.³⁰

So just what are the essential core values, attitudes, and character traits that a church planter should possess? Much of the literature identifies the primary characteristic is an absolute dependence on the power of the Holy Spirit.³¹ Interestingly, Roland Muller analyzed successful evangelists with widely divergent personalities and isolated the following commonalities: 1) a life so saturated with the Word of God that even non-believers recognized that this was a person of God; and 2) an absolute submission to God, often gained at the expense of suffering and brokenness.³² This dependence on the Holy Spirit is demonstrated in the church planter’s dedication to a lifestyle of prayer. Unfortunately, as Stetzer candidly observes, “[t]he personality type that plants churches is not consistent with the same personality type that is great at walking with God.”³³ It is all the more critical, therefore, that training for church planters include this foundational component of character development.

Many writers have attempted to enumerate various other character qualities that are essential. Because character is such a crucial component, some have formulated an assessment process that helps “discern the readiness and giftedness” of potential church planters.³⁴ For example, the assessment used by the Redeemer Church Planting Center includes “the use of

²⁹ Ott, *Global Church Planting*, 360.

³⁰ The lists are found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. While some of the two dozen or so character traits are included in both lists, others are not. The lists are therefore not exhaustive and may reflect the situation of the two different churches.

³¹ For example, see Brock, “What are the absolute essentials?” and Hesselgrave, “Essential Elements of Church Planting and Growing in the 21st Century.”

³² Roland Muller, *The Messenger, The Message, The Community: Three Critical Issues for the Cross-Cultural Church Planter* (2d ed.; Altona, Manitoba: CanBooks, 2010), 16-17.

³³ “Ed’s Big 7 Church Planting Mistakes,” Taken from Kent Shaffer’s 7 October 2009 blog posting of the list Ed Stetzer shared at Lab 3 of the Catalyst Conference. Cited 29 August 2011. Online: <http://churchrelevance.com/tag/ed-stetzer/>.

³⁴ Ott, *Global Church Planting*, 361-62.

experiential exercise, simulations and other instrument activities.”³⁵ Keller’s *Church Planter Manual* contains a sample self-assessment instrument for church planters to rate themselves in regards to spiritual, gospel, interpersonal, and self-management disciplines. The manual also includes Allen Thompson’s assessment list of eighteen characteristics of a church planter, including seven personal characteristics (similar to the biblical qualifications); six ministerial characteristics (skills); and five interpersonal characteristics (flexibility, likability, emotional stability, sensitivity, and dynamism).³⁶ Significantly, the Redeemer Manual also adds nine characteristics of a church planter spouse. According to Ott, the most commonly used assessment measure is Charles Ridley’s instrument of thirteen behavioral characteristics necessary for effective church planting. This list includes “spousal cooperation” and others such as “visioning capacity,” “creates ownership of ministry,” and “builds group cohesiveness.” Oddly enough, the only characteristic that is remotely spiritual is “exercises faith.”³⁷ Although Ridley’s assessment intentionally focuses on behavioral characteristics, surely a thorough assessment would not overlook the essential ingredient most likely missing—according to Brock—from today’s church planting: “spirit-filled church planters with a burning message from God.”³⁸

If it is difficult to measure godly character, it is even more difficult to instill it. Most church planting books simply point out the need for a deep spiritual walk, but neglect to discuss specifics.³⁹ Others lament that seminary-based training fails to develop spiritual character. According to Roger Greenway,

³⁵ Keller, *Church Planter Manual*, 70.

³⁶ J. Allen Thompson, *Church Planter Competencies as Perceived by Church Planters and Assessment Center Leaders: A Protestant North American Study*, Ph.D. dissertation, Trinity International University, Deerfield, Illinois, 1995. These are listed in Keller, *Church Planter Manual*, 69.

³⁷ Ott, *Global Church Planting*, 362.

³⁸ Brock, “What Are the Absolute Essentials?”, n.p.

³⁹ Keller’s manual was the only church planting book found in the research for this paper that actually addresses the development/maintenance of spiritual renewal—both on the individual and corporate level (179–214).

The trouble with the traditional way of training for the ministry is that it is so heavily weighted toward academic accomplishments that the “weightier things,” such as diligence in prayer; evidence of a loving and gracious spirit; obedience to the moral standards of Christian living; spiritual power in teaching, preaching, and evangelism; and the ability to exercise authority without pride, receive scant attention. Yet these are the most important things to be measured in persons preparing for Christian leadership.

Instead of an academic model focused on knowledge, Greenway proposes a new model that places primary attention on Christian character. In actuality, however, spiritual formation is one of the four foci of the “signature pedagogy” of theological education.⁴⁰ Seminaries must be careful to make the most of available opportunities for spiritual formation. But even the executive director of ATS admits that Christian character may best be formed in actual Christian ministry. Seminaries, therefore, must partner with churches to ensure that students are involved in ministry which parallels their studies. According to Ott, the supervisor model has been replaced or at least supplemented with the mentor model where “[c]hurch-planting mentors listen to mentees, pray for them, model faithful life and ministry, set the pace, hold them accountable, and give them constructive feedback.”⁴¹ Ott sees mentoring as the key to developing character. The development of a Christ-like character is of such critical importance for church planters that they need both seminary and church to attend to its formation.

⁴⁰ The other three are interpretation, contextualization, and performance. Charles R. Foster et al., *Educating Clergy: Teaching Practices and Pastoral Imagination* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 32–3.

⁴¹ Ott, *Global Church Planting*, 360.

Skills

In addition to solid biblical and theological grounding and the development of a godly character, a church planter must also learn a variety of skills. A quick perusal of church planting literature amasses an overwhelming inventory of competencies necessary for church planting. Payne, however, reduces the primary tasks of church planting to two: evangelism and leadership development.⁴²

Evangelism

Because Payne defines biblical church planting as evangelism that results in new churches, he sees it as absolutely crucial to the church planting task. Ironically he observes that “[w]ith many church-planting teams, evangelism is the weakest link.”⁴³ Unless church planters discipline themselves to do the work of an evangelist—building networks, spending time with unbelievers, and sharing the gospel—invariably they will tend to start churches with believers from other churches. Adopting Gary Rohrmayer’s term for this tendency, “evangelism entropy,” Payne warns that church planting built around transfer growth will fail to make disciples of the four billion people on planet Earth who do not yet know Christ.

Although there are many different methods of evangelism, “[a] scriptural doctrine of evangelism should be the controlling element in any practice of evangelism.”⁴⁴ Muller charts a spectrum of evangelism styles, from least to most offensive: “Lifestyle—Friendship—Teacher-based—Proclamation—Confrontation.” He warns that the popular philosophy of friendship evangelism all too often falls short on either the side of true friendship or actual evangelism.

⁴² Payne, *Discovering Church Planting*, 121. Elsewhere, he states that “it should be understood that . . . these [two] great activities must be bathed in prayer,” (74).

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 87–8.

Instead, he suggests that missionaries should most often use the teacher-based style because he believes it is the biblical pattern and that teaching is at the core of evangelism.⁴⁵ Keller, on the other hand, advocates the strategy of cultivating a networking mindset for the whole church. Networking recognizes the reality that in today’s privatized, secularized society, “people will not listen to the gospel from strangers.” It is crucial therefore to share the good news intentionally along the existing networks—familial, geographical, vocational, and relational—of every new believer.⁴⁶

Cultural Exegesis

Whatever evangelism approach church planters choose, they should communicate the gospel in a way that fits the context. Cultural exegesis is an indispensable skill for church planters. Keller explains how to develop four community profiles including interior life (hopes, dreams, fears, and problems), world-view, social context, and religious institutions. His manual also provides a sample ethnographic interview. Keller strongly underscores that living incarnation within the culture is the key to effective ministry.⁴⁷

Contextualization

Knowing a community thoroughly is also a requirement for *contextualization*—a term that missionaries used to describe the process of sharing the gospel in cross-cultural contexts.⁴⁸

Darrin Patrick addresses this concept in an excellent chapter entitled: “The How of Mission: Contextualization.” Although some voice suspicions that contextualization is spiritual

⁴⁴ Will Metzger, *Tell the Truth: The Whole Gospel, to the Whole Person, by Whole People* (2d ed.; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1984), 15.

⁴⁵ Muller, *The Messenger*, 27–31.

⁴⁶ Keller, *Church Planter Manual*, 124–5.

⁴⁷ Keller, *Church Planter Manual*, 79.

⁴⁸ Patrick, *Church Planter*, 193.

compromise—becoming like the world to win the world—actually any articulation of the gospel is in a concrete historical context. After all, language itself is a social context. The issue then, is how to contextualize the gospel critically, achieving that delicate balance of faithfully communicating the unchanging truths of the gospel in a way that is comprehensible to the hearers.⁴⁹ Patrick also includes biblical examples of how Jesus and Paul used contextualization to accomplish their mission.⁵⁰ Like Patrick, Keller thinks contextualization is so important that he identifies it as one of the handful of principles that run throughout his manual for church planters. He cautions the reader not to underestimate its complexity or its importance.⁵¹

Cross-cultural Skills

Church planters need to see themselves as missiologists and adopt helpful tools and practices for sharing the gospel in their own cross-cultural contexts. Muller dedicates most of his book to the discussion of how contextualization provides an extremely useful tool for cross-cultural evangelism.⁵² Muller identifies the three basic ancestral worldviews based on fear, guilt, and shame. He demonstrates the effectiveness of both comprehending someone's worldview and communicating the gospel in a way that resonates with that particular worldview. While this skill is indispensable for missionaries in a cross-cultural setting, it is just as important for evangelicals in North America where traditional worldviews are shifting and populations are increasingly pluralistic. Ott mentions several other competencies that are important factors for effectiveness in cross-cultural settings: for example, personal maturity, entrepreneurial ability, flexibility, and

⁴⁹ Ibid., 194–5.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 204–7.

⁵¹ Keller, *Church Planter Manual*, 3.

⁵² Muller, *The Messenger*, 97–214.

resourcefulness.⁵³ These apostolic skills will become increasingly important for North American church planters as their own context becomes more diverse.

An Urban Skill-Set

Around the world, cities are growing at exponential rates. For the first time in history, the urban population reached 1 billion in 1961. It took only 25 years to hit the second billion; 17 years to hit the third. It is projected that there will be 4 billion city dwellers in 2018. In North America over 80% of the population lives in urban areas.⁵⁴ The effects of this urbanization have had even greater impact as the corresponding urbanism reaches far beyond the borders of the city into small towns and rural areas. If today's Christians desire to make disciples of the nations, they will have to engage the cities more than ever before. Church planters in urban contexts today, therefore, will need to develop a distinctly urban skill-set.⁵⁵

Church planters must be able to navigate the financial challenges of the city. An escalating inundation of human needs threatens to swamp the social institutions which have traditionally met them. In the face of this overwhelming hardship, some may be tempted to place social justice and compassion as the primary focus of the church. But as Hibbert observes,

The church is at the heart of God's purposes, and is the primary agent and sign of the kingdom of God. Transformation of societies in God's desired direction occurs through the agency of God's people, and it is local churches which are designed to be the central expression of the values and life of the kingdom.

Evangelism that results in the planting of new churches is the primary way God has chosen to extend the reign of his kingdom. While church planters must not lose sight of the primacy of evangelism and making disciples, they must keep the transforming power of the gospel in view.

⁵³ Ott, *Global Church Planting*, 308.

⁵⁴ Payne, *Discovering Church Planting*, 344–5.

⁵⁵ This in no way denigrates church planting in rural areas. It is just that the vast majority of people in North America now live in cities, and traditional seminary preparation has failed to prepare urban workers adequately.

In the preface to his church planter training manual, Keller explains the principle that “paradoxically, churches grow best not when they aim at church growth as much as when they serve the peace/*shalom* of the whole city.”⁵⁶ Keller names mercy ministries as one of the “two key ministries pivotal to the formation of a healthy church,” the other one being leadership development.⁵⁷ Urban church planters need to know how to share a holistic gospel that truly transforms the city.

An urban context calls for other skills as well. Harvie Conn and Manuel Ortiz consider the cities of North America as a close parallel to foreign mission fields. The authors present a strong case for orientation and training that is just as rigorous as that for foreign missionaries. The problem is that there are few models for urban ministry and few personnel experienced enough to equip others. Conn and Ortiz note that the possession of a theology degree does not prepare a church planter for urban ministry: “The truth of the matter is that new curricula have to be developed for leaders to work with the aggressive ideological pluralism in the city and the ethnic, cultural and social diversity.”⁵⁸ Bakke calls for a tithe of nonurbanites to make “downward social mobility an art form for the sake of a righteous witness in corrupt urban communities.”⁵⁹ These relocated church planters will need to learn the skills necessary for life and ministry in an urban setting.

Obviously, the development of indigenous urban leaders should not be overlooked as a logical alternative to relocated church planters. However, potential indigenous leaders often present their own set of challenges, usually needing spiritual formation, theological training, and

⁵⁶ Keller, *Church Planter Manual*, 3.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 161.

⁵⁸ Harvie Conn and Manuel Ortiz, *Urban Ministry: The Kingdom, the City & the People of God* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2001), 397.

⁵⁹ Bakke, *A Theology as Big as the City*, 46.

instruction in the application of Scripture to their own context.⁶⁰ Conn and Ortiz argue that it is incumbent on the church, rather than the seminary, to develop indigenous leadership using a variety of integrated training traditions including mentoring and modeling, as well as informal and distance education. The authors also note that an urban curriculum should incorporate social sciences, theology and biblical studies, and the cultural context of the urban reality.⁶¹ They suggest a curriculum for developing urban leaders that includes spiritual formation, mission formation, and social formation.⁶²

Leadership Development

According to Payne, next to evangelism, leadership development is the second primary task of a church planter. The process of discipleship should be a natural part of leadership development. Evangelism is only the beginning of fulfilling the Great Commission. Jesus tasks his followers with making disciples—baptizing them and teaching them to obey all his commands. Church planters need to ensure that those who profess faith in Christ grow to maturity as fruit-bearing Christ-followers.⁶³ Church planters must learn how to teach new believers to become obedient followers of Christ by modeling a Spirit-filled life before them. Church planters must also provide basic biblical knowledge with application, instruction in spiritual disciplines, hands-on involvement in ministry, and accountability.⁶⁴

Ott observes that it is a natural progression for a disciple to learn to serve by meeting immediate needs of the church and community. Disciples are followers of Christ who set the example as the ultimate servant leader as Philippians 2 so eloquently expresses. Ott states his

⁶⁰ Ibid., 398.

⁶¹ Conn, *Urban Ministry*, 414–17.

⁶² See chapter 22, “Curriculum for Developing Urban Leaders,” in Conn, *Urban Ministry*, 412–27.

⁶³ Payne, *Discovering Church Planting*, 97.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 119.

personal conviction about developing leaders: “*Train a servant, and you will get a leader.*”⁶⁵ Through training in experiential acts of service to the church, a servant will naturally display certain spiritual gifts. The wise church planter will then be able to identify and develop these faithful servants into leaders.

It is extremely important that a church planter raise and equip leaders from the harvest for the continuing work in the harvest. These new leaders will in turn guide others to “discover and attain their potential in service. The multiplication of churches is built on multiplying disciples, workers, *and* leaders.”⁶⁶ Payne declares that this process must be reproducible in order for multiplication to take place. He also notes that the failure to develop leaders is “the bottleneck of church multiplication.”⁶⁷ Church planters would do well to learn the skill of multiplying leaders inherent in Paul’s injunction to Timothy to entrust the things he has taught him to reliable men who will in turn be qualified to teach others (2 Tim 2:2).

Other Skills

A survey of church planting literature reveals myriads of other tasks and skills that would also be helpful for church planters. For example, they should demonstrate a dizzying array of behavioral assessment characteristics and biblical qualifications. They should be familiar with various models and methods; they should develop a philosophy of ministry, a church planting action plan, and a disciple-making plan. Church planters should be proficient in evangelism, discipling, encouraging, mentoring, comforting, admonishing, caring, and counseling.⁶⁸ They should be able to interpret and teach the Bible, lead small groups, and handle conflict appropriately. Some

⁶⁵ Ott, *Global Church Planting*, 352.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Payne, *Discovering Church Planting*, 123.

⁶⁸ Keller, *Church Planter Manual*, 170.

may need to balance tent-making and ministry; all must manage their own household and finances well. They should know how to use marketing and social sciences. If they cannot do all these things they need to be able to assemble and manage a team who can or they need to know God, know God's Word, and walk with God in such a way that it compensates for their deficiencies.

Church planting is obviously not for the faint of heart. Perhaps it is endless lists like these that prompted Michael McKinley to write *Church Planting Is for Wimps: How God Uses Messed-up People to Plant Ordinary Churches That Do Extraordinary Things*.⁶⁹

The Canadian Context

A Multi-Cultural Society

Canada is one of the most culturally diverse nations in the world. In contrast to the concept of American society as a "melting pot," Canadians consider their society to be a "cultural mosaic." In 1971, Canada became the first country to adopt an official policy of multiculturalism. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982) recognized this ideal as a distinctly Canadian value, and the Canadian Multiculturalism Act (1988) formalized the policy "designed to preserve and enhance the multicultural heritage of Canadians while working to achieve the equality of all Canadians."⁷⁰ The 2006 census data reveal the undeniable fruit of Canada's policies. The proportion of foreign-born population (6,186,950) represented one in five of the total population, the highest proportion since 1931. Between 2001 and 2006, Canada's population growth rate was just over 5%, and immigrants were responsible for almost 70% of the increase. Of the 1.1 million recent immigrants, approximately 58% came from Asia.

⁶⁹ Michael McKinley, *Church Planting Is for Wimps: How God Uses Messed-up People to Plant Ordinary Churches That Do Extraordinary Things* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2010).

Most recent immigrants gravitate toward Canada's largest census metropolitan areas—Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal. In 2006 these three cities were home to 63% of Canada's foreign-born population, while being home to only 27% of the country's Canadian-born population. In comparison to the proportion of foreign-born in Toronto (46%) and Vancouver (40%), the U.S. cities that come closest are Miami (37%) and Los Angeles (35%).⁷¹ Not surprisingly, "Canada is increasingly being recognized as a highly diverse mission field of comparable challenge with many international settings."⁷² The nation's staggering cultural diversity presents both unique challenges and unique opportunities for the church planter.

An Urban Society

In light of Canada's great cities, it is surprising to realize that just one hundred years ago, the nation was basically a rural society. In 1867, at the time of the Canadian Confederation, less than twenty percent of citizens lived in towns of 1,000 or more population. "Now there are over 140 urban centres, occupying less than 3 per cent of the land. In the three largest urban centres—Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal—we find 35 per cent of the population occupying 0.8 per cent of the land."⁷³ The growth of these megacities in the last century is phenomenal. For example, Toronto's population has swelled from 208,000 in 1901, to 5.1 million in 2006.⁷⁴ More than 8 million—one-quarter of the entire population of Canada—live in the surrounding "Greater Golden Horseshoe" area. Sociologist Harry Hiller notes that "the Toronto census metropolitan area is unrivalled in Canada as a region of power and influence and clearly reflects the processes

⁷⁰ Reginald W. Bibby, "Canada's Mythical Religious Mosaic: Some Census Findings," *JSSR* 39 (June 2000): 235. [cited 27 Jan. 2011]. Online: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1387505>.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁷² Geoff Tunnicliffe, "Canada for the Nations," in *Discipling Our Nation: Equipping the Canadian Church for its Mission* (ed. Murray Moerman; Delta, British Columbia: Church Leadership Library, 2005), 235.

⁷³ Glenn Smith, "Canadian Urban Ministry, Proposals for New Initiatives" in *Discipling Our Nation: Equipping the Canadian Church for its Mission* (ed. Murray Moerman; Delta, British Columbia: Church Leadership, 2005), 84.

of concentration and centralization.”⁷⁵ Not surprisingly, for Canadians this region is referred to as “the centre of the universe.”

There are many sociological issues that an urban church planter in Canada will need to be aware of. For example, living in the city has had an impact on the nature of human relationships. Whereas in the past those living in the same community had a common bond, now people look beyond their residence for meaningful social ties with others who share similar interests, such as “[r]eligious or political values, hobbies, occupational interests, sports,” etc.⁷⁶ Another social reality is increasing urban inequality, as families fall through the cracks of social safety nets. There is a great need for the advancement of urban social justice in Canadian cities.⁷⁷

Although there are obvious commonalities shared by cities north and south of the Canada-US border, there are noteworthy differences, as well. Glenn Smith enumerates “Seven Startling Differences between Canadian and American Cities.” He observes that Canadian cities are more compact, denser in population, more reliant on public transportation, and more ethnically diverse. They have higher incomes, more “traditional family” units, and radically different urban government, as well. Canadian cities are also safer and more stable than cities in the U.S.⁷⁸

Smith proposes several new initiatives for urban ministry in Canada, including the following: 1) Churches can become centers for urban ministry research and ideas; 2) As the “conscience of the city,” churches need to find a voice in the public forum; 3) Churches need to

⁷⁴ Harry H. Hiller, *Urban Canada*, (2nd ed.; Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford Press, 2010).

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 126.

⁷⁸ Smith, “Canadian Urban Ministry,” 87.

“offer local social services without being owned by the municipality”; and 4) They need to balance spiritual mission with practical ministry to the poor.⁷⁹

An Increasingly Secularized Society

Canadian pollster Reginald Bibby observes that whereas weekly church attendance in Canada in 1945 stood at 60%, by 1995 it had declined to 23%, and it is projected to drop to 15% by 2015.⁸⁰ Consequently, the church has lost its voice in Canadian society. Glenn Smith observes that “[t]he moral consensus of . . . society increasingly bypasses the traditional values of the church in national debates over social policy and morality.”⁸¹ Canadians have adopted a pluralistic ideology as evidenced in the data from Bibby’s 1995 Project Canada Survey. The majority of respondents agreed with the following statements: “Everything’s relative” (73%); “What’s right or wrong is a matter of personal opinion” (52%).⁸²

In spite of sundering formal ties to religious institutions, Canadians have continued to evince some spiritual interest. The 2010 ISSP survey reports that a majority of respondents believe in God, but only the polar opposites seem to have nailed down their beliefs: 30% do not doubt that God exists; 7% are sure he does not. Closer examination of the responses in the middle, however, reveals enormous uncertainty: “While I have doubts, I feel there is a God” (20%); “I find myself believing in God some of the time, but not at others” (10%); “I don’t believe in a personal God, but I do believe in a higher power” (20%); “I don’t know whether

⁷⁹ Ibid., 91–2.

⁸⁰ Reginald Bibby, *There’s Got to Be More: Connecting Churches and Canadians* (Winfield, B.C.: Wood Lake, 1995), 15.

⁸¹ Conn, *Urban Face of Mission*, 18.

⁸² Project Canada 1995 Survey, Collected by Reginald Bibby. Association of Religion Data Archives. [cited 30 Jan. 2011]. Online: <http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Descriptions/PC1995.asp>.

there is a god and I don't believe there is a way to find out" (11%).⁸³ Church planters need to learn to engage Canadians in gospel conversations that tap into this lingering spiritual interest.

The Canadian National Baptist Convention

Constituted in 1985, the Canadian National Baptist Convention (CNBC) is a network of 271 churches across Canada, with the majority located in Western Canada.⁸⁴ These churches reflect the incredible diversity of Canada, as less than half are Anglo churches.⁸⁵ The Canadian Southern Baptist Seminary (CSBS) commenced classes in 1987. Both the convention and seminary are located in Cochrane, Alberta, Canada. The convention's commitment to church planting is expressed in the vision statement of the CNBC: "1000 Healthy, Reproducing, Cooperating Churches by the year 2020."

Interviews with CNBC Church Planting Leadership

Until recently, Dwight Huffman served several years as the CNBC National Team Leader for Church Planting. Speaking from his years of experience with Canadian church planters, Huffman outlined several critical needs in ministry practice. Church planters need organizational skills (budgeting and calendaring), relational skills (listening and shared decision making), conflict management, and accountability. He sees major problems where church planter spouses do not share the same sense of calling or commitment, and noted that church planters sometimes struggle with the same ethical issues as their surrounding culture. Huffman also observed that there is a need for urban training in order to prepare church planters to target ethnic groups and

⁸³ Richard Johnson, "Heaven tops hell in Canadian belief poll," *National Post*, September 3, 2010, n.p. [cited 3 February 2010]. Online: <http://life.nationalpost.com/2010/09/03/heaven-tops-hell-in-canadian-belief-poll/>.

⁸⁴ CNBC website. The convention, formerly known as the Canadian Convention of Southern Baptists (CCSB), voted to change its name in 2008. A similar seminary name change is under review.

⁸⁵ CNBC ethnic churches include 35 Korean churches, 18 multi-ethnic, 17 Cantonese, 12 French Canadian, 10 Mandarin, 10 Haitian, 9 First Nations, and a smattering of Filipino, Arabic, Hispanic, Bengali, Ghanese, etc.

lower socio-economic groups.⁸⁶ Even with all these pressing practical needs, Huffman cautioned, “Don’t jettison theology. We have to integrate practical skills and mentoring into theological education if we’re going to prepare a person for a lifetime in ministry. I’m amazed at how much I do is what I believe.” Huffman also suggested that church planters need to study Church History in general and Baptist History in particular, in order to understand the bigger Missions picture and the difference between cooperative and societal missions.

Dan Morgan is the CNBC Senior Strategist for Church Starting and the CSBS Nehemiah Professor of Church Planting, arriving one year ago from Texas. Morgan stated, “You don’t need a M.Div. to plant a church, but you need formal theological education to found a movement. You need theological depth to reproduce true to Scripture.” Morgan mentioned church planters’ need for biblically-based strategy and tactics and advocated the use of techniques based on sociology and theological reflection. Morgan also decried the scarcity of church planter candidates, attributing it to the small pool of CNBC churches from which to draw.⁸⁷

Focus Group with CNBC Church Planters

The CSBS recently conducted a thorough review/revision of the M.Div. degree program. Part of this process involved surveying different constituencies of its parent denomination, CNBC, to discuss how the degree might better meet the needs of theological education in Canada. In May 2009, CSBS professor Kevin Peacock convened a focus group of eight CNBC church planters in Toronto. When they were asked what are the greatest needs and challenges they face as ministers, most of their responses centered on identifying and equipping leaders. One mentioned the difficulty of “getting a grip on a community that’s changing so fast.” These church planters identified the parts of their training that were least beneficial: set programs to be implemented in

⁸⁶ Personal interview with Dwight Huffman, 19 August 2011.

the field and academic instruction without hands-on training or explanation of how it related to ministry. They also identified the most helpful components of their training: Bible surveys, systematic theology, apologetics, world religions, research and critical thinking, field training, and church history (highlighted several times). When asked to suggest new courses, the church planters mentioned social sciences (demographic, urban planning and development, cultural anthropology, ethnic/pluralism studies) as well as prayer and biblical spirituality. Finally, they also identified the following skills as *absolutely vital* in the training to be an effective minister: community exegesis, critical thinking, clear communication, and people skills.⁸⁸ The focus group clearly highlighted the need for specialized training for church planters in Canada.

Theological Education Designed for Church Planters

Although Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (SEBTS) first began offering a M.Div. with Church Planting degree in 1995, the four-year program was designed for international missions. Two years of on-campus study was followed by “two years of international field based service in cooperation with the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board (FMB).”⁸⁹ In 1999, SEBTS began offering a similar 2 plus 2 degree—a M.Div. with North American Church Planting—in conjunction with the North American Mission Board (NAMB). At that time there was only one course in church planting (Biblical & Strategic Foundations), and 40 field-based hours comprised of a practicum and 36 hours of unspecified modulars.⁹⁰ In 2001-02, a new course (North American Church Planting Field Experience) was designed to expose first-year students to church planting on the field. The degree saw significant revisions in 2004–05, when

⁸⁷ Personal interview with Dan Morgan, 19 August 2011.

⁸⁸ M.Div. Focus Group Toronto, Oakville, Ontario, 22 May 2009, convened by Kevin Peacock.

⁸⁹ SEBTS Academic Catalogue (1995–96): 36.

⁹⁰ SEBTS Academic Catalogue (1999–2000): 62–3.

the field-based training dropped to 18 hours.⁹¹ The current SEBTS online catalogue reveals major changes to the M.Div. with North American Church Planting. The degree is no longer a 2 plus 2 program. “Students may have the option of finishing most of their academic requirements on campus” (except for six hours of field-based practicums) or they can head to the field after two years of campus curriculum in two years and complete the remaining work on the field.⁹²

According to Mike Dodson, SEBTS Professor of Church Planting, after graduation students may be assigned to church planting teams and deployed by NAMB to one of several North American cities. Although the Nehemiah Church Planting Project has been around for twelve years, Dodson observed that “the field supervised mentorship doesn’t happen the way it needs to.”⁹³ Dan Morgan, Dodson’s counterpart at CSBS, also remarked that it was difficult for Nehemiah students to juggle coursework and the demands of church planting at the same time. Perhaps this explains why the future of the Nehemiah Project is currently up in the air.⁹⁴

Other Southern Baptist seminaries offer similar M.Div. degrees with concentrations in Church Planting in cooperation with NAMB. The church planting tracks all offer an introduction to church planting, a models course, ten-week practicums, and a variety of electives. SEBTS requires “Contextualized Church Planting” and a NA Missions trip, while Southern requires “Intercultural Communication” and “Church Multiplication Strategies.” Golden Gate electives include “Ministry and Marketing” and “Polity for Church Planters.”

In Canada, church planter training is often done in boot camp conferences.⁹⁵ There are a handful of seminaries, however, that offer an introductory course in church planting, for

⁹¹ SEBTS Academic Catalogue (2004–05): 96–97.

⁹² SEBTS online Academic Catalogue, (2011–12): 114.

⁹³ Personal interview with Mike Dodson, 16 June 2011.

⁹⁴ Personal interview with Dan Morgan, 19 August 2011.

⁹⁵ For example, see the Summit boot camp, <http://churchplantingcanada.ca/>. Ott notes that many networks offer “a plethora of high-quality seminars, boot camps, publications, resources and support systems to train and

example, Toronto School of Theology, Masters Pentecostal Seminary, and Taylor Seminary. Outside of CSBS the only seminary that offers a specialization in church planting is the Association of Canadian Theological Schools (ACTS) in British Columbia. This consortium of five seminaries in partnership with Trinity Western University offers a M.A. in Christian Studies with Church Planting Leadership. The 15-hour specialization offers two church planting courses (“Leadership Issues” and “Strategies”) in addition to assessment and a practicum.

Theological Education for Church Planters at CSBS

The Curriculum

As the seminary of a denomination that is dedicated to a vision of planting churches, CSBS is committed to providing effective theological education for church planters. While the Canadian Southern Baptist Seminary does not offer a M.Div. with a concentration in church planting, it does have a NAMB-sponsored Nehemiah professor of church planting. All students enrolled in the M.Div. program are required to take the introductory “Church Planting”; all Nehemiah students are required to take “Models of Church Planting,” as well. In response to the various focus groups, surveys, and discussion generated by the M.Div. review, the CSBS faculty voted to revise the M.Div. degree by making changes to seven courses, adding an additional seven courses, and creating the possibility for student internships in churches and church plants. The purpose of these changes is to equip every student for ministry in the context of today’s Canada.

The recent review of the M.Div. degree program also revealed the need to provide a two-year Masters degree that focuses on the needs of church planters. CSBS responded by designing a M.A. in Christian Ministry with a Missions and Church Planting Track. Approved by ATS in January 2011, the new degree launches in the fall semester, 2011. This 60-hour degree scales

assist church planters” (364). He recommends Glenn Smith’s 2007 monograph, “Models for Raising Up Church

back the curriculum to those courses which are essential for the church planter.⁹⁶ While it would have been optimum for this paper's research to inform the development of the degree ahead of time, it will still prove beneficial to evaluate the curriculum in light of the findings of this paper.

Assessment of the Missions and Church Planting Track

The foregoing survey of church planting literature, interviews with church planting strategists, and focus group all underscore the needs church planters have for knowledge, skills, and character. CSBS demonstrates both strengths and weaknesses in addressing each of these areas.

Knowledge

Not surprisingly, like most traditional seminaries, CSBS is strong in the knowledge components of the Biblical and Theological Studies. This curriculum includes comprehensive surveys of both the Old Testament and the New Testament and a "Biblical Interpretation" course that is indispensable for understanding and applying hermeneutical principles. Two semesters of Christian Theology serve to meet the need for a solid theological framework and sound ecclesiology. Additionally, the course in Christian ethics included in this section addresses some of the concerns that Huffman identified. However, there is one course missing that both Huffman and the focus group mentioned: Church/Baptist History. The faculty may need to consider requiring it or highly recommending students include it in their free electives. A strength of CSBS is that it avoids the common "academic apartheid"⁹⁷ in which theology is segregated from missiology. Almost all the teaching faculty have extensive international missionary experience;

Planters" for an overview of the many approaches to church planter training in North America.

⁹⁶ See Appendix for an overview of the degree courses.

⁹⁷ Paul G. Hiebert and Tite Tienou, "Missions and the Doing of Theology" in *The Urban Face of Mission: Ministering the Gospel in a Diverse and Changing World*. (ed. Manuel Ortiz and Susan S. Baker; Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R, 2002), 85.

they are all practitioners; several are currently serving in church plants. This missional ethos invariably produces trans-curricular integration.

Skills

The research also revealed a number of practical skills needed by church planters. If one of their primary tasks is developing leaders, church planters will find the Leadership Studies section of the curriculum to be very helpful. The “set religious education programs” that the focus group expressed an aversion to are gone. In their place are courses that teach skills which church planters desperately need: “Effective Bible Teaching” and “Leading Disciples to Maturity.” The titles themselves reflect themes that surfaced in the literature’s discussion of developing leaders. The courses listed in the Missional Studies section demonstrate the commitment CSBS has to giving students the skills they need to engage their Canadian context.⁹⁸ The faculty also heard the resounding cry for more field-based praxis alongside experienced mentors. Therefore, in addition to the two semesters of Capstone Ministry (two 2-hour practicums), students in the new degree have the option of up to eight additional hours of internship experience.

Again, faculty experience as practitioners is hugely beneficial in teaching skills to students. CSBS faculty and students often minister alongside one another in local churches and church plants. However, CSBS also has to rely on partnerships with pastors and church planters to mentor students adequately in field practicums and internships. Just making room in the curriculum for more praxis does not mean that meaningful mentoring and coaching will automatically take place. The school will need to be proactive in promoting the internships and ensuring that these opportunities are all they should be.

⁹⁸ The first five of these are required courses for all M.Div. students, as well.

A potential weakness in this area is that several of the skills mentioned in the research are not included in the required curriculum. Some of these—for example, relational and organizational skills—may naturally be addressed in field-based practicums or internships. Required missional electives can cover other areas such as urban and cross-cultural ministries, contextualization, and social sciences. This is where outside expertise may enrich the learning environment at CSBS. The seminary is just beginning to implement mid-program reviews and e-portfolios in the fall of 2011. Included in this assessment are certain competencies, such as a gospel presentation and a cultural exegesis. The faculty will review those to make sure students in this degree are able to demonstrate essential church planting skills.

Character

This curriculum also addresses the highlighted need for character development in the courses “Spiritual Formation” and “Dealing with Conflict.” One course which is missing from this core curriculum area is “Prayer.” The school offers teaching on prayer in electives, but may need to enlist church planting students for it directly. As the literature noted, however, character formation cannot take place in a classroom alone. Therefore, the seminary provides extra-curricular activities designed to meet this need: the Spiritual and Ministerial Formation covenant, faculty-facilitated journey groups (small groups that meet weekly for accountability and prayer), weekly chapels, monthly prayer chapels, and the annual Spiritual Renewal Week.

The area of character development will continue to present challenges for CSBS as it does for most other traditional seminaries. However, this school is uniquely positioned to address this particular area. One of strengths of CSBS is a low student-faculty ratio. Students often drop in to talk with professors or spend time in their homes. Unlike in many large seminaries, the faculty of CSBS is able to mentor students, to walk with them in ministry, and to ask the hard

questions. Faculty members are being challenged to be more intentional about speaking into the lives of students. Another critical area is the call and character of the church planter's spouse. Although CSBS does have a program for women in ministry, many who need it most do not participate. The department of Student Services will need to evaluate the content of this program and find ways of increasing participation.

Delivery of Theological Education for Church Planters in Canada

Perhaps the greatest challenge CSBS faces in providing theological education for church planters in Canada is its location in Cochrane, Alberta. Although it is just a thirty-minute drive from the heart of Calgary (population 1 million), the campus is at a great distance from most Canadians. The school's response thus far has been to deliver Masters level courses online through SeminaryLink and in on-campus intensives. ATS standards, however, still require a minimum of thirty credit hours be taken on campus.⁹⁹ In order to facilitate work in the East, the convention is opening a CNBC/NAMB office in Toronto, Ontario, in August 2011. Consequently, convention leadership has recently entered dialogue with CSBS about providing theological education for church planters in Toronto. The challenges would be huge. The financial costs and administrative burden of establishing a fully accredited extension site seem prohibitive. But the overwhelming need is pushing us to find a way to provide theological education for church planters—whatever it takes.

⁹⁹ Standard 10 on distance education is under review and will be addressed at the 2012 ATS biennial meeting, which may have implications for the residency requirement.

Conclusion

Overall, CSBS is providing effective training for church planters. In order to equip church planters to meet the changing needs of all of Canada, the seminary will have to respond with even more creative changes. Leonard Sweet believes that seminaries can and must step up to the challenge of change. In an article entitled “Not Your Father’s Seminary,” Sweet explains that “seminaries need to reinvent the ways in which theological education delivers ideas, information, best practices, and prophecies to the tens of thousands of religious leaders who have the closest day-to-day contact with people.” Advocating a new model for theological education called “NexSem,” Sweet sees leadership development as a highly participatory discipleship training, delivered in a “mix/match of learning opportunities including classroom, online, face-to-face, immersive HILTs (high-impact learning techniques), . . . hybrids and so on.” Sweet’s next seminary model also envisions a significant role for the local church since he sees it as “the most effective incubator of spiritual leaders on the planet.”¹⁰⁰ The Toronto context may provide just the setting for such an experiment.

The challenges of providing theological education for church planters through the Canadian Southern Baptist Seminary are enormous, but so are the opportunities. The Lord of the Harvest has given us our marching orders: Go, make disciples of all the nations. Conveniently, the nations have arrived on Canada’s doorstep. We must be willing to ask where the Lord is at work and what are his purposes for us. It is encouraging in the face of such challenges to recall Jesus’ promise: “I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.”

¹⁰⁰ Leonard Sweet, “Not Your Father’s Seminary: How Seminaries Must Reinvent Themselves—A Conversation with Leonard Sweet on “NexSem,” in *REV!* (March/April 2008): 71. Also available online: <http://www.rev.org/ArticlePrint.asp?ID=2871>.

APPENDIX

MA in Christian Ministry: Missions and Church Planting Track	
Biblical Studies (14 hrs)	
Old Testament 1 and 2	(3/3)
New Testament 1 and 2	(3/3)
Biblical Interpretation	(2)
Theological Studies (7 hrs)	
Christian Theology 1 & 2	(2/2)
Christian Ethics	(3)
Leadership Studies (6 hrs)	
Spiritual Leadership	(2)
Effective Bible Teaching	(2)
Leading Disciples toward Maturity	(2)
Missional Studies (12 hrs)	
Missiology	(2)
Evangelism	(2)
Christianity & Other World Faiths	(2)
Christian Apologetics in a Post-Christian Era	(2)
Church Planting	(2)
Models of Church Planting	(2)

Character and Praxis (8 hrs)	
Spiritual Formation	(2)
Dealing with Conflict	(2)
Capstone Ministry	(2/2)
Missional Electives (4 hours)	
Free Electives* (9 hours)	

Total hours: 60

*Free electives may include up to 8 credit hours of optional internship experience beyond the 4 hours of required Capstone Ministry 1 & 2, depending on availability of internship opportunities

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