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DIETRICH BONHOEFFER'S EXPERIMENT IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION: WOULD ATS GIVE ACCREDITATION TO FINKENWALDE?

In April 1935, one of five “preachers’ seminaries” established by the Old Prussian Council of Brethren in Germany opened at Zingst under the direction of twenty-nine year old Dietrich Bonhoeffer. The other four were a seminary directed by Hermann Hesse in Elberfeld, one in Bielefeld-Sierker led by Otto Schmitz, one in Bloestau, East Prussia led by Hans J. Iwand, and one in Naumburg, Silesia directed by Gerhard Gloege (Bethge 1967, 484-485; ET (English Translation) 2000, 422). Bonhoeffer’s seminary was centered in Pomerania, part of Prussia which was ceded to Poland following the end of World War II. Finkenwalde, the final location of the seminary, is now known as “Zdroje.” The seminary operated for a little more than two years before it was closed by the Gestapo. During its time of operation, however, the seminary at Finkenwalde adopted some innovative approaches in theological education which remain relevant. This paper will examine the history of Bonhoeffer’s seminary at Finkenwalde, examine the daily schedule, review the curricular emphases, and employ the current standards of the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada to assess the approach taken there.

A Brief History of the Seminary at Finkenwalde

Theological education in Germany in the 1920's and 1930's had adopted particular standards for the preparation of parish ministers. Since theological faculties in German universities did not provide courses in practical, parish related ministry, denominational governing councils found it necessary to establish a *Predigerseminar* or a preachers’ seminary where candidates for ordination would be prepared for service in a parish. Paul F. W. Busing, one of Bonhoeffer’s students at the seminary in Finkenwalde, writes:

A candidate for the ministry in Germany must have two years of practical training following the completion of four years with a theological faculty of a university. As a rule he spends a year and a half as an assistant in a parish under an experienced minister and six months at a “seminary for preachers,” a kind of postgraduate school at which he prepares for his final examination and ordination. (1108)

While this pattern was established prior to the Nazi rise to power in Germany, that ascent brought the need for the Confessing Church to establish preachers’ seminaries under their control. In the German Evangelical Church the Nazi idea of the racial superiority of Aryans was mixed with other traditional elements of Christianity. Among the requirements for candidates for the ministry in the German Evangelical Church were proof of pure Aryan ancestry and an oath of loyalty to Nazism (Kelly 1991, 13). In the universities, Bonhoeffer complained, the theological

faculty either promoted the “German Christian heresy” or they remained indecisive (1996, 204; ET 1966, 70). One visitor to Finkenwalde reported on his attendance at a required German Evangelical Church course for church youth work noting that forty of the forty-five attendees wore either SA or SS uniforms. The workshop included the Nazi flag ceremony, the Hitler greeting, and National Socialist training as part of the form (Wind 1992, 100). While many Christians in Germany were willing to accept a “Nazi church,” for others the formation of that church demanded a serious response.

The Confessing Church was established with the Barmen Declaration in 1934 which expressed objections to Hitler’s policies particularly as they addressed the church. The need for establishing special seminaries which existed separately from the Nazi-controlled seminaries of the German Evangelical Church was addressed later that year by the Dahlem Synod. The resolutions had called upon Christians to ignore the instructions of the Reich church government. The formation of emergency church organization at that gathering included the five seminaries of the Old Prussian Council of Brethren. Given the need for these seminaries to run with little central control, the seminary directors were given a great deal of personal autonomy. Care was taken to select directors who could be trusted. Eberhard Bethge reports that the five were selected for their ability to arouse the interest of the students, they were respected for their scholarship, and they had demonstrated determination. (1967, 485; ET 2000, 422).

Bonhoeffer was pastoring a German congregation in London when he was asked to become director of the seminary in Pomerania. After some hesitation, he accepted the assignment. To prepare for the task, he visited Anglican monasteries and a Quaker center in Britain hoping to emphasize a heightened understanding of community within the seminary (Kelly and Nelson, 2003, 22).

In the Spring of 1935, Bonhoeffer’s seminary opened to twenty-three students at Zingst on the coast of the Baltic Sea. The seminaries were regional and students were placed primarily by their home districts. In all, about one hundred students were enrolled in the five seminaries during that first summer (Bethge 1967, 485; ET 2000, 422-423). Financial support for the seminaries and usable materials for the faculty and seminarians were donated by churches and individual supporters.

In June, the seminary relocated to an old estate near Finkenwalde, Pomerania. Council member Wilhelm Niesel describes it as a “neglected . . . pigsty” which the seminarians cleaned and made habitable (1966, 146). There theological education began in earnest and Bonhoeffer began to introduce his ideas for educating ministers and for establishing community. He recognized the purpose of the seminary as being given the task of serving the Confessing Church in the region. Classroom work in practical ministry is included. Additionally, the seminarians were involved in mission work and emergency church service in the seminary’s region. (1996, 203; ET 1966, 70).

Bonhoeffer was not alone in directing the seminary at Finkenwalde. Wilhelm Rott, a pastor, was appointed as “Inspector of Studies” behind Bonhoeffer. The appointment appeared

to be, in part, a means of keeping an eye on Bonhoeffer (Bosanquet 1968, 150). Though Rott may have been skeptical initially, he recognized that Finkenwalde stood out among the five seminaries deeming it “something special” (1966, 132). In addition to his supervisory responsibilities, Rott taught a number of classes.

In addition to his work at Finkenwalde, Bonhoeffer was a regular lecturer in theology in several German universities most notably in Berlin. In December 1935, the Fifth Implementation Decree prohibited unauthorized church groups from appointing or ordaining clergy and from training and examining theologians. This made the Confessing Church’s seminaries illegal. In addition, Bonhoeffer was banned from teaching in legally recognized educational institutions (Bethge 1967, 564-565; ET 2000, 496). In spite of this prohibition Finkenwalde continued to function for almost two more years.

In all, five classes of students passed through the seminary. In spite of various decrees restricting the activities of the Confessing Church and its seminaries, the government was unable to exert influence on its institutions. In August 1937 the institutions were banned and the seminary at Finkenwalde was closed by the Gestapo in October. By the end of the year twenty-seven of the former Finkenwalde students had been arrested and were imprisoned. Yet, the work continued in a new form, the “collective pastorate,” for another three years (Kelly and Nelson 2003, 25).

The Theological Curriculum at Finkenwalde

While preachers’ seminaries were common in German church life, Finkenwalde stood apart from other seminaries with its innovations in their theological approach. In addition to course work in homiletics, theology, and spiritual care, Finkenwalde adopted a strict community schedule for the students. Meditation and confession were emphasized. A “house of brethren” was established for long-term participants. Ministry activity and mission work were common elements of the approach.

The Daily Schedule for the Seminary. Bonhoeffer’s visits to monasteries found expression in the daily schedule. From the very beginning at Zingst, a monastic type schedule was employed. Paul Busing recalls:

We members of the community rose in silence each morning, then assembled in silence in the dining room for prayers. None of us was allowed to speak before God himself had spoken to us and we had sung our morning prayer to him. There was a fixed form for these prayer, which was also used each evening. After a hymn, one or more psalms were read antiphonally. The Old Testament lesson was followed by a verse or two of a hymn that was used for a week or more. After the reading from the New Testament, one of us offered prayers. Morning worship closed with the singing of another hymn. Then, again in silence, we went to our dormitories to make our beds and put things in order. Next came breakfast, during which we continued to practice *taciturnitas*; after breakfast we retired to our studies, which each of us shared with one or two of his fellows. For half an

hour our task was one of meditation on a short passage from the German Bible, a passage about which we were asked to center our thoughts for a week, not to gather ideas for our next sermon or to examine it exegetically but to discover what it had to say to us. We were to pray over it, to think of our life in its light, and to use it as a basis for intercession on behalf of our brethren, our families, and all whom we knew to be in special need or difficulty. . . (1961, 1109).

The time following meditation was taken up with more routine seminary activities: course work, study, meals, and so forth. There were lecture periods which frequently were discussions or seminars.

Evening prayers following a format similar to the morning prayer were scheduled at 9:30 PM. This was followed by silence designed to keep God's word before the seminarian (1961, 1110).

On Saturdays, the morning worship service included a brief sermon from Bonhoeffer. On Sundays there was a more routine worship service for those who were not involved in ministry elsewhere. Later in the seminary's history, weekends were spent in villages visiting in homes and having services in the village church. (1961, 1110).

On a weekly basis, the seminary community gathered in the evening to discuss current issues. Even in isolation, the seminary community recognized the importance of the German political situation. There was a wide range of opinion on proper response to growing German militarism and response to the Nazi government (Bethge 1967, 493-494; ET 2000, 430-431).

Meditation. One of the distinguishing marks of theological education at Finkenwalde was the practice of meditation. For half an hour following breakfast each day, each student meditated silently on a text selected for the week. The passage was not related to lectionary texts, sermon texts, or theological class texts. Bethge says they "were to be free of any ulterior goal" (1967, 529; ET 2000, 462). They were neither to consult the texts in the original language nor to use dictionaries or other books (Zimmerman 1966, 107). According to Bethge's introduction to meditation, prepared under the direction of Bonhoeffer, the Word of Scripture should remain in one's ears and work in them all day. The purpose is not to produce some product such as a sermon or devotional or theological treatise which the mediator should possess but rather that the mediator should be possessed by the Word. This also provided a focus for prayer on behalf of others (Bonhoeffer 1996, 947-948; ET 1966, 59). Bonhoeffer hoped that this would become a long-term practice rather than being a requirement which would end when attendance at Finkenwalde was completed.

Finkenwalde student Wolf-Dieter Zimmerman reports that the practice of meditation was difficult initially: ". . . the time of meditation did not grow into a time of revelation; the text did not speak to us, and if it did, it was in our own voice" (Zimmerman 1966, 107). This early frustration brought the compromise of weekly communal meditation. Bethge described this practice as being similar to a Quaker meeting. One could speak or remain silent as long as

Scripture was the focus. This communal practice provided a content which could be the focus during personal meditation. The practice became more widely accepted and was continued by some after leaving Finkenwalde. Later circular letters to former Finkenwalde students provided texts for meditation so all who wished could meditate on the same passages (1967, 530-531; ET 2000, 463-464).

Confession. Bonhoeffer introduced the practice of confession in association with the celebration of Eucharist at the seminary. In preparation for the first Eucharist, Bonhoeffer stressed mutual reconciliation as a prerequisite for celebration. To achieve this, he suggested private confession to one of the other students but also made himself available to hear confessions. Consistent with Luther's position, the community recognized this as confession between brethren rather than sacramental confession to a priest (Bosanquet 1968, 154). Zimmerman says that ". . . Bonhoeffer suggested we should each choose a brother who would accompany our life in intercession—as an outward sign. . . we were not alone" (1966, 109). As was experienced with the practice of meditation, there was resistance to this innovation. Bethge reports, however, that the community became accustomed to the practice of communion and confession. Many of them began going for private confession, yet this was not reported openly or discussed. Eventually Bethge was asked by Bonhoeffer to hear his confession (1967, 532-533; ET 2000, 465). As with the other innovations, the practice of confession was oriented to the promotion of community and developing the sense that individual members were not alone in their service.

The House of the Brethren. During the first course at Finkenwalde, Bonhoeffer began making plans for a *Bruderhaus* or "house of brethren" where students would remain beyond the six month term leading a common Christian life as pastors. Bonhoeffer made a request to the Council of the Church of the Old Prussian Union to allow the establishment of the house. The house would provide fellowship and help for the pastor participants. The community would provide support for ministers to serve in whatever area necessary without concern for finances or other issues. The house provided a spiritual haven to strengthen the pastor through prayer, meditation, study, and discussion (Bonhoeffer 1996, 76-78; ET 1966, 29-31). Much like a member of a monastic community who may be directed wherever needed, members of the house would be assigned work particular to them and could be sent to minister wherever they were needed for ministry. Size of the membership would be limited. Participants would be free to leave when they wished.

When permission was granted to begin the house, six ministerial candidates were allowed to remain. Assignments were made for each participant including tutorials in the seminary, correspondence, serving churches as pastor. Celibacy was not a requirement for members despite rumors to the contrary (Bethge 1967, 535; ET 2000, 468).

While there are similarities to monasticism, the House of Brethren, it should be noted was not oriented to monastic seclusion but to preparation for outgoing service. Participants renounced financial privileges and other privileges to dedicate themselves to the tasks of ministry which awaited them and they provided leadership for the rest of the seminarians in their mission activities.

Homiletics. While homiletics is a common curricular element in preparation of ministers, Bonhoeffer approached the practice of preaching and preparation for preaching in a new way. Theologically, he argued that the movement in preaching is not from Scripture to the present but from the present to Scripture. “It is thus apparently away from the present, but it is away from the false present in order to come to the true present,” he argued (1996, 489; ET 1965, 312). To the students’ surprise, their sermons were treated with great respect. Sermons were to be heard with humility rather than with a critical ear. Discussion was limited to sermons which had been read aloud in class; sermons presented before a congregation were not discussed. Such respect and awe was an appropriate response for him since he insisted the real voice of Christ was speaking in the sermon (Bethge 1967, 505-506; ET 2000, 441-442).

American homiletics professor Clyde Fant in his analysis of Bonhoeffer’s approach to preaching recognizes that listening to sermons is an important part of learning to preach. Students were influenced more by Bonhoeffer’s instructions on listening to sermons than by methods for preaching. The recognition of the sermon and the central place of the Word of God within the church moves Bonhoeffer to claim the teaching of preaching for himself. It is a central concern in his theology (Fant 1975).

Mission. Although the two year plan of study for the *Predigerseminar* included an eighteen month period of service as an assistant in a parish, mission and practical experience found its way into the course at Finkenwalde as well. Students in each of the terms were involved in missions to the churches of the Confessing Church located within Pomerania. As a student, Wolf-Dieter Zimmerman recognized this activity as “the practical application of what we had learned in theory” (1966, 111). These missions began with the first course of study in August 1935. The approach became more systematic as time passed. Typical of the mission was the pattern of sending a team of about four seminarians to minister to a parish with the team spending a whole week in a village. During the day they would split up and visit homes in the village. Each day there would be an evening worship service in which each of the team members would preach for ten minutes addressing part of the theme (Bethge 1967, 614; ET 2000, 543). Sermons prepared for the worship service were assessed by Bonhoeffer and others—Zimmerman characterizes this assessment as having the sermon “most ruthlessly torn to shreds” (1966, 111). The pattern met the dual needs of providing well-supervised experience for the student ministers and providing leadership within the churches of the Confessing church which lacked leadership and willing ministers within the context of Germany in the 1930’s. Other students were involved in regular parish ministry within the area of the Finkenwalde. The house of brethren provided a level of supervision for the other student members during this time.

In addition to this local mission activity, when possible Bonhoeffer took students to other regions of Europe for the purpose of representing the broader Christian world to the students and allowing the students to represent ministers of the Confessing church. This travel was usually without civil government knowledge or approval (Bosanquet 1968, 174). As awareness of non-approved church groups became known to the governing authorities, obtaining proper paperwork to travel outside of Germany became less likely. Still, the work within Pomerania continued while there were students who were willing to live out the demands of ministry in a dangerous world.

Perceptions of Finkenwalde and Its Theological Approach

For several years following the Barmen Declaration and the formation of the Confessing Church, the Church and its seminaries operated apart from the legally recognized German Evangelical Church. It appears that the Nazis hoped such activity would cease without legal action. The actions taken that resulted in the closing of Finkenwalde in the Fall of 1937 was the beginning of active suppression of that movement. This operation apart from the legally recognized church seems to result in an almost “stealth” operation which drew little attention. There is some debate regarding recognition at world Christian gatherings with the German Evangelical Church claiming that the Confessing Church should not be seated. Apart from this question of who represents Christians in Germany there seems to be little outside debate or discussion of theological education at Finkenwalde. In considering perceptions of theological education at Finkenwalde, several issues should be considered. First, there was a clear desire of many within the Confessing Church to be perceived as patriotic; thus, there is a distinction between opposing the German Evangelical Church and opposing Germany itself. In the course of the operation of Finkenwalde, there are a number of students who choose to align themselves with the German Evangelical Church. The reaction by Bonhoeffer and the Confessing Church to this action should be examined. The student perception of Bonhoeffer’s experiments with community and theological study will also be examined. Finally, reaction from colleagues of Bonhoeffer will be examined.

Patriotism in the Confessing Church. The Confessing Church’s resistance to the Nazi takeover of the Christian Church should not be misunderstood. Resistance to Hitler and his policies was distinct from resistance to Germany as a whole. This distinction was found in broader German society as well; active conspiracies to remove or assassinate Hitler were found within the established German military prior to hostilities and then during the course of the war (Parssinen 2003). Within the Confessing Church, after his arrest and incarceration in Sachsenhausen concentration camp, Martin Niemöller, decorated U-boat captain from World War I, continued to send letters requesting reassignment to military service defending Germany (Gill 1994, 47-48). Similar attitudes were found among Bonhoeffer’s students. Bethge reports that in May 1935 when the seminary was still in Zingst, the seminarians listened to Hitler’s speech declaring Germany’s rejection of the limits placed upon it by the World War I armistice. The reaction was excitement and “wondering when it would be their turn to put on the uniform.” Even those who had been arrested for earlier protests against church restrictions welcomed Hitler’s action and volunteered for service in the military. Within the Confessing Church, Bethge reports, there was desire to provide volunteers for military service to prove its patriotism (1967, 493; ET 2000, 430).

Defection from the Confessing Church. Attendance at Finkenwalde clearly set the seminarian apart from the government approved German Evangelical Church. Completion of the educational preparation qualified ministers to serve in the poorly funded, scattered churches of the Confessing Church. For financial and employment security, taking the oath of loyalty to Hitler and service in the German Evangelical Church was necessary. Students struggled with the appropriate response. Bonhoeffer maintained that separation from the Confessing Church was separation from Christianity. Finkenwalde student Albrecht Schönherr recalled Bonhoeffer’s

response to a student who wished to join the German Christians in order to undermine that movement from within. Bonhoeffer responded, "If you board the wrong train it is no use running along the corridor in the opposite direction" (1966, 129). Still, some students did leave and align themselves with the state recognized church. While Bonhoeffer did not approve of this, he did understand. Social pressure and family pressure was too much, especially for those who had little financial support (Wind 1992, 107).

When one did align himself with the German Evangelical Church they were dismissed from the seminary. In response to a letter from Friedrich Schauer complaining about the dismissal of K. Wendtlandt from Finkenwalde, Bonhoeffer defended the actions. (Interestingly, in the earliest publication of this correspondence the recipient of the letter and the subject of the letter are identified only as Brother S. and Brother W. The more recent publication of *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Werke* identifies both more fully.) Wendtland, he says, was informed by the superintendent of the German Evangelical Church that he could not remain at Finkenwalde. Further, Bonhoeffer stated that Wendtland took the step of his own will and withdrew himself from the Confessing Church. This was consistent with the wishes of the Councils of Brethren (Bonhoeffer 1996, 108-109; ET 1965, 303-304).

Reaction from Students. Students were resistant to some of Bonhoeffer's innovations. The modification of meditation to include a weekly community mediation was noted earlier. Bethge notes that Bonhoeffer's attempt to introduce the practice of reading aloud during meals was met with opposition by students who objected to this "monkish custom." Yet, selected books were read during the meals (1967, 492; ET 2000, 429). In other areas, students noted resistance at the time but many times upon later reflection found the approach beneficial. Wolf-Dieter Zimmerman writes, "The spiritual order was . . . a burden difficult to bear, a discipline to which we did not like to submit. We made jokes about it, mocked at this cult. . . ." Still he says the method made life bearable for the participants (1966, 109-110). Albrecht Schönherr recalled the difficulty of the spiritual practices, especially in a location which was well suited for relaxation and sport (1966, 126). Inspector of Studies Rott found what Bonhoeffer was able to accomplish with students in such a short period to be impressive (1966, 131). Student Johannes Goebel says that the course at the seminary "gave a decisive form to my life. . ." and that the approach taken there "gives me the way to solve problems in present-day theology" (1966, 123).

Reaction from Colleagues. Bonhoeffer found colleagues wary of his approach and the dedication with which he approached his task at Finkenwalde. Life in the seminary and the development of a community of believers there employed approaches which some viewed as "too Catholic," yet for him it was an adaptation of the best elements of Catholic-Christian tradition within the principles of Reformation Christianity (Bonhoeffer 1995, 24-25).

To Erwin Sutz, a Swiss theologian with whom he had studied at Union Theological Seminary in New York City, he defended his departure from theological education within the university system: "I no longer believe in the university and never really have believed in it . . . training of the budding theologians belongs today in church, monastery-like schools in which the pure doctrine, the Sermon on the Mount, and worship can be taken seriously. . ." (1994, 204; ET

1995, 412). The setting and approach at Finkenwalde was appropriate for the task which could not be performed appropriately in the university.

Karl Barth, Bonhoeffer's professor and colleague, voiced his concern about the Finkenwalde experiment to Bonhoeffer and others. Barth complained about "an indefinable odor of the eros and pathos of the cloister. . ." (Bosanquet 1968, 159). Bonhoeffer defended against the perception that the seminary has withdrawn from the world and ceased to be relevant. He argued that they needed a different kind of training given the situation which they would face in the parishes. Further, he argued that alongside their meditation and other practices they were doing serious theological work. In the same letter to Barth he addressed a concern which had come from some in the Confessing Church. There was a concern that too much time was being spent on meditation while other things were much more important. The complaint was "We have no time for meditation now, the ordinands should learn how to preach and catechize." Bonhoeffer saw this perspective as ignorant showing no knowledge of how preaching and catechism emerge. (1996, 237; ET 1995, 431). While Bonhoeffer expressed confidence in the approach he takes, it is clear that there were those who questioned the approach.

Would ATS Grant Accreditation to Finkenwalde?

Clearly the question of Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada accreditation is theoretical. One could point out numerous reasons why ATS would not consider accreditation. First, schools were not recognized as being accredited by ATS until 1938 a year after Finkenwalde had been closed by the Gestapo. Secondly, ATS grants accreditation to schools outside the United States and Canada when they are affiliated with accredited schools within the United States and Canada. There was no such affiliation for the Confessing Church's seminaries. In considering the physical qualities of the school, an ATS accrediting team certainly would find educational resources inadequate. Standard 5 "Library and Information Resources" requires an adequate collection of materials (ATS 2004, 62). Finkenwalde's resources consisted of a library mainly of Bonhoeffer's own theological books as well as a grand piano and his recordings of black spirituals (Kelly and Nelson 2003, 23). Most certainly this would be inadequate for a student body of Finkenwalde's size. In addition, the termination of students for joining with the German Evangelical Church would place Finkenwalde in violation of ATS's standard on "Termination of Student Tenure" (2004, 195-196) since the reasons for termination were not made explicit in advance of admission. To be sure, there are probably more reasons why Finkenwalde would not be accredited than reasons why it should be. However, the educational approach makes the assessment of the program following Standard 3 "Learning, Teaching, and Research: Theological Scholarship" (2004, 50-54) interesting at least and instructive at best.

Learning, Teaching, and Research: Theological Scholarship

Standard three of the general institution standards of the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada addresses the issues of theological scholarship. It states:

A theological school is a community of faith and learning that cultivates habits of theological reflection, nurtures wise and skilled ministerial practice, and contributes to the formation of spiritual awareness and moral sensitivity. Within this context, the task of theological scholarship is central. It includes the interrelated activities of learning, teaching, and research (50).

A consideration of these habits as they apply to the theological approach of Finkenwalde should provide an assessment of that approach. The evidence will show that Finkenwalde does well in addressing learning, teaching, and research.

Learning. “Learning in a theological school should reflect the goals of the total curriculum and be appropriate to post-baccalaureate education” (51). Since the six month term at Finkenwalde follows four years of theological study in the university and since the students have completed the first examination moving towards ordination it is apparent that the course of study is appropriate to post-baccalaureate education. The curriculum is oriented towards common tasks of ministry including homiletics and spiritual care. Other learning activities are oriented toward spiritual preparation for ministry including meditation, confession, and community building activities. Service in area parishes and mission activities further advance the preparation of the students for vocational service in Confessing Church parishes.

The practice of meditation cultivated students’ ability to encounter Scripture in a new way which would result in both spiritual renewal and sensitivity to biblical texts that go beyond an academic, literary study of those texts. While library resources were limited, research continued with students preparing sermons and other materials for use in the practice of ministry.

Of significance in the approach at Finkenwalde was the dedication with which students approached their commitment to service within the Confessing Church. Following the issuance of the Fifth Emergency Measure in December 1935 which made Finkenwalde and the other Confessing Church seminaries illegal, Bonhoeffer discussed the implications of that law with the students. The seminary and Bonhoeffer took steps to provide support for current students and the class which had completed course work earlier in the fall. The students freely chose to remain at that time (Bethge 1967, 564-565; ET 2000, 496-497). Thus, students were able to assess the tradition represented by the Finkenwalde curriculum and demonstrate an emotional and spiritual maturity in reaching decisions regarding that tradition. It should be noted that there were those who chose at other times to align themselves with the German Evangelical Church, but even these did so after discussion with Bonhoeffer and colleagues who helped them in assessment of the actions and allowed them to determine the influence of their traditions on that action.

Teaching. According to standard three, “Teaching should involve faculty . . . and students working together in an environment of mutual learning, respect, and engagement” (51). The small number of students (fewer than twenty-five in the first course) and the service of a director (Bonhoeffer), an inspector of studies (Rott), and other visitors with teaching responsibilities, collegiality was quite easy to promote. When the practices of meditation and confession along with group recreational activities and fellowship around the table along with

morning and evening worship are considered as well, opportunities for mutual learning and engagement were part of the environment of the seminary.

The emphasis upon community among the students and leaders extended itself to creating a learning community. Although there was initial discomfort with the practices of meditation and confession, common Christian practices, yet uncommon to the experience of these students, they served to create a trusting community in which learning could take place. Respect for students was shown, for example, in homiletics classes when critique of sermons was done in private between the student and the professor.

In developing courses and community experiences, Bonhoeffer displayed concern for addressing a variety of areas. There is a concern for the academic preparation of the students and their cognitive content. Although much of their preparation that is more cognitively oriented was accomplished in university studies prior to matriculation at Finkenwalde, continuing academic study at Finkenwalde was still subjected to high standards.

Paul Busing observed that in his time at the university, “no one took any responsibility for nurturing the spiritual life of a candidate for the ministry” (1961, 1108). At Finkenwalde, however, a great deal of concern is demonstrated for the spiritual development of the minister. The rigid schedule places activities of spiritual development at significant times of the day. The day begins and ends with prayer and worship. Attention is paid to spiritual development at meal times. Thus, the affective content of theological education plays a prominent role in the overall curriculum.

The weekend service in area Confessing Church parishes as well as extended mission service in Pomerania and other areas demonstrates a concern for behavioral aspects of the theological curriculum. This service provides preparation for ministry by participating in ministry.

Research. Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s research activity while serving as director of Finkenwalde demonstrates the seminary’s commitment to research. The production of two volumes during and immediately following service in Finkenwalde, *Nachfolge* (the English translation initially used the title *The Cost of Discipleship*) and *Gemeinsames Leben* (the English translation is entitled *Life Together*) shows the high level of theological scholarship with which Bonhoeffer approached his work (Floyd 1999, 82; Green 1999, 125). In addition, Eberhard Bethge reports that Bonhoeffer kept up current theological knowledge and was able to produce publishable material as a result of that study (1967, 493; ET 2000, 430). His research ability was further demonstrated by his continued service in the universities of Germany as a lecturer in theology until government action made such activity illegal for him.

Theological research by students is demonstrated by the publication of the work of Eberhard Bethge. His “Introduction to Daily Meditation” circulated as the rationale for the seminary practice of meditation and that essay’s later publication in the works of Bonhoeffer provides an anecdotal demonstration of the seminary’s commitment to research in the theological curriculum (Bonhoeffer 1996, 945-950; ET 1966, 57-61).

Characteristics of Theological Scholarship. ATS states that “Patterns of collaboration, freedom of inquiry, relationships with diverse publics, and a global awareness are important characteristics of theological scholarship” (52). Finkenwalde demonstrates these qualities in a variety of ways. On the issue of scholarly collaboration, students reports suggest that the practice of meditation and, to a lesser degree, confession which were practiced at Finkenwalde, reluctantly at first, in some cases became lifelong habits. Appreciation for those experiences is expressed by a number of students in their reflections on their experience of Finkenwalde and with Bonhoeffer. Additionally, interaction with the faculty in a variety of settings: classroom, worship services, prayer services, recreation, meals, singing, travel, and mission activities promote mutual respect among students and leaders.

Clearly Finkenwalde limits freedom of inquiry within the parameters established for the Confessing Church. Expulsion of students who submit themselves for ministry positions within the German Evangelical Church demonstrates the boundaries for this freedom. This does not suggest that Finkenwalde is restrictively narrow. It does indicate that this institution, established in a time of crisis within the Christian movement within Germany, remains at the forefront of the conflict within Germany.

Finkenwalde demonstrated involvement with diverse publics in a variety of ways. The seminarians remain attached to the life of the church. Their service in area parishes and their missions team activities assist them in relating to the church in addition to their relationship to the academic community. It should be noted that life in the community of Finkenwalde is always as preparation for service within the world rather than for withdrawal from the world.

Globalization is demonstrated by their participation with other Christians in the ecumenical movement meeting in Sweden. Although this participation is discontinued due to a perceived lack of relevance of the ecumenical movement for the situation in Germany, the effort is admirable for Finkenwalde.

Conclusions

The theological approach at Finkenwalde appears to include radical elements, yet it shows continuity with the theological approach employed in Germany at that time. The inclusion of practices designed to deepen the spiritual life of the participants and promote community suggest that Finkenwalde was an institution where preparation for ministry within the context of 1930's Germany could be accomplished. Given the information available, it is difficult to assess the totality of the program at Finkenwalde. Some of the ATS standards are more difficult to examine. The examination of Finkenwalde's approach in light of the ATS standard regarding learning, teaching, and research indicates that there is much to be admired. Since few situations parallel the situation which gave rise to the Confessing Church, the uncritical adoption of the Finkenwalde model might not be advisable. Still, some elements present interesting possibilities and examination of them for possible inclusion in other theological schools deserves consideration. Would ATS grant accreditation to Finkenwalde? Within the parameters examined here, it is hoped that they would!

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