

# BIBLE COLLEGE CONSULTATION 2017

## **BIBLE COLLEGE Consultation 2017**

**Christian Ethics for  
Bible Education in Africa**

**20-22 June**



**Facilitating synergies for theological education in Southern Africa**



# **“Schools of the Prophets”**

The prophetic witness  
of theological education

Dr. Brian A de Vries, 20 June 2017

# Introduction

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- How should theological education aid the cause of Christian Ethics in southern Africa today?
  
- Thesis: **Theological education serves the Church by equipping biblical prophets for relevant public witness [in Africa]**

# What: biblical theology

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- Where do we find the concept/practice of “theological education” in Old Testament?
- Early prophets: The “Sons of the Prophets”
- Later prophets: The call to accountability
- Christ’s discipleship & teaching ministry

# What: biblical doctrine

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- What is the “prophetic” ministry or witness of the Church in the New Testament?
- Christ's prophetic ministry continued

# Christ's Anointing & Christians



Q 31. Why is He called “Christ,” that is, Anointed?

A. Because He is **ordained** of God the Father and **anointed** with the Holy Spirit to be our chief **Prophet** and Teacher, who has fully revealed to us the secret counsel and will of God concerning our redemption; and our only High **Priest**, who by the one sacrifice of His body, has redeemed us, and ever lives to make intercession for us with the Father; and our eternal **King**, who governs us by His Word and Spirit, and defends and preserves us in the redemption obtained for us.

Q 32. But why are you called a Christian?

A. Because by faith I am a member of Christ and thus a **partaker of His anointing**, in order that I also may **confess His Name**, may **present myself a living sacrifice** of thankfulness to Him, and with a free conscience may **fight against sin and the devil** in this life, and hereafter in eternity reign with Him over all creatures.

# What: biblical theology

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- What is the “prophetic” ministry or witness of the Church in the New Testament?
- Christ's prophetic ministry continued...
- The prophetic witness of believers (in Christ)
- The prophetic witness of the NT Church

# What: historical theology



- How in church history did theological education aid the prophetic ministry of the church?
- John Calvin’s “School of the Prophets”
  - Erik A. De Boer, *The Genevan School of the Prophets: The Congregations of the Company of Pastors and their Influence in 16th Century Europe*, (Librairie Droz 2012).
  - Review of De Boer in the *Calvin Theological Journal*:  
“Preaching in Geneva was considered an activity of prophecy as it was found in the early church. Prophecy must be understood as the application of the message... This was applied to regular interpretation of Scripture and the work of the Spirit in applying its meaning to the present in the act of preaching.”



# What: historical theology



- How in church history did theological education aid the prophetic ministry of the church?
- John Calvin’s “School of the Prophets”
- Many New England “Schools of the Prophets”
  - Harvard College                      1655
  - Yale College                              1701
  - The “Log College”                      1726

“The ‘school of the prophets’ [in New England] were decentralized apprenticeships with local pastors, which eventually gave way to and were replaced by the ‘seminary’ model.”

# What: biblical prophets in Africa



- Thesis: **Theological education serves the Church by equipping biblical prophets for relevant public witness [in Africa]**
  - The **prophetic ministry** of calling God's people and society back to morality as taught by Torah (the Law of God)
  - The **prophetic witness** of the New Testament church and believers, as disciples of Christ and empowered by His Spirit

# What: NT prophetic witness



## Prophetic Witness

Discipleship

Passive witness:

- holy living
- moral behavior

Public witness:

- speaking
- writing

Apologetics

Elencitic dialog

# What: biblical prophets in Africa



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**A primary task of theological education is to prepare faithful “Men of God” to lead the Church in prophetic public witness**

# Why: contemporary reasons

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The urgent need for “Schools of the Prophets”:

1. The preponderance of false prophets
2. The pressing contemporary social challenges
3. The marginalization of the Church in society
4. The present distractions of theological education

# What: defining the terms



## Prophetic Witness

### Within the Church

- false teachers
- theological errors

### In the world /society

- government
- business
- education
- media/culture

Theological education trains leaders for the Church who will be used by God to equip the saints for the work of prophetic ministry in society

# How: adjusting our focus



Historical cautions from common mistakes:

1. The Mormon (delusion) mistake
2. Modern unbiblical prophetic ministries

**We must keep Christian (biblical) ethics  
“biblically grounded” and not distracted by  
academic philosophy or political agendas!**

# How: Biblical MOTIVES

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- What should motivate the theological education of prophetic witnesses?
- Our Identity: Witnesses of the gospel of Christ
- Our Message: Speaking the Word of the LORD
- Our Power: Empowered by Christ's Spirit



# How: Biblical METHODS



- What should guide and shape the process of educating men for prophetic ministry?
  1. Teachers of the Law... and the Gospel of the Kingdom
  2. Spiritual training “in” ministry (not just “for” ministry)
  3. Discerning guards against excess and error
  4. Intentional preparation for prophetic ministry

# How: Biblical MANNERS



- What should be our behavior and attitude of our this training for prophetic ministry?
- An urgent responsibility
- A more certain hope

Theological education serves the Church by equipping biblical prophets for relevant public witness [in Africa]