

An ethical investigation of the teaching and practice of moral formation at St Augustine College, the College of the Transfiguration and the South African Theological Seminary

by

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"I declare that *An ethical investigation of the teaching and practice of moral formation at St Augustine College, the College of the Transfiguration and the South African Theological Seminary* is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references."



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Abstract

This research investigates the teaching and practice of moral formation at three theological education institutions in South Africa. The theological institutions, while acknowledging moral formation in their aims and teaching ethical theory, have difficulty developing and implementing a moral formation programme. Among the reasons for this are the complex nature of moral formation and the numerous and wide ranging expectations placed on the institutions.

In this research, morality is described in terms of relationship with God, with self, with others in the Church and society and with the environment. The findings of the research suggest that the teaching and practice at the institutions that involve relationships are most effective for moral formation. Hence it is recommended that the institutions find ways to foster the students' relationship with God, with themselves, with others and with the environment. Modes of moral formation that involve thinking and knowledge are important, but so are those modes that encourage emotional development and character and spiritual formation. Through projects and assignments, students can be exposed to the harsh realities of life and opportunities created to reflect on these experiences in the light of faith. Practical suggestions such as encouraging students to pray, meditate, reflect, journal and study are made. Other suggestions are that lecturing staff make more use of participative teaching methods such as discussions, case studies and stories, including the stories of the students. The mentoring role of staff and the importance of the faith community are affirmed.

These relational teaching methods and activities are easier to implement in a residential seminary than in a distance learning situation. In order to fully implement the relational aspects of a programme for moral formation, it would be helpful for the theological institutions to explore various forms of blended education and to develop partnerships and work with local churches.

Key terms

Theological education; moral formation; relationship; ethics; morality; discipleship; spiritual formation; virtues; wisdom; social justice; community of faith; modes of moral formation

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Dedication

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List of Abbreviations

The following is an alphabetical list of abbreviations that are used.

| | |
|--------|--|
| ATR | African traditional religion |
| COTT | College of the Transfiguration |
| DRC | Dutch Reformed Church |
| Fedsem | Federal Theological Seminary |
| KJV | King James Version |
| MRM | Moral Regeneration Movement |
| NIV | New International Version |
| NRSV | New Revised Standard Version |
| SACC | South African Council of Churches |
| SATS | South African Theological Seminary |
| TEEC | Theological Education by Extension College |
| Unisa | University of South Africa |

Chapter One: Introduction

“Tell me not what you believe but what difference it makes” (Verna J. Dozier)

“So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead” (Ja 2:17 NRSV)¹

1.1 Introduction

“I no longer care whether I pass or fail.”² This seemingly irresponsible assertion was in fact a daring moral declaration from a student who, as part of a theological course, had interviewed a number of people who were infected or affected by HIV and AIDS. As she listened to their stories and heard of their struggles, she was moved by compassion and a desire to do something to help. She matured through these experiences and came to a deeper understanding of what it meant to be a disciple of Christ. These experiences and new understandings were life changing, and in comparison, passing the course faded into insignificance. Her theological studies had touched her and contributed to her moral formation.

Hers is one among many stories. Another comes from a white South African student during the apartheid years. Through his theological studies, he realised that he had been indoctrinated by his parents and his church. This led to a crisis of faith as he felt that his parents, his leaders (the apartheid government) and his church had lied to him, yet it also opened the possibility for a new and deeper understanding of faith and the cost of discipleship (Ackermann 1996:35).

However, theological education does not always change students’ outlook, form them morally or lead them to costly discipleship. At a symposium held at the Theological Education by Extension College (TEEC) in Johannesburg, a question was posed by one of the speakers. He was a student at TEEC and a member of a church in a township where poverty was rife. From his experience of the church in this context he asked,

What sort of ministers are we training? How can TEE College and other theological training institutions go on taking young people like us, and train us to be clergy who live on money paid by a congregation consisting of people of whom 30% are pensioners, 70% are women, 50% are youth, 40% are HIV positive and 70% are unemployed? Priests drive big beautiful cars. Payment for those cars comes from the poorest of the poor, and from pensioners. (Sonti 2006:32)

Sonti is addressing a social context where some priests (who have graduated from a theological education institution) are known to use church money for their own gain rather

¹ Unless otherwise stated, the NRSV is used for all the biblical quotations.

² Quoted with permission from a telephone conversation with a student from TEE College.

than for the good of the congregation and the ministry of the church. He suspects that theological education either lacks social analysis and so priests see nothing wrong with their comparative wealth in the midst of poverty or, if there is social analysis, it has no impact on the lifestyle, moral understanding and formation of these priests. He wonders how their theological education can fail to make these priests aware of the dubious way in which they sustain their luxurious lifestyles. It appears that their theological education has not challenged their attitudes of selfishness, entitlement and disregard for the poor.

So in this thesis, I research ways in which theological education can help to form morally mature people who uphold justice both personally and socially and seek the common good. The early church understood that Christian doctrines needed to be *aretegenic* or salutary, meaning that belief in the doctrines affected the way people lived their lives. Doctrines should not be an empty set of beliefs, but rather they should form or reform our character (Charry 1997:vii).³ The question then arises as to why the teaching of Christian doctrine at theological education institutions does not always have this salutary effect. What is needed to enable theological training to make a difference to the moral character of students?

The above stories show that theological education can contribute to moral formation, but unfortunately, this is not always the case. The purpose of this research is to determine what it is about theological education that contributes to and enables the moral formation of students and to develop teaching and practices that will promote moral formation in theological education institutions. Even though theological colleges espouse certain norms, values and principles and seek to transmit them to students, this does not always happen. The concern about the moral formation of those going into Christian ministry is echoed by others in South Africa, America and Europe. O'Connell, a lecturer at an American theological college, tells the story of a student whom he had taught and interacted with during his studies. However, a year later when O'Connell listened to a sermon delivered by the student, he found that the values the student was preaching were false and shallow in terms of the Christian ethics that he had been taught at college. O'Connell (1998:2) knew these were not the values that he had taught and wondered how the student "had come to choose the values out of which he actually lived." O'Connell worried that he had not brought the students to a point where they genuinely embraced the moral perspectives of the Christian tradition and made them their own. The question that O'Connell grappled with reflects the focus of this research, namely, **how can**

³ *Aretegenic* means conducive to virtue and describes the moral shaping function of doctrines. It is derived from the Greek word *arte* meaning moral excellence and *genao* meaning to beget (Charry 1997:19).

theological education play a role in making true disciples of Christ and promote the moral formation of theological students?

One might immediately ask: What is a 'true disciple of Christ'? What does it mean to be morally mature? And so before investigating the effectiveness of theological education to form 'true disciples of Christ' and the role that theological education plays in moral formation, it is necessary to define these concepts and clarify how they are used in this thesis.

1.2 Definition of key terms and concepts

The key terms used in this thesis, namely, ethics, theological ethics, morality, moral formation and theological education are defined below for greater clarity.

1.2.1 Ethics

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines ethics as "moral principles that govern a person's behaviour or the conducting of an activity". Ethics incorporates both the critical reflection on what is right, good and wise and the use of this reflection as a basis for making ethical decisions regarding how we ought to live. The scope of ethics is wide ranging as it involves moral norms, values and virtues, convictions, vision and worldviews on both an individual and a collective basis. This individual and social dimension of ethics is reflected in the definition of ethics as "the systematic and communal reflection on and analysis of moral experience" (Connors & McCormick 1998:175). Peoples' understanding of what comprises ethics is influenced by and derived from their context and their worldview. The understanding of ethics in this study is based primarily on a Christian theocentric ethic.

A further explanation of the meaning of terms such as principles, norms, values, virtues, convictions and worldviews is appropriate as these are the building blocks in ethical reflection. A principle is "a general statement of how things should be, from which specific rules might be derived" (Wright 2010:46). Norms can be understood narrowly as consisting of rules or instructions or more broadly as moral principles that guide people in the way they ought to live. A value "is some aspect of human life which is prized in itself, and from which principles and thereby rules might be generated" (Wright 2010:46). Values guide individuals and societies in their decisions, attitudes and behaviour (McDonald 1995:xvii). Virtues are norms and values which have been internalised and become part of the character and conduct of a person (Kretzschmar 2005:123). They are dispositions or traits that are acquired through "teaching and practice and perhaps grace" (Frankena 1973:63). However, the way in which virtues are defined is influenced by context. For example, Homer defined virtues in terms of the qualities that would enable individuals to discharge

their social roles. Aristotle and Aquinas saw virtues as helping people to move to a human *telos* or goal whether this was natural or supernatural (MacIntyre 1984:185). In this thesis, virtues are seen as the inner dispositions that lead to outer practice that enable people to live a good, righteous and wise life. Virtues involve acting and feeling, and the exercise of virtues requires judgement. Convictions are firmly held beliefs and worldviews about the way in which people perceive and make sense of the world. Together, principles, norms, values, virtues, convictions and worldviews influence ethical thought and behaviour.

Ethics is about behaviour and not just about ethical systems or theories. It includes moral formation, character and action. This is highlighted in a definition of ethics by Klaus Nürnberger (1984:9) as “a reflection on what ought to be and on how we can be liberated and motivated to bring it about.” Connors and McCormick (1998:175) recognise the role of experience and include reflection on moral experience as part of ethics. From earliest times, people have grappled with how to make good choices and with what is right and wrong and the reasons for being moral. These reasons developed in diverse contexts, and different understandings of ethics emerged. Some of these ethical understandings are based on religion, others on philosophy and others on culture and tradition.

Moral philosophy and human society have long recognised the importance of balancing the needs of the individual with those of society so that communities can exist and thrive in peace. So, for example, an individual is prohibited from killing as this would be detrimental to society. Different cultures all acknowledge to a lesser or greater degree the role of the community and the reciprocal relationship between persons and their communities where one has to “do to others as you would have them do to you” if the group is to function effectively. There needs to be a balance between self-assertiveness and what Hinde (2007:107) calls pro-sociality. The rights of the individual as an autonomous entity are emphasised as well as the need to live cooperatively in society. The ancient Greeks recognised this, and virtues were to be practiced not just between individuals but also corporately in the life of the city (MacIntyre 1984:150).

In Africa, ethics is deeply embedded in the culture and tradition of society. This is reflected in the philosophy of *ubuntu* which recognises and affirms the interrelatedness of people. Moral understandings and action are seen in terms of the community, including those who have died and the yet unborn (Bujo 2001:126). There is some debate regarding the foundation of African ethics. Gyekye (1995:194) considers it to have a strong humanist emphasis while Mbiti (1969:1-5, 29-74) regards a belief in God as the foundation of African ethics. Prozesky (2003:5) sees this belief in God as being grounded in the holistic nature of African ethics which views life as a whole with no separation between the holy and the secular. African ethics highlights the interdependence of people living in harmony with one

another and with their environment (Richardson 2009b:44). The self exists only in relationship with others and the self's surroundings as expressed in many African languages as a variant of the Zulu saying *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* – a person is a person through persons (Shutte 2001:23). This traditional understanding of African ethics with its holism and stress on community differs from the modernist tendency to think individualistically and dualistically and to separate the sacred from the secular. However, the changed, urbanised context in Africa has posed new challenges to African ethics, as explored in chapter three.

In Europe, until the Enlightenment, the link between religion and ethics was accepted without question with morality being based on religion (Van der Ven 1998a:11). Religion provided divine sanction for moral standards and requirements. Moral laws were seen as divinely ordained and simply accepted as the way things were with little distinction being made between religion and ethics. Enlightenment thinkers replaced this religious basis for moral laws with that of universal principles derived by human reasoning. Moral philosophers such as Immanuel Kant believed that humans could reach agreement and identify moral norms and duties through reason alone. The sociologist Peter Berger points out that in the modern, technological Western world, a vast amount of what was accepted by earlier ages and cultures is now subject to human decision and individual choice (in Newbigin 1986:13). The postmodern, pluralistic society leaves people free to choose what they consider to be good and desirable (Newbigin 1986:16). This is in contrast to traditional societies where authority was unquestioningly accepted. In Southern Africa, there is often a clash of cultures and worldviews as African traditions and traditional authority are confronted by modernist, rationalistic, individualistic trends and secularism.

Due to the diversity of students at the theological education institutions researched in this thesis, traditional approaches to ethics which are grounded in religion and culture are important as well as modernist rational approaches and postmodern ethics based on individual choice. The above explanation of ethics has focused primarily on philosophical and African ethical perspectives. These understandings will be further explicated as the concepts of morality and ethics are explored and developed in chapter three. The role of religion and more specifically that of Christianity is central in this research, so the term 'theological ethics' is explained below.

1.2.2 Theological ethics

Theological or Christian ethics can be defined as “a critical reflection on the practice of morality from the perspective of the Christian belief in a God who is active in creation and human history, who is made known and is present in the person of Jesus, and in an

ongoing way through the work of the Spirit” (Ryan 2006:25). Theological ethics includes reflection on our beliefs about right and wrong, good and evil and how we behave and live these out in the world. For Christians, their beliefs are shaped by the gospel story (Connors & McCormick 1998:vi). Christians believe that God’s intention is for humans to be in relationship with God and that it is as we respond to God that we are enabled to develop good relationships with others, both in terms of interpersonal relationships and in terms of the wider relationships with society and the natural world.

The importance of relationship for theological ethics is recognised by moral philosophers such as Ricoeur (1992:22) who explains theological ethics in terms of a response to a call rather than simply being about answers to questions of true and false, good and bad, right or wrong. This view can be contrasted with the work of Kohlberg who based morality on the ability to reason. Kohlberg, following a Kantian ethic, concluded that morality was primarily a matter of moral thinking and more specifically the capacity to think reversibly and universally (Browning 2006:42).⁴ While the work of Kohlberg and Kant (which are more fully explained in chapter three) are important, this research considers the role of faith to be crucial in ethical decision making as will become clear in the discussion of morality and the modes of moral formation in chapter three.

1.2.3 Morality

To define morality is a complex task in a postmodern world where individual choice and relativism abound. Even in a Christian context, where certain common values and traditions are upheld, there is still divergence. Therefore before defining morality, it is helpful to dispel some misconceptions about the way that morality is used in this thesis.

In this thesis, morality is not to be confused with moralism which is a narrow, legalistic understanding of what is right or wrong. Such a legalistic understanding leads to morality being associated with narrow-minded, conventional, power-abusing, legalistic systems of morality and adherence to a rigid set of rules. It is obedience to the letter of the law without the spirit of the law, and this can lead to hypocritical behaviour (Mt 23:1-35) (in Kretzschmar, Bentley & Van Niekerk 2009:19).

4 Kohlberg understood universality and reversibility in terms of Kant. Kant believed that our actions should be guided by a categorical imperative, namely, that one should act only on that maxim which one can at the same time will to be a universal law. Universal laws are reversible in that they apply to our actions toward the other person and to that person’s actions toward us. For example, if we are ready to break a promise when it suits our purposes, we would have to be willing for others to do the same.

Other misconceptions are that morality has to do with individual behaviour alone and is mainly concerned with individual sexual behaviour rather than understanding morality as a broad concept that is concerned with the whole of life.

In contrast to these misconceptions, in this thesis, the term morality is defined in terms of human flourishing. “It is about our call to human flourishing and following Christ” (Connors & McCormick 1998:vi). It is about making choices that will enhance rather than diminish human flourishing (Makgoba 2010).

Another feature of morality as used in this thesis is its incorporation of individual, social and cosmic concerns. Kretzschmar provides a definition of morality that does this and avoids the pitfalls of an individualistic understanding. She describes morality as “the pursuit of goodness and integrity in personal life and both justice and love in social life” (Kretzschmar 2008:66). This inclusive view of morality is not a specifically Judeo-Christian insight, and moral philosophers incorporate the personal and the social defining morality as “aiming at the ‘good life’ with and for others, in just institutions” (Ricoeur 1992:172). From an African perspective, in the concept of *ubuntu*, we are human through others.⁵ This means that it is a false dichotomy to ask if morality is essentially individual or social. Both individual morality and social morality are important as morality transmits collective moral mores and also incorporate the qualities of individual virtue, reflection and choice. In this research, both individual and social aspects of morality are considered, incorporating the students’ relationship with God, self, others in the church and in society and creation. Right relationships in all these areas are important and consistent with the broad understanding of morality as a “defining feature of our humanness.”

Van Niekerk (1998:13) provides a definition of morality that encompasses the search for meaning in life. He describes morality as “a system that gives meaning to life and prevents chaos as the nature of human life in community demands some form of normative system” (1988:13). Morality is more than ethical reflection. Morality is seen as “the sum total of the principles that influence or should influence the behaviour of a Christian” (Mugambi & Nasimiyu 1992:2). Morality is about the values and principles that guide our choices about what kind of person we want to become and what we consider to be a meaningful existence (Ahlers, Allaire & Koch 1996:12). For Christians, this is understood in a broad sense as living out Christian norms, following Christian principles and embracing Christian values.

⁵ *Ubuntu* will be explored further in chapter three.

These definitions of morality incorporate worldviews and visions, virtues, beliefs, convictions and values and how these are lived out in moral decision making and life. Not only is morality concerned about choices but also the motives for and consequences of those choices. Morality incorporates individual actions as well as institutional systems and action. For the marginalised morality involves a process of overcoming oppressive societal mechanisms in order to enter a more human condition (De La Torre 2014:21). It is about individual holiness and about social justice; the “glue that keeps society healthy and functional” (Van Niekerk 2009:17). For Christians, it involves a normative system that is linked to Christian faith and is concerned with duties and obligations to others, to society and to the whole of creation.

In this research, morality is understood as human flourishing as people live in a Christ-like manner bearing witness to the reign of God. This involves engaging with and being in a right relationship with God, with oneself, with others and with creation. The reasons for defining morality in terms of human flourishing and relationship are further explained in chapter three.

The terms ethics and morality are closely related, and at times, the two words are used interchangeably. For example, one could refer to the ethical or the moral thinking of a person using either term. When the terms are used differently, morality tends to be used to describe Christian conduct that is actual behaviour while ethics tends to be used to refer to theoretical discussions of and reflection on what constitutes good, right and wise behaviour. For example, Van der Ven (1998a:3) sees morality as the practice of the good and ethics as the reflection on this practice. Birch and Rasmussen (1989:39) make a similar distinction and include character and conduct as part of living the Christian moral life. McClendon (1990:45-6) makes a similar distinction:

‘Morals’ nowadays refers to actual human conduct viewed with regard to right and wrong, good and evil, [and] ‘ethics’ refers to a theoretical overview of morality, a theory or system or code. In this sense morality is the concrete human reality that we live out from day to day, while ethics is an academic view gained by taking a step back and analysing or theorising about (any) morality.

Morality is thus often understood as living out ethical theory and ethics as a reflection on morality. For example, ethics articulates worthy aspirations of ‘universalization’ or ‘love for neighbour’ while morality lives out such aspirations in concrete actions. “Morality builds on, tries to fulfil, yet properly orders our ethical striving toward the goods of life” (Browning 2006:49).

In this thesis, I make a similar distinction and tend to use ethics to refer to the critical intellectual discipline in the service of the moral life and morality to refer to the behaviour that conforms to right norms and values and which contributes to 'the good life' and the well-being of all.

1.2.4 Moral formation

Morality is about being at one with God, self and others that leads to human flourishing and well-being (the product). Moral formation is about the methods (the process) that are used to attain this oneness, flourishing and well-being. Moral formation can be defined as "a process by which people become, in their deepest selves, as well as in their attitudes and actions, genuinely committed to becoming good persons and acting justly and mercifully towards others and the natural world" (Kretzschmar 2007:27). This definition reflects the social nature of morality as it includes justice and mercy as virtues that are to be displayed by Christians as we live out our calling to be part of the reign of God. This research considers right relationship with others as individuals and as a community as an integral part of moral formation. It emphasises the social nature of moral formation and the role of the church community and to a lesser extent the broader community in moral formation.

Moral formation is about wholeness and becoming fully human as God created us to be. In the Christian understanding, becoming fully human is to grow into the likeness of Christ. This involves inner transformation, the development of character and the participation in the creative and redemptive work of God in the world and all of creation (Johnson 1989:22). For the Christian, this formation is "shaped by our understanding of God and God's promises" (Childs 1992:26).

Kretzschmar writes of five conversions that are needed for moral formation. These she describes as conversion of the head, the heart, the will, relationships and actions (Kretzschmar 2007:28). These show the comprehensiveness of moral formation. Moral formation involves the whole person and requires a consistent response of the total self rather than a haphazard response of a mind disconnected from the heart.

Johannes Van der Ven uses the term modes of moral formation to describe the teaching and learning processes in moral education. He identifies three groups of problems that shape the modes of moral formation (Van der Ven 1998a:2). The first group of problems involves the moral criteria from which moral education should be developed, analysed and evaluated (:9). He uses Ricoeur's model of the complementarity of the good, the right and the wise as his starting point. In this research, I use the concept of relationship which I develop in chapter three to analyse and evaluate the moral formation of students. The next

group of problems he identifies is religious. Van der Ven considers that despite the decline of traditional religion and church membership, there is still a connection between religion and morality and religion still plays a role in moral formation (:12-17). In this thesis, relationship with God is considered central for moral formation. The third group of problems in moral formation involves pedagogical questions which have to do with the aims, content and methods used in the educational endeavour.

In his book *Formation of the Moral Self*, Van der Ven discusses seven modes of moral formation. He identified two informal modes of moral formation (discipline and socialisation) and five formal modes that take place in educational institutions. These formal modes are value clarification, emotional development, transmission, cognitive development and character formation. Other authors have identified different modes. For example, Kohlberg (1984) uses cognitive development as an overarching mode, and Durkheim (1973) focuses on discipline, socialisation and cognitive development. However, the work of Van der Ven forms a useful basis for this research into moral formation as it includes insights from a range of disciplines including theology, the social sciences and philosophy.

Conradie (2006:77) identifies what he describes as conditions that help to promote moral formation. These include having a vision, the influence of narratives and role models and the importance of friendship. Following on the work of the American theologian Stanley Hauerwas, Conradie affirms the role of the faith community in moral formation, and this too will be investigated to see to what extent and in what ways the faith community plays a role in the theological institution programme.

Many theologians emphasise the importance and close connection between moral formation and spiritual formation, and so the role of spiritual formation is also discussed in this thesis. O'Keefe (1995:9) affirms this connection, saying that "there is no moral life separate from a spiritual life. In the actual living of the Christian life efforts to pray, to avoid sin, to make good moral decisions and to grow in virtue are all intertwined." In her comprehensive book on moral formation, Charry (1997:18) asserts that "knowing and loving God is the mechanism of choice for forming excellent character and promoting genuine happiness." She bases this assertion on the writings of Augustine who taught that knowing God brought about human dignity and uplifted behaviour. Charry quotes the 14th century mystic, Julian of Norwich, who wrote widely regarding God's love and compassion and who believed that it is "by moving into the reality of divine presence and substance for which we were created that we can fully understand ourselves and by extension how we are to live with others" (:195). This understanding that human excellence comes from

knowing and loving God conceives of spiritual formation as another mode of moral formation to be added to those identified by Van der Ven. While Van der Ven acknowledges the contribution of theology and spirituality to moral formation, the understanding of the inseparable relationship between the two for Christian discipleship needs more consideration. This incorporates the spiritual disciplines as described by various writers such as Foster (1978) in his book *Celebration of Discipline*. This includes an inward, a shared and an outward journey as will be discussed in chapter three. This emphasis on being in relationship with God is consistent with and affirmed in Jesus' teaching regarding the vine and the branches (Jn 15).

1.2.5 Theological education

The term theological education is often used rather narrowly to refer to the activities of theological colleges or seminaries that prepare clergy for their role and tasks in the ordained ministry of the Church (Wheeler & Farley 1991:7). It can also be used to refer to all theological education whether this is in a formal institution or informally in a church setting (Astley, Francis & Crowder 1996:97). However, it usually refers to the more coherent, formal, systematic and self-critical teaching of Christian beliefs including cognitive content and method as well as affective attitudes, dispositions, values and virtues (Astley et al. 1996:xi).

In this research, the term theological education is understood to include all who study at a theological college whether they are going into ordained ministry, lay ministry or simply studying for their own growth and interest. The research concentrates on theological education at tertiary theological education institutions leading to a qualification. However, the Church plays an important role in moral formation of believers, so it is to be expected that the faith community of the Church is vital for the moral formation of students at theological institutions. Johnson (1989:43) believes that theological education has to engage the faith community. She describes the task of theological education as being "to initiate believers through the faith community into the coming of God's realm and to help them understand and live their whole lives in light of that reality."

Eileen Scully (2008:202) defines theological education as

...necessary for all Christian people to make sense of all God has given and revealed to us, in other people, in the world, in our place and time, in the Bible and supremely, in our Lord Jesus Christ. It is the attempt to make the connections between our daily life and the Christian experience of God, faith and life in the Spirit. It is the attempt to understand why trust in the Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier make a difference, and, in that knowledge, to be willing and eager to share God's love with others.

These definitions of Johnson and Scully show the importance of the faith community for theological education. While this study understands theological education to refer to the formal, systematic education in theology that is conducted in tertiary theological institutions, it also researches the degree to which the theological institutions encourage student interaction with the local church. It recognises that aspects of Christian education in the Church affect the moral formation of students who are studying at theological education institutions. The task of theological education which further describes and explains these brief definitions of theological education will be described in chapter four.

1.3 Motivation

There is seldom just one reason for doing research. This is the case with this research as I was motivated by my experiences as a student and as an educator as well as by the experiences of other students, such as those described in the beginning of this chapter. I was interested to know what made the difference between the experiences of the student who was moved by compassion and the priest who was criticised at the symposium for his opulent lifestyle as described earlier. They had both studied theology, and yet the priest seemed to be unmoved by the needs of the poor. I wanted to research what it was about my experiences of theological education as a student and as an educator and the experiences of students that led to moral formation. Below, I describe these experiences in more detail and show how they motivated and influenced the research.

1.3.1 Personal experiences as a student

My own theological studies played a role in my moral formation and built on my early moral socialisation in my family and church community. Through my studies, my understanding of the ethical principles I had learnt from my family and church community deepened especially in terms of their implications in my life. For example, the biblical principle of justice, which I had been taught and which I internalised as a child and inherently followed, was clarified. I now had concrete reasons, built on my faith, as to why apartheid was wrong and why, for example, I had felt outraged as a teenager at discovering that a Christian conference centre underpaid their workers. These were not new ethical insights; my family had laid the moral foundation, but the formal studies helped me to articulate and act on them.

My theological studies helped to develop a deeper understanding of the abysmal moral failure of apartheid. It gave substance to my feelings of abhorrence towards it and showed its sinfulness in stark contrast to the biblical principles of love, justice and care for the poor as embodied in Micah 6:8 and proclaimed by the prophets and taught by Jesus.

As part of my theological studies, I spent three months in a residential community studying youth ministry. As well as being part of a non-racial community, we visited and worked with a number of youth groups in Anglican churches in the townships.⁶ These experiences reinforced and made real the need for justice as it affected the lives and well-being of friends and fellow Christians. Thus an understanding of justice was added to the sense of outrage at what was being done to people I cared about.

For me, a feminist awareness was the most influential aspect of my theological studies. Feminism was an issue I had hardly thought about as I was so involved in anti-apartheid activities and race issues. Yet when Mary Hall, a lecturer at Selly Oak College in Birmingham explained that feminist issues and race issues were all part of human liberation and human flourishing, my perspective was changed. Her lectures were illuminating and deepened my understanding.⁷ I started to reflect on feminist issues, and I was better prepared for the sexism that I would face in my ministry in the Anglican Church particularly in the early 1980's before women were allowed to be ordained. My further theological studies at the University of South Africa (Unisa) deepened my understanding of Feminist Theology so that the championing of gender issues became a way of life.

My experiences as part of a parish church community as well as being a member of a non-racial youth leadership programme and having participated in the theological college community at Selly Oak made me aware of the formative influence that a Christian community can have on its members. The experience of family, church, community, encounter with God, challenging lectures and wise teaching contributed to my moral formation. In this thesis, I seek to reflect on these personal experiences and expand these insights into moral formation in theological education.

1.3.2 Personal experiences as an educator

I have worked in a residential setting with students at the Baptist Convention College in Orlando, Soweto, and in a distance education setting at the Theological Education by Extension College. In both these situations, I have asked myself why I am teaching theology and what I hope to achieve. It is not enough simply to 'get students through the exams'. I wanted what I was teaching them to make a difference in the way they lived their faith. I felt a commitment to contribute to training for ministry through providing theological education and a desire that this should be done in the best way possible. I found myself echoing the sentiments of other theological educators such as Gilpin (2002:6) who wanted

⁶ This was in 1978 when non-racial communities were not the norm and churches were mostly divided along racial lines.

⁷ Mary Hall is the author of a number of books including *The Impossible Dream* (1979). I was privileged to have her as a lecturer at the Selly Oak Colleges in Birmingham in 1981.

to see how theological education could make a “substantial, even critical contribution to religious communities and civic society” and McGinnis (2002:184) who reflected that she had chosen teaching as a profession because of its evangelical role. She hoped that in studying theology, her students might also come to know God. Beuchner speaks of the place where “our deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet” (in Jones & Paulsell 2002:218). My deep gladness is in the knowledge of God’s compassion and in the celebration of the goodness of creation. This I could express in my work with theological students as I sought to raise awareness of the world’s need for compassion, justice and care of creation. Like Malcolm, a theological educator in the United States, I wondered “How could we best prepare them [students] to perceive and respond to God’s presence and activity in the world?” (in Jones & Paulsell 2002:140). How can students be helped to find the fullness of life promised by Jesus (Jn 10:10b) and to live out their Christian faith in joyful and loving obedience to God’s commands? Concerns and questions such as these motivated this research into moral formation of students at theological education institutions.

1.3.3 Students’ experiences

Another thread in the web of motivations for this research came from listening to what students were saying about their studies and the influence of their studies on them. For example, a student identified a course on HIV and AIDS, which required students to work in a local community, as the most formative part of her studies. She described how “putting together a workshop for children whose parents were dying from HIV/AIDS” affected her and her moral growth.⁸ She had learnt facts about the disease and a theological response to it, but it was this work with AIDS orphans and the relationships she developed that had touched her most deeply. Through this experience, she had grown as a person and a disciple of Christ. Her engagement with the oppressed and the suffering changed her attitude to her studies and led to a profound insight on what it meant to follow Jesus who identified with the poor and the suffering, who was not recognised by the self-righteous religious adherents but rather by the sinners and those who needed help (Mt 9:12). It appeared that this engagement with individuals and the community promoted her moral development. Her theological studies went beyond academic analysis into the real world. Listening to the stories of such students resulted in me reflecting on the kind of theological education that was valued by the students because of the difference it made in their lives. Through these intense experiences the students felt they had achieved more than simply pass an assignment.

⁸ Quoted with permission from Barbara Hoy from her talk at the April 2007 TEEC graduation ceremony.

For other students, their theological studies did not appear to influence them. I found myself wondering what caused some students who had studied theology to become removed from the daily struggles of people and to see their studies as a way of escaping poverty, even at the expense of others in the community in which they were supposedly to serve.

These experiences motivated me to read further about moral formation and theological education. From this, new ideas emerged and I started to think again about the role and purpose of theological education and the extent to which moral formation is consciously part of theological studies. All these factors contributed to the need I felt to research how moral formation is included in theological education, what helps to bring moral maturity and wisdom and how this can be done more effectively.

My hope is that this research will make a contribution to the understanding of moral formation in theological education and that it will help to “inform, form and transform people in identity and agency for the reign of God” (Groome 1991:150). In this way, it will address the problem of a lack of morality in South Africa, both in the Church and in society. The research problem is now explained in more detail.

1.4 Problem statement

The problem that this research addresses is how theological education institutions can give enough attention to and adequately address the moral formation of students so that they become ‘true disciples of Christ’ and agents for moral transformation in the Church and society. This focus on morality is crucial considering the lack of morality in both Church and society. Theological education institutions need to find and develop the most effective methods to address this mammoth task as they are training future leaders and ministers who are in a position to tackle the moral crisis in the country.

This sense of moral crisis in South Africa has been voiced by religious leaders and also by political and business leaders. The South African government organised meetings that were called ‘moral summits’ to tackle the moral crisis. In April 2002, the Moral Regeneration Movement (MRM) was formed to address the following problems:

The devaluation of people, racism in key societal institutions, sexism and gender oppression... [the] undermining and abuse of the Bill of Rights; [the] breakdown of family ... huge gaps between the “haves” and the “have-nots”; poor work ethic; a culture of enrichment, individualism and selfishness, lack of integrity and honesty.
(Moagi 2002:4-5)

The depth of the moral crisis in South Africa is highlighted when one considers the assessment of Stallworth (1992:171) that a civilisation is in trouble when it has to

concentrate on something called morality. The fact of the MRM in South Africa and statements by our leaders indicate that our society is in trouble and faces moral disintegration. Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu (2012:4) lamented the moral decay in South Africa that caused people to live in fear like prisoners in their homes rather than enjoying the freedom of the struggle. “Senzeni na?” he asks, “What have we done? What has happened to us?” (*The Times* 12 September 2012:4). The then deputy president of South Africa Kgalema Motlanthe (2011:4) warned that “the pestilence of corruption menacing the soul of our democracy is a life-and-death matter” (*The Times* 18 August 2011:4).⁹ He identified the need for the teaching of ethics in schools. This research helps to address this problem and to investigate modes of moral formation relating to the teaching of theology at a tertiary level. In this way, it helps to provide insights into effective ways of teaching ethics and incorporating moral formation into theological studies.

This moral crisis is not a new phenomenon in South Africa. The lack of morality has its roots in the disruption of traditional lifestyles and close knit communities over several centuries, firstly by colonialism and then by apartheid, the migratory labour system, rapid urbanisation and poverty. Apartheid has left a legacy of trauma, tragedy and hurt which still exerts pressure on society. The disruption of traditional lifestyles led to the loss of traditional cultural values and the rise of individualism which have further exacerbated the moral crisis. African theologians recognise the need to address themselves “sentiently and sensibly to the dilemmas and complications of modern African living” (Mugambi & Nasimiyu 1992:1).

This disruption of traditional lifestyles combined with materialism and individualism contributes to a sense of malaise and meaninglessness in life. Emile Durkheim coined a term *anomie* to describe this sense of meaninglessness and isolation.¹⁰ Sacks, an American theologian, echoes this sense of meaninglessness, saying that “having constructed a society of unprecedented sophistication, convenience and prosperity no one can remember what it was supposed to be for. Just enjoying it is not enough” (Sacks 1995:x). This applies to many of the rich in South Africa and those who have adopted a consumerist lifestyle. There are many others in South Africa who face a daily struggle for survival. This struggle while hard may provide a purpose to life. Yet, this struggle for a share in the good things in life means that there is sometimes little room for ethics and concern for others in the fight for survival. The malaise of society is further analysed by Wells (1998:13) as a turning from virtues to values, and in the postmodern world values

9 Quoted in *The Times* newspaper from the Ruth First lecture given by K. Motlanthe at the University of the Witwatersrand.

10 He did this in connection with his work on suicide (See Sacks 1995:12).

can be relative and self-serving and little more than preferences. Where virtues are still considered important and desirable, they are often abstracted rather than lived out in concrete situations of injustice. Gustavo Gutiérrez, a South American liberation theologian, emphasised the importance of virtues being lived out in communities and practised in concrete situations for them to be meaningful. Based on his reading of Matthew chapter 25, he avows that “the sincerity of our conversion to the Lord is to be judged by the action to which this concern leads us (Gutiérrez 1984:103).

In this atmosphere of moral decay, meaninglessness and uncertainty, it is vital that the Church addresses the issue of morality. One way to do this is through the training and development of leaders who live as ‘true disciples of Christ’ and inspire and help others to do the same. These leaders often attend theological education institutions and study theology as part of their preparation for ordained or other Christian ministries, whether on a full-time or part-time basis. However, this task of preparing students to be moral leaders, while generally embraced by theological institutions as desirable, is often one among many concerns and pressures facing them. A number of theological educators note that seminaries are given a daunting if not impossible task to “prepare wise, compassionate, theologically astute and pastorally proficient servants who can lead the Church and our societies through the crises of the twenty first century” (Dearborn 1995:7; Harkness 2001:143). The theological institutions face the problem of preparing those who are entering the ordained ministry for a variety of roles. While most professionals have a relatively focused role, clergy have such a variation in their roles that it raises many ethical dilemmas (Trull & Carter 2004:15). The scope of their work is extensive, and the boundaries are fluid, incorporating pastoral care and counselling, teaching, service, transformation, spiritual direction and more. Van der Ven (1998b:126) concurs that the tasks of ministry are wide ranging. He classifies these competencies as shepherding, communicating and organising, kerygma (preaching), didache (teaching) and paraclesis (pastoral care) in a congregation. Amongst these competencies, moral formation is not specifically mentioned with the danger that it is overlooked. From his experience of working in theological education in India, Gaikwad (2007:26) identifies the need to make theological education holistic in terms of academic excellence, professional skills, personal formation, teamwork and sensitivity and openness to others. It is an enormous challenge for theological education to include all these aims and requirements, and the problem is that because moral formation is assumed, it is often overlooked.

From her research at a number of Protestant theological institutions in South Africa, Naidoo (2010:185) concluded that academic excellence and professional skills were favoured and given priority while spiritual formation was left to happen implicitly, informally

and on a personal basis. While Naidoo focuses on spiritual formation, it is likely that as little or even less priority is given to moral formation as it is far less frequently referred to in the literature. This is in stark contrast with theological education in the early centuries of the Christian church where the main focus was on spiritual formation (Naidoo 2010:185).

It is the hypothesis of this study that moral formation should be deliberately and consciously included in tertiary theological education, whether this is done by the theological institution itself or in partnership with the churches. One of the reasons that it is not deliberately and consciously included is that tertiary theological education institutions face numerous priorities and goals in the task of equipping people for church leadership and ministry. They give these goals greater conscious priority than moral formation, leading to inadequate time and effort being given to moral formation.

This research addresses this concern and seeks to find ways to increase the consistency and effectiveness of the teaching and practice of moral formation at tertiary theological education institutions. This involves the evaluation of current teaching and practice of moral formation in the light of the literature and the perception of students and educators. The moral formation of those studying theology cannot be conventionally assessed using methods such as submitting assignments and writing examinations. However, moral formation should be included in theological education, and it is crucial to find the most effective ways to do this. To this end, the ways in which and the extent to which theological education institutions give deliberate and conscious attention to and address the moral formation of students is investigated. This includes investigating the teaching and practices¹¹ that encourage and promote the formation of students so that they become 'true disciples of Christ' and agents for moral transformation in the Church and in society.

1.5 Research objectives

From the above, it is clear that the focus of this thesis is moral formation in formal, tertiary theological education. The aim of this study is to research the extent to which moral formation is consciously pursued and deliberately included at three theological institutions in South Africa, namely, the College of the Transfiguration, St Augustine College and the South African Theological Seminary. This involves an investigation of what the teachers and students perceive as the most influential aspects of the teaching programme and activities at the selected institutions on the moral formation of the students. This is done with the objective of finding the most effective ways to promote moral formation in

¹¹ The term 'practices' is used here in a similar way to the way in which Stassen and Gushee (2003:122-4) use it to describe things such as baptism, Eucharist and giving to the poor. I am aware that the plural form of practice is not found in dictionaries, but it is more accurate and describes better what is meant than words such as activities or rituals.

theological education and to make recommendations regarding the most effective ways of promoting the moral formation of students at tertiary theological education institutions in South Africa. These are made with the hope that ultimately this will help to address the moral crisis in South Africa through the formation of moral leaders.

These objectives lead to the following research questions which are listed below and which will be further explained with the methodology in chapter two.

1.6 Research questions

The key research questions are as follows:

1. To what extent is moral formation consciously and intentionally included in the theological education programme at the selected institutions?
2. What aspects of the teaching and learning programme at the institution do the staff and students consider the most effective for moral formation?
3. How can moral formation be pursued better and more effectively in formal theological education?

These questions will be further explored in chapter two which describes the methodology for this research.

1.7 The significance of this research

Moral formation is crucial in South Africa today. Many involved in teaching in theological colleges and seminaries assume that because the students are studying theology, they will be morally formed even if moral formation is not consciously included in the programme. Theological studies have made a difference in the growth of morality in the lives of some students. This was shown through the data obtained from the empirical research. This data shed light on what brought about moral formation at the institutions. This new knowledge regarding the effectiveness of various modes of moral formation is crucial and can be used to promote moral formation of the students more consciously and consistently. The data also indicated that there were gaps in the moral formation teaching and practice at the institutions. Insights and information from the considerable literature that exists on moral formation were used to increase the effectiveness of moral formation at the institutions. This research is significant in that it combines these insights from the literature with the findings from the empirical study.

Theological education in South Africa takes place in the context of many challenges such as racism, cultural differences, ethnicity, class divisions, widespread unemployment and gender violence. In this context, moral formation is a necessity. This thesis looks at these

challenges in the South African context and addresses the need for moral formation especially of those in leadership positions in the Church. It is crucial that the leaders of the churches in South Africa are morally equipped to deal with the challenges that face not just South Africa but many other countries throughout the world. Through addressing these issues in the context of theological education, this research contributes to the body of knowledge regarding moral formation.

This study is significant in that it focuses on the extent to which and the ways in which moral formation is intentionally included in theological education. Furthermore, it investigates the complex nature of morality in relation to theological education in the context of ministry in the Church and the community, remembering that this is a community that has come from a past of racial discrimination and violence and which continues to be wracked with violence, racism, ethnicity, class divisions and crime. It contributes to research into the use and effectiveness of various modes of moral formation in theological education showing how these insights regarding moral formation can be incorporated into the theological education programme.

My intention is that this research will have an impact on the reflection and practice of theological educators in their quest to promote the moral formation of those studying for ministry whether lay or ordained. Further, I hope that it will contribute to a more reflective, analytical, self-critical and so more effective training paradigm for moral formation in theological education institutions.

It is possible that, as moral formation is more consciously and effectively integrated into theological education, students will play a greater role in the moral well-being of the Church. They will help to form 'true disciples' of Christ. The Church, in turn, may then play a greater role in developing a more moral society. In this way, this research has significance for the students, the institutions, the Church and for society.

1.8 Assumptions

The first assumption in this research is that morality exists even though the particularities and content of moral codes are contested and some moral codes are no longer overtly linked to religion. For Christians, the question of how we should live before God is relevant, and morality is a feature of the Christian life and of the process of sanctification. Being a person implies the "capacities of self-consciousness, self-worth, observation, comprehension, meaning, value, communication, intention, vision, community, interaction and creativity," and these all imply free will and moral agency (Nürnberg 2010:97). This means that humans have the ability to think about their actions and are faced with the

necessity to choose between options and to take action based on ethical decision-making. These decisions are influenced among other things by our ethical understandings, moral perceptions, religious convictions, worldviews, culture, family and experiences. The content of morality, what we have been taught is right and good as well as the ways in which we have been morally formed by family, culture, community and church all come together and inform how we make moral choices and decisions and act on them in order to live a good life.

Secondly, following the analysis of David Tracy (in Bosch 1991:3) who asserts that the theologian functions in respect of “the academy, the church and society,” this research assumes that theological education is of relevance to the broader society and can make a contribution to society. The Christian moral quest and content make a contribution to the formation of believers and the formation of the Church. This, in turn, influences and contributes to the broader society and the general academic debate regarding moral formation. Christian morality is relevant to society, and Christian leaders who study theology should be of service to society.

A third assumption is that good educational practice is important. This is affirmed because there is some controversy regarding the need for good educational practices using the insights from psychology and other human sciences. Some Christian educators assert that all human beings can do is prepare the ground but it is God who will act and bring people to faith and moral goodness. Other Christian educators, such as Michael Lee, disparagingly refer to this as the ‘blow theory’. This ‘blow theory’ denies the serious nature of theological education and the educational rigour that should be applied. Instead it claims that the Spirit blows where it wills and so undermines the value of good educational practice (Astley et al. 1996:xiv). While this research embraces the need for spiritual formation as part of moral formation and concedes that all we do is worth nothing unless God blesses it, it also affirms the need for research into teaching and learning and the importance of good educational practice. It acknowledges the role of the Holy Spirit in leading us into truth (Jn 16:13) but rejects the use of this to cover a lack of careful preparation of what is being taught and how it is taught. Conversion involves the whole person, our heads, hearts and wills, and requires a comprehensive approach to moral formation that includes good educational practice.

1.9 Outline of the chapters

Chapter one, this chapter, introduces the topic, explains the motivation for researching the topic and describes the research problem which forms the context for this study. It

outlines the research objectives and questions and provides initial definitions of the key terms used in the research as well as indicating the significance of the research.

Chapter two clarifies the research questions and the purpose of the study as it influences the methodology. It develops a theoretical paradigm which contains certain epistemological assumptions. It outlines the research approach and the details of the empirical research design. It explains the choice of institutions to research and the process of data collection and analysis that was followed. It identifies various ethical considerations related to the empirical study and acknowledges certain limitations.

Chapter three surveys the literature, specifically the biblical and theological literature pertaining to moral formation. It explores and unpacks the concepts of ethics and morality. Signposts that provide some measurable criteria to assess moral formation are identified so that moral formation can be researched. Having explained what constitutes the moral life, it then turns to how the moral life is formed. To this end, it describes key modes of moral formation.

Chapter four looks at the ways in which morality was taught and practiced in theological education through the ages. It traces the growth of theological education in South Africa and the challenges faced by the theological education institutions. It describes various models of theological education showing how they incorporate moral formation and the ways in which they help or hinder moral formation.

Chapter five presents, reviews, analyses and compares the findings of the empirical research from the three theological institutions selected for this research. Areas of focus include the profile of the students, the mission statement, purpose and objectives of the institutions, their programmes, including their teaching and practices, the pedagogical aspects of the findings as well as the role of the faith community. All these are considered in relation to moral formation. Much of this data came from official statements, documents and websites of the institutions and from the questionnaires with the staff and students at the theological education institutions.

Chapter six documents the growth and change in moral formation of the students. It draws out some of the implications of a relational understanding of morality and links pedagogical practice to the experience of moral formation. In this way, it identifies the strengths and weaknesses of the way morality is nurtured in different theological educational institutions. These are compared with the literature on moral formation in order to ascertain how moral formation can be pursued most effectively and to make recommendations in this regard.

Chapter seven concludes the research with a summary of the chapters, drawing out the implications for moral formation in theological education. It stresses the importance of including relationship in an intentional and conscious way in moral formation. It raises the imperative of ensuring that in the teaching and practice of moral formation at the theological institutions, the power of relationship is used to support moral formation. Lastly, it suggests some areas for further research.

Chapter Two: Research design and methodological framework

“Search me, O God and know my heart: try me and know my thoughts” (Ps 139:23 KJV)

2.1 Introduction

Chapter one introduced the topic and defined the key terms used in this thesis. The purpose of this chapter is to map the research journey which includes the following steps:

- The purpose of the research and the research questions which were introduced in chapter one are further explained.
- The context of the research journey is described.
- The theoretical research paradigm is elucidated, including the key texts that helped to form the theoretical basis and determine the criteria to be evaluated in the empirical research.
- An introduction to and description of the chosen institutions is given and the reasons for choosing them explained.
- An explanation of the empirical research design and the reasons for its choice is provided.
- The reasons for the choice of a qualitative research design and an explanation of the qualitative data collection and analysis process follows.
- An acknowledgement of the limitations regarding the research methods and a comment on the ethical guidelines followed in this research is included.

De Vos (1998:45) encourages qualitative researchers actively to report their values and biases. This I do in this and the previous chapter as my experiences, worldview and values have influenced my understanding of the concept of morality and my choice of which literature to use in developing a model of morality. In this chapter, I develop a theoretical understanding of morality and moral formation which has been moulded by the literature and by my experiences. This understanding of morality and the paradigmatic assumptions about morality provide the direction for the research journey. On the research journey, there is a criss-crossing, spiral of paths between my paradigmatic assumptions, experience and the literature.

Figure 2.1 illustrates the mutual interaction between the theoretical understanding of morality, the choice of literature and my pre-existing assumptions.

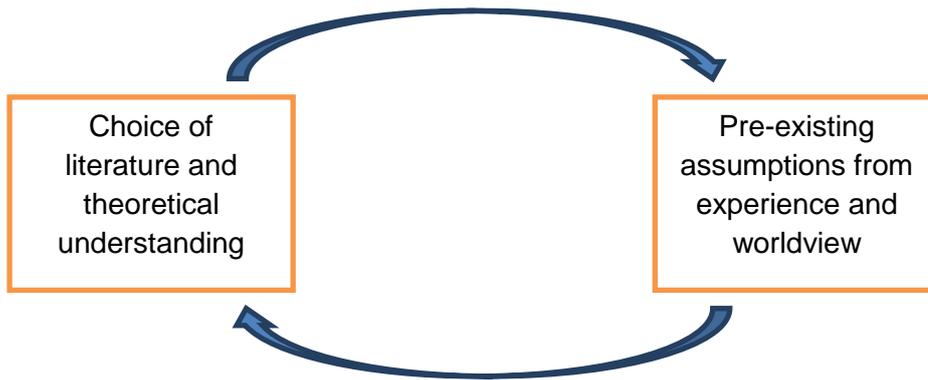


Figure 2.1. Interaction between theory, literature and assumptions.

While this research journey takes methodology seriously, it also acknowledges and responds to God’s revelation and action in the world with awe, wonder and surrender (Van der Ven 1994:29). The action of God which can never be defined and confined is acknowledged. The importance of research methodology is also acknowledged so that the research is reliable and can contribute to the realm of public debate (Hermans & Moore 2004:4). Research methodology is not an end within itself, but helps to answer the question “why and to what extent a theological theory about today’s religious praxis can stand the test of reality” (Hermans & Moore 2004:50). It is not limiting God’s activity but neither is it undervaluing the role of good educational practices.¹²

Keeping this in mind, the purpose and research questions are now clarified before explaining the research framework and the theoretical paradigm.

2.2 Objectives and research questions

In the light of the background of the moral crisis in South Africa as described in chapter one and the need for moral formation, this thesis investigates ways of promoting the moral formation of students in theological education institutions. In order to do this the following research objectives arise:

- To ascertain the extent to which the teaching and practice of moral formation is consciously pursued and included at the three selected theological institutions.
- To investigate the teachers’ and students’ perception of the moral formation process at the selected institutions and what had the most influence on the moral formation of students. In other words, what were the most effective teaching methods and practices for moral formation?

¹² See also Burgess (1976:113) and Lee (1996: 45-68) for a further discussion on the activity of God and that of the educator.

- To make recommendations regarding the most effective ways of promoting moral formation in the specific theological education institutions under consideration.

Before one can answer these questions, clarity is needed regarding what is meant by moral formation. In other words, what is it that is being formed in people? What is the content of morality? Of what does a good life consist? This requires an understanding of ethics and morality and the identification of certain elements or 'signposts' that might indicate moral excellence and which can be empirically researched. These elements will form the basis for the research and are broadly based around relationship with God, with self, with others in the Church, with others in society and with creation. The choice of relationship as the basis for moral maturity and the aspects of relationship that are identified as important for moral excellence are influenced by my theoretical paradigm which is outlined in section 2.5 and discussed more fully in chapters three and four.

The first two research questions revolve around the extent to which moral formation is included in theological education, the way in which this is done and its effectiveness. This involves analysing the teaching programme and other activities and practices at the selected theological institutions that may contribute to moral formation of students. This means going beyond the belief and the hope that moral formation is inherently part of the theological education process. Rather, the formation of moral character and excellence needs to be clarified and made conscious, deliberate and assessable. The overall vision, mission and purpose of the institution and the teaching and learning programme and practices need to be analysed. The current approaches to moral formation at the institution are assessed to discover what aspects of the programme are given more weight, why this is the case and how it influences moral formation. This analysis is based to a large extent on the perceptions of the staff and students regarding the effectiveness of the way in which moral formation is pursued at the institution.

The research focuses primarily on the moral formation of students but not exclusively as the literature indicates that spiritual formation is crucial for moral formation. To help evaluate the teaching and practice of moral formation at the theological institutions, an understanding of the existing models of theological education was required. This necessitated a historical overview of theological education as it relates to moral formation as well as a review of the various models of theological education that have been developed, both internationally and in South Africa. From this overview of the literature concerning theological education, certain models of theological education were identified in chapter four. The ways in which moral formation was pursued at the institutions could then be analysed in the light of these models.

A subsidiary question coming from the third key question deals with the relationship between the theological education institutions and the faith community, the Church. It considered who is responsible for the moral formation of students. What is the role of the theological education institution and what is the role of the Church? To what extent is moral formation left to the churches rather than being addressed by the theological institutions? The possibility and effectiveness of a partnership between the churches and theological education institutions to promote moral formation was investigated.

The question of the effectiveness of the teaching and practice of moral formation was perhaps the most difficult aspect to research. The fact that the institutions claim to develop good people, dynamic leaders, compassionate pastors and organised administrators is no guarantee that they do in fact accomplish this. Therefore in the empirical research, the teaching and practice of moral formation at the institutions was investigated. What the institutions said in their mission statements, vision and purpose regarding moral formation was examined. The modes of moral formation used at the institutions were investigated. I analysed the students' inspiring stories of moral formation and looked for the selected 'signposts' such as a sense of awe and wonder, compassion and justice that might indicate moral formation. These were analysed as explained later in this chapter in order to identify what helped the formation of morality and how this can be repeated, supported and enhanced in the theological education institutions.

2.3 Scope of the research and fields of study

The topic of moral formation covers a number of overlapping fields of study weaving together theological, educational, psychological and ethical concerns and drawing on the moral dimension in them as it explores moral formation in theological education. These are briefly described showing the connections between them. They will be further defined and explained in the following chapters.

2.3.1 Theological ethics

This research into moral formation is located primarily within the field of theological ethics that deals with issues of what is right, good and wise and how to live these out in the world. These issues are addressed from a specifically Christian framework, informed by Christian principles and the promise of salvation through Christ's atoning death and resurrection.

Initial definitions of theological ethics were provided in chapter one, and this field will be explored further in the following chapter in the literature review. A chronological review of

theological ethics that traces a relational understanding of morality is followed by an exploration of moral formation and what it means to live a good life. From this understanding of morality the criteria that indicate moral formation are drawn.

2.3.2 Spirituality

The definition of theological ethics in chapter one emphasized the role of faith in the practice of morality. God is at work in our lives, and it is through relationship with God that we grow in holiness. This being the case, this research is located in the field of spirituality and theological ethics. Spirituality incorporates the attitudes, beliefs and practices that help people to respond to the invitation and presence of God. Spirituality is a life-filled path, a Spirit-filled way of living (Fox 1991:11). Spirituality motivates the ethical life as the presence of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life enables moral development (Kretzschmar et al. 2009:22). Moral development is not in our strength alone but through the power of the Holy Spirit (Rm 8:9-11). As we grow in love for God, we grow in love for neighbour (1 Jn 4:7). A life lived in obedience to God and following the example of Jesus is all about morality and spirituality. The two fields are closely interwoven. Moral formation and spiritual formation are linked in the lifelong process of discipleship (Kretzschmar 2006:345). Christian spirituality is not just about feelings and beliefs but also about actions and a way of living. "It is not simply for 'the interior' life or the inward person, but as much for the body as for the soul, and is directed to the implementation of both the commandments of Christ, to love God and our neighbour. Indeed our love, like God's, should extend to the whole of creation" (Holt 1993:6).

2.3.3 Practical theology

The study of moral formation in theological education is interwoven with pedagogical questions regarding "what kind of education moral education is and how it is to be accomplished" (Van der Ven 1998a:21). This involves educational problems which fall into the field of practical theology.

Practical theology is a contextual and critical theology focusing on religious praxis (Pieterse 1998:176). It is understood as "the area of theology which deals with the active 'doing' dimensions of faith. The acts of celebrating, teaching, preaching, ministering, counselling and praying traditionally constitute its field of study" (Ruether 1996:125). It is often associated with empirical studies regarding the caring, preaching, worshipping and teaching tasks of the church. These studies are based on theory but speak into the world of practice. This overlap between theological ethics and practical theology has been noted in other studies and writing, leading to the development of what is commonly called

'practical philosophy'.¹³ This study of moral formation touches on many of these practical areas. I follow Browning in combining the moral and the practical which he calls "practical theological ethics." This arises from a genuine concern not only "to articulate norms but also to transform lives and institutions, to get down to specifics – to get practical" (Browning 2006:57). This concern has led to a very specific literature review as described below.

2.4 The literature review

As can be seen from the discussion of the scope of the research, moral formation is a wide ranging topic requiring reading in the disciplines of Christian ethics, spirituality, moral philosophy and practical theology. This research has drawn substantially from the literature in these disciplines, particularly in the fields of theological ethics (chapter three) and theological education (chapter four). Chapter three traces the importance of relationship as a basis for morality and in chapter four, theological education is investigated.

The broad nature of morality and moral formation necessitated a focused literature review for this thesis. It concentrates on areas of relationship, on developing a relational model of morality and in identifying and elucidating criteria that can be used to indicate moral formation. It includes a historical overview of the manner in which relationship is developed in ethical theory from the time of the virtue ethics of the ancient Greeks to modern thinkers such as Barth (1957) and McClendon (1980) as well as liberation and feminist contributions. African perspectives are included, for example, through the writings of Bujo (2001), Conradie (1997, 2006), Dube (2010), Mbiti (1969), Murove (2009), Phiri (2006) and Richardson (2003, 2009).

Van der Ven's (1998) work regarding moral formation forms a basis for organising data regarding moral formation. Further contributions on moral formation include those of Charry (1997), Gilligan (1991), Kohlberg (1981, 1984), O'Keefe (1995) and Von Hügel (1928) and from the South African perspective Conradie (2006). In the Christian milieu, spiritual and moral formation is closely linked. The literature review incorporates insights regarding spiritual disciplines from Foster (1978), Kretzschmar (2006) and Willard (1998). Naidoo's (2005, 2011) research regarding spiritual formation is also of relevance.

Various models of theological education form part of the literature review. Banks (1999), Cheesman (1993), Farley (1983) and Kelsey (1992, 1993), have all developed models of

¹³ This movement towards the practical can be found in works such as those of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, Marxism, Habermas's discourse ethics and Ricoeur's critical hermeneutics (Browning 2006:85).

theological education which are reviewed, noting their weaknesses and strengths. Others such as Groome (1980; 1991), Harkness (1998), Hauerwas (1981, 1983) and Johnson (1989) are also relevant to theological education and the passing on of the faith. Elements of these which relate to theological education in tertiary institutions are reviewed. Due to space constraints, the focus of the review is on those aspects that contribute to the discourse concerning moral formation in theological education.

2.5 The theoretical paradigm and relationship

In this section, the pertinent paradigmatic assumptions that form the framework for the research are outlined. A researcher comes with his or her own prejudices and is never neutral as one's experiences and worldviews influence the way one sees reality (Van der Ven 1994:37). This assertion that a neutral, disinterested interpretation does not exist acknowledges and affirms the validity of experience. My understanding of what it means to be a moral person was influenced by my experience as a Christian, a South African, and a woman as well as by my reading and studies in the field of theological ethics. As a Christian, my understanding of morality comes from the Bible and Christian teaching. As a South African, who lived in apartheid times, I am influenced by and concerned with issues of justice, oppression and racism. As a woman, I have a feminist perspective. All these influence the way in which I understand morality and the framework I develop to research it. More traditional approaches to theology and biblical interpretation tend to ignore experience in favour of neutral, disinterested methods, but many theologians, especially feminist ones, acknowledge the role of experience and context on interpretation (Dube 2010:91).

This research is grounded in the Christian faith and theological ethics. As any scholar of Christian theology knows, there is no single, universal Christian tradition. Rather, there is an array of strands and voices in theology just as there are different approaches in moral philosophy. The work of Kohlberg (1981) and Gilligan (1991) typify two schools of thought in the study of moral philosophy. Kohlberg's work has been described as being based on abstract universal moral principles and peopled by autonomous subjects while Gilligan's work is described as being relational and particular (Hekman 1995:29). Kohlberg proposed justice as the basis for morality while Gilligan posits an ethics of care. Significantly in Micah 6:6-8 justice and mercy (care) are combined in the context of spirituality.

In Christian theology, there are various approaches to using the Bible in ethics. For example, the Bible can be seen as a rule book, a set of universal principles or a narrative of encounter with God (Foster in Kretzschmar et al. 2009:144). There are dangers in using only one of these methods in isolation from the others just as there are dangers in

stressing only one approach in moral philosophy. For example, there is a danger that Kohlberg's impartial perspective does not build or sustain community. It uses the language of contract rather than of covenant or relationship (Verhey 2002:496).

Jesus, while making truth claims (Jn 14:6) and positing universal principles for human well-being and flourishing (Jn 15), also incorporates the personal and the particular. In his encounters with people Jesus treated everyone as an individual. He followed universal moral norms but applied them in the particular situation to a specific person, relationally and subjectively rather than abstractly and objectively. For example, he addressed the particular situation of the wealth of the rich Jewish leader while affirming the universal imperative to love God and neighbour (Lk 18:18-30). He praised the widow's small offering (Mk 12:38-40) as he understood her circumstances. He accepted the anointing with expensive perfume (Jn 12:1-8). In this way, Jesus combined the approaches described above, taking rules and norms seriously but also relationship with God and with others in particular situations. He emphasised remaining in relationship with God (Jn 15:1-10) as the basis for right living and right relationships with others and all creation, while not ignoring the importance of norms.

This research follows this approach and combines the importance of relationship with Christian norms and values. In developing an understanding of morality that can be researched, it emphasises the importance of relationship with God as the basis for living a moral life and being at peace with oneself and in right relationship with others in the church, in the world and with all of creation. This emphasis on relationship is grounded in the centrality of good, right and wise relationships throughout creation as the basis for ethical living and human and cosmic flourishing. In turn, what constitutes good, right and wise relationships is grounded on Christian principles. The theological and philosophical basis for relationship as the framework for morality is described below. The Christian norms and values that determine the nature and characteristics of these relationships will be explored and explained in chapter three.

2.5.1 Relationship: theological foundations

Relationship forms the framework for this research into moral formation. This builds on the definitions in chapter one where morality was defined in terms of following Christ and human flourishing. Relationships are key to human excellence and flourishing. This includes our relationship with God as it is in knowing and loving God that we experience life abundantly (Jn 10:10b). Also included is our relationship with creation which is one of dependence and care (Gen 1:28-30). "Humans are primarily relational beings who have a dynamic, participatory engagement with the world" (Adams quoted in Gabriel & Casemore

2009:82). The well known I-Thou concept as expounded by the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber (1970:17) affirms that relation and the quality of relationships are vital. He illustrates this by explaining that “Whoever says You ... stands in relation” and that the basic word “I-You establishes the world of relation” including God as in every “You we address the eternal” (:55-57). The basis for this is our creation in the Trinitarian image of God (Gn 1:16-28). The very essence of God is relational and thus relationship is at the heart of all reality (Johnson 1992:215, 227). “We are by our nature, as beings created in God’s image, relational” (Ahlers et al. 1996:49).

The doctrine of the Trinity conceives of God as a community of co-equal Persons and enshrines relationship as the basis for Christian anthropology. It affirms that being human involves relationship with other human beings and with God (Billy & Orsuto 1996:101). Moreover, it is a particular kind of relatedness. If being created in the image of God is the basis for our relational nature, then our relationships should be similar to and reflect the loving, mutual relationships as conceived of in the doctrine of the Trinity. Our relationships should be ones of mutuality in which there is equality while still respecting distinctions and uniqueness (Johnson 1992:216). Johnson traces the way in which the co-equality of the Father, Son and Spirit are enshrined in the Bible. She explains how the Father-Son-Spirit pattern is not always in that order. It is not always the Father who comes first. This can be seen, for example, in Luke 4:16-20 where it is the Spirit who sends Jesus (1992:195-6). This mutuality and equality are essential and inherent in human relationships if they are to mirror those within the Trinity.

The doctrine of the incarnation also affirms relationality. Embodiment, taking flesh, is relational not solitary as the birth process is relational (Holness 2008:111). The love of God for the world and God’s passion for human and cosmic flourishing is revealed in Jesus becoming human (Jn 1:14). God comes to us by being embodied and this signifies that all physical embodied life has value. In the incarnation, Christ empties himself. This emptying or *kenosis* as described in Philippians 2 is a letting go of self and yet, paradoxically it also has the possibility of a new beginning, a new birth (Jn 3). “Relationship lies at the heart of incarnation and therefore of redemption” (Holness 2008:112).

Foundational for the covenant community of Israel was relationship with God as expressed in the command to love God with heart and soul and strength (Dt 6:5) and mind (Mt 22:37). Israel was to be God’s people and God would be their God (Ex 6:7; Lev 26:12). From this flowed relationships with others which spanned both individual and social or institutional relationships (Ex 20:1-17; Deut 5:6-21). In the New Testament, the centrality

of relationship is affirmed through the life and teaching of Jesus. The kingdom or reign of God, which is central in the teachings of Jesus, is covenantal and its essence is the restored relation of God with all creation. Furthermore, Jesus' new commandment to love God and others is inherently relational. The biblical basis for a relational understanding of ethics is further explained in chapter three.

2.5.2 Relationship: moral philosophical foundations

Besides the Christian basis for the emphasis on relationship as the central and guiding principle for morality, moral philosophy also affirms relationship. Modernist thought tends to emphasise the autonomous self (Hekman 1995:72) and the work of Kant and Kohlberg reflected this emphasis. But, even within this understanding, universal principles were applied in concrete situations that involved relationships. In the dilemma of Heinz that Kohlberg uses, the issue hangs on the fact that it is Heinz's wife who is dying. Without this connection, the dilemma loses its potency and in fact no longer makes sense. Principles, such as justice which Kohlberg regarded as a universal principle are combined with relationship.¹⁴ Gilligan (1982) in her critique of Kohlberg's developmental psychology recognised two types of equally valid moral reasoning. One was based on an ethic of justice and rights and the other on an ethic of care and responsibility. She defines psychological health not as disengagement but rather as staying in relationship with oneself, with others and with the world (Gilligan 1991:23).

Tronto (1993:9) recognises that an ethic of care serves both as an individual moral value and as a basis for political action for the good of society. She questions the view of morality that disregards emotions and customs in favour of distant, disengaged reasoning and abstract, formal rules. She regards morality as an activity not a set of principles. Moral judgements are made in concrete circumstances, influenced by customs, traditions, feelings and emotions.

This relational emphasis on community, customs and tradition plays an important role in African moral thought. The centrality of relationship for human flourishing is recognised in the African philosophy of *ubuntu* that it is through others that we become fully human. *Ubuntu* defines a person through his or her relationships with others (Gathogo 2008:45). One exists in the fact of being known rather than because of thinking – “I am related therefore I am” rather than “I think therefore I am” (Bujo 2001:3; Gathogo 2008:46). Tutu

¹⁴ Hekman analyses the work of Gilligan and Kohlberg. She identifies the use of relation in the work of Kohlberg and further explores the ramifications of this in terms of moral theory, arguing that the many voices of relational selves belie the possibility of a single objective theory. While this discussion on moral theory goes beyond the parameters of this study, it reinforces the importance of relation as a basis for moral formation (1995:25-33).

(1989:71) affirms the concept of *ubuntu* and that “we are made for the delicate work of relationship, of interdependence. All kinds of things go horribly wrong when we break that fundamental law of our being.”

While the concept of relationship is central to an understanding of morality, the quality of relationship is crucial. Not all relationships are sources of growth and joy. Some can be debilitating and destructive, and so the characteristics of good, right and wise relationships need to be explored and explicated. Some indications of the essence and kind of relationship required are found in the loving, mutual relationships in the triune nature of God. While being in right relationship with self and other individuals is essential, relationships are not just personal and individual. Human flourishing involves communities and structural issues of justice. The stories in chapter one indicate the importance of justice and compassion as being integral to morality and moral relationships. The contribution of liberation theology, which is explained in chapter three, further explores this social, political understanding of morality. The character traits that indicate moral goodness are further investigated, identified and developed in chapter three and become the basis from which to assess moral formation.

There are strengths in a relational ethic but there are also dangers as it may not take human sinfulness seriously enough. Humans need the empowerment of divine love if they are to form truly selfless, loving relationships (Charry 1997:23). In our own strength, we cannot change and become the people we would like to be. Rather it is through God's action and transforming work that we become more like God (Rm 12:2; Eph 4:23-24). Moral formation is inherent in the relationship with God as people grow in faith and relationship with God (Rm 5:1-11).

2.5.3 Experience as a foundation for relationship

My own experiences, as mentioned earlier, also inform my understanding of morality. Following a feminist praxis perspective, I use experience as a legitimate source of theology and recognise the power of storytelling (Ackermann in Phiri & Nadar 2006:225; Phiri & Nadar 2006:78). “Story theology” challenges a hyperemphasis on grounding all theological thought on the rational (De La Torre 2014:30). The two stories that follow illustrate the power of relationship.

The first story is from Birch and Rasmussen (1989:58) who describe an incident at a conference on the ethics of organ transplants. The organ transplant surgeons were asked

a question by a congenitally deformed young man regarding their organ transplant policy. There was a generally accepted policy among the surgeons regarding who receives organ transplants if a choice had to be made between an able bodied person and a disabled person.

At first the surgeons defended their practice of excluding significantly disabled persons, all other factors being equal. They used considered, reasonable, informed and sophisticated moral and policy arguments. Yet before long they began to realize the actual consequences of their train of mind: The person who had quietly put the question to them would not, by their judgements, have been allowed to live. The surgeons experienced a kind of slow, silent moral shock. Deep down, they realized they had not considered the disabled to be fully persons. (1989:58)

It was the power of the relationship, of being confronted by the young man that challenged and fragmented their well reasoned arguments (quoted in Conradie 2006:18).

The second is a personal vignette which illustrates the power of relationship and how experience and theory interact.

This cameo goes back to the apartheid era and the Group Areas Act. A friend and I are sitting together on the scenic Knysna Heads looking out at the ocean. This idyllic moment is shattered as she comments, "I can never own a house in this beautiful part of the country of my ancestors." An abyss of racial pain and guilt opens between us. The Group Areas Act was blatantly one of injustice which violated all moral principles of fairness, but it was the sharing of the hurt of a dear friend that clarified and personalised the issue and gave me the impetus to struggle against the injustice.

These stories illustrate the power of relationship for moral action and contribute to the reasons why I have used relationship as the framework for the understanding of morality. Moral action is rooted in relationship, particularity, connectedness and care rather than abstract theory, objectivity and universality. Schluter and Lee (1993:72) illustrate the power of relationship by presenting the following scenario:

Imagine the unimaginable happened and the ATM coughed up R10 more than asked for. Would you go into the bank and give it back? Then imagine R10 extra change being given to you in your local grocery shop. Will you return it?

Schluter and Lee conclude that people are more inclined to return the money in the second case than the first because of the relational factor. In the first scenario, a person is pushing buttons; in the second, one is confronted by a person.

2.5.4 Relationship and wisdom

Wisdom adds to the relational understanding of morality in this research. Basing his work on Ricoeur, Van der Ven (1998a:113) links wisdom with practical knowledge and considers wisdom to be essential for ethical decision making. This practical wisdom he calls *phronesis*.¹⁵ Wisdom involves acting according to virtues but after they have been considered in the light of justice and then applied wisely in practical situations. This is applied on three levels, namely, the individual self, the self in relation to others and society and the institutions of society (in Van der Ven 1998a:9).¹⁶

From a gender perspective, Fiorenza (2001) too envisions wisdom as practical knowledge gained through experience combined with discernment. She writes, "Wisdom is intelligence shaped by experience and sharpened by critical analysis" (2001:23). "Wisdom understands complexity and seeks integrity in relationships ... bringing together self-awareness and self-esteem with awareness and appreciation of the world and the other" (Fiorenza 2001:23). Wisdom as the process of meaning making in the world is not only concerned with the interpretation of data and literature, but understanding and experiencing the self, others, the mystery of God and the world (Fiorenza 2001:3). Wisdom comes through intuition and being in relationship with God. People receive wisdom through being open to and remaining in the presence of God.

The biblical understanding of wisdom is deeper and more profound than 'wise knowledge'. Wisdom is a virtue and it is relational. It is a gift of God's grace that is communicated to us through the Presence of Wisdom as a Person. In the Christian tradition, that person that is communicated to us is Sophia, a wise woman (Pr 1:20-33). This relational nature of wisdom is recognised by Snyman (2006:80), and she affirms that "to say wisdom is a gift of God's grace is to say that wisdom is a Person with whom one can have a relationship."

God's presence in the world is signified by both Spirit and Wisdom (Johnson 1992:94,125,133). As Johnson (1992:94) writes, "Sophia's universal presence is analogous to God's Spirit insofar as she fills the world." Wisdom is a perfect mirror of God's activity and goodness (Wis 7:26). Therefore wisdom understood as relationship and as practical knowledge informs the understanding of morality.

¹⁵ Aristotle used the term *phronesis* to mean prudence or correct judgement and it included intellectual virtues such as wisdom and well as moral virtues (Munoz 1996:31).

¹⁶ Van der Ven bases this understanding of wisdom on the work of Ricoeur.

2.5.5 Implications for research methodology

This emphasis on morality as grounded in relationship forms the theoretical framework and understanding of morality and what will be researched. In no way does this emphasis on relationship negate the importance of ethical principles, reflection and analysis. Knowledge of what is right and good informs the conscience and leads to right and good relationships which flow from the inner being and character of a person.

The nurture of good character through the habitual practice of virtues leads to a healthy self-esteem, a right relationship with self, and this in turn enables right relationships with others. In the Christian understanding, this is not just a matter of self-will. It is through being in relationship with God and allowing the Holy Spirit to transform one from the inside. It is being born again (Jn 3.3-8) and being transformed by the renewing of one's mind (Rm 12:2).

The emphasis on relationship does not mean that there is never a conflict of duties. We exist in a web of relationships, all of which require a response from us. The particular situation, specific person and the relationship are considered as well as ethical norms and duties. For example, we have obligations and duties to those we love, our families, our church community, the wider community and to the environment. At times, we might have to compromise our church obligations in order to meet work demands or neglect family responsibilities in order to support and care for those in need in the community or to make a stand against injustice. An obvious example here might be that of Nelson Mandela and the sacrifices he and his family made in the fight for justice against the apartheid regime.

There were many possible aspects of relationship which could be chosen as guiding themes for the research. Those I have chosen are grounded in the Christian faith and based on a Christian theological and biblical understanding of what constitutes good and right relationships. Such an understanding is rooted in personal encounter and in relationship with God whose love is stronger than death and the evils of hatred, destruction, exploitation and oppression (Gutiérrez 1984: xvii). Hence, morality is understood as both personal and social, concerned with individual faith lived out in the midst of the struggle for justice. It involves mutuality as embodied in the Trinity. Such mutuality points to relationships of love and of justice. An individualistic, pietistic moral understanding is not adequate. As Gutiérrez (1984:137) asserts, "Spirituality is a community exercise."

Good, right and wise relationships lead to moral being and living. This understanding of morality forms the framework for the research journey. The research questions and the

criteria that might indicate moral character and action are based on the formation and quality of these relationships. This research involves an inductive and a deductive process as past experiences and pre-existing assumptions coming from one's worldview influence the choice of literature and the theoretical understanding and vice versa. Following Ezzy (2002), I have called this process a hermeneutical spiral.

2.6 The hermeneutical spiral

Certain ethical presumptions or paradigmatic assumptions regarding the nature of moral relationships and moral formation shape this research. These presumptions are affirmed through experience and praxis which in turn inform the development of theory. Ezzy (2002:23-28) uses what he calls a hermeneutic circle to illustrate this relationship between theory and praxis. This hermeneutical circle is similar to Van der Ven's (1994:38-42) empirical spiral which places theory and praxis in a cyclic relationship involving various phases in which theory and praxis inform one another. Ezzy explains that "the interpretative process involves an ongoing cycle in which pre-existing interpretive frameworks shape how people make sense of their experiences, and how these experiences in turn shape the development of new interpretive frameworks" (:6). Similarly, Pieterse (1998:190) points out that "practical theological research is hermeneutical in nature, but empirical by design."

This research follows a theory-praxis spiral, where theory informs praxis and, in turn, praxis shapes theory. This means that the research is both inductive and deductive with the two intertwining and influencing one another. The systematic study of the theological material and literature provides the framework that informs the empirical research. The empirical research and practical experience then provide new insights that can contribute to and throw further light on theory which can then again be tested empirically. The diagram below shows the relationship between the two.

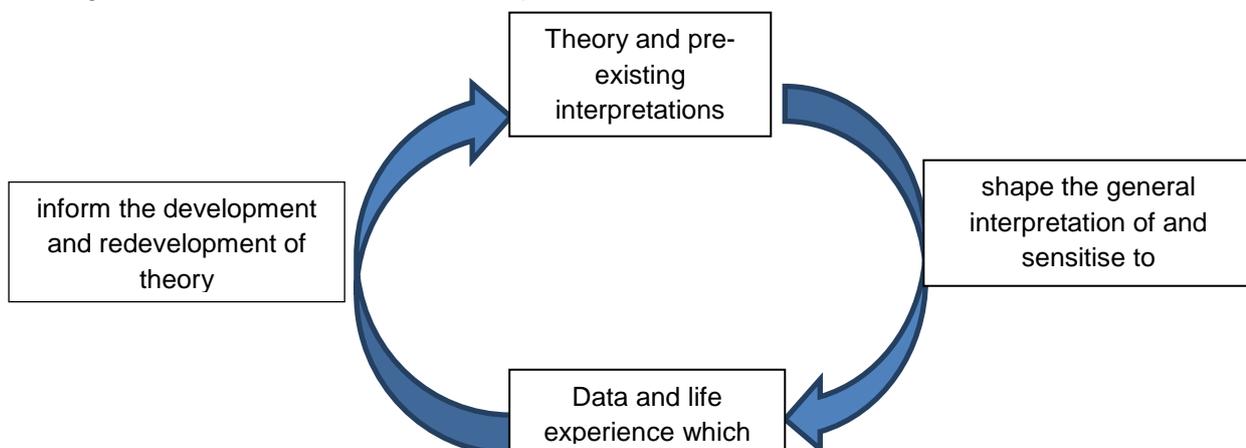


Figure 2.2 The hermeneutical cycle (Ezzy 2002:26)

In this study, the theoretical understanding of ethics, morality and moral formation is developed from my interpretation of morality in terms of relationship. This is based on the exploration of the nature of moral relationships as described in the Bible and understood by various theologians and moral philosophers and, to a lesser extent, moral psychologists and is more fully explained in the following chapter. This understanding is used to evaluate moral formation at the selected theological institutions.

In this research, it is a view of morality as right relationship with God, self, others and creation that influences the research questions regarding moral formation practices in the theological education institutions. But, the experience and findings from the research, in turn, develop new perceptions, insights and knowledge that influence the theory as shown in Figure 2.3 below:

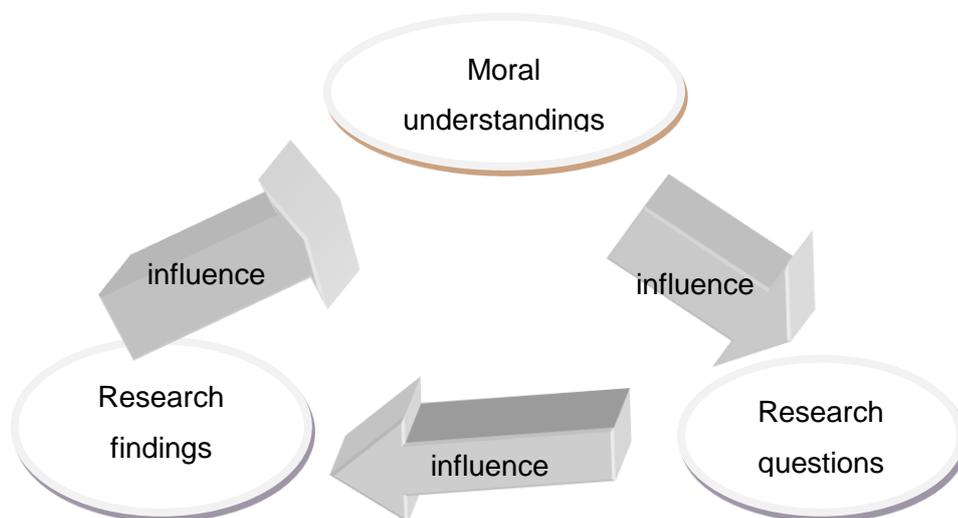


Figure 2.3 The research cycle

2.7 The empirical research methodology

A small empirical research project based on the teaching and practice of moral formation in three theological institutions in South Africa was conducted. By combining the insights from the formal theory contained in the literature and the findings from the empirical research at the institutions, I hoped that some insights helpful for reviewing, appreciating, challenging and adding to moral formation in theological education would be generated.

There are two major approaches to empirical research, namely, quantitative and qualitative research. In what follows, I describe the salient features of the qualitative

research approach explaining the reasons for my choice of this approach rather than a quantitative approach. In this discussion, I show how the qualitative approach is best suited for research regarding moral formation and how it will help to achieve the research objectives.

2.7.1 Qualitative research

Qualitative approaches to research are “**holistic in nature** and aim to understand social life and the meaning that people attach to it” (De Vos 1998:241).¹⁷ Moral formation is a complex phenomenon and needs to be studied as a whole, so it lends itself to the use of a qualitative approach rather than a quantitative approach which tends to dissect a phenomenon to examine the component parts. Qualitative research reveals how the parts work together to form a whole (Merriam 1998:6).

While incorporating a theoretical framework, qualitative research does not emphasize theories at the beginning of the research (Wiersma & Jurs 2009:14). Rather, there is an **openness** to various new findings or theories that might emerge from the research. There is naturally some initial reading and understanding in order to inform the research and develop the paradigmatic assumptions, but that theory might be changed or refined or even dropped as the research progresses. This is part of the hermeneutical circle or spiral model as described by Van der Ven and Ezzy (section 2.4). I have followed this principle of allowing the theory to inform empirical research and vice versa. From the research questions, it followed that an empirical as well as a theoretical study was necessary to research moral formation at the theological institutions. This interweaving of theory and practice took place through a study of the literature regarding moral formation, my own experiences and assumptions that led to an understanding of morality as based on relationship and research into the implementation of moral formation practices at the institutions.

One of the characteristics of qualitative research is that meaning emerges from the data rather than being posed beforehand and then tested for verification. Wiersma and Jurs (2009:12) term this ‘grounded theory’, but Merriam (1998:49) is more hesitant in terms of calling research grounded theory. While acknowledging that the research is inductive and does interpret data, it is referred to as shaping or modifying existing theory rather than ‘grounded theory’. I follow this more hesitant approach of Merriam in understanding the contribution of this research. It contributes to ‘expanding the knowledge base’ rather than developing grounded theory in the sense of new constructs and conceptual schemes. But

¹⁷ The bold type is my emphasis. It serves to highlight the characteristics of qualitative research that have contributed to the choice of the qualitative approach for this research.

it does add to the body of knowledge and make recommendations for theological education.

Ezzy (2002:3) sees qualitative methods as being particularly good for examining and developing theories that deal with the role of **meanings and interpretations**. This makes a qualitative approach appropriate for research into moral formation. De Vos (1998:242) supports this view as qualitative researchers aim to “understand reality by discovering the meanings that people, in a specific setting attach to it.” In this research on moral formation, I am dealing with peoples’ interpretation of moral formation as well as with the meaning that they attach to morality. These are complex concepts that are not easily investigated using quantitative, statistical methods.

“Qualitative research aims to understand phenomena within a **particular context**” (De Vos 1998:241); hence, a qualitative design helped to understand moral formation in the various theological education institutions. It was important to investigate the context of the institutions and to have information on the context of the students. So information was collected on the cultural and educational background of the students as well as their age and reasons for studying. This research takes place in a ‘**natural setting**’, which is also characteristic of qualitative research as opposed to quantitative research in which behaviours and settings are controlled and manipulated (Wiersma & Jurs 2009:13). The institutions that were chosen for research are rooted in different contexts and followed different models of theological education.

Qualitative study looks at relationships within a system or culture and deals with the personal. It is focused on understanding a given social setting (Denzin & Lincoln 1994:212). This made it an appropriate approach for this study as the personal circumstances and histories of individuals influence their understanding of morality and their perception of the effectiveness of moral formation at the institution. As there are so many variables in moral formation, I needed a personal approach to understand the nuances of those involved in theological education and the understanding that they gave to moral formation, hence the decision to visit the institutions and to conduct interviews with the staff and to use many open-ended questions. As De Vos (1998:45) observes, “the qualitative researcher needs to **rely on the voices and interpretations** of informants.” It is the voices of those involved in theological education and their perceptions of morality and how moral formation took place that is crucial to the research.

Babbie and Mouton (2001:272) add that the focus in qualitative research is on the participants’ experience of the research phenomenon using their language in an attempt to stay true to the meanings of the participants themselves. I have tried to follow this principle

and to use the words of the participants themselves to describe their understanding of morality and their experiences of moral formation. To this end, I have included comments and stories as told by the participants as well as factual data.

2.7.2 Appreciative inquiry

I have chosen to use an appreciative inquiry approach in this research. Appreciative inquiry is “a process of collective learning – a way to explore, discover, and appreciate everything that gives ‘life’ to organizations when they are most vibrant, effective, successful, and healthy in relation to their whole system of stakeholders” (Ludema & Fry in Reason & Bradbury 2008:280). Many appreciative inquiry practitioners use what is known as the “4D cycle”; the four Ds are as follows:

- (1) *Discover* - this involves appreciating ‘what gives life?’;
- (2) *Dream* - envisioning ‘what might be?’;
- (3) *Design* - constructing ‘how can it be?’; and
- (4) *Destiny* - sustaining ‘what will be?’ (Cooperrider, Stavros & Whitney 2008:5).

In regard to this research, these steps apply in the following manner. **Discover** where and how moral formation is taking place in the theological education institution. Collect comments and stories from staff and students about moral formation, and assess how moral formation is incorporated in the purpose, the teaching and the life of the institution. Seek the very best and then encourage **dreaming** of how moral formation could be enhanced and pursued even further. Then **design** how the discoveries and dreams can be implemented and make recommendations regarding how moral formation can be made to work more effectively. Then **destiny** involves the future as these insights and plans are implemented to form good, wise, moral people.

I used aspects of appreciative inquiry for the following reasons. Firstly, research shows that appreciative inquiry is **effective** in bringing change in organizations. Focusing on the root causes of success rather than the root causes of failure was more effective in bringing the desired changes (Ludema & Fry in Reason & Bradbury 280-297). Therefore, it will be of value to use this approach as it could contribute to moral formation in theological education institutions.

Secondly, appreciative inquiry is appropriate because it focuses on the **positive**. It begins by identifying what is positive and connecting to it in ways that heighten energy, vision, and action for change (Cooperrider et al. 2008:xv). Appreciative inquiry focuses on strengths and what is good rather than the failures and weakness. It works on the strengths of the organisation and improves what is going well rather than stressing the

weaknesses. The appreciative inquiry approach identifies the positive ways in which moral formation occurs in theological education and makes recommendations that have the potential to promote moral formation in the students and impact on the church community and world. Proponents of the appreciative inquiry approach believe that organisations live up to the best stories if these are emphasised rather than perpetuating the problems which can happen when following a problem solving approach. So the strengths are emphasised rather than focusing on the weaknesses.

Thirdly, appreciative inquiry can help to overcome the limitation of “**impression management**” as people who are interviewed can identify the positive, and so there is less need to impress or to give answers that are perceived to be correct. In the study of the theological education institutions, it was important to look for what was positive and to build on that. Every organization has something that works, that gives it life, and it is these aspects that make the organization most alive, effective, successful and connected in healthy ways to its stakeholders and communities (Cooperrider et al. 2008:xvii). These are the aspects that can most help in the moral formation process.

Fourthly, appreciative inquiry is sensitive to **building relationships**. It works with a vision of a relational self rather than an individualistic self (Zandee & Cooperrider 2008:195). There is an appreciation of human existence as relational. This relational aspect links with the relational understanding of moral formation.

Fifthly, appreciative inquiry touches on structural not just individual relationships as it promotes advocacy for **worldwide justice** and sustainability. “Such **global compassion** is enabled when we can once again appreciate our sensuous participation in a more than human world” (Reason & Bradbury 2008:195). This structural understanding of morality as part of the moral formation of students was assessed.

Sixthly, this research focuses on relationship, acknowledging that each and every relationship has an **element of mystery**. Our relationship with God is one which we can never fathom or understand and we remain awed by the depth, height and breadth of the relationship. Relationship with God is the ultimate mystery and reality. For Christians and those who believe there is more to life than the concrete, to what can be seen and touched, facts alone cannot explain the quandary of life which is filled with mystery (Verhey 2002:497).

Seventhly, appreciative inquiry uses ‘**mystical pragmatism**’ as a guiding value. Mystical pragmatism is “an invitation to engage in a form of action research as spirited inquiry where together we discover and realize the noblest, most beautiful and meaningful

possibilities for human existence on this planet” (Zandee & Cooperrider 2008:192). In many ways, this reflects the Christian ideal as described by liberation theologians where there is a search for justice and for helping to bring about the reign of God that incorporates the noblest and most beautiful in the world. I am studying moral formation in a Christian setting, in which the links between holiness and spirituality are acknowledged. It is as we become holy that we become good. Appreciative inquiry “allows us to respond with a sense of awe, curiosity, veneration, surprise, delight, amazement and wonder (Zandee & Cooperrider 2008:193). Such responses are appropriate in theological education and in the presence of God’s transforming power. How moral transformation takes place cannot be tied down once and for all. In a sense, it is God working in the lives of students and staff, and that is a multi-faceted working as the Spirit moves as she wills. There are no guaranteed recipes for moral formation, and there are many factors beyond the control of staff and students that may contribute to the process. Moral formation is indeed a process of awe and wonder, surprise and delight to behold the unfolding of people of virtuous character.

There is some synergy between the qualitative and the appreciative inquiry approaches as they are used in this research. These are outlined in the table below, showing the connections and indicating the design of the questionnaires.

Table 2.1 Qualitative research and appreciative inquiry research compared

| Qualitative research | Appreciative inquiry research |
|---|--|
| Holistic – all the parts work together | Relational and collective learning |
| Meaning and interpretation | Mystical pragmatism |
| Openness to new findings and emergent meaning and hearing the voices of the informants. | Listen to stories and discover where moral formation occurs successfully and what contributes to this success. |
| Be open | Open to dreams of fostering moral formation. |
| Particular context, natural setting. | Design and apply findings to the institution. |

2.8 The three theological education institutions

The empirical research was conducted at three theological education institutions. What follows is a description of these institutions and an explanation of why they were chosen.

2.8.1 Selection criteria for the institutions

In order to investigate the teaching and practices of moral formation in theological education, it was necessary to select institutions that represented different models of

theological education. Hence these institutions were chosen as they were representative of several of the following categories:

- distance learning
- residential full-time learning
- face to face lectures but not residential
- part of a university that offers non-theological courses
- a faith based, denominational institution

While it was important that they differed from one another and were representative of certain categories and types of education, they were also selected for the following similarities. They are all involved in training for ministry whether it is towards full-time ordained ministry or part-time non-ordained ministry. They all offer degrees and are nationally accredited institutions.

2.8.2. A description of the selected institutions

2.8.2.1 St Augustine College of South Africa

St Augustine College is a Catholic university that offers theological and non-theological or secular courses of study. The original motivation for a Catholic university was born in the mid-nineties when South Africa was in turmoil and on the brink of the first truly democratic elections. A group of Catholic academics, clergy and business people recognised the need for a Catholic university to make a moral and academic contribution to the development of South Africa. The motivating factors for a Catholic university were:

- To include morality and character formation in education;
- To better inform Catholics about matters that affect their conduct as Christians in the modern society, matters such as business ethics and Christian practice in the workplace;
- To equip Catholic intellectuals to play their part in helping the Church to deepen its commitment to the mission of evangelisation and renewal and to precipitate a qualitative change in Catholic intellectual life and Catholic intellectual education in general.¹⁸

In 1999, St Augustine College was given conditional permission by the Department of Education to offer postgraduate courses. It opened in July 1999, and Prof Edith Raidt became its founding president. In 2004, the college received full accreditation and by

¹⁸ History of St Augustine viewed, 2/2/2014 from staugustine.ac.za/history-of-sac/

2008, it offered a number of undergraduate programmes including BTh, BCom and BA programmes. Soon after this research, which was conducted at the end of 2013, the undergraduate programmes were held in abeyance. However, 2014 saw the beginning of the new BA (Hons) programme in Peace studies and a full range of postgraduate degrees in the humanities. Short courses for non-degree purposes, workshops and public lectures are also offered.¹⁹

There are partnerships between the Catholic Bishops conference and St Augustine College and collaboration regarding the training and formation of laity and clergy. Catholic clergy are trained at various institutions such as St. John Vianney Theological Seminary in Pretoria and Saint Joseph's Theological Institution at Cedara near Pietermaritzburg. This meant that St Augustine College was not used to any very large extent for the training of Catholic clergy. However, St Augustine College has a relationship with various churches besides the Catholic Church. The Anglican Church in the Diocese of Johannesburg recognises and often requires students to study for a qualification at St Augustine College as a condition of ordination into the Church.

Presently, St Augustine's offers postgraduate courses and is strongly committed to resuming undergraduate programmes. It sees the need for quality education with small classes that allow face to face interaction with the lecturers.

2.8.2.2 The College of the Transfiguration

The College of the Transfiguration was established in Grahamstown in 1993. It was born out of the union of four well known religious educational institutions in Southern Africa, namely, St Paul's, St Bede's, leLapha leJesu and St Peter's (Prospectus 2015). In the history of the college as written in the centenary journal (2003), the amalgamation between St Bede's and St Paul's features most strongly, so further details of these two colleges are given. St Bede's grew out of St John's theological college which was established in 1879 as a centre for learning. In 1899, theological training was moved from St John's to what came to be known as St Bede's in Mthatha (Ngewu 1994:23). St Bede's was founded mainly to train the clergy and catechists of the diocese. The first black principal, the Revd Ephraim Khotso Mosothoane, was appointed in 1976 (:29). The college went through some trying times, but in 1985 with Winston Ndungane as principal, it was doing well and "pulsating with activities" (:32).

¹⁹ St Augustine's Today viewed, 16/2/2014 from staugustine.ac.za/st-augustine's-today/

St Paul's came into existence in 1902 (Hewitt 1994:38). In 1906, there were six students, and it was full (:39). In 1976, the first black students were enrolled at St Paul's despite apartheid laws that forbade this. From then on, more and more black students enrolled till over 80% of the students were black (:44).

In 1991, it was decided by the Provincial Standing Committee of the Anglican Church of the Province of Southern Africa to close St Bede's college in Mthatha on the ground of "the high cost of training and a depleted number of ordinands."²⁰ This resolution was later withdrawn and a new one made whereby St Bede's and St Paul's should both close and be amalgamated and a new college, the College of the Transfiguration, be formed.²¹

Hence, the College of the Transfiguration (COTT) was formed in 1994 as a residential Anglican seminary, and it replaced St Bede's and St Paul's. COTT is on the same site as St Paul's was. In the first year of the new college, there were 50 students, three full-time lecturers, three part-time lecturers and a handful of support staff. The current number of students at the college is approximately 60. One of the objectives of the college was to increase the number of women students and women lecturers (May & Trisk 2003:5-6). This objective has been partially achieved as there are a number of women students but just one woman lecturer on the staff. However, a woman has been appointed as the new rector of the college starting in 2015.

The college is registered with the Council on Higher Education and offers accredited programmes. It includes courses such as a response to HIV/AIDS, personal growth, local church history and contemporary spirituality (May & Trisk 2003:7). The college is the only provincial residential theological college of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa.

2.8.2.3 The South African Theological Seminary

The South African Theological Seminary is avowedly a Christian college that is faith based and teaches the Christian faith. It describes itself as "Bible-based, Christ-centred and Spirit-led".²² It is evangelical in nature and emphasises the centrality of the Bible.

It is a distance learning institution that makes use of electronic communication as well as written communication. It is a founder member of the National Association of Distance Education Organisations in South Africa and the Christian Private Higher Education Forum (Prospectus 2013:15).

²⁰ Minutes of the Provincial Standing Committee, September 1991, a Report from the Synod of Bishops to Provincial Standing Committee – Appendix a, p1.

²¹ Minutes of the Provincial Standing Committee, September 1991:37-38.

²²About the South African Theological seminary, viewed 21/6/2013, from <http://www.sats.edu.za/about-us/>

After much prayer and research into distance learning management and practices, the Seminary opened its doors to the public in June 1996 with just three full-time staff members. By 2002, there were 98 students and seven full-time staff members. There are now students from 77 countries studying through SATS.

The Seminary has a financial model which depends on student fees rather than on donor-funding for its sustainability. However, several larger projects have been funded by foundation grants. Through the latest technologies, SATS offers students a variety of programmes, each supported by expert tutors and supervisors located in various places around the world.

The SATS website explains that SATS came into existence for the following two reasons:

Firstly, our deep and continuing concern for the doctrinal integrity of the church. SATS has been established on a triune doctrinal foundation – The unique authority of the Word of God the Father, the lordship and centrality of Jesus Christ, and the ministry of the Holy Spirit. These key doctrines are strongly promoted in all of our courses and programmes.

Secondly, to be a Seminary (a place where things are grown) where church leaders are not taken out of their local churches into a sort of academic ‘hot house’ in order to grow. Instead local churches become the real seedbeds for Christian education and training.²³

SATS believes in forging partnerships that are designed around the needs of the students. For example, there are partnerships with other denominations who use SATS to train their leaders. SATS is also able to offer accreditation for a degree for students from other countries where government accreditation by that country is not possible (Prospectus 2013:16).

2.9 Data collection

Data was collected from the websites of the above mentioned institutions as well as from other documents such as the institution’s prospectus and statement of faith. Data was also collected from questionnaires conducted with staff and students.

2.9.1 Document analysis

The mission statements, purpose and objectives of the institutions were analysed to determine the extent to which moral formation was included in them. How the qualifications were structured, what was included particularly with regard to the ethics courses, the modes of moral formation used, the emphasis placed on moral and spiritual

²³ Why we exist viewed, 18/10/2014 from <http://www.sats.edu.za/about-us/sats-why-we-exist>.

formation and the involvement in practical work in the community and in local churches was considered. This involved ascertaining the extent to which moral formation was included in the overall programme either intentionally or inadvertently as part of the purpose and process of theological education. This analysis of the ethos of the institutions as contained in the documents was done in the light of a relational understanding of moral formation. The questions regarding the document analysis include the following:

- Do the mission statement, the purpose and objectives include a focus on moral formation?
- In what ways does moral formation feature on the website?
- To what extent was the importance of developing a relationship with God, self, others in the church community and others in society and the environment included?
- What modes of moral formation were consciously used at the institution?
- Is there a relationship between the Church and the institution? If so, how is this relationship described and how does it contribute to the moral formation of students?
- Does the theological institution interact with the wider community, and if so, does this promote moral formation?

The answers to these questions form part of the triangulation process which compares three sets of data thus allowing for greater trustworthiness of findings. Information from these written documents was compared with the narrative responses from the staff and students and the rating scale type questions, as described below. Comparisons between these three aspects allowed for greater trustworthiness.

2.9.2 Questionnaires

Questionnaires were conducted with the staff and with students. Copies of these are included in appendices A and B respectively. The purpose of these questionnaires was to research the ways in which moral formation was included at the selected theological institutions and to determine which modes were used and what the staff and students perceived to be the most effective for moral formation. The questionnaires with the staff were personally administered so that they had the opportunity to explain and expand on their answers where appropriate.²⁴ This allowed for a deeper understanding of the way moral formation is encouraged in the institution.

²⁴ For example, a staff member from COTT reworded one of the questions to include creation.

The questionnaires were designed to elicit information on the role played by the theological education institutions in the moral formation of students and more specifically what aspects of the theological education programme played this role. Students were asked for feedback on the extent to which various aspects of the programme were influential in forming their moral awareness and action.

People often understand morality differently. In this research, I have developed a relational understanding of morality, but the staff and students might hold different views regarding morality. Hence, it was necessary to ask both the staff and students to describe what they considered to be the essence of morality. To do this, some imaginative questions were included. For example, they were asked who they saw as a good person and why they considered this person to be good.

Questions were designed to determine whether the student's relationship with God was consciously fostered, whether the student was encouraged to know herself or himself more deeply, whether the students deepened their relationship with those in the Church and those in society and whether care for the environment was fostered. The questions sought to determine whether the criteria that indicate moral maturity and promote human and creation flourishing were present in these relationships.

The questionnaires allowed for the voices of the participants to be heard and for their own words to be used. One of the characteristics of qualitative research is that it is 'richly descriptive' as it focuses on meaning and understanding of a phenomenon as described in the participants' own words (Merriam 1998:8).

2.9.2.1 The structure of the questionnaires and the use of narrative

In qualitative investigations, questionnaires and interviews are usually fairly open-ended and less structured so that participants can use their own words and define the phenomenon in unique ways (Merriam 1998:74). Hence, I included questions that allowed students and staff to use their own words and that allowed for storytelling as well as a mix of more and less structured questions. Use was made of Likert-type rating scales in order to elicit quick information regarding a range of possible modes of moral formation that were included at the institutions.²⁵ Rating scales can be unreliable as there are possible problems of 'central tendency bias' in which respondents avoid the extremes of the scale and of 'social desirability bias' where people choose the positive aspects rather than the

²⁵ A Likert scale is one in which students rate statements usually on a five point scale from 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'neither agree nor disagree', 'disagree' to 'strongly disagree'.

negative ones. These dangers were minimised by the inclusion of the narrative style questions.

The questionnaires started with a profile of the students. This was included in order to determine if gender, age, economic well-being, previous education and marital status were factors that played a role in the moral formation of students. This information also allowed for comparisons between students from different backgrounds to be made.

The questions then proceeded to clarify the understanding of morality of both staff and students. This was followed by a section on theological education. Here, questions were included to gain information on why students were studying, and this was compared with the stated purpose and outcomes of the theological institution. The students were asked to describe how their purpose for studying had been facilitated or not facilitated. A key question in this section for the students was, "Give an example of how, as a result of your studies, you are now practicing Christian values in your church, your family and in your community."

In the theological education section, the staff questionnaires focused on the structure of the programme. They were asked what they considered the most important aspect of ethics to teach and the modes of moral formation that were included at the institution. This included questions regarding the ways in which the students' relationship with God was nurtured.

The students were asked to evaluate the extent to which certain aspects of the programme had made a difference to their moral formation and to assess on a rated scale the extent to which certain modes of moral formation were included in the programme. The staff also assessed the extent to which these modes of moral formation were included in the programme, and their answers were compared with those of the students.

These rating type questions were balanced by a number of narrative questions. For example, the students were asked to tell a story of how their studies had influenced their moral development and what in the programme of studies contributed most to their moral development. This section on what influenced their moral formation consisted of more open-ended questions that required solving ethical dilemmas, telling stories and recounting examples of moral action.

In the staff questionnaires, there was a section that dealt with the relationship between the institution and the Church. This was included in order to clarify the staffs' understanding of their role, the role of the institution and the role of the Church in the moral formation of the

students. As a residential college was included, there were also questions regarding community life and the influence that this had on the students. These questions did not apply in the same way particularly to the distance learning institution (SATS), but they did seek to discover if the students were encouraged to be part of a local church community.

In keeping with the appreciative inquiry approach, the last section of the questionnaires asked the staff and students to “dream”. They could dream of ways that moral formation could be supported and deepened.

2.9.2.2 The respondents

In qualitative research, subjects may be selected randomly, but more often purposive sampling is used (Wiersma & Jurs 2009:282). “Purposive sampling is a procedure of selecting individuals or small groups because of certain characteristics relevant to the phenomenon under study” (Wiersma & Jurs 2009:282). In this research, I used purposive sampling to select the theological education institutions and the respondents from those institutions. The criteria used to identify staff members included involvement in the ethics courses, responsibility for students’ practical assignments or projects in local churches or the community and involvement in spiritual formation programmes. Staff who co-ordinated the overall programme and so had an understanding of the vision and outcomes of the theological programme and an understanding of how the various disciplines fitted into the overall objectives of the programme were also selected. Staff participants needed to have a broad understanding of the vision and functioning of the institution. The students who were selected to answer questionnaires were in their last year of study which meant they had experienced more of the programme of the institution than a student who had been there for a shorter time.

Typically, qualitative research makes use of small sample sizes. “The size of the sample is determined by informational considerations. If the purpose is to maximize information, the sampling is terminated when no new information is forthcoming from new sampled units” (Lincoln & Guba 1985: 202). Lincoln and Guba call this saturation or redundancy. I followed this principle in determining the number of staff members to be interviewed. It was apparent when I found no new themes coming from the interviews that a saturation point had been reached.

2.9.2.3 Ethical considerations

I followed the principle of treating subjects with respect and seeking their cooperation in the research. First the cooperation and consent of the institutions was obtained and then

arrangements were made with the institutions to contact students to ascertain if they were willing to participate in this research study. The institutions informed their students about the research and gave them the choice of participating or not. Staff and students agreed that they would return the questionnaire forms only if they were willing to participate. Participants were informed of the purpose of the research, that it would be anonymous and that they could withdraw at any point if they so wished. The response was generous, but not all the questionnaires were returned, and the choice to participate or otherwise was respected. The principle of confidentiality and anonymity was followed for the questionnaires so that staff and students felt completely comfortable with giving answers and no names were included. Permission was obtained from the staff members to record verbal comments and explanations regarding their responses to the written questionnaires. If staff members felt uncomfortable with this, I ensured there was no violation of their privacy, and I respected their wishes and did not record these comments. This did not compromise the validity of the results as the bulk of the information was obtained from the questionnaires, and some staff in fact gave no extra explanations after filling in the questionnaires. The purpose of the interview was to build relationship with the staff in keeping with the relational nature of this study. Where information gained from the interviews was useful in further describing or elucidating the answers in the questionnaire it was used.

I had intended to use codes for the participants, but I found that this jeopardised their anonymity. Therefore, no codes are used for the staff in the write up of the findings. As there were many more student participants, this was less of an issue regarding the students' comments. However, if something students said in their responses could possibly identify them, these responses were not coded to ensure that there was no breach of confidentiality and anonymity. Moreover, the use of the personal pronouns 'he' and 'she' is avoided for the staff members as this might identify them. As most of the staff members were men, I have used 'he'. This pronoun danger did not apply to the responses from the students due to the larger number of questionnaires submitted. Results of the research will be shared with the institutions and more broadly as appropriate.

2.9.2.4 Pilot interviews

The key to obtaining good data from interviewing is to ask good questions. Pilot interviews are crucial for testing the questions (Merriam 1998:75), so I conducted some pilot questionnaires to test the clarity of questions and whether the information they elicited was relevant.

2.10 Data analysis

There is no one neat and tidy approach to qualitative data analysis (Babbie & Mouton 2001:491). “Categories emerge from informants, rather than being identified *a priori* by the researcher. This emergence provides rich, ‘context-bound’ information leading to patterns or theories that help explain a phenomenon” (De Vos 1998:46). This was exactly the kind of data that was required by this research. The growth in moral formation and the type of theological education that encourages this growth must emerge from the students and their experiences.

Qualitative data analysis focuses on understanding and interpreting a phenomenon (Mouton 1996:168). Such analysis also concentrates on accurately portraying the concepts as used by the respondents in their understanding and description of the phenomenon. This meant that in my analysis of the data, I searched for concepts or categories that the students and staff identified as having promoted moral formation. I have made use of open coding as described by Ezzy (2002) as it is a helpful inductive method of extracting key stories, phrases, words and ideas to discover concepts or themes that are embedded in the multiple sources of evidence and data. Open coding allows the themes to surface from the data rather than starting with pre-selected categories. Ezzy calls this thematic analysis and contrasts it with content analysis which has a deductive approach and uses predetermined categories based on existing theory (Ezzy 2002:82). This research lent itself to both a deductive and an inductive approach as it was open to new possibilities for moral formation in theological education rather than simply evaluating existing theory regarding moral formation. However, it is informed by existing theory.

The data was scrutinized a number of times to identify the similarities and differences in the responses. This organization of material or coding, as it is known, involved asking questions about the meaning of the text and making comparisons between the various responses. From this open coding process, a number of key phrases, words and ideas emerged. I worked through these a number of times looking for similarities and how to group them. From this, central themes or story lines were identified. Once the major or central themes were found, sub themes which were present but less dominant were also identified. Lastly, unique themes, i.e. data which was not repeated, were identified.

2.10.1 Literature control

A literature control was used as a way of corroborating the analysis of the data. The responses of the staff and students were analysed and compared with the existing

literature. Morse and Field (1996:107) are of the opinion that the literature control confirms the usefulness of the findings. This study highlights the similarities and differences between the literature and the responses of the students regarding their own moral formation. The comparisons with the literature contribute to the trustworthiness of the research as they enter into a dialogue with the data.

2.10.2 Bracketing

Qualitative research seeks to approach the research with an open mind rather than starting with an explicit framework. This process of 'putting aside' is known as bracketing and is a way to manage the "tension between subjectivity and objectivity and the problems that arise when undertaking emotionally and ethically challenging research" (Rolls & Relf 2006:286).

Bracketing helped prevent presuppositions, theories and beliefs regarding moral formation that were necessary in order to form the research questions, from overly influencing the interpretation of the data. Bracketing allowed me to be open to what staff and students said and to hear their responses regarding what contributed to their moral formation.

2.11 Impression management

Students and staff might feel a need to impress and to give the 'right' answers. This phenomenon is known as 'impression management' and can be defined as the "process of adapting to situational demands to create a favourable impression in order to obtain a desired outcome" (Van Breda & Potgieter 2007:100). I have tried to reduce this possible distortion by using an appreciative inquiry approach.

The rating scale type questions, as mentioned above, are most susceptible to this 'social desirability bias', so they were balanced with questions that did not require rating scale or simple yes / no answers. Students could describe their moral formation in a number of ways and identify the qualities and virtues that they saw as characterizing the morally mature person. Students could identify any aspects of the course and of the whole educational experience as having influenced their moral formation. With such open-ended questions they could give their own interpretation.

Narrative research techniques were also used in this research. Some of the initial questions were followed by a narrative description of an incident that illustrated what was said. This gave a deeper insight into their understanding and avoided answers that were couched in 'correct' language.

2.12 Conclusions

The purpose of this chapter was to develop the theoretical framework for the research which informed the collection and analysis of the data. Firstly, the theoretical paradigm and the understanding of morality as grounded in relationship was developed. The importance of relationship in moral thought and action was based on the understanding of people as relational beings. Human flourishing and well-being was understood as coming through right relationship with God, self, others and all creation. Secondly, the theological, biblical, philosophical and experiential reasons for this relational understanding of morality were outlined. The theological foundations included the I-Thou concept as expounded by Buber and the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation. The biblical basis was grounded in the covenant community and the commandments to love God and neighbour. The philosophical foundations included the work of Gilligan with her focus on the relational self, and the concept of *ubuntu*. I explained that experience is a valid form of theology and recounted some stories that illustrated the power of relationship for moral decision making. Wisdom and relationship were linked as “wisdom ... is not only concerned with the interpretation of data, but understanding and experiencing the self, others, the mystery of God and the world” (Fiorenza 2001:3). These understandings and presuppositions influenced the research experience and the view of morality that informed the collection and interpretation of the data.

In the second part of the chapter, the institutions and the reasons for their choice were described. There was an explanation of the empirical research methodology and the reasons for using a qualitative research approach and an appreciative inquiry approach. The data collection process which included documents from the institutions as well as information from the questionnaires was explained. There was an indication of the structure and content of the questionnaires. Reasons were given for the thematic approach to data analysis and the use of open coding methods. Finally, I explained the steps taken to avoid possible discrepancies and distortions in the respondents' answers due to their desire to impress and give 'right' answers.

The questions in this thesis are not of a purely academic nature but relate to the practical improvement and outworking of moral formation in theological education. They address the question of how students can be formed into whole, healthy human beings who have a relationship with God and so with one another and all of creation. How can theological education better help them to become people who remain attached to the vine and bear fruit (Jn 15:5)?

Chapter Three: Ethics, morality and moral formation: reflecting, being, relating and doing

“Can you tell me, Socrates, whether virtue is acquired by teaching or by practice; or if neither by teaching nor practice, then whether it comes to man by nature, or in what other way?”

Socrates replied, “Perhaps virtue is a gift of the gods.” (Plato quoted in Verhey 2002:488)

3.1 Introduction

Chapter one described the purpose of this study and defined the key concepts used in the research. Morality was defined in terms of relationship with God, self, others and creation. These relationships were identified as key factors for human flourishing. In chapter two, a paradigmatic understanding of morality based on relationships was further developed. This paradigmatic understanding of morality came from biblical, theological and philosophical arguments which validated understandings from experience which were also incorporated. The relational understanding from the Bible was based on the co-equal, mutual loving relationships of a Trinitarian God and biblical imperatives to love God and one another. An indication of the nature of these relationships as based on love, justice and wisdom was developed from a philosophical as well as a biblical perspective.

In this chapter, the theological and biblical basis for a Christian understanding of the relational nature of morality is further developed through a review of ethical theory. Ethical theory is a vast and complex field that can be approached from a number of perspectives. For example, it could be approached from ecclesiastical perspectives such as that of the Catholic, the Reformed and the Anabaptist traditions. Another possibility is to use various movements or approaches to ethics. This might include a deontological approach such as found in the ethics of doing which focuses on rules, principles and duties or a virtue ethics approach which focuses on character or a teleological, consequence based approach. One could also trace the broad, historical shifts in ethical thinking, such as those identified by Conradie (2006:72-76). These included classical, communal or institutional ethics based on group loyalty, obedience to authority ethics, modern, individualistic forms of morality and responsibility ethics. Other theologians such as Beach and Niebuhr (1973), Huebner (2012) and Wogaman (1994) use a chronological, historical approach. While finding Conradie’s overview of ethical thinking useful for moral formation, I have chosen to use a chronological organisation for the following reasons:

1. It traces the ways in which relational issues have been part of ethics throughout the ages and how they contribute to a relational understanding of morality.
2. It allows for classical and contemporary theological voices.
3. It locates ethical thought and themes in their historical and social contexts which are relevant for moral formation and for a relational ethic.
4. It is simple and neat.

However, even within the historical framework, deciding which writers and movements to include is a highly selective process and inevitably a subjective one. I selected ethical theories on the basis of their contribution to an understanding of ethics and morality in terms of relationship and their guidelines for moral formation. My focus with regard to the theories discussed in this chapter is their contribution to a relational understanding of morality as outlined in chapter two. Moreover, I follow a Christian perspective; hence, philosophical and sociological ethical theory is included only to the extent to which it contributes to a relational understanding of ethics. For example, the virtue ethics of the ancient Greeks is included as it contributes to a relational understanding of ethics, and it is compared with the virtue ethics of Christian theologians. African ethics, though not strictly part of the historical framework, is included due to the centrality of relationship in African understandings of ethics and the fact that this research is in an African setting. In this regard, the influence of Christianity on traditional African ethics is discussed after a brief review of traditional African beliefs, including *ubuntu*.

The purpose of this research is to establish the most effective ways to promote moral formation in theological education and to make recommendations for theological education institutions in this regard. In order to do this, a clear model and understanding of morality including certain measurable elements is needed. This review of ethical theory contributes to a relational understanding of morality and helps to determine appropriate 'signposts' that are rooted in relationship and that can be used to evaluate moral formation in theological education institutions and to ascertain the extent to which the students' theological studies have contributed to their moral formation. The word 'signposts' is used deliberately as it indicates a direction rather than a static state of arrival. Moral formation is a journey not a destination.

A further task of this chapter is to examine the 'how' of moral formation. How does moral formation occur? How do people grow into the moral life? This involves pedagogical questions regarding moral formation and how it is nurtured. Thus after the historical synopsis of various ethical approaches, I move from ethical theory to moral formation. I describe and explain various modes of moral formation including that of spiritual formation

so that it is possible to research the extent to which they are used by the selected theological education institutions.

Due to these aims and the centrality of moral formation in this research, the ethical review has been kept brief. Many other ethicists such as Yoder (1927-1997), Ruether (1936) or Pope John Paul II (1920-2005) have made valuable contributions and could have been included. Even those who are included such as Aquinas are dealt with briefly, in terms of their contribution to a relational ethic. The survey that follows is short and does not do justice to ethical theory. Far more could be written regarding ethics but this would lead to excessive length and blur the focus of the research which is moral formation.

3.2 Ethical theory

3.2.1 A historical overview

The historical overview starts with the virtue ethics of the ancient Greeks as these classical writers recognised the importance of virtue, have influenced Christian scholars and theological ethics and continue to have an impact on contemporary society. In a Christian context, biblical ethics with its emphasis on right relationship with God, self and neighbour is crucial for a relational understanding of ethics and morality. The highly influential Saint Augustine and Thomas Aquinas are included as their insights add to a relational understanding of ethics. The Reformation cannot be left out from a historical review so a few insights from Luther are included, before moving to Enlightenment ethics which emphasised knowledge and the analysis of ethical dilemmas. Contributions from the 20th century include liberation theology with its emphasis on political and social relationships and feminist theology as it raises the important issue of equality and justice for women. A few theologians, namely Bonhoeffer, Barth and Fletcher, whose writings illustrate the role of relationship and context in ethical reflection are considered. The review ends with insights from MacIntyre and Hauerwas whose writings moved from the over emphasis on reason and returned to virtue ethics. This overview provides insight into why relationships are important in ethics, explores the kind of relationships that are moral and forms the framework for the criteria that indicate moral formation.

3.2.1.1 The virtue ethics of ancient Greece

The classical Greek philosophers Socrates (469-399 BCE), Plato (428-354 BCE) and Aristotle (384-322 BCE) developed a virtue ethics. Plato, in his classic work, *The Republic*, identified the virtues of reason, courage, justice and temperance which he described as cardinal virtues as they were the pivot on which moral life turns (Conradie 2006:57).

Aristotle, a pupil of Plato, saw virtue as the mean between excess and deficiency both of which he considered vices (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1139a-20).²⁶ He identified virtues such as courage, temperance, generosity, integrity, magnificence, justice and friendliness as exemplifying this balance (Huebner 2012:22). He distinguished between intellectual virtues, such as wisdom and understanding, and moral virtues such as temperance. Intellectual virtues were developed through knowledge and training, and moral virtues were developed through their habitual practice (*Nic. Ethics*, 1103b-15-20).²⁷ He explained that “we become just, by the practice of just actions, self-controlled by exercising self-control, and courageous by performing acts of courage” (*Nic. Ethics*, 1103b-30).²⁸

In his understanding, the acquisition of virtue enabled a person to move towards a goal or *telos* which he called *eudaimonia*. He associated *eudaimonia* with happiness and described it as “living well and doing well” (*Nic. Ethics*, 1095a15-20).²⁹ *Eudaimonia* incorporated the pursuit of one’s *telos*, and the acquisition of virtues led to *eudaimonia* (MacIntyre 1984:59).

Wright (2010:33-36; 239-4) compares the Christian vision of moral living with that of Aristotle. They both have a vision of character being formed through the pursuit of a right goal, the acquisition of virtues that will help attain that goal and the habitual practice of such virtues so that one automatically acts in the right way. However, there are also important differences. For Aristotle, human flourishing excluded all but the Athenian gentleman as the ideal, who could show virtues of magnanimity and munificence (MacIntyre 1984:182), and the virtuous ‘man’ was encouraged to take pride in his self-made character. The Christian vision is wider than that of human flourishing as Christians seek to become a new creation, reflecting the image of God which will also restore the world through God’s love and justice so that “God may be all in all” (1 Cor 15:28 KJV). The whole world, including the poor and the outcasts, is part of this vision. Moreover, the virtues that Jesus and his followers emphasised differed from those of Aristotle. They recognised that virtues such as love, forgiveness and humility were needed to reach this goal. They taught that it is through relationship with God and by the power of the Holy Spirit that people are empowered to practise the virtues, live a holy life and act in the right way. For Christians, the virtues are not primarily for themselves, for self-actualisation, although this may happen. Rather they are for God, for others and to seek first the kingdom of God (Mt 6:33). This understanding of virtue shifts away from good works in the

²⁶ This can also be referenced as (Arist. *NE* VI.1, 1139a20, trans. Ostwald)

²⁷ (Arist. *NE* II.1, 1103b15-20).

²⁸ (Arist. *NE* II.1, 1103b-30).

²⁹ (Arist. *NE* I.4, 1095a15-20).

sense of moral living and keeping moral rules to good works in the sense of doing things which will bring God's wisdom and glory into the world (Wright 2010:71).

This Christian vision is now explored, starting with its Old Testament roots. Inherent in this vision is the importance of relationship.

3.2.1.2 Biblical ethics: Old and New Testament

Biblical ethics is a vast, complex discipline. The Bible spans a lengthy timeframe, is written by different authors and contains different genres of writing such as history, stories, teachings, commandments, poetry, proverbs and letters. This variety does not make for one theme or a unified narrative let alone a single ethical thrust (Huebner 2012:23). While biblical texts are used to provide scriptural links, lengthy exegesis is inappropriate as this research is concerned with practical issues of ministerial formation rather than biblical studies. Inevitably, one must make choices regarding what to include in a brief survey. I have chosen biblical themes and insights that highlight the centrality of relationship.³⁰

A central motif of the Old Testament is relationship with God. As long as Adam and Eve remained in relationship with God, they and all creation were in harmony and life was 'good'. This relationship was broken (Gn 3), and the subsequent stories of Cain and Abel (Gn 4), the flood (Gn 7) and the Tower of Babel (Gn 11) bear out the disastrous consequences of broken relationship with God.

Central to the story of the people of Israel is their relationship with God. They understood themselves as a covenant people and recalled the covenant between God and Abraham (Gn 17). In the Exodus story, they remembered how God rescued them from Egypt and entered into a covenant law with them at Sinai, promising a land filled with milk and honey (Ex 19:3-8; 20:1-17). God invited them into a covenant relationship, not as slaves but as firstborn sons (Ex 4:22-23) redeemed by Yahweh (Anderson 1966:65). Out of gratitude, the Israelites would keep God's commandments, knowing that if they obeyed, then God would be with them. Their covenant relationship with God, who liberated them from slavery, created their moral identity and was the basis for the relationships within the community of Israel. The commandments start with love of God and then give guidance regarding relationships within the community. In contrast to the surrounding nations, Israel is called to care for the poor (Lv 19:9-10; 15; Lv 25).

The prophets' task was to remind the Israelites to live in fellowship with God, to do what is just and to love kindness (Mi 6:8). Right relationship with others flows from right

³⁰ The biblical texts are used as illustrative of the relationship themes that run throughout the Bible, not as proof texts.

relationship with God. The Israelites are to shun oppression, protect the weak and do what is right (Jr 22:3; Ezk 45:9). The heart of biblical thought mandates efforts to correct economic and social injustices (Mott 1982:ix). God is offended by the indifference of the rich to the poor and the inequalities between them (Am 8:4-6) and by those who enrich themselves at the expense of the poor, seizing their fields and houses (Mi 2:2). The environment too is included in these right relationships as for example the instruction to allow the land to lie fallow (Lv 25:4-5).

Today the prophetic tradition still inspires the call for justice, an end to oppression and care for the vulnerable. Relationship with God means acting on a structural as well as a personal level to promote justice and shalom. The spiritual and the moral are inextricably linked.

The New Testament writings are permeated with the redeeming love of God. God's love for the world was so great that God came into the world as a human being so that people might be restored to relationship with God (Jn 3:16).

Jesus saw his teaching as a fulfilment of the law rather than a break from the law (Mt 5:17-18). Jesus built on the Ten Commandments, encouraging inner, relational adherence to them as it is what comes from within a person that determines a person's actions (Mt 12:33-35). Jesus' public ministry begins with reading from the scroll of Isaiah 61 (Lk 4:18-19). Jesus continues the prophetic tradition of justice and demonstrates compassion for those in need (Mott 1982:77). Jesus extends the covenant to include both Jew and Gentile as seen in his interaction with the Samaritan woman (Jn 4:7-30), his teaching in parables such as the great feast (Lk 14:15-24) and the tenants in the vineyard (Mt 21:33-46) and his command to love enemies (Mt 5:44). Jesus included women among his disciples (Lk 8:2-3), challenged women's exclusion from learning through his affirmation of Mary (Lk 10:42), opposed cultural taboos against women (Lk 8:43-48) and entrusted women with the message of his resurrection (Mt 28:1-10). Paul echoes this in Galatians (3:28) saying that there is neither Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free, male nor female.

Jesus challenged injustice. He criticised the exploitation of widows (Mk 12:38-40), the thievery of the temple money changers (Mt 21:12-13) and the Pharisees who placed heavy loads on people (Mt 23:4). Jesus' followers were to show their love of God in care for those in need (Mt 25:31-46). Love of God, self and others is inseparable and central to Jesus' teaching (Lk 10:26-28; Jn 13:34) and affirmed by Paul (Gl 5:14).

Discipleship has implications for the way people live and involves following the teaching of Jesus and living out the qualities and virtues that he embodied. It means taking up the cross, denying oneself and following Christ (Mk 8:34). As one loses one's life, one finds life and who one truly is. For Christians, it is the Holy Spirit who enables us to become truly human, what we already are in Christ, rather than what we seek to become in our own strength.

The theme of relationship with God is central in the writing of Paul. Character starts with knowledge of God and a renewing of the mind which comes from wisdom and spiritual understanding (Rm 12:2; Col 3:10). Character anticipates the promised future (Col 3:1) with the risen Christ but also develops in the present as people get rid of old selfish desires (Col 3:8) and instead put on their new being which is the image of God (Col 3:10). Paul identified virtues which he called 'fruit of the Spirit' that Christians should seek to cultivate. These are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control (Gl 5:22). He identifies love as the greatest of these (1 Cor 13:13). These virtues need to become habits of heart, mind and living action (Wright 2010:169).

Paul regards moral self-knowledge or conscience as a vital element in the formation of moral character. Conscience can be defined as "a personal, self-conscious activity integrating reason, emotion and will in self-committed decisions about right and wrong, good and evil" (Callahan 1991:14). Similarly, Paul understands conscience as an inner voice within oneself assessing one's actions in the light of God's wisdom and grace (2 Cor 1:12; Heb 13:18). When on trial, Paul says that he has a clear conscience before God (Ac 23:1; 24:16; 2 Tm 1:3). Conscience can however be weak (1 Cor 8:7b) or distorted (2 Cor 4:2; 5:11-15) or rejected (1 Tm 1:18-19). The workings of conscience and what makes for a good conscience are complex. The Second Vatican Council understood conscience as people's most secret core and their sanctuary with laws being inscribed in our hearts by God. Through loyalty to a good conscience, Christians are joined to others in the search for truth and the right solution to moral problems in the life of the individual and in social relationships. The more correct a conscience is, the more people will conform to good, objective standards of conduct. Conscience can go astray through ignorance and so a person needs to take the trouble to find what is true and good (Egan 2010:59).

A biblical ethic is based on relationship with God, finding one's true self in Christ and so living in love with others and seeking justice in society. This brief review does not exhaust the ways in which relationship is present in the Bible. Nevertheless, it serves to illustrate the centrality of relationship to which later theologians returned. One such is Augustine,

who while a man of his time and unable to grasp the concept of equality between men and women, yet contributed to a relational understanding of ethics, which is still influential today.

3.2.1.3 Early Christian theological ethics – Augustine

Following the biblical emphasis on love, Augustine (354-430), one of the major figures in the history of Christianity, is credited with saying, “Love God and do what you want” (Beach & Niebuhr 1973:108). People are recognised as Jesus’ disciples primarily by their love (Jn 13:35). Augustine recognised this and affirmed the importance of love for relationships. He regarded love as the greatest of all the virtues leading to “a more excellent way” (Augustine 13.VII.8).³¹ For Augustine, all the virtues should be grounded in love for God, otherwise they become corrupted and cultivated for the wrong reasons such as pleasure, money or honour (Conradie 2006:59). Charry (1997:124) warns against this grounding of the virtues in loving God rather than in properly ordered social and personal relationships, fearing it might foster a privatised relationship with God that could lead to relationships of exploitation of the oppressed. This danger surfaces in some of Augustine’s writings concerning women. For example, he wrote that rational action should be subordinated to the “higher excellence of intelligence as the woman is subordinate to the man” (Augustine 13.XXXIV.49). Despite these criticisms, Augustine’s emphasis on the centrality of love affirmed the importance of loving relationships, especially relationship with God, for moral living. In his *Confessions*, he suggested that our hearts are restless, until they repose in God (Augustine 1.1.1). Augustine (13.XXXVII.61) recognised that love of God must also lead to love of neighbour. Living virtuously, in relationship with others is made possible by being in a loving relationship with God. “For when there is a question as to whether a man [sic] is good, one does not ask what he believes or hopes but what he loves” (Beach & Niebuhr 1973:108).

Concurring with Augustine’s belief that knowing and loving God formed the basis for human dignity, excellence and flourishing this research uses loving relationships with God, self and others as a basis for moral living.

3.2.1.4 Middle Ages – Aquinas

The great medieval theologian Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) saw the work of Aristotle as complementary to Christian theology. The cardinal virtues which he identified, namely

³¹ *Confessions and Enchiridion* viewed 30/3/2015, from <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/augustine/confessions.pdf>

prudence, justice, courage (fortitude) and temperance were similar to those of Aristotle, but he added the specific Christian virtues of faith, hope and love (*ST I*, q 47, 170).

Aquinas integrated the intellectual virtues such as wisdom and understanding with the virtue of love, the greatest of all the virtues and with moral virtues such as temperance, self-control and justice (Kourie and Kretzschmar 2000:43). Understanding and love are gifts of the Holy Spirit, and so relationship with God is important. Understanding and love, faith and reason are united and together lead to love of God, neighbour and self (*ST II-II*, q 23, 25, 28, 29). It is through the cultivation of these virtues that good relationships are possible and laws can work for the general good of the community (*ST I-II*, q 90).

Using their God given reason, humans can discern moral principles. Aquinas understood this act of intellect as conscience (*ST I*, q79). A conscience, properly formed and informed through the Holy Spirit, is one's deepest connection with God (Egan 2010:63). Aquinas recognised the importance of being true to one's conscience even at the risk of excommunication (Egan 2010:59). Relationship with God and being true to one's self, that is, to one's conscience, are vital.

3.2.1.5 The Protestant Reformation

The emphasis of the reformers such as Luther and Calvin on grace was basic to the Christian ethics of the Reformation, the primary precept being that "good works do not make a good man [sic], but a good man does good works" (in Wogaman 1994:110). Luther, like Paul, insisted on freedom from enslavement to external precepts and laws while concurrently recognising that "those who are justified by faith will respond by gratefully and lovingly fulfilling the true intent of the law" (:111). In this environment which was ripe for questioning the abuse of religious practices such as indulgences and for challenging the authority of the Church, the reformers argued that obedience to the law was the result of a relationship with God. People who love God deeply and sincerely will freely choose obedience to the law. The reaction of Luther to the idea of earning salvation through 'good works' rather than as a free gift of grace contributed to a decline of emphasis on virtue ethics in philosophy and even in some Protestant churches as virtue came to be associated with 'earning' salvation.

3.2.1.6 The Enlightenment

With the Enlightenment, the link between religion and morality declined. Religious understanding of the world was replaced by natural laws, most comprehensively defined by Newton. A new framework that relied on observation, reason and the modern concept

of knowledge replaced the traditional worldview (Newbigin 1986:24). This rise in scientific thought was accompanied by philosophical thinking that relied on reason rather than revelation. Knowledge, based on reason and empirical facts was emphasised by writers such as Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) rather than faith and the development of character.

Kant developed a deontological ethic based on logic, norms, duties and right action. Kant set forth what he called the universal categorical imperative meaning that moral maxims must be universal, rational and applicable to all. Kant (1959:39) summed this up as, “Always act so as to treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of others as an end, and not as a means only.”

Later, others such as Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill developed a utilitarian ethic based on the ancient philosophy of hedonism, but they understood the pleasure principle primarily in social not individual terms (Wogaman 1994:164). This utilitarian approach based on the maximisation of pleasure and minimisation of pain sought to bring ‘the greatest good for the greatest number’. Even though the gap between faith and reason increased and relationship with God waned in importance for moral action, this philosophical approach to ethics is still used in many theological education institutions today.

3.2.1.7 The 20th century

In the 20th century, a variety of developments led to a new phase where many people realised that an ethic of autonomy, individual choice and personal conviction was insufficient to deal with complex modern problems. Conradie (2010:76) terms the theories that developed from this shift in thinking, responsibility theories. These theories attempt to combine individual as well as communal decision making. The focus of moral formation shifted from the rational individual to the development of virtues and the importance of communities, justice and liberation.

3.2.1.7.1 Liberation theology

Liberation theology comprises many different strands. In this short overview, a few elements that highlight the social dimensions of a relational ethic and the importance of justice in the political and economic realm are discussed. Liberation theology emphasises the social, political and economic dimensions of Christian faith affirming that morality involves justice and an end to oppression and exploitation as well as personal righteousness.

Liberation theologians challenge all structures that lead to oppression and domination. Some, such as Joza Miguez Bonino (1976), Leonardo Boff (1981) and Gustavo Gutiérrez, have used a Marxist analysis to highlight the gap between the rich and the poor, but this does not mean that they reject Christian doctrines. Rather they hold the earthly and physical aspects of faith and salvation together with the spiritual and eternal. Sin is both personal and social, and anything that oppresses people stands in opposition to God's love and justice.

Liberation theologians emphasise God's concern for the poor and for those who are exploited and suffering. "The hope of God, like the hope of the marginalised, is the re-creation of proper relationships whereby all people can live full, abundant lives, able to be all the God has called them to be, free from the societal forces (racism, classism, sexism and heterosexism) that foster dehumanising conditions (De La Torre 2014:5). This option for the poor and marginalised is based on the Exodus story, the prophetic tradition and the life and teaching of Jesus.

While liberation theology rose primarily as a response to economic oppression, black theology addressed the issue of racial oppression. Martin Luther King and James Cone are names associated with black theology in America while Allan Boesak was particularly influential in South Africa. Proponents of black theology affirm the dignity of all and condemn oppression based on skin colour. Feminist theology, another form of liberation theology, also affirms the dignity of all and condemns anything that diminishes the full humanity of women.

3.2.1.7.2 Feminist ethics

"Feminist ethics contributes to a relational understanding of morality as it eschews the vision of the isolated moral agent so prized by the dominant view of man in Western culture and rejects the ideal of non-relational autonomy as deficiently human" (Johnson 1992:68).

Feminist ethics affirms that women are "fully human and are to be valued as such" (Johnson 1992:67). This means that women's well-being along with everything they cherish should be promoted (:67). Men and women are equal, and anything that diminishes the value of women is not of God. At times, this means that the language used for God should include female roles and experiences and our images of God should be "transformative pointing us back to our authentic potential and forward to new redeemed possibilities" (Ruether 1983:69).

Feminist theologians often make a connection between the domination of women and nature as patriarchal culture defines women as being closer to nature. Women are identified with body, earth, sex, the flesh and weakness vis a vis men who are identified with spirit, mind and sovereign power over both women and nature as the property of the ruling class (Ruether 1996:3). Religion is used to reinforce patterns of domination, giving them divine sanction. God is imaged as “supreme deified patriarchal male to the world that he created and rules” (Ruether 1996:3). Many feminist theologians have taken up this connection of women and nature to resist the violence done to nature and themselves (Gebara 1996; McFague 1987; Phiri 1996; Ruether 1996).

3.2.1.7.3 A selection of 20th century theologians

Liberation theologies rose in the context of oppression and exploitation. Other 20th century theologies have also grappled with the challenge of dealing with imperfect reality and evil systems. This struggle can be seen, for example, in the Christian realism of Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971) and in the responsible freedom ethics of Bonhoeffer (1955). Niebuhr (1932) highlighted the conflict between individual and social morality in his classic book, *Moral man and immoral society*.

Bonhoeffer sought to live out his Christian convictions and weigh up the conflicting responsibilities that confronted him in the face of a totalitarian political force that was carrying out systematic genocide. In his book *The Cost of Discipleship*, he explains that discipleship has consequences for the way one lives. He started the confessing church which opposed the injustices of the Nazi regime and moved away from conformity to and collaboration with the authorities to serving all peoples and upholding justice. He emphasised the role of the community in moral formation and the need for ‘costly grace’ which calls us to follow Jesus, to give up all and which gives true life (Bonhoeffer 1959:37).

After the Second World War, in a very different context, Fletcher (1966), well known for his situation ethics as outlined in his book of the same title, addressed the permissive society of the time with a relational ethic based on love. He attempts to walk a path between legalism and antinomianism by positing love as a norm to be applied contextually in situations calling for ethical action. There are a number of criticisms of his method. For example, James Gustafson (1978:43) accuses Fletcher of an insufficient use of critical tools as “loving, liberating and humanizing are far too elastic to provide clarity in judging benefits and harms.” McClendon (1990:5) agrees with Gustafson that Fletcher’s ethic has no content beyond doing the loving thing and comments disparagingly that it appears that

the situation or context of an ethical choice provides the most important input for the decision. Hauerwas (1975:5) concurs that there is no continuity of the self, responding lovingly in different situations since the content of love varies. Using love as a guiding norm fails to avoid the dangers of human rationalisations and self-justification. Fletcher's ethic runs the danger of disregarding the need for knowledge of what is right, faith in God to help one do what is right and the development of character.

Others, such as Lehman (1963) and Wogaman (1976) felt uncomfortable with such a loose interpretation of the law of love and sought 'axioms' or 'moral presumptions' based on the Bible and church teaching that should be followed unless there are overwhelming reasons to the contrary. In *Ethics in a Christian Context*, Lehman (1963) asserts that the New Testament ethical rules are normative for the Christian and cannot be ignored or violated. Wogaman (1976) developed some basic moral presumptions, both positive and negative, which serve as guidelines in ethical decision making. Barth (1886-1968), one of the most influential theologians of the 20th century, contributes to a relational ethic through his teaching regarding encounter with God. Moral action comes through obedience to the command of God and stems from one's relationship with God. Obedience is not an attempt to win God's approval but a response to God's love. For Barth, ethics is defined by God's grace as shown through Jesus, as God enters into relationship with humanity (1957:509). The command of God is to be, by grace, what God has called us to be. The following section focuses on some theologians who emphasised the importance of virtue in ethics and the development of character.

3.2.1.8 A return to virtue

A renewed interest in the virtue ethics of the classical Greeks was stimulated by philosophical writers such as Alisdair MacIntyre in his book *After Virtue* (1984). Christian writers too recognised the importance of community and the role of virtue in moral formation. For example, Wright recalling Paul's encouragement to the early Christians "put on the new self" (Col 3:10) and to be clothed with the life of Christ (Gl 3:27) identifies the importance of virtue. They were to develop communal virtues of mutual kindness, truth-telling, forgiveness, acceptance across traditional barriers of race, gender, culture and class. "To 'put on' these virtues is a matter of consciously deciding, again and again, to do certain things in certain ways, to create patterns of memory and imagination deep within the psyche, so that moral living becomes habitual" (Wright 2010:145).

Stanley Hauerwas, who wrote extensively on the role of the community, argues that moral decision making cannot be separated from the character, convictions and worldview of the

moral agent which are acquired through the community to which the moral agent belongs. It is in relation to others in the community of faith that people learn to be God's disciples (Hauerwas 1983:28). Neville Richardson (1994:89), a South African theologian, also emphasises the role of community and affirms that character and community go hand in hand. He argues that it is the character of people as developed through communities that influences ethical decision making rather than abstract ethical theories of right and wrong (:91). This resonates with the African perspective of the formative nature of the community and that it is through others (*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*) that we discover our humanity. This then leads to a further examination of the contribution of African ethics to a relational ethic.

3.2.2 African ethical voices

The enormous scope of African ethics and the variety of ethical trends and issues in Africa entails a far more in-depth study than space allows in this research. What follows is a brief sketch of some of the defining features of African ethics as they concern relationship. Some traditional African ethical voices particularly from Southern Africa and the contribution of the concept of *ubuntu* to the understanding of morality and moral formation are explored. Christian African ethics are briefly included as they are taught in the selected theological institutions. As is seen in the next chapter, the relational model of moral formation developed in this study draws heavily on both Christian and African ethics. As the work of several African and especially South African theologians is drawn on in chapter four, only a few main themes within African ethics are noted in the following section.

3.2.2.1 Traditional African ethics

Because African ethics involved an oral tradition passed on in stories, songs, proverbs, rituals, kinship relations and festivals, there tend to be various strands of African ethics (Kunhiyop 2008:7-26). There is no single African ethical voice, but there are commonalities in traditional African morality (Kasenene in Villa Vicencio & De Gruchy 1994:138). These commonalities arise from an understanding of the world as an interconnected whole where ethics is not a separate sphere disconnected from the rest of life (Murove 2009:28). In some strands of African ethics, belief in God is emphasised (Mbiti 1969:1-5, 29-74), while others emphasise ethics in relation to the community and the ancestors. However, religion permeates the whole of life including ethics (Mbiti in Gathogo 2008:39). African ethics is holistic and sees things in totality as opposed to dualistic thinking that separates and polarises into sacred and secular, physical and spiritual, above

and below. This includes relatedness between humanity and nature. In African ethics, there is a symbiotic relationship between people and the environment (Richardson 2009b:44, 62). Ethical conduct is based on a relational network with the goal being life itself (Bujo 2001:2).

Bujo (2001:1) and Murove (2009:29) both understand the idea of community to be the starting point for traditional African ethics. The individual is moulded by the community, and people become who they are because of the community. Senghor affirms that in the African concept of community, the individual has dignity and value and that traditional African society was based on both the community and the individual person. He asserts that “because society was founded on dialogue and reciprocity the group had priority over the individual without crushing him [or her], but allowing him [or her] to blossom as a person” (quoted in Nicolson 2008:28). This involved a dynamic interplay between personal growth and the good of the community. This was the ideal, but in modern society, the reality is less rosy. The perceived good of a section of the community or greed and self-entitlement may take precedence over the good of the individual. Often, those in positions of power exploit the weak and enrich themselves rather than caring for those in need and seeing to the good of all.³² However, the understanding of life as an interrelated whole, despite the flaws in practice, forms the basis for the emphasis on relationships and the concept of *ubuntu* which is now explored further.

3.2.2.2 Ubuntu

Chapter one introduced the concept of *ubuntu* which can be defined as “an internal state of being or the very essence of being human” (Chikanda in Murove 2009:64). Biko’s description of *ubuntu* consciousness as “a deliberate act of God to make us a community of brothers and sisters jointly involved in the quest for a composite answer to varied problems of life” (in Murove 2009:73) incorporates the moral concerns for mutuality between men and women and social issues which affirms the need to be in relationship with one another and God. Such *ubuntu* consciousness formed part of black theology and gave impetus to the fight against apartheid.

Munyaka and Motlhabi believe that *ubuntu* is realised in deeds of kindness, compassion, caring, sharing, solidarity and sacrifice (in Murove 2009:74). Desmond Tutu describes someone who has *ubuntu* as being hospitable, generous, caring and compassionate (N. Tutu 1989:69, 1999:31). Such a person is able to affirm others as she or he has a proper

³² One example, from the South African context is that of President Jacob Zuma who has been accused of enriching himself at the expense of the poor with the R246 million upgrade to his Nkandla homestead (Nkandla Report, City Press 19/3/2014).

self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole (1999:31). This sense of belonging is important for a relational ethic. Shutte (2001:80) divides the moral virtues that make up *ubuntu* into those that concern relationship with others and those that characterise relationship with self. With regard to self, he identifies integrity and wholeness of character and spirit in regard to one's judgements, decisions and feelings, and with regard to others, there is respect, loyalty, courtesy, tolerance, patience, generosity, hospitality and readiness to cooperate.

Complementary to this is the concept of *Seriti* that denotes the dignity of people which is like an aura. It is the energy that connects with others and with the external world. To quote Setiloane (in Nicolson 2008:29) "*Seriti* is not neutral. It promotes and participates in relationship with the external world, human, animal, animate, inanimate, and even spiritual." These concepts affirm the understanding of morality in terms of relationship – with self, others and the external world which includes the spirit world and God (see also Murove in Prozesky 2003:9).

Ubuntu regards people as family who are expected to be with one another especially during times of duress. People should contribute to the needs of others and the good of society. This care for others reflects the centrality of relationship in African ethics and includes individuals, Christian communities, the wider society and all of creation (Kumalo 2005:62).

This brief exposition of *ubuntu* would not be complete without some further comment on the breakdown of the practice of *ubuntu* especially in the urban settings of the theological institutions that were researched. Often, there is a romanticising of *ubuntu* with a falsely selective view of rural village life that remembers the good and disregards witchcraft, distrust and oppressive fear (Richardson 2009b:55). The noble sacrifices and common struggle against apartheid are remembered as being in the spirit of *ubuntu*. In stark contrast to this idealised, sacrificial practice of *ubuntu* are the harsh realities of unemployment, poverty, corruption, crime and violence in South Africa today. Nepotism, embezzlement and misappropriation of funds allocated to the upliftment of communities, is rife³³ Such greed, materialism, individualism and violence contradict the *ubuntu* philosophy of inclusivity and well-being of the whole community. Tribalism is another problem identified by Gathogo (2008:47) as one of the biggest threats to the well-being of community as *ubuntu* comes to be seen as caring for one's own people rather than all people.

³³ Hamill, J., viewed 1/8/2014, from www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/111114/south-africas-deepening-corruption-crisis

3.2.2.3 Christian African ethical voices

Africa is a vast continent with many differing Christian ethical voices. Richardson (2009b:130) identifies three approaches to Christian ethics in Africa. The first approach appreciates and incorporates traditional African culture and practices into Christianity. Examples of people who have followed such an approach are Bénézet Bujo, Kwesi Dickson and John Mbiti. The second approach focuses on new trends in Western ethics in general and in Christian ethics in particular. These new trends have a communal, narrative based understanding of Christian ethics and have been elucidated by theologians such as Hauerwas, Taylor and Richardson. Their acknowledgement of the role of the community, stories, a communally based understanding of personal identity and the role of ritual and of the 'saints' has much in common with traditional African ethics (:144-152). The third approach is found in the interaction between the African Independent churches and Christianity which goes beyond the scope of this research.

Besides these three approaches, there are some African theologians such as Kunhiyop (2008) who follow traditional church teaching and use a fairly fundamentalist biblical approach to Christian ethics. Such a fundamental and literal approach to the Bible tends to lead to the condemnation of practices such as homosexuality as unbiblical and endorses the submission of women to their husbands. Such a stance is often based on a literal interpretation of a few selected Bible verses, and it presents problems for a relational ethic based on mutuality and equality. Despite this, many African women are finding their own voices, addressing the unequal burdens placed on women and recognising the need to love themselves as well as loving and serving others (Oduyoye 2002:178).

Christianity has been criticised for undermining traditional African practices and beliefs. This can be seen, for example, in the failure of many missionaries to understand African marriage customs and their condemnation of polygamy. However, it is also recognised that the Christian story, when contextualised can lead to individual, ecclesial and social transformation (Kumalo 2005:59).

Christian ethics as influenced by the Enlightenment philosophy has been presented in an individualistic manner with an emphasis on independent decision making by individuals on the basis of what is right for him or her rather than what is right for the community. The basis of such ethics was an understanding of society as made up of rational human beings and which put actions above persons and right over good (Richardson 2009a:143). Yet, there is also much synergy between African ethics and Christian ethics. For example, the holism in African thought is similar to Paul's understanding in Romans 8:21 that the whole

of creation groans as it waits for salvation and the glorious liberty of the children of God (Richardson 2009b:45). Another example of synergy can be found in the link between the African emphasis on the good of the community without sacrificing the individual and the Christian understanding of the Body of Christ which is made up of individual parts all working together for the good of the whole Body (1 Cor 12:27).

3.2.3 Conclusions – drawing it all together

The views regarding ethics and morality as traced in this short synopsis contribute to a relational understanding of ethics as inherent in human flourishing and the well-being of all creation. Through the ages, despite the different contexts, there are common themes that support a relational understanding of morality. One such theme that comes through strongly is that of love. Love is not an abstract quality but exists in relationship. Love is central to the nature of God and the life and teaching of Jesus and considered as the greatest of all virtues (1 Cor 13:13). Theologians as diverse as Augustine and Fletcher follow this emphasis on love.

A second theme is the centrality of relationship with God. Augustine, Aquinas, Luther and Barth, among others, emphasise relationship with God as the starting point for morality. If relationship with God is right, then right relationships with self, others and creation follow. Being renewed in the image of God (Col 3:10) demands relationships of mutual respect regardless of race, class, culture, creed, gender or sexual orientation as all are created in the image of God and of equal value. Love incorporates justice both in the personal and the social sphere, as seen in the prophetic tradition and the teaching of Jesus and as affirmed by liberation theologians among others. It also includes justice and care for the environment.

Knowing or wisdom is another thread that weaves into a relational ethic. The importance of reason, knowledge and wisdom in ethical decision making is recognised because love without these can be misdirected. Aquinas pioneered this synthesis between faith and reason. Character or being is another theme. In order to develop and enjoy good, loving relationships, one needs to acquire and practice virtues that become habits and the core or inner 'being' of a person. Character makes us who we are, and the way in which we relate and what we do cannot be separated from who we are. As Ryan (2006:35) says, "It is not possible to separate the acting person from the actions they perform."

Acquiring knowledge and virtues occurs in the context of community, and for Christians, in the context of the Church. This is another theme that was recognised by thinkers as far apart as the ancient Greek philosophers, African philosophers, Aquinas and more recently

MacIntyre and Hauerwas. Aristotle's virtue of *eudaimonia* incorporated right relationship with the community. Paul exhorts the early Christians to meet together regularly in fellowship, prayer and mutual Christian support (Phlp 2:1-5; Eph 4:2-4). Relationship is inherent in African ethics. In the philosophy of *ubuntu*, people's humanness comes through relationship with others in community. The acknowledgement of Hauerwas and Richardson regarding the importance of the community in the development of virtues and the forming of Christian disciples reflects some of this African emphasis on relationship and community.

There is a large degree of consensus regarding virtues. This agreement often comes more clearly in the rejection of negative qualities. Hatred, revenge and jealousy, for instance, are not qualities to be nurtured. Instead reason, wisdom, courage, justice, temperance, love, compassion and self-control all feature strongly as virtues to be cultivated. Paul uses this distinction as he urges the Colossians to put to death the old self with its selfish desires and instead to put on the new being which God is renewing in His own image (Col 3:1-17).

Relationships with God, others in the Church and society as well as with the environment are all central to Christian ethics. A combination of knowledge and the nurture of virtues are required to form good relationships and to living as a disciple of Christ. Knowing, being and doing work together in a relational ethic as will be explained further in the model of morality described below.

3.3 A relational model of morality

The above discussion has shown that morality is essentially relational. We are embedded in relationships, and it is in loving and being loved that we become fully human. In this research, moral formation is considered in terms of relationship with God, with self, with others and with creation. These relationships are explored in the context of theological education and the question as to how moral people are formed is addressed.

Kretzschmar (2012:146-148) outlines a fourfold Christian way of life in which believers can be discipled. She combines the elements of knowing (cognitive aspects), being (character formation), relating (right relationships) and doing (right actions). There is an ongoing, mutual interaction between these elements where all are essential for moral formation. The relationship between these elements can be represented thus.

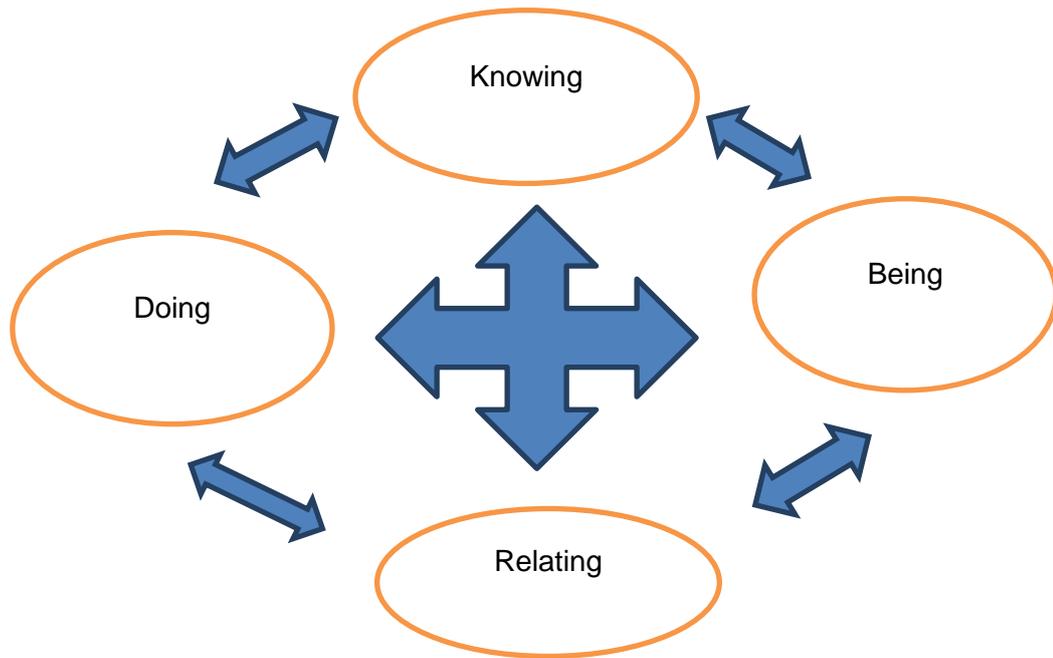


Figure 3.1 Elements of the Christian life.

(Kretzschmar 2012:147)

This model concerns discipleship and links the importance of knowing, being and doing for relationship.³⁴ I have developed a model that places greater emphasis on relationship while incorporating the importance of knowing, being and doing. In my relational model of ethics, five categories of relationship are considered, namely, relationship with God, with self, with others in the Church, with others in society and with creation. My relational model draws extensively on Christian ethics and an African world view, thus integrating a relational and communal focus. These relationships and the role of knowing, being and doing are shown below in the diagrammatic representation of a relational model of ethics.

³⁴ A later version of this model develops these areas of knowing, being, doing and relating to include goals, obstacles and means, with God's grace and human volition at the core of the model (Kretzschmar 2015:4).

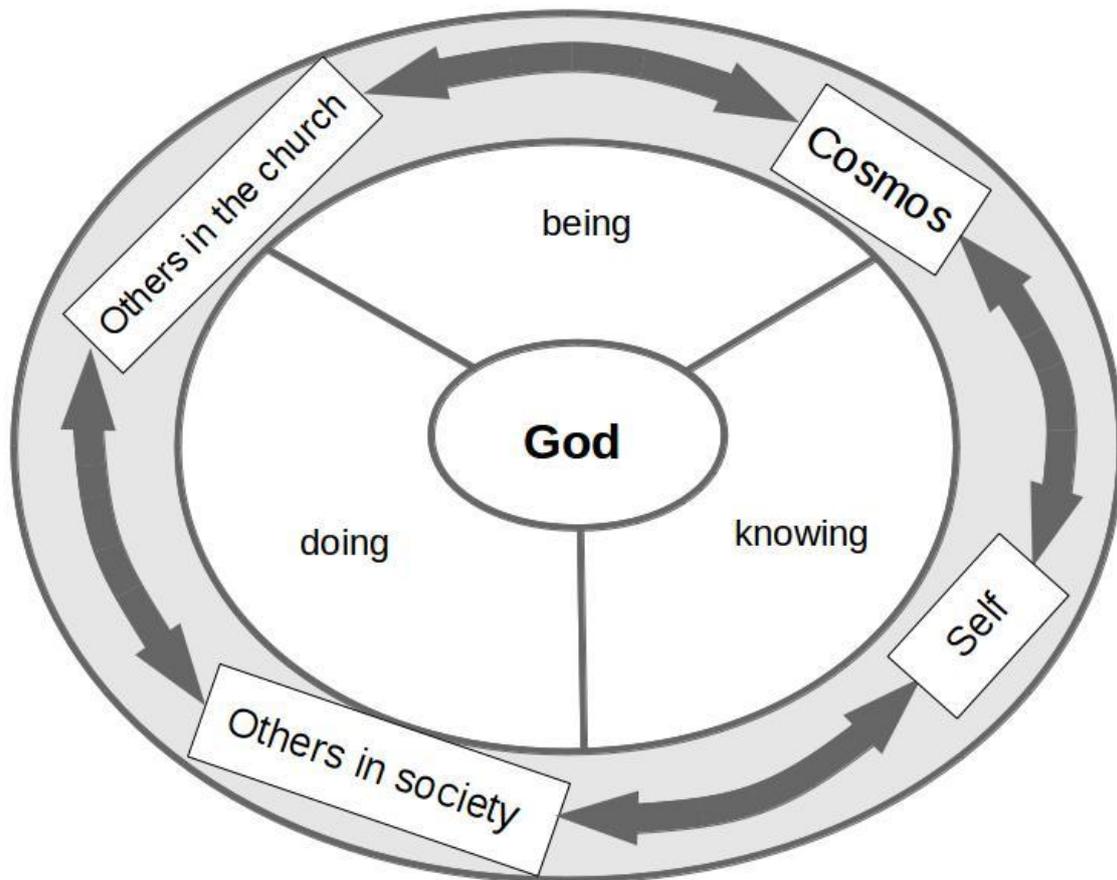


Figure 3.2
A relational model of ethics

The centre of all relationships is God, and so this relationship is represented by the inner oval. It is in relationship with God that we find ourselves. As we open ourselves to God's grace and love, there is healing in our all our relationships (Ahlers et al. 1996:71). As we are transformed by the renewing of our mind (Rm 12:2) and put on the new self (Col 3:10), we come to reflect the divine image (Col 3:10).

Radiating from the core circle that represents relationship with God are the elements of knowing, being and doing which, while distinct from one another, work together to form moral relationships. A person of good character, who knows what is right, will do good acts. For example, a relationship of integrity and truth requires knowledge of the truth and the will and habit of being honest and the skill and ability to tell the truth. In the Christian context, knowledge comes from the study and reflection on Christian norms and principles which touch every aspect of life. Paul explains to the Colossians that Christian living starts with knowledge of God that comes from wisdom and spiritual understanding (Col 3:10). "This involves a rigorous, honest, intellectual journey of self-awareness and critique"

(Kretzschmar 2007:29). But knowledge on its own is not enough. Honest, intellectual seeking should lead beyond knowledge to practical wisdom that is shaped by experience and discernment in the light of the mystery of God (Fiorenza 2001:3). Jesus recognised the importance of being and doing as well as knowing in his teaching. His disciples will be recognised by what they do (Jn 13:35). Evil intentions come from the heart (Mk 7:21). Christian virtues become part of one's being through their habitual practice, and this leads to moral action.

Knowing, being and doing together influence our relationships. The outer oval depicts the interaction and relationship between self, others in the church, others in society and the cosmos. These relationships are integrated and influence one another. As we grow in wisdom and understanding and become more as God created us to be, our relationships with others are enriched. We gain courage and wisdom to engage as Christian witnesses in society despite the cost as we live out our faith. Following in the prophetic tradition, we may need to critique society, speak out against injustice and call on leaders to act justly, to care for the poor and vulnerable and to shun corruption. This prophetic role extends to the environment as we are to care for and protect the environment.

An understanding of morality that is grounded in relationship avoids defining morality in a narrow, static, authoritarian and moralistic manner. The notion of blind obedience runs contrary to Christian living in response to a dynamic relationship with God. Instead, one should follow one's conscience as Paul encourages the Galatians to do (Gl 5:1). However, this God given freedom is seen in the light of Jesus' teaching regarding the law. He explains that he has not come to abolish the law and the prophets but to fulfil them (Mt 5:17). Jesus rejoiced in the law as did the psalmist (Ps 119: 97). Jesus' teaching was about Spirit and life (Jn 6:63) as he recognised that external obedience to the law alone does not lead to a moral life. In the Beatitudes (Mt 5-7), Jesus is not outlining a new set of laws for achieving blessedness. One does not have to be poor in spirit or mourn to be blest. Willard (1998:117) points out that the poor are blessed "precisely in spite of and in the midst of their ever so deplorable condition, as the rule of the heavens has moved redemptively upon and through them by the grace of God."

Paul in his letter to the Galatians reminds them that they have been set free from slavish adherence to ceremonial and ritual law (Gl 5:1-15), but for the sake of relationship and not causing others to fall, they are to follow the laws (Rm 14:13-23). The circumcision of Timothy was an example of this (Ac 16:2). The inner freedom that comes from knowing that we are loved by God leads to outer freedom (Jn 8:31; Rm 8:212; Cor 3:17). The law is

written on our hearts (Jr 31:33). Paradoxically, it is as we love and obey the law that we find freedom and choose what is good and right. And this leads to abundant life.

There is a danger that measuring certain qualities or characteristics that indicate morality can become a new form of law, a set of human criteria having little to do with truly being 'in Christ' (Col 2:6). I have tried to avoid this danger by situating these in terms of relationship. The characteristics of a good person revolve around relationship as a central and guiding principle. These are now explored in terms of relationship with God, self, others in the church and society and with creation, and some signposts that indicate moral formation in these relationships are identified.

3.3.1 Relationship with God

We are created to be in relationship with God. Our relationship with God is the origin and destiny of human happiness and the foundation for human self-knowledge and direction (Charry 1997:4). Paul exhorts the Christians in Rome (Rm 12:2) to be transformed by the renewing of their minds by growing closer to God. A renewed mind "weighs up and considers what God's will actually is (Wright 2010:151). In the Bible, 'knowing' is a comprehensive concept that involves relationship, not just intellectual capacities. This kind of knowledge of God touches our deepest being, forms our character and transforms our understanding of who we are and how we relate to one another. Knowing God is being in relationship with God, not just knowing about God. As McGrath (1999:4) says, "to know about God is inadequate and needs to be replaced with knowing God in a relationship of growing intimacy." Ultimately, the Christian life is a way of life, not just a belief system. Our ethical decision making, actions, choices and character grow and come from this life with God.

Knowing God and being in relationship with God does not lessen the sense of awe and wonder we have for the Divine or mean that we understand God. Hughes (2004:23) considers our ability to wonder and to be awe struck, to sense sacredness in a place and mystery in a person, to be a sign of holiness. The experience of God cannot be confined or described in words; it is a mystery and beyond our comprehension. It is grace and peace that passes all understanding (Phlp 4:7).³⁵ Relationship with God touches every aspect of our lives, our innermost beings, our identity, our relationships, passions and desires. To paraphrase Proverbs 9:10, "being in relationship with God is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." Wisdom is more than just

³⁵ The Christian tradition describes this as the kataphatic and the apophatic traditions. The former tradition concerns God's self-revelation to us and the latter stresses the mystery of God. See McGrath (1999:118-119).

factual knowledge as it involves wise perception which penetrates below the surface and gives insight into people and situations.

The Holy Spirit bestows the power to live in accordance with the will of God rather than being controlled by fallen human nature and selfish desires (Gl 5:16-26). It is through God's grace and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that we are transformed (Gutiérrez 1984:63). Our love for God finds expression in love and service for others as the Holy Spirit enables us to channel our talents (gifts) and energies outward in the service of others and for the good of all (1 Cor 12:4-11) as "we allow God to be the God of love and compassion to us and through us to everyone we encounter" (Hughes 2004:161). Faith in God involves relationship and goes beyond the mere recitation of creeds and doctrines. It is in knowing God and being in relationship with God that we become more Christ-like and the virtues become habits leading to a desire to be good.

Our relationship with God brings a sense of freedom from sin and the need to find our identity in status and material goods. It gives us the freedom to be all that God created us to be. Gutiérrez (1984:26) describes this as "freedom from a selfish inertia to constancy, from illusion to hope, from the honour of worldly trappings to a profound fidelity to the Church, from fads to the truly new, from authoritarianism to moral authority and service and from a tranquillising past to a challenging present."

This research investigates whether developing a relationship with God is given prominence in the theological education institutions. Is there an emphasis on spiritual disciplines that will help to form a relationship with God? Is there a sense that theological education goes beyond intellectual acceptance of people as created in the image of God, and do the purpose, vision and content of the courses and material presented reflect this?

Knowing, being and doing all develop in relationship with God. Knowledge of God and knowledge of self grow in relation to one another as described by many spiritual writers such as Catherine of Sienna (Kretzschmar 2012:153). As we draw closer to God, we also understand and know ourselves better. This leads to relationship with self.

3.3.2 Relationship with self

Conscience properly formed and informed is understood as a person's deepest sense of connection with God (Egan 2010:59). Conscience compels us to act in line with our deepest held beliefs, and if we go against conscience, we have a sense of guilt. But conscience can be misinformed as happened with the apartheid government's justification of the system that allowed many white South Africans to feel no guilt about apartheid's

systematic discrimination. As Egan (2010:65) says, “to really act in conscience requires profound self-examination and self-knowledge a willingness to confront oneself honestly.” This was looked for among the students.

Relationship with self involves knowing. Knowledge, understanding, comprehension and critical reflection are part of faith and “make it possible to take the experience of faith deeper” (Gutiérrez 1984:36). Wise choices, knowledge and critical reflection were used in this research as indicators of growth in relationship with self. Students were asked about the links they saw between their relationship with God and their growth in self-knowledge and how their studies had helped them to make ethical decisions.

Relationship with self refers to the way individuals relate to their own inner being, to their moods, feelings, emotions and mental states (Hughes 2004: 44). It involves our thinking and our feeling which in turn influence how we relate to others and to the environment. It involves integrating our knowledge and understanding with our faith and our feelings. Relationship with self involves self-understanding and self-awareness. The way we see ourselves matters, comments Tutu, as it affects our quality of life and the way in which we treat others (Tutu & Tutu 2010:7).

Experiencing God’s love for us, as we are, gives us the courage to face our flaws and faults and to know that these are not the end of the story. We are made for goodness, wholeness and relationship. It is in facing our failures and flaws and accepting these as ‘doors to relationship’ that we grow into all that God created us to be. The early Christians were encouraged to develop what today might be called emotional strengths. Paul encourages them to rejoice always, not to worry and stress, to give thanks, and to pray without ceasing (Phlp 4:4-7; 1 Th 5:16-17). A life of wholeness, lived in relationship with God, does not exclude pain, death and grief and the harsh realities of the world. Christians still experience pain and suffering, but it is how we deal with these experiences that is important. We can still flourish and experience a life of wholeness as this does not depend on what we experience but on how we deal with these experiences (Tutu 1989:48).

Relationship with self involves our being. It is about developing virtues and becoming the kind of Christ-like person God created us to be. The Benedictine writer Norveen Vest (2000:59) believes that “virtue is the capacity to live and act in accord with our deep human desire for wholeness.” She writes, “If wisdom is centred in the desire for life, then virtue is the training of desire, the ongoing shaping of our hunger for life towards the good” (2000:59). This ‘training of desire’ develops the character or being of a person to want to choose what is right and good. This means that embracing Christ and submitting to the will

of God is not in conflict with our redeemed will as what we desire with our whole heart is also what God desires for us. There is an understanding of costly grace (Bonhoeffer) in Christianity that is associated with self-sacrifice, but there is also the understanding that God loves us and delights in our happiness and joy. This means that often we serve God best when we discover our gifts and what we are passionate about and act on this. For example, a person can serve God through a passion for soccer, singing or nature.

Jesus promises abundant life (Jn 10:10b). As we grow in relationship with self, we come to know God within us, and our relationship with self is made whole in relationship with God. This does not mean that we lose our identity and individuality but that they will come to reflect the divine image more fully and completely (Wright 2010:139). Paul encourages the Ephesian Christians to “submerge themselves in Christ as this is the way to a more fulfilling, exuberant and wholesome life” (Eph 3:16-19 in Charry 1997:54). We find our true identity in Christ as members of the household of God (Eph 2:19). For the Christian, self-realisation is to grow into our God given potential and to be all that God created us to be. Johnson (1989:20) describes this as inner transformation and contrasts this with Maslow’s never ending escalator of self-actualisation. For Christians, the paradox is that we find our identity most fully as we grow in Christ and root our identity in Christ. As Hauerwas (1983:27) explains, we know ourselves ‘truthfully’ when we know ourselves in relation to God.

In Christ, the old has gone and the new has come (2 Cor 5:17). For the first Jewish Christians, this meant “letting go of the law and relinquishing exclusive claim to God’s electing grace” (Charry 1997:43). For the Gentiles, it meant letting go of the gods of Rome, Greece and Egypt. For us today, the challenge is to relinquish arrogance and to question our cognitive paradigms, critique society and subject cultural assumptions, such as consumerism and advertising to the light of the gospel. As Christians, we are transformed and have a new identity (Rm 12:2) which can be counter to the norms of society and at times challenge society based on the radical, inclusive love of God.

This research investigates whether their theological studies helped students be more in touch with their emotions and helped them to talk about feelings. Conversion of the heart is identified by Kretzschmar (2007:31-32) as necessary for moral formation. It is not just *orthodoxy* and *orthopraxis* but also *orthokardia*, right heartedness towards God that is needed. As students studying theology, they need to beware of losing their first love for God (Rv 2:4-5). It must not be forgotten and replaced with other motivations such as love of power, status or money.

Feminist theologians have warned that anything that denies or hampers the full humanity of women is not of God (Oduyoye 1995:4; Ruether 1983:19). This aspect is important in this discussion of morality and wholeness as some students may come from traditions or churches that do not promote the full humanity of women and that do not encourage women to take up leadership positions or to question male authority. Rakoczy (2004:266) warns that women sin when they deny themselves the gift of full humanity and fail to develop their potential and do what they are capable of doing. The promotion of the full humanity of women as well as of men is a criterion for moral formation in theological education. Talents are not gender specific and should be promoted in both men and women (Fiorenza 1993:58).

As we grow in relationship to self, we grow in wholeness. This wholeness can be seen in people who “fully inhabit their own lives regardless of the circumstances of their lives. It is a flourishing for ourselves and also for others – the two are one and the same” (Tutu 1989:45). Wholeness combines “friendship with oneself, others, creation and God” (Snyman 2006:27).

The following categories, relationship with others and with creation, balance any misconceptions that faith can be purely about the interior life, a privatised spiritualism that ignores the economic and political dimensions of life. Gutiérrez (1984:5) condemns individualism and spiritualism that combine to impoverish and even distort the following of Jesus. If the social aspects and a concern for justice and the material welfare of the poor are ignored, then the moral life is incomplete.

3.3.3 Relationship with others

To be fully human is to be in relationship with others as we are created in the image of God which is relational in nature. The doctrine of the Trinity symbolises this relational character of God as a community of equals related in mutuality (Johnson 1992:223). This sets the ideal for a human community without supremacy or subjection where differences flourish in the matrix of a relationship (Johnson 1992:209). Our relationships should have the qualities of the mutual, equal and loving relationships found in the Trinitarian God. The Trinity calls us to “be persons in community” as God is a perfect and compassionate community of persons, a community of love (Hoose, Claque & Mannion 2008:238).

Besides this focus on the Trinity, the life and teaching of Jesus as described in the biblical ethics section 3.2.1.2 helps to elucidate the kind of relationships that are required. Jesus opposed all systems of exploitation and oppression (Mk 12:40; Lk 4:18; Jn 2:13-22). Jesus had a particular concern for the poor and for those who were vulnerable because of the

socio-economic and political dispensation of his day. His teaching continued in the early church with the creedal statement in Galatians 3:28 that all are one in Christ. Race, class and gender are relativised. Equality means the abolishment of existing dehumanising inequalities engendered by domination so that justice is done and diversity is celebrated (Fiorenza 2001:7). In this research, equality and mutuality in relationships of gender was of particular interest as the Southern African society tends towards patriarchy with unacceptably high levels of violence against women.

Jesus' example sets the basis for our relationships with others which are now explored in relation to others in the church and then others in society.

3.4.3.1 Relationship with others in the Church

Belonging to and being part of a church, the community of faith, forms us, our beliefs and convictions and our character. We learn from the Church, listening to the Christian story, absorbing the teachings, sharing in worship and growing spiritually as well as morally. The faith community shapes moral identity and character and functions as a mode of moral formation. The ways in which the local church or the residential theological institution might play this role were researched and the extent to which the institutions actively encourage students to be part of a faith community.

Throughout the ages, Christians have gathered for fellowship and worship (Phlp 2:1-4). In Acts chapter two, we read about the first believers who met regularly for teaching, prayer, the breaking of bread and fellowship and who shared their possessions so that no one among them was in need. This close knit, powerful community cared for one another and attracted others to join (Ac 2:47). Those in the first Christian communities welcomed one another, were hospitable and loved one another (Verhey 2002:504). Where this is still happening today, deep, supportive friendships are formed. The support of a community can nurture morality. This includes the role of friendship which Conradie (2006:77) identifies as a factor in moral formation. Johnson affirms this and considers that "friendship is the most free, the least possessive, the most mutual of relationships, able to cross social barriers in genuine reciprocal regard" (Johnson 1992:217). Therefore, the role of friendship in the institutions is explored.

If Christian communities do not remain in relationship with God, relationships within the community also start to falter and divisions and conflict arise. This can be seen in the early churches. In his letters, Paul addressed issues of false accusations (2 Cor 13:1) and conflict regarding eating food sacrificed to idols that were causing friction (1 Cor 10:18). It is through relationship with God, through the work of the Holy Spirit that these conflicts can

be resolved in a manner that does not destroy community. Just as the differences between people and nations were overcome at Pentecost when the Spirit was first given, so too the Spirit empowers those in the Church to be community, to be the Body of Christ. Christian communities need to grow their relationship with God. The spiritual disciplines can be a way of doing this. Foster's (1978) description of these as inward, shared and outward disciplines is a helpful way of categorising and understanding them. The inward disciplines include meditation, prayer, fasting and study. Worship and guidance are examples of shared disciplines, and simplicity, solitude and service are outward disciplines. These are explained further in the discussion of spiritual formation in section 3.4.2.8.

Spirituality, walking with Jesus, is never individualistic, although there is that dimension of deep personal joy and love for Jesus and experiences of transcendence. As Gutiérrez (1984:89) explains, "Following Jesus has a personal dimension but it is a collective adventure." Spirituality involves service to and love for others both in the church and in society which is now discussed below.

3.4.3.2 Relationship with others in society

Relationship with others includes a concern about and challenge to destructive attitudes of sexism, racism, classism, consumerism and narrow nationalism that can lead to xenophobia (Hughes 2004:45). Our experience of God leads to care for the poor and opposition to structural oppression. This includes exposing patriarchy and any system that denies the full humanity of women. In our relationships with others, we are called to love one another. This love transcends boundaries of race and culture and even includes our enemies" (Lk 6:36).

The research will look at whether the deepening spirituality and experience of God has led students to a greater concern for the poor and vulnerable and for justice. Do students care when the poor are treated unjustly and exploited? Does this lead them to service and engagement with the poor and those in need? This research investigates whether there is an ethic in the institutions that encourages mutuality and equality both in personal relationships and at a structural level in their policies and practice.

Students may start to study theology without realising or without being able to articulate and live out the social nature of spirituality. The research investigates whether students are helped to critique society and analyse political and social structures in the light of the gospel. Are the students aware of the need for Christians to be involved at a structural level where they can lobby governments to provide necessities such as water and housing and to use resources to uplift the poor? Do the students have an understanding of the

prophetic role which challenges socio-political and economic injustices that oppress and exploit the weak?

Van Niekerk (1998:260) asserts that an ethical system should be self-critical and avoid dualistic tendencies. Do their theological studies help students to see such tendencies and to do something about them? Do their studies lead to a deeper concern for social issues and justice? Are students encouraged to be responsible and proactive, taking care of the poor, serving the needs of the downtrodden and caring for the whole of creation? This will be looked for in the teaching and ethos of the theological education institutions as well as in the students' responses.

The following section explores care for creation, which is another aspect that is inherent in our relationship with God as God's realm embraces the whole of creation.

3.3.4 Relationship with creation

We are created in relationship with all of creation. Erlander (1992:77) understands God's unfolding promise as mending the entire universe not just the relationship between God and people. This is in contrast with those theologies that emphasise the special place of humans at the cost of the rest of creation. While humans are different, they are not separate from the rest of creation. After the flood, God made a covenant not just with humans but with all of creation (Gn 9:15). The commandments in Exodus include rest for domesticated animals and the land that they might not be exploited, damaged or destroyed (Ex 23:10-13; Stavridis 2009: 244). The prophet Hosea recounts how the land mourns and the beasts of the field and the birds of the air and the fish of the sea die because there is no faithfulness from those who live in the land (Hs 4:1,3). We are part of creation and "our spirituality, when authentically Christian, establishes us in communion and solidarity with all that God creates and loves (Johnson 1989:13). Fox agrees, saying that "we are creatures among creatures with a responsibility for creation" (Fox 1991:175).

God's providence displayed in creation nourishes and sustains us, and we are in relationship with creation (Conradie 2009:54-55; Stavridis 2009:243). If we are to care for creation, we should have some knowledge of creation. We tend to care for that which we know and appreciate, and conversely, we learn to know that for which we care. Our relationship with ourselves involves the development of virtues, and our actions arise out of these virtues which form our being and who we are. Stavridis calls these "habits of the heart" (:253). When we are in relationship with creation, care of the earth becomes a 'habit of the heart'. We will engage in actions that help to preserve and care for the environment.

Care for and knowledge of the environment tend to be linked, and so knowledge of the environment and evidence of care for these life sustaining systems and all living creatures that share the planet with us, will be investigated. The research explores whether students have an awareness of their interrelatedness with all of creation. Questions that are posed concern the presence of an environmental ethic and action at the institutions.

Where these relationships with God, self, others and creation show the characteristics as described above, they form a way of life and the basis for moral living.

3.3.5 Conclusion - What then are the characteristics of a moral person?

Throughout the ages, various forms of the question regarding what it means to be 'good' have been asked. The rich young ruler asked this question of Jesus (Lk 18:18-22), and people today are still asking what it means to be a true disciple of Christ and what constitutes goodness.

Jesus based obedience to the law on relationship, on loving God and neighbour (Mt 22:37-40). Love involves being grounded in a community of relationships and these are key to moral formation. This community of relationships includes relationship with God which empowers people to grow in goodness; relationship with self that enables people to live in harmony with their innermost self, and relationships with others, both as individuals and on a structural level, and with the whole of creation. The quality of relationship between people is crucial and should, among other things, reflect the love, mutuality and equality of Trinitarian relationships.

3.4 Nurturing an ethical life

The previous section developed a model of morality that was based on relationship with God, self, others and creation. It explained that moral formation involves growth in knowing, being and doing which together lead to moral relationships, moral living and the flourishing of humans and all creation in harmony with God.

This section turns to the question of how people are morally formed and the pertinent question of whether morality can be taught. The problem is that a person does not become wise simply by reading lecture notes or attending a lecture. It takes more than reading a book about God to develop a relationship with God. Even though there are no easy steps or simple recipes that can be followed by educators and used in theological education institutions, this research posits that moral formation is possible. It is a complex process, carried out, among others, by parents, teachers and religious and community leaders as

well as hopefully in theological education institutions. It is affected by changing paradigms in moral thinking (Conradie 2006:72-76). For some, the community is most influential; others rely on external rules and authority for direction, while others follow a more individualistic approach to morality. The implications of these differences will be explored as the modes of moral formation are examined. Helpful to this discussion of the modes of moral formation is a description of Von Hügel's three stages of Christian development, namely, the institutional, the critical and the mystical stages, as they help to explain the ethical thinking that influences moral action.

This section explores various modes of moral formation and addresses the question of how one becomes a good person by outlining formative practices and modes of moral formation that assist in the development of good people who live in right relationship with God, themselves, others and creation.

3.4.1 Stages of Christian development

Von Hügel describes three elements or stages of Christian development that correspond to childhood, adolescence and adulthood, namely, the institutional, the critical and the mystical stages (in Hughes 1985:10-25). He calls them elements rather than stages as one does not move from one stage to the next, leaving the previous stage behind. Rather one adds the commitments and concerns of the next element to those of the previous one, thus growing in understanding and faith.

The first is the institutional stage. At this stage, in the Christian context, there is childlike trust in and obedience to church authority and acceptance of church teaching and beliefs. As its name suggests, at the second stage, the critical stage, there is a questioning of traditions and teaching and the need for rational reasons before adhering to and obeying laws. At this stage, it is "the reasoning, argumentative, abstractive side of human nature that begins to come into play" (Von Hügel 1928). At the mystical stage, "religion is rather felt than seen or reasoned about, is loved and lived rather than analysed, is action and power, rather than either external fact or intellectual verification" (Von Hügel 1928). One has a deeper walk with God.

These elements described by Von Hügel have implications for moral formation in theological education. Theological educators need to be aware that students come from different backgrounds and have differing worldviews and understandings of morality and may be operating from one or more of the stages. For many students, culture, the norms of the community, tradition and external authority are important, and the teaching of church and elders are accepted as authoritative. This means there needs to be sensitivity

to students to help them to expand their understandings and consider new paradigms, to move beyond uncritical obedience, but in a responsible manner.

While critical thinking and intellectual analysis are needed (Stage 2), an overemphasis on intellectual knowledge and content, and a neglect of spiritual formation and responsibility towards others and the community can lead to an overly critical, cold intellectualism (Kretzschmar 2005:121). Theological education needs to allow responsible moral reflection while encouraging relationships that are life giving, including the students' relationship with God.

3.4.2 The modes of moral formation

The comprehensive work of Van der Ven is used as a starting point in the consideration of the 'how' of moral formation as his seven modes take cognizance of the views of various moral educators and philosophers and incorporate insights from other disciplines. This gives a broad perspective on moral formation and the possible ways in which moral formation can be encouraged at theological institutions.

Van der Ven acknowledges the role of religion in moral formation but he does not explore spiritual formation and spiritual disciplines in any depth. Hence various insights regarding spirituality and the role that spiritual formation plays in moral formation are discussed as a separate mode of moral formation. Much research and work has been done on the links between religion and morality as well as the synergy between moral and spiritual formation. Many contend that as a person's relationship with God deepens and grows so will their moral accountability (Charry 1997; Childs 1992; Gutiérrez 1984:93-103; Kretzschmar 2007:27; O'Keefe 1995:2). The spiritual disciplines and the role of the Church have long been recognised in the moral formation process. The biblical story which forms the Church nurtures certain moral traits and behaviour, and the stories of the saints and heroes of the faith inspire and contribute to moral formation, as do friendships and role models. These are discussed in more detail in the section on spiritual formation.

The role of the community of faith is important for moral formation; hence insights from Hauerwas, Richardson and others regarding the formative role of communities of faith are also considered. Where local churches form part of the theological education experience of students, they are regarded as being a formative community. Connors and McCormick (1998) have developed a model that includes the influence of the community on ethical choices and the building of character. Conradie (2006) offers insights regarding the role of the community and the narratives and visions held by the community. All these are explored as part of the modes of moral formation.

Below is a description of the various modes of moral formation highlighting some criticisms against them and some of their strengths. This provides the framework for the exploration of how these modes of moral formation are utilised in theological education institutions.

3.4.2.1 Discipline

Van der Ven describes discipline and socialisation as informal modes of moral formation as they occur mostly in the home and the community, rather than in formal institutions of learning. Discipline is about acquiring virtues through learning and practicing good habits. Healthy discipline involves love and positive nurture and helps children to accept the values of their family and the broader community. Effective discipline, which is neither overly authoritarian or too laissez faire and permissive, encourages self-discipline (Van Niekerk 2009:104). As self-discipline grows, and if parents are good examples, children often respond in obedience and joy to their parents' love and direction. So too, Christians respond to the love of God by gladly and willingly doing what God asks. This self-discipline is crucial for moral formation.

3.4.3.2 Socialisation

Van der Ven defines socialisation as “the process by which new generations are initiated into the moral order of the existing ones, by which the young recognise, accept and lastly internalise the moral convictions, principles and rules passed down to them by the old” (Van der Ven 1998a:86). Socialisation comprises cognitive and affective aspects as it involves knowledge, comprehension and skills as well as emotional identification with significant others (Van der Ven 1998a:87). There are a number of agents of socialisation such as family, friends, church groups, peers and the mass media. Conradie (2006:77) identifies role models such as heroes, saints and significant adults as agents of socialisation that play a role in moral formation.

Socialisation plays an important role in traditional, close knit, homogeneous societies where ethics is linked to the good of the community and social cohesion (Conradie 2006:72). Some students studying at the theological institutions might come from such traditional societies where there tends to be a single worldview and moral norms are not questioned. By the time the students enrol at a theological institution, a great deal of socialisation has taken place, and they have learnt the values and norms of their families and communities. However, the context and the community in which students study, especially if it is a residential community, can play a significant role in socializing students.

3.4.2.3 Transmission

Transmission involves conscious, cognitive teaching of moral traditions and knowledge. It is probably the most frequently used mode in theological education as doctrines are taught and the content of the Christian faith is passed on. Transmission is content based as described above, but ideally it does have affective and volitional aims as well as cognitive aims (Van der Ven 1998a:131). The cognitive aim is to transmit knowledge and to develop critical thinking. The affective aim develops an approach to life that embodies the values that have been learnt cognitively. The volitional stage concerns the moral will to live as one knows one should. Van der Ven describes the stages thus: "First the content of the good is discovered, then it is tested in the second stage and becomes part of the value system, then in the third stage it must be acted on in real situations" (Van der Ven 1998:177).

The authoritarian, content-based aspects of the transmission mode are used in traditional settings and institutions which promulgate strict adherence to laws and obedience to external authority. In traditional settings and institutions, the sources of authority and the content of the moral life are often clearly defined. In other settings, there may be greater diversity of content and more conflicts and disagreements regarding its interpretation (Van der Ven 1998a:129). However, due to authoritarian teaching which promotes unquestioning obedience, this approach is sometimes accused of indoctrination. The following two modes, namely moral development and value clarification, both claim to avoid indoctrination.

3.4.2.4 Cognitive development

Van der Ven's description of this mode of moral formation stresses the development of the logic of morality rather than inculcating any specific content or behaviours. This focus on internal thought processes contrasts with the transmission mode that tends to focus on external influences. Moral components and logical constructs are taught rather than particular moral precepts or codes (Wilson in Chazan 1985:32).

Van der Ven explains Kohlberg's developmental theory of moral judgement. Kohlberg's theory builds on Piaget's developmental stages of learning which move from the concrete thinking of the sensorimotor stage to abstract understanding and cognitive processes.³⁶ Kohlberg (1981; 1984) focused on the process of moral thinking at successively higher stages of moral development. He describes these as the pre-conventional, the

³⁶ In a similar way James Fowler (1981) studied the faith stages people move through in their religious understanding.

conventional and the post-conventional levels. At the pre-conventional level, which Kohlberg associated with children till the age of about eleven, moral motivation comes from promises of reward and threats of punishment. Then follows conventional morality in which the rules and laws of society are appreciated and followed. At the post-conventional stage which according to him, few adults reach, morality is guided by universal principles based on justice. Moving through the levels involves moral logic and the ability to apply the moral principle of justice and reversible moral thinking which according to Kohlberg underlie the moral process. People do not stay at one particular level of moral reasoning but move between them depending on the circumstances.

Besides the seminal work of Kohlberg, some practical moral making methods are useful and often used in the theological institutions, and so they are briefly described. The **See-Judge-Act** method was developed by a Belgian worker priest, Joseph Cardijn, in the early 20th century. First the facts and feelings involved in the problem are investigated and then one critically reflects on and analyses the problem. Judging can come from Christian convictions, from consequences and from what is considered good, right and wise. Action follows this analysis and judgement of what should be done. The Analyse-Evaluate-Ask-Act model of Kretzschmar (2009:91) is a variation of this model that takes cognizance of the wisdom of the community and of prayer.

An interesting adaption of the spiritual exercises of Ignatius of Loyola can be used in what Egan (2010), a Jesuit, describes as “prayerful use of the See-Judge-Act method.”³⁷ Using the spiritual exercises avoids what he terms ‘commandist short circuiting’ of moral decision making (:58). This method of decision making is done in the context of prayer, using one’s own reason, in consultation with others and in line with the thinking of the church (:67). This requires a ‘formed and informed’ conscience and involves both head and heart work (:66-67). These decision-making methods develop internal thought processes and the logic of moral thinking while acknowledging the value of the wider community and of asking for God’s guidance.

Groome’s (1980) praxis-based pedagogy combines action and reflection. Students reflect on their own activity and beliefs which become the starting point for formation. The educator helps them to reflect on their experiences in the light of the Christian story with the aim that the students will choose a personal faith which includes knowing, desiring and doing as modes of learning.

³⁷ Ignatius of Loyola was a Spanish soldier and mystic in the 16th century who founded the Jesuit religious order.

This cognitive mode of moral formation opposes the emphasis on authority and obedience to particular institutions. Critical thinking, norms, principles, values, internal convictions and individual decision making are valued rather than obedience to external authorities (Conradie 2006:74). This mode has similarities with Von Hügel's critical stage as both rely on logical thinking.

3.4.2.5 Value clarification

Value clarification has its roots in the non-directive counselling of Carl Rogers. It became very popular in the 1980's as it is easily understandable and lends itself to use in the classroom situation. In a distance education setting, it is more difficult to use.³⁸

Value clarification involves prizing, choosing and acting on one's values. For values to be one's own, they must be freely chosen, not externally imposed. While value clarification avoids indoctrination, it runs the danger of relativism as there are no absolutes. The terminology reflects this as it uses values and valuing rather than principles and norms. Strictly speaking, the teaching of specific values and norms such as Christian ones is incompatible with this non-directive approach which adheres to the idea of unconditional acceptance of any values which a person may select. This could lead to values being individualistic and simply a matter of personal preference. Many educators, such as Dewey, opposed a simplistic application of value clarification as it undermines the social nature of morality and intelligence. Besides this, individuals often do not have sufficient resources to make decisions about values or the moral will to act on their chosen values.

3.4.2.6 Emotional formation

Emotional formation, as can be deduced from its name, has to do with feelings and emotions. However, it includes observation, experience and concept learning (Van der Ven 1998a:39). It takes people's contexts seriously and the way in which people interact with and respond emotionally to their environment. There is a relationship between cognition, emotion and context as emotions emerge from people's perceptions of their context and their reaction to experiences (Van der Ven 1998a:294). This mode avoids suppressing, controlling and neutralising emotions but rather orders and processes them (:381). What Van der Ven means by processing is to allow the emotions to flow and then order them by discerning their authentic and inauthentic aspects and their pure and impure aspects. There should then be a practical, rational weighing up of emotion in the light of virtues such as temperance and wisdom (:382). This has similarities to Vest's (2000:62)

³⁸ In the questionnaires, a number of students from SATS said that value clarification was used at SATS. This was actually more likely to have been the teaching of biblical values using the transmission mode (See chapters five and six).

concept of training of desire. One does not become a virtuous person by eliminating feelings but rather through being aware of one's feelings and training one's desires so that one chooses what is right and good.

Erik Erikson (1959) too identified the need to explore and process emotions. For healthy moral development, there needs to be healthy emotional development. Erikson describes various life stages that people go through and the emotional strengths that need to be developed at each stage. For example, in the first stage, a young child needs to experience unconditional, loving relationships in order to learn to trust. As people move through the various stages Erikson described, they might develop emotional strengths such as self-esteem, empathy, and a sense of justice and purpose, or they may be left feeling guilty, unworthy and despairing. Negative emotions can also play a role in moral formation as an inner sense of shame or guilt can be a warning when one is transgressing the boundaries and doing something that goes against one's self-perception and beliefs about what is good, in other words, one's conscience. So people need to become fully aware of their emotions rather than denying or distorting them. By becoming aware of emotions, one has greater self-understanding which can lead to creative love, solidarity and compassion for others.

There is a danger that a narrow focus on emotional development can lead to self-absorption. The fruits of the spirit as listed in Galatians chapter five are emotional and moral strengths that can help to prevent this. Patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness and self-control move beyond a narrow self-love and are crucial to the development of healthy, loving relationships. Rogers affirmed that emotional maturity is a prerequisite for living a truly authentic life (quoted in Van der Ven 1998a:305). Moral education should include emotional awareness and help people to express their emotions in appropriate ways.

3.4.2.7 Character formation

Character formation has to do with the development of virtues. Van der Ven (1998a:343) describes "virtues as orientations, not fixed guidelines." Character formation takes the situation seriously, but instead of applying a rule, the person acts according to their character whether it is a good or a weak or bad character. Following Aristotle, Van der Ven (1998a:384) notes that the practice of virtues requires instruction and communication. He concurs with Aristotle that virtues are formed from the habitual practice of virtuous actions (:383) saying, "One learns to practice virtue only by practicing virtue" (:384). Kretzschmar (2005:127) agrees that virtues cannot be acquired simply by being taught; they must be

put into action and practiced. Ethicists such as Gustafson affirm that the core of ethical behaviour and action comes from the habitual practice of virtues that leads to good character. Van der Ven considers character formation as the culmination of the modes of moral formation as it involves and integrates all of them and together they work towards the formation of moral character.

Character formation is strong in the New Testament as explained in section (3.2.1.2). Paul places God at the centre of his virtue ethic, urging Christians to embrace the habits of heart, mind and living that will lead to becoming like Christ and thus reflecting the image of God to the world. Virtues require habitual practice, the renewal of the mind and fellowship with other Christians (Rm 12:2, Col 3:12-16). Paul is describing character formation as he concludes his letter to the Philippians:

Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you. (Phlp 4:8-9)

Van der Ven (1998a:342) fears that virtues while good, may fail to resolve conflicting ethical duties and obligations as they lack guidance in complex situations and dilemmas. Countering this, the advocates of character and virtue education argue that the abstractness of character allows space for individual and situational difference. They claim that virtue ethics liberates one from restrictive rules and oppressive norms by emphasizing questions like “Who am I, who are we?” and “What is good for me, good for us?” rather than “Which rules do I or do we have to follow?” (Van der Ven :342-344).

A relational understanding of morality affirms the liberating nature of virtue ethics, but at the same time, a knowledge of norms and values is needed. In virtue ethics, rules are still important, but they are not the starting point or the destination (Wright 2010:172). To get to the point where Christian habits of virtue come naturally, Christians have to think and be transformed by the renewing of their minds which will inform them of what is right and direct their habits of life (:173). This leads to spiritual formation.

3.4.2.8 Spiritual formation

Separating spiritual formation and moral formation leads to an impoverishment of both morality and spirituality. O’Keefe (1995:43) describes this as reducing morality to moral problem solving and the trivialising of spirituality so that it becomes a matter of disembodied prayers and discussions. He affirms that “There is an essential dynamism to

the Christian life that is both moral and spiritual” (:4). Similarly, Kretzschmar affirms that “spirituality provides morality with a sense of the sacredness of life, and indicates a willingness to move beyond human self-fulfilment to self-transcendence” (2008:68). A deepening relationship with God nourishes the desire and ability to love one’s neighbour, to practice proper self-love, and to live according to moral norms and values in relation to others and creation (Kretzschmar 2007:27). Johnson concurs that Christian spiritual formation has to do with what it means to be a Christian here and now in everyday life. It is to confess our self-deception and to walk according to the Spirit and so acquire Christian character (1989:28). Spiritual formation is growing in holiness, what Paul calls ‘sanctification’ or ‘having the mind of Christ’ (1 Cor 2:16).

Often, people know what is right and what they ought to do, but they do not do it. They either attempt to justify their actions with various spurious ethical arguments or turn a blind eye and do what they know is not right. In Romans 7:15, Paul struggles to understand his actions for he does not do what he wants, but instead what he hates. This indicates that human will-power is not enough for moral action. Some further power is needed.

For Christians, this power comes from God, from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Paul emphasises that righteousness is a gift of God (Rm 5:17). This teaching is found throughout scripture and stands as one of the cornerstones of the Christian faith (Foster 1978:6). Through the action of Jesus, we are given a new identity as members of the household of God. Paul exhorts the Ephesians to live according to this new identity rather than continuing with their former practices (Eph 2:11-22). For Christians, living the moral life is “a response to God’s love and a willing embrace of a God-infused life that brings healing and renewal to one’s relationships to self, others and creation” (Kretzschmar 2011:71). It is a joyful outworking of the Holy Spirit in the believer’s life rather than a reluctant, rigid obedience to laws and rules. It is about spirituality which is now defined before looking at spiritual formation.

Definitions of spirituality abound with many having an underlying theme of encounter with God that leads to relationship with others. John Macquarrie (1992:40) understands spirituality as becoming human in the fullest sense. McGrath (1999:2) defines it as loving God with heart and soul and living out an encounter with Jesus and the spiritual practices that go with deepening that encounter. Sheldrake (1998:153) describes spirituality as “a relationship with God in Christ made possible through the Holy Spirit and lived in a community of believers.” In the Iona Document (Amithram & Pryor 1989:153) Christian spirituality is described as “opening oneself to the healing power of the Spirit which

enables human beings to become whole and reconciled with themselves, with God and with the world.”³⁹

If spirituality is about relationship with God and others, then spiritual formation should nurture these relationships. Spiritual formation “occurs when persons consciously and voluntarily enter a God-initiated process of becoming like Christ. It is an inner journey or pilgrimage (towards God and our true selves), a shared journey (genuine Christian fellowship) and an outer journey (in mission and service to the world)” (Kretzschmar 2006:344). This understanding highlights three aspects of spiritual formation that Foster (1978) termed the inward, the outward and the corporate disciplines. He describes the inner disciplines as meditation, prayer, fasting and the training of the mind through study. The disciplines for the outer journey are simplicity, solitude, submission and service, and the corporate disciplines are confession, worship, guidance and celebration.

Similarly, Thiessen (2005) describes three Cs of spirituality namely connection, contribution and compassion. Connection is with God, the inner self and with the community and nature. This “connection gives understanding of one’s weakness and limitations and of one’s strengths and capacities” (Thiessen 2005:60). Connection with nature leads to a sense of awe and wonder at the *shekinah*, the presence of God in nature. This inner process of connection and being conformed to the image of Christ leads to compassion and relates to the shared journey. Contribution relates to the outer journey where the relationship between connection and compassion is expressed in the practice of love for one another as Jesus commanded.

Willard (1988:454) while identifying similar disciplines to those of Foster, divides them into two groups, namely disciplines of abstinence such as solitude and frugality and disciplines of engagement such as worship, service and celebration. The disciplines of abstinence are designed to break the power of life involvements that threaten relationship with God, while the disciplines of engagement nourish relationship with God.

The working group at Iona identified a number of ways in which spiritual formation takes place and some creative steps to promote it. These as well as other traits already mentioned provide indicators and guidelines for assessing the presence of spiritual formation in the theological education programmes and how this influences moral formation. These are as follows:

³⁹ This document was drawn up by a number of theological educators who met at Iona to discuss ways of spiritually empowering those training for various ministries in the church.

- Spiritual formation takes place in community, part of the shared journey. Students at theological education institutions should be encouraged to be part of a Christian community, whether in a local church or part of the college community.
- They should engage in scholarly study
- There should be opportunity to partake in silence and in retreats
- They should have direct exposure to the harsh realities of life and direct involvement in areas of human struggle.
- There should be participation in worship and liturgy. This might happen as part of the college community, but it could be in the context of the local church.
- The institution should encourage ecumenical and cross cultural exchange so that students can expand beyond their own cultural confession and look beyond their own narrow context and 'see oneself with the eyes of the other'.
- Spiritual formation should be an integral aspect of the whole programme, and all should take responsibility as they are part of the 'totality of the learning-teaching activity'. It is the task of the whole faculty.
- The institutions should encourage participation of students and to do this it is important to be non-judgemental.
- The relation between theology and life should be made obvious, and one way of doing this is to use stories.
- Small study groups are important as well as 'soul friends', mentors and role models.
- Various spiritual disciplines such as journaling should be included.
- Students should be seen in their totality, as whole beings, and so family ties and commitments must be considered.

Kourie and Kretzschmar (2000:20) in a discussion of spiritual practices highlight the importance of silence, meditation and contemplation. Meditation is a means of learning to appreciate and respond to our own inner depths enabling us to be at peace with ourselves and come to experience the peace of God within. Contemplation is understood as a quietening of the mind and allowing silence to pervade the inner depths of one's being.

As this research is in Africa, the understanding and practice of the spiritual disciplines is considered within an African context. Spirituality should reflect a sense of the presence of God in all things, provide the power to meet the challenges of life, emphasise the community and celebrate music and dance (Holt 1993:110). From the African perspective, Mulandi (2002:54) warns against spiritual formation that is too individualistic and does not take the caring and sharing aspects of the community seriously.

Theological education needs to foster spiritual growth inter alia through prayer (Col 4:2-6), study, service towards others, spiritual mentors, communal worship and contemplation. It also needs to form people as members of a Christian community and to educate for loving kindness and justice. Those disciplines that have been identified by various writers were used as a basis to evaluate spiritual formation practices in the institutions, bearing in mind that one cannot easily assess spirituality as one can cognitive knowledge.

The Christian community is fundamental to spiritual and moral formation as Christian faith requires nurture in the Christian community (Kourie & Kretzschmar 2000:41).

3.4.2.9 Communities of character

Van der Ven (1998a:357) understands that there is a dialectic between character and situation for as much as one's character is influenced by one's situation so too one's character determines one's interaction with the situation. As Van der Ven (:354) says, "Character does not unfold from within the person in isolation, but is called out through interaction with others in the situation, and through grappling with tasks and challenges that are part of that situation." This understanding that virtues are grounded in interaction with others and the community is well documented and considered central to moral formation by biblical writers and others such as Hauerwas and Richardson as well as in the African philosophy of *ubuntu*.

The first Christians realised the importance of community and met together daily, shared their possessions and devoted themselves to teaching and fellowship and to the breaking of bread and prayer (Ac 2:42-47). Paul recognised the power of the church community to socialise members into the moral tradition, and so, for example, he exhorted the Ephesians to participate in the church community through baptism, prayer, thanksgiving and corporate worship. The people of the Way, as the first Christians were known, met regularly in house churches. The greetings and personal messages in Paul's letters, for example, in Romans 16, 1 Corinthians 16, and Philippians 4 indicate the importance of the house churches and the role that they played in moral formation and the growth of faith. Everyone had a role to play in the Church in order that "the whole body, joined and held together, grows and builds itself up in love" (Eph 4:11-16). Paul encouraged people to live in peace, to be joyful, to pray, to warn, encourage and help one another, to be patient and kind, not to be revengeful and to give thanks continually. They should avoid evil and hold onto the Spirit (1 Th 5:12ff; 2 Th 3:6ff).

Today, Christian theologians such as Hauerwas and Richardson still emphasise the importance of community for moral formation and recognise that people are formed by the

church community and that our worldview is influenced by our community as are our norms and the rules we follow. Birch and Rasmussen (1989:45) acknowledge the social nature of moral formation and the role that is played by the community which they describe as “shaping the moral identity of the individual so that it is in line with the faith identity of the community”. It is through being part of the Christian community that faith is nurtured, and this leads to spiritual and moral formation. Hauerwas has written extensively on the role of the community in the development of character. He believes that there can be no Christian ethics without Christian community, that is, the Church. He sees the Church as the school for the shaping and developing of Christian character. His concept of the church is complex and multifaceted but at its centre is the Christian story as told in the Bible, the most central part of the story being the life and teaching of Jesus. This story, Hauerwas (1981:9; 1983:15) asserts, is the basis for the Church’s existence, and he affirms the role that the Christian community and its narratives play in shaping character. Following Hauerwas, Conradie (2006:77) considers moral formation to take place when “the paradigmatic stories are carried by *communities of character*, such as the Church or any group that lives with integrity, honesty and loyalty.”

Richardson identifies similarities between the prominent role of the community in African thought and the formative understanding of community as expressed by Hauerwas. Oduyoye (in Richardson 2009b:50) expresses this connection, saying that Africans recognise life as life-in-community and that one is truly known in terms of the community, past and present. Thus morality is concerned with one’s place in the community and the well-being of the community (Richardson 2009b:49). Kasenene affirms that to belong, to be part of a group, is intrinsic to African society (in Villa Vicencio & De Gruchy 1994:141-142). As the community is important in African understanding, so are the quality of the church communities and their faithfulness important to the Christian story. If Christian communities are not centred around the Christian story and striving for relationships that reflect the love of God, moral formation will be compromised.

What are the characteristics of a Christian community? Albert Nolan, a writer in the South African context (in Kourie & Kretzschmar 2000:44-45), offers some useful indicators that focus on relationship with God. From love of God comes love of neighbour. Nolan spells out what this love means in the context of the wider society. Justice and compassion should be practiced and human dignity respected. There must be no humiliation and exploitation of people. This means going beyond tribalism and narrow group loyalties and rejecting oppression and the abuse of power.

John Westerhoff (1972:63) emphasises the role of the community as being crucial in theological education as well as in moral formation. He developed an approach which he termed socialisation or enculturation as an alternative to the over pedagogical emphasis on the transmission of knowledge and facts rather than Christian lifestyle and faith. In this approach, it is through the Christian community that people are disciplined and learn about the Christian faith and the implications of the faith for living.

Connors and McCormick (1998:148) believe that moral formation depends on the presence of a moral community capable of bearing and transmitting ethical values and visions. This includes habits, virtues, convictions, principles and ways of life of the community one belongs to. Character (developing virtues) and making choices (thinking and analysing) happen in the context of the community. People's choices and the development of virtues are profoundly influenced by their communities. "Shared beliefs and structures embedded in our communities, can shape how we see and judge specific moral questions and predispose us to certain ways of thinking, feeling and acting" (Connors & McCormick 2002:7). South African theologians have made the same point that "communities provide a sense of belonging, accountability, moral reference points, coherence and sustainability" (Richardson 2003:10-11). However, the community can be misleading as seen, for example, in South African society where many did not question the racist basis of society.

What happens in the local church, outside of students' formal studies, is of importance (Groome 1980:140). The intention of this study was to throw more light on the interplay between formal theological studies and the local church and community for the moral formation of students. A faith community can be formed within a residential theological college. This community can be very influential as can be seen in the comments of a former student who attended the Federal Theological Seminary (Fedsem): "My entire life perspective was to be transformed radically in this very place ... I discovered that I could compete with anyone regardless of race ... I met some of the most stimulating people in my entire life" (Tinyiko Maluleke in Denis 2003:72). The role played by the church community and the community of the theological education institution will be considered in more detail in the next chapter.

Often, a community is held together by a common vision and united by a shared story. The role that these play in moral formation is explored below.

3.4.2.9.1 Vision

Humans have imagination that enables them to envision and plan a better world. According to Hauerwas (1975:10), Christian communities are the place where virtues and visions are generated and practised. He believes that Christian ethics is more concerned with rightly envisioning the world than with what one should or should not do (1983:29).

Having a vision is important as it guides a community and gives hope that a better way of doing things is possible (Conradie 2006:13-21). The need for vision is summed up in the biblical proverb “where there is no vision, the people perish” (Pr 29:18 KJV). Theological institutions often acknowledge the need for a vision, so they develop vision or mission statements as do many other enterprises. People can be inspired by a vision and act to fulfil the vision whatever it might be. This contributes to moral formation as people live out their vision and embody their beliefs and intentions in the way they act.

3.4.2.9.2 Narratives

The Christian story forms the church community and provides the moral vision for the Church. For Christians, it is the inherited Christian narratives as well as the traditions of the Church that provide the stories and the context for ethical reflection and moral formation.

Van der Ven (1998a:384) considers storytelling to contribute to character formation as it offers the possibility of participating in the life, words and deeds of the characters embodied in the story. Complex situations that show conflicting choices can be presented through stories. In this way, storytelling functions as a kind of modelling.

Biblical stories embody the view of life in the faith community. These stories are a reflection of the reign of God, of the alternative life that is offered by Jesus, and through their message they promote moral formation. While teaching and reason are important for moral formation, Brown (2002:17) believes that stories are more powerful as they engage imagination and emotions as well as the intellect. Similarly, Conradie (2006:77) writes that “virtues are usually embodied and carried through narratives, through paradigmatic stories.”

McClendon (1990), in his book *Biography as theology*, emphasised the role of narratives in moral formation as people learn from the life stories of others. Dube (2003) too uses biography in teaching and has developed a method which she terms ‘social location’ in which students tell their own stories. This allows students to talk about themselves and

listen to the stories of others and encourages self-examination, the analysis of social systems and the network of relationships that people experience (:101-112). Students identify their own context and the power or powerlessness associated with their own place within their context, touching on issues such as their place in the family, their gender, class, race, education and weight. This method challenges students to empower those who are under their power and to confront and challenge situations where power is unequal. “This should empower us to transform our society and ourselves” (:5). From the South American liberation perspective, De La Torre (2014:29-30) also affirms the use of one’s own stories to connect theory and reality. Hence the use of stories and case studies can be very effective for teaching ethics and as a means of moral formation (Frazer Evans, Evans, Gudorf & Stivers 1991).

The way the faith community and theological education institutions present and model the Christian narrative plays a role in the formation of students. It is not just the Christian story that forms and shapes believers but also stories of saints and heroes and modern stories of faithful action and courage. As noted above, case studies, the stories of others, one’s own story and testimonies of faith all play a role in moral formation. The evidence suggests that narrative is important in moral formation, so this research investigated whether stories form part of the programme at the theological institutions.

3.4.2.9.3 Role models and friendship

The influence of the leaders of the community who act as mentors and role models is also an important aspect of the role of communities in moral formation as they provide direction, motivation and inspiration. Conversely, bad role models and abusive relationships can alienate and wound people and hamper their moral formation.

Spiritual directors or companions can help people “navigate the landscape of faith” through talking, listening and mutually seeking to foster relationship with God (Ackermann 2003:163). Spiritual direction is about having a friend for the journey. Friendships that develop within communities deepen relationships between people and God, leading to faithfulness, love and kindness. Conradie (2006:77) notes that such friendships are crucial in order to sustain people on the road to moral formation.

3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, from the extensive field of ethics, I selected and reviewed ethical theories that contributed to a relational understanding of morality. The brief historical overview of ethical theory affirmed the importance of relationship in ethics and highlighted the

influence of context on ethical thinking. Themes that emerged included the love of God and neighbour, for example, in Jesus' summary of the law, justice from the prophetic tradition, equality, care and compassion. These affirmed the social dimension of relationship. Feminist theologians broaden and focus this discourse through the conscious inclusion of the liberation of women and the emphasis on mutuality and equality for all and care for creation. The centrality of community in African ethics further emphasised the role of relationship in ethics. The importance of virtues and good character for relationship emerged again and again. From these insights regarding the relational nature of ethical theory, a relational model of morality was developed that incorporates relationship with God, self, others and creation. In this model, knowing, being and doing work together to form moral relationships. One needs to know what is right in order to do what is right. The virtues need to become habits, part of one's being, behaviour and actions.

A relational understanding of morality was established, and certain 'signposts' linked to relationship with God, self, others and creation that indicate moral living were identified. The word 'signposts' was used as it indicates that they are not fixed qualities that have been arrived at, but rather pointers along the journey towards wholeness. These signposts are tentative and exploratory, dynamic and evolving rather than dogmatic, fixed and final. So for example, a sense of awe and wonder indicates relationship with God as does an attitude of thankfulness, inner peace and calm. However, these are just tiny indicators of a far greater reality and growing relationship. Regarding relationship with others, signposts include justice, compassion, mutuality, integrity, love and wisdom. The signposts were used to analyse the moral formation of students and the teaching and practices at the institutions that contribute to their moral formation.

Having explored the nature of morality and developed some measureable criteria (signposts) of morality, I turned to the question of how moral people are formed. Von Hügel outlined three stages in spiritual formation namely an institutional stage, a critical stage and a mystical stage. These were described as institutions meet students at these various stages. For example, their teaching should not be too authoritarian or too theoretical and critical, or the students may struggle to integrate such teaching in their lives.

Next, the various modes of moral formation were discussed. Most of these were based on the work of Van der Ven (1998a) who identified seven different ways in which moral formation occurs. To these I added spiritual formation and the role of the faith community. Each of these was discussed, showing its relevance to theological education. For example, if students tend towards obedience to external authority, they may find it difficult

when they are exposed to numerous different perspectives and expected to evaluate them and come to their own decision as to what is right. In situations such as these, students might prefer the transmission mode of moral formation which relies more on content and gives clearer guidance regarding rules and norms.

In the empirical research, I investigated which of these modes of moral formation are used and what conditions for moral formation are present in the institutions. These modes also form the basis for further ways in which moral formation can be encouraged in theological education.

Chapter Four: Theological education

*“What’s the point of knowing good if you don’t keep trying to become a good person?”
(Willard 1998:10)*

4.1. Introduction

The previous chapter contained a review of some of the major trends in ethical thinking, identifying the ways in which relationship is included and often central in them. From this followed a proposed understanding of morality based on relationship with God, self, others and creation, and certain ‘signposts’ that indicate moral formation were identified. After establishing a relational model of morality, a discussion followed of how morality is nurtured. In this chapter, the focus is on theological education and more specifically on moral formation in theological education. It starts by tracing the history of theological education noting how the task of moral formation was tackled and explicating the implications of this discussion for the present context. Then various models of theological education are reviewed and their strengths and weaknesses with regard to moral formation identified.

In the literature, there is general agreement that moral formation in theological education is crucial, but the best way of doing this is less clear and the subject of some debate. Considerations in this debate cluster around the issues of contextual relevance, theological understandings, the purpose of theological education, the relationship between moral and spiritual formation as well as other aspects of the educational programme. Various models of theological education which grapple with these issues, the nature of theological education and how it should be done are considered. The institutions that have been chosen for the research are located within one or more of these models of theological education. The models are evaluated in terms of their contribution to moral formation, and some of the difficulties faced by theological education are identified.

The context with its moral needs, the purpose and the theological understandings of the institutions interact with one another and influence the educational model and the modes of moral formation employed. The purpose of theological education is discussed in more detail in section 4.3 of this chapter. The theology, moral understandings and modes of moral formation will be further considered in the discussion of the models of theological education as will the context. Figure 4.1 illustrates the relationship between these factors and their influence on the model of theological education.

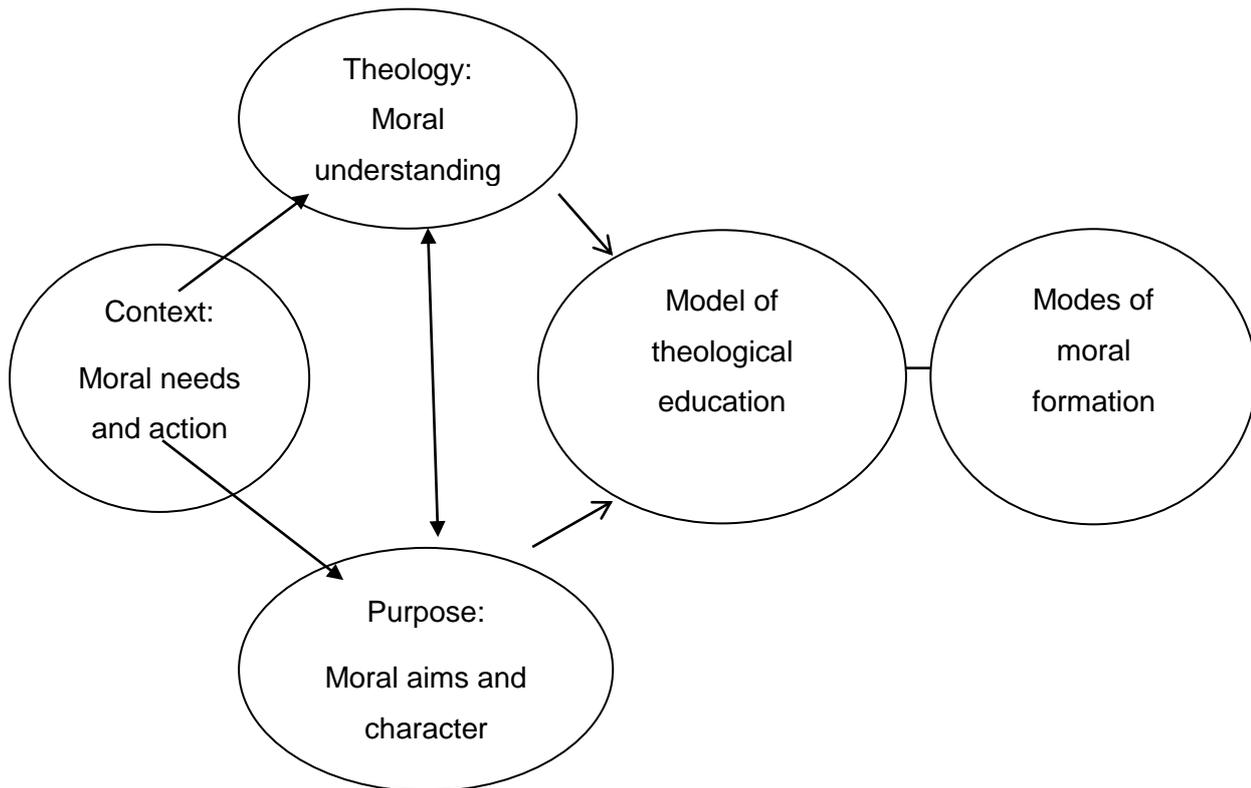


Figure 4.1 Factors that influence theological education.

Through the ages, these factors have influenced theological education. What follows is an overview of the historical trends in theological education, highlighting the teaching and practice of moral formation.

4.2. A historical overview

Over the centuries, theological education has been conducted in different ways, and various models for theological education have arisen. In the historical overview provided below, various ways in which theological education was conducted are discussed, highlighting the implications for moral formation. Included is an examination of the teaching and practice of moral formation and the ways in which morality was understood and nurtured in theological education. Insights from what has been done before can inform current methods and models of theological education and nurture moral formation in the students.

4.2.1 The roots of theological education

The passing on of the faith is something that has happened for millennia. In Old Testament times, moral formation was integrated with spiritual formation and was done

largely in the context of the home and family although it was supplemented by the synagogues and the Temple. For example, many of the exhortations in the Proverbs are addressed to 'my son' (Provest 2001:335). The role of rituals, feasts and festivals that helped to integrate people into the covenant community played an important part in spiritual and moral formation. A question and answer method of learning that promoted reflection on as well as the memorization of the oral tradition was used. Religious education and training was seen as a natural part of everyday life, not something distinct and separate (Provest 2001:335).

Jesus integrated the spiritual and the moral in his teaching. For people to grow as disciples, he taught that they need to remain in relationship with God, (Jn 15:5-10), to spend time in prayer (Mt 6:9, 17:20; Lk 18:1) and to be with other believers (Mt 18:20). Jesus emphasised that the law was dependent on love for God, for self and for others (Mt 22:37-40). He understood the law to be based on loving, compassionate relationships rather than commands that were abstracted from the lives of people. Jesus did not add anything new to the law or detract from the law – rather he showed what was essential in the law (Billy & Keating 2006:17).

Jesus reflected critically with the twelve disciples on their experiences, helping them to learn and to discern the truth in these situations. For example, he encouraged his disciples to reflect critically on the small offering of the widow compared with that of the wealthy teacher of the law and to discern the oppressive socio-economic forces involved in the temple system that led to the exploitation of the poor (Mk 12). The disciples learnt as they participated together with Jesus in ministry and then reflected on what had transpired. He used what today might be called an action-reflection or a praxis based pedagogy such of that of Groome.⁴⁰

Jesus spent time building relationships with his disciples. He was their role model. Jesus endorsed the great biblical commandment which affirmed the importance of right relationship with God and others (Lk 10:27). This combination of critical reflection and relationship resulted in transformation (moral formation) in the lives of the disciples from which flowed acts of service and ministry (Harkness 2001:148). Jesus' way of teaching morality was closely grounded in good, right and wise relationships. Jesus did not found a rabbinic school, but he was known as 'a teacher'. He did not teach theology in a formal setting but on the mountain (Mt 5), in the desert (Mk 6) and in fact wherever the people

⁴⁰This was described in chapter 3.4.2.4

were (Lk 6; Jn 4). Jesus aimed his teaching at people's hearts and habits as these would influence the hearers' everyday life (Willard 1998:129).

After the ascension, the mode of teaching and discipling in the early church did not change radically from Jesus' pattern of teaching. It remained relational and largely informal. This pattern can be seen in the learning relationship between Paul and Timothy. Furthermore, Paul's letters reflect the communal and reciprocal nature of discipling. In the early church in the Greco-Roman milieu, there was a need for theological education to ensure believers were rooted in their faith and able to resist heresies that were challenging the early church (2 Tim 3:14-15). This was often done on an individual basis as a younger Christian would follow an elder Christian who would mentor him or her, as for example Barnabas who travelled with Paul (Ac 13). Teaching also occurred in house churches such as the house church of Priscilla (Rm 16:3). There was a tradition of passing on the faith (Ac 1:1-2; Ac 2:42).

Paul Stevens summarises this New Testament church model of theological education:

Biblical theological education is a complex reality involving many strands of learning, faith development and active ministry evoked by authentic relationship with the living God. ... It is community orientated (rather than individualistic), co-operative (rather than competitive), life-centred (rather than merely school based), oriented towards obedience (rather than the mere accumulation of cognitive information), life-long (rather than concentrated in a degree program), and available for the whole people of God, the *laos* (rather than a clerical elite). (quoted in Harkness 2001:148)

This quote contrasts the early church paradigm with much of what happens today in theological education. While there are valuable insights and elements of truth to learn from this, one must beware of a simplistic comparison as today's theological education is set in a complex multi-layered world. While using this idealistic vision of biblical times as a yardstick to evaluate present day theological education, the modern day complexities have to be taken seriously. However, the importance of relationship with God and with others that is included in this assessment of biblical theological education is significant for a relational model of morality.

Besides these examples of theological education in the Bible, it is very likely that mothers were the first theological educators as they told their children stories of the faith. It was in the home context that faith grew and children came to understand and live out their faith. The importance of the early years should not be underplayed in moral formation. The two informal modes of moral formation, namely, discipline and socialisation, have the most influence in the formative years in the family. They are not directly relevant to moral

formation in theological education, but they play a vital role, and their impact should not be underestimated. Children absorb the worldviews, norms, attitudes, values and principles of their parents and others with whom they have close contact. The socialisation process forms good or bad habits and moral character.⁴¹

As time passed, theological education moved away from a mentor or discipling model to a more formalized model of education. Centres of learning such as the catechetical school of Alexandria in Egypt were started and initiated a long history of deep commitment to education and promoting intellectual life within the Christian church (Kang 2009:9). Augustine of Hippo (354-430) used a catechetical model to prepare converts for baptism. He combined faith and reason, holding the two in tension. Monasteries and religious orders were formed which became centres for Christian learning. For example, the Irish monk Columba (521-597) established a monastery in Iona which coupled a life of austerity and evangelism with rigorous scholarship (Townes 1975:66). Moral formation was through study (catechism), asceticism, prayer and contemplation as well as through active ministry on the island and elsewhere. The ethic of monasticism came to be regarded as a way of life, and the role of the community was crucial for moral formation. The monks followed their vows, including those of poverty, chastity and obedience, and practiced the spiritual disciplines. While there were very strict rules in monasticism and humility and self-denial formed part of the monastic rule, De Waal (1984:29) notes that often those who followed the religious life found their true selves in the selfless devotion to others, in giving love and being loved.

The monastic movement allowed women to enter convents where they were able to explore their spirituality, obtain an education and make a significant contribution to the church and society. Well known examples of such women are Hildegard of Bingen in the 12th century and the mystic Teresa of Avila in the 16th century (Provest 2001:340). Their writings include the importance of inner faith and its outworking in social issues. For example, Hildegard writes that “the first two steps on the way of the heart have opened the human being to the creative energies of God and this then leads to good works” (Craine 1998:104).

The collapse of the Roman Empire in the West and the controversies that plagued the Church led to the split between the Orthodox East and the Catholic West in 1054. This split was exacerbated during the 12th and 13th centuries as the Church was embroiled in the Crusades. During these turbulent years, theological education continued with, for

⁴¹ It was interesting to note that almost all those at Saint Augustine College and COTT came from a Christian family. This early socialisation appeared to be an important factor in their faith and contributed to their decision to study to be church leaders and ministers.

example, the scholasticism of Thomas Aquinas (a Dominican, 1225-1274) and Bonaventure (a Franciscan, 1221-1274) and the mysticism of Geert Groote (1340-1384) (Towns 1975:61). The scholasticism of Thomas Aquinas supported theological education and learning, helping to counter the growing intellectual doubts with the use of reason and Aristotelian philosophy which he synthesized with Christian theology. Groote established the Brethren of the Common Life which had several hundred schools throughout Europe. During the medieval period the Church was the primary provider of education at all levels in Western Europe. The universities were rooted in Christian faith and theology was considered as the foremost of the sciences. Aquinas maintained the balance between revelation and knowledge, but during the 14th century the Franciscan philosopher William Ockham (1295-1349) with his Nominalist approach taught that human reason was incapable of coming to a natural knowledge of the divinity and that God was known by Revelation alone. This contributed to a divide between spirituality and the moral code and theology lost its cohesiveness as it split into a collection of specialized disciplines (Billy & Orsuto 2001:21-22). This lack of cohesiveness in the teaching of theology is still of concern, and writers such as Edward Farley (1983) in his book *Theologica* highlight this problem.

Scripture was given greater prominence in theological reflection, and certain teachings of the church were questioned and critically examined. This emphasis on scripture rather than church teaching contributed to the controversies that led to the 16th century reformations. During the 16th century reformations, theological education came to be seen as being for the laity as well as the clergy. Luther, Melanchthon, Zwingli, Calvin and Knox promoted universal education that should be conducted within a community of caring individuals (Towns 1975:90). The reformers emphasized the authority of scripture as the basis for morality and the priesthood of all believers, where all are accountable to God rather than simply submitting to church authority (Provest 2001: 342). The Roman church responded to the reformation by purifying itself. The strong teaching tradition rooted in monasteries and religious orders such as the Jesuits, the Dominicans, the Franciscans and the Ursulines was affirmed and centres for Christian learning were formed (Kang 2009:10). Spiritual formation was combined with this strong teaching tradition of the Franciscans and the Dominicans. They emphasized learning, but there was also an understanding that the friars were responding to a personal call from God in their lifestyle of poverty and their ministry, and this was related to the holiness of their lives (O'Malley in Neuhaus 1992:79). Alongside the monasteries were cathedral schools mainly for the training of clergy from which the universities developed. In these cathedral schools, there was a gradual shift from meditation and prayer to logic, critical thinking, disputation and

argument with others (Conradie 1997:354). This paved the way for the rise of highly intellectualized theological education which contributed to the further fragmentation of theology into different branches.

In the 16th century, as part of the Catholic Counter Reformation, the Jesuits developed certain formation practices such as retreats and spiritual exercises into a codified system. Contemplative spiritual exercises had been in existence before Christianity, but Ignatius of Loyola developed them into a spiritual programme “to teach prayer, to enable discernment of God’s will, to lead to and sustain conversion (O’Malley in Neuhaus 1992:83). The Jesuits also attached importance to spiritual direction, and this gained in prominence through factors such as the insistence of Teresa of Avila on its value for spiritual and hence moral formation (:83). Besides this emphasis on retreats, spiritual direction and prayer, the Jesuits also included a programme of service to those in need (:84). The Jesuits’ formation included a codified set of rules known as the ‘Rules of Modesty’ which date from the earliest years of the order as well as the assumption of the internalization of religious values or virtues. Thus conversion of heart and adherence to norms of behaviour were combined. It is interesting to note that the training of diocesan clergy, as opposed to those who were part of an order, focused more on ministerial concerns and less on formation, and many of these priests were perceived as failing to live by standards of morality and spirituality. This perception contributed to the Protestant reformation (:87). However, the Council of Trent (1563) affirmed that spiritual formation should be the most important aspect of ministerial training.

Among Protestants, Pietism arose in the wake of the Reformation as a reaction to the perceived scholasticism and intellectualizing of the faith. Pietism emphasizes the authority of scripture for spiritual (moral) formation and the inward personal devotional life and outward good works of social ministry. Pietistic leaders such as Spener saw the character of the teacher as crucial for formation. Francke encouraged personal prayer and the application of the doctrines in one’s life. Zinzendorf regarded the singing of hymns which appeals to people’s emotions as the most effective way of integrating the doctrines into their lives and thus nurturing morality (Provest 2001:343-345).

The philosopher scientists of the Renaissance and the early Enlightenment challenged the role of faith in the world. This was reflected in theological education, and a gradual shift from a focus on spiritual formation to the practice of critical thinking and logical argument ensued. This led to an intellectual, cognitive approach to theological education and a split between the rational and the spiritual. “Humanity became master of its own moral edifice – apart from any intrinsic reference to God” (Billy & Orsuto 2001:23). Friedrich

Schleiermacher, one of the founders of the Berlin University which was based on the principles of the Enlightenment and research, defended the place of theology at the university by demonstrating the empirical, scientific character of theology and promoting professional training of ministers in the same way as a doctor was professionally trained (Conradie 1997:354). This affected the model of theological education and will be discussed in more detail with the models of theological education.

Alongside this scholastic, scientific approach to theology in the universities there was the Methodist revival in the 18th century. This gave rise to the Sunday-school movement which adopted a threefold way of forming Christian disciples, namely, through an understanding of doctrine and beliefs, through practicing spiritual disciplines such as attending church and praying and through the Christian practice of self-denial (Bentley 2010:557). Wesley affirmed the role of lay people and that everyone could be a leader and use their gifts (:559). But in order for people to become leaders, they needed to understand the faith, and so he promoted the study of the Bible in the Sunday school system. This was not a hierarchical system; rather it encouraged mutual accountability and responsibility (:560-561).

For Wesley, turning to God meant becoming involved in action that would influence and change society. Methodism exhorted followers to adhere to key disciplines, namely, Bible study, prayer, church attendance, and mutual accountability and encouraged music and the singing of hymns as this formed people at an emotional level. Bentley (2010:556) asserts that Wesley's success in sparking this moral formation of Christians came from his affirmation of the value of each individual as created by God and able to become a leader who could benefit the community by taking responsibility for personal holiness and social concerns. Gooch (2006:43) describes this as "warm hearts and dirty hands." The social impact of this Methodist movement was not always welcomed by the established church. For example, the Bishop of Rochester condemned the Sunday schools as places where children learn to "despise religion, laws and subordination" (Provest 2001:346).

As Christianity spread, the training of missionaries became important and contributed to theological education. As new churches were established outside of Europe and America, there was a need to train church leaders in order to develop indigenous leadership in those younger churches (Kang 2009:10). This led to the establishment of theological colleges for the training of indigenous clergy. Missionaries from Europe went to South America, the East and to Africa. In South Africa, missionaries came from various denominations, and these denomination differences were reflected in their work. Theological education was instituted to train local ministers to meet the needs of the

church. The first training institutions in South Africa tended to reflect the political divisions and were based on racial lines.

4.2.2 Theological education in South Africa

In South Africa, most of the main line churches established seminaries for the training of clergy. Many of these were denominational, race-based and gender exclusive. For example, in 1859, the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) seminary was established in Stellenbosch (Kritzinger 2009). The churches also made use of university theological departments such as the theology department at Rhodes University for the training of white students, but black students were excluded from these white universities. Some seminaries were started for black students who were not allowed to attend white universities. For example, there was Zonnebloem College in Cape Town which was founded in 1858 by Bishop Gray (De Gruchy 1979:18), and a seminary was established at Fort Hare in 1921 (Denis 2003). St Bede's was established at Mthatha in the old Transkei in 1899 and St Paul's in Grahamstown (1902) for the training of Anglican ordinands. These came to be divided along racial lines with white students attending St Paul's and black students at St Bede's. The Methodists, Presbyterians and the Congregational Union had trained seminarians at the University of Fort Hare since 1921, but this ceased in 1959 due to the apartheid government passing the Extension of Universities Education Act (Denis 2003: 70).

With the growing opposition to apartheid and the dismantling of Fort Hare due to the passing of the Extension Of Universities Education Act in 1959, the churches attempted to combine training at one theological seminary, and The Federal Theological Seminary (Fedsem) was established in 1963 with the backing of the South African Council of Churches (SACC). This seminary was ecumenical, non-racial, contextual, politically challenging and forward looking (Denis 2003:79). It raised the awareness of students regarding political and economic issues and encouraged critical thinking and analysis. However, there were tensions at the college relating to spirituality, morality, and leadership that led to the appointment of a commission on inquiry in 1984. Despite this, the numbers enrolled at Fedsem continued to decline due to a lack of ecumenical commitment from the participating churches, a crisis of leadership, the deterioration of academic standards and its location in a violence racked area (:76). Fedsem closed in 1993 for various reasons, some of which involved tensions between the staff and students from the various denominational colleges that formed the seminary and some of which were related to political developments and the opening of universities to all races (:74). The opening of universities meant that black theological students could now attend any university that

offered theological studies. This option was attractive for the training of ministers as it is generally a less expensive option than sending students to residential denominational theological institutions. More recently, the Methodists have developed the Seth Mokitimi Methodist Seminary and the Anglicans have revitalized The College of the Transfiguration, both of which are residential, denominational colleges. This was done out of a growing concern that distance or extension methods of theological education were not forming church leaders of the calibre required to deal with the complexities faced by the Church in the modern world. This argument was based on statements such as that of De Gruchy (1986:135-136):

The congregation simply does not provide the setting, time and resources for the disciplined study required for professionals who will lead the Christian community in its search for an adequate contemporary expression of its identity along with reflection on authentic concrete Christian practices in its world-historical context.

Similarly, Storey (in Kumalo & Richardson 2010:268) argues that “ministers with integrated intelligence and imagination can be formed only through intensive residential, full-time seminary experience.”

While the universities of the Witwatersrand, Rhodes and Cape Town have closed or reduced their theology departments, there are still a number of state-funded universities, such as the Free State, Pretoria and Stellenbosch (all linked to Reformed churches), and the universities of Kwa-Zulu Natal and South Africa, that offer degrees in theology. There are also private universities which are accredited by the Council on Higher Education. One such university that is used by churches for theological training is St Augustine College.⁴² It is a Catholic university but offers secular as well as theological courses. It is one of the institutions that formed part of the empirical research.

There are also now a number of open distance learning institutions. The University of South Africa (Unisa) has for many years offered theological studies in the open distance learning mode. Despite the dismantling of the Theology Faculty at Unisa and its incorporation into the College of Human Sciences, theological studies are still offered. A variation of the open distance education model is that of theological education by extension. The Theological Extension movement started in South America as a response to the difficulty and the cost of full-time study at theological colleges that were often far from where people lived, necessitating that students leave their homes and communities in order to study. The Theological Extension model allows people to study at home in conjunction with support from the local churches, combining book learning with interaction

⁴² For example, it is also used by the Anglican Diocese of Johannesburg for training.

in groups with local church leaders. Kinsler, the founder of extension education, defines it as “any method that allows a person to continue as a member of society, earning his [sic] support” (2008:248). The Theological Education by Extension College (TEEC) based in Johannesburg is a representative of this extension movement in South Africa.

Another factor that influences theological education is the advance in technology. Distance learning traditionally occurred through printed notes, but today electronic media offer new possibilities with the advantage of a radically shortened turnaround time between lecturer or tutor and the students and the possibility of real time interaction. Technological advances have made communication affordable and allow for visual as well as audio communication. Online contact and conversation between lecturer and student are a possibility and can help to overcome some of the isolation and lack of contact and interaction between staff and students. The South African Theological Seminary (SATS), one of the institutions researched, is a distance learning institution that makes use of such technology. SATS sees its role as “a provider of reasonably priced, academically sound Christocentric, theological distance learning tuition via the latest course delivery technologies” (SATS 2013:7).

Despite advances in technological communication, there are still disadvantages to distance learning and extension education. It is not easy to study amidst the pressures of family, church commitments and earning a living. Students benefit from ‘coming apart’, from spending time at retreats or symposiums where there are no distractions and it is possible to focus on their studies. One of the ways of dealing with such problems and issues is to develop what is termed diversified or blended education that attempts to combine the best of both residential and distance education (Kinsler 2008:98-103). The term ‘diversified education’ describes various creative, contextual possibilities for theological education that generally include more contact time away from the pressures of the local community than the traditional distance learning or extension model (Kinsler 2008:8-10).

Outcomes Based Education was introduced in South Africa in 1994. It emphasized the achievement of assessable, cognitive, practical and affective outcomes. These outcomes fell into the categories of heads, hands and hearts that John Dube the founder of Ohlange institute in Inanda just north of Durban had long before developed in what he called the 3 H’s approach to education: head – thinking, hands – skills and heart – belief in God. (Kumalo & Richardson 2010:261). These are similar to knowing, being and doing as discussed earlier and link with the threefold purpose of theological education as discussed below in section 4.3.

The institutions that form part of this research represent the spread of different forms of contemporary theological education as St Augustine College is a religious (Catholic) university that offers theological studies but also offers non-theological studies. The College of the Transfiguration (COTT) is a residential denominational college, and The South African Theological Seminary (SATS) is not directly linked to any denomination but falls under the spiritual oversight of the Elders of The Village Church, which was established by Rosebank Union Church, a broadly evangelical church, and uses distance learning methods (SATS 2013:8).

4.3 The purpose of theological education

Today, theological education is well established with many different strands and expressions that reflect the perceived purpose of theological education. This section begins with a discussion regarding the purpose of theological education. Then, various models of theological education that developed in order to achieve what was considered as the primary purpose for theological education will be discussed.

The purpose of theological education as expressed by many theologians and Christian educators as well as by a number of theological education institutions incorporates three basic dimensions. This threefold purpose of theological education is described in various ways and is linked to the aims of imparting knowledge, developing professional skills for ministry, and spiritual and moral formation. These form a matrix for Christian theology which Bosch (1991:16) believed all theological education should embody to be credible. For Bosch, the three aims of theological education correspond to what he calls the three publics namely the academy, the church and society or to use the phraseology of classical Greek philosophy *theoria*, *poiesis* and *praxis*. Others use the terms “head, hands and heart; faith, hope and love; intellectual, relational and intentional; what is true, what is of God and what is just” (:16-17). Other terminology includes “to be like Christ, to know the word of God, and to do the work of ministry (Chow in Harkness 2001:142). Banks (1999:144) writes of these three elements as “acquiring cognitive, spiritual-moral, and practical obedience.” He argues that theological education should have a balance between the three areas of character and spiritual formation, professional development and academic excellence. Harkness (:147) summarizes these three elements as “the cognitive acquisition of appropriate knowledge, competence in required ministerial skills, and personal character development.” The elements of knowing, doing and being described in the previous chapter reflect this threefold purpose of theological education.

Keller (2010a:302) argues that theological education should comprise formative catechesis that is academic learning of content, practical catechesis that is practical skills

and transformative catechesis which focuses on the spiritual and personal growth. Sometimes, these three aims are further divided and a fourth priority is emphasized. For example, the Association of Theological Schools in America identifies a fourth purpose of theological education, namely, contextualization of ministries, which is an extension of the practical skills as identified by Keller with the emphasis on the transformation of society.

A number of models of theological education are identified based on the perceived and stated purpose of these institutions. These are now considered.

4.4 The models of theological education

4.4.1 Introduction

Overend (2007:134) offers a useful continuum of approaches to theological education that positions various models of theological education along the continuum. Ministerial formation which he describes as an embodied reflective wisdom tradition is at one end of the continuum while ideas of liberal education which emphasise the development of knowledge and cognitive skills of the learner lie at the other end. The stated purpose of a theological institution tends to locate it at one or other end of this continuum.

The models that will be discussed below start with those of Kelsey, a faculty member at Yale Divinity School, who pioneered the classification of theological education. He developed a twofold typology based on a paradigmatic use of the cities of Athens and Berlin (Anderson 2009:101; Kelsey 1992:227; 1993). The Athens model was concerned with spiritual formation as this was the overarching aim while the Berlin model focused on academic excellence. In other words, the Athens model was more concerned with 'knowing God' than 'knowing about God'.

Robert Banks, also from the North American context, grappled with the balance between the academic and the vocational aspects of theological education. He acknowledged the importance of knowing, being and doing, recognising that moral formation depends on corporate worship (being), interpreting scripture (knowing) and pastoral care (doing) (Banks 1999:26). Banks developed what he termed a *missional* model which placed the main emphasis on 'theological mission'.

Like Banks, many who followed Kelsey developed a threefold typology. For example, Herzog (1995), having reviewed the models of Kelsey, called for a third model (which he called Lima) which focused on the needs of the poor and the marginalised. Similarly, Conradie (1997) added a third model to the Athens and Berlin models which he called Calcutta and thus coined the term 'the ABC of theological education'. His typology is

based on the three major aims of theological education. Athens represents spiritual and moral formation and wisdom, Berlin academic excellence and Calcutta the development of practical skills for ministry within a given context particularly that of the poor and marginalised. The models that Conradie identified as 'the ABC of theological education' will be discussed in more detail below as they influence the way theological education is conducted and the emphasis placed on moral formation.

A fourth model based on relationship which pertains to the South African milieu and extends the ABC of theological education has been identified by Kretzschmar (2011:69) to form the ABCD of theological education. The D stands for Durban and emphasises relationality. Kretzschmar writes, "Not only does this incorporate a vital African element of relationship, but it emphasises the existing stress on relationship within the biblical and Christian tradition, on relationships with God, self, others and creation" (:69). Ballard and Pritchard (1996:57-70) also offer four models describing them as an applied model, a critical correlation model, a praxis model and a habitus model. Their work was influenced by Farley and his critique of theological education.⁴³

Feminist theologians represented for example by the Cornflower Consortium have expressed concern that theological education does not address the concerns of women and there are no models of theological education that truly incorporate a feminist perspective. These concerns will be addressed in section 4.5 after the discussion of the models of theological education.

An informal, non-schooling model advocated by Harkness is discussed as it has value for moral formation, even though in this model, he advocates a movement away from institutional theological education which is the focus of this study.

Cheesman (1993) classifies theological education institutions according to the structure of the theological college as well as the content and purpose. He identifies four dominant paradigms of theological education. These he describes as the academic, the monastic, the training and the business models. His models will be discussed particularly as they pertain to the differences between distance and residential theological education

4.4.2 The Athens model

The Athens model is sometimes referred to as the classical model as it is based on the classical Greek model of education where the primary goal was character formation, the cultivation of excellence and knowing the supreme good (Edgar 2014:2). For Christians,

⁴³ Especially Farley (1983:35-36).

the supreme good is to know God. The purpose of the Athens model therefore is *paideia* which can be described as ‘culturing the soul’ (Anderson 2009: 101).

The theology underlying this model stems from the theological analysis of Edward Farley (1983:29ff) as set out in his study entitled *Theologia*. In this study, Farley criticises the splintering of theology into a number disparate academic disciplines which lacked coherent unity.⁴⁴ In his attempt to overcome this fragmentation of theological education, he grappled with the question of how to obtain the virtue or habit of wisdom. Traditionally, theology was understood as ‘the virtue of wisdom’ and was studied as one unified body of knowledge even though two types of wisdom were distinguished by scholars such as Thomas Aquinas (Fiorenza in Astley et al. 1996:320). One type of wisdom was the habit of virtue, and the other was based on knowledge and prudent judgement which were acquired through study. The wisdom of habit and virtue was seen as a gift of the Holy Spirit.

Farley felt that the solution to the problem of theological education was to recover *theologia* which involved linking faith and theology and combining the two types of wisdom and spiritual formation. Without that recovery, he feared that theological education would perpetuate its enslavement to specialities, its lack of subject matter and criteria and its functionalist and technological orientation (Farley 1983:156). He believed that the goal of theological education should be theological understanding not “functional specialities” for clerical ministry (Wheeler & Farley 1991:15).

The Athens model seeks to integrate knowledge and faith and so to avoid a split between knowledge and spiritual formation (Fiorenza in Astley et al. 1996:326). One of the problems, if there is a split and the study of theology becomes a purely academic endeavour, is that students might not associate what they are learning with the practical aspects of ministry and virtuous living. For example, they may not apply what they learn in biblical studies to ethical issues of daily life. There is a danger of a separation between theology and faith, or knowledge and action which impoverishes moral formation.

The Athens model criticises the presentation of theology as knowledge rather than as wisdom which is a personal characteristic that comes through relationship with God. It emphasises character formation and spiritual formation through knowing God rather than through knowledge about God. Traditionally, this was done in a community setting where the teacher’s aim was to develop young men of good character.

⁴⁴ These were biblical studies, church history, systematic theology and practical theology.

While this model cultivates character and relationship with God, there is little or no reference to social conditions and encouraging relationship with others in society. This leads to a criticism that it is concerned with inward transformation rather than outer transformation.

4.4.3 The Berlin model

The Berlin model is associated with the founding of the University of Berlin in 1810, hence the term 'Berlin' (Kelsey 1993:12). This model was influenced by Enlightenment thought and grew from theological institutions that were attached to universities and valued "critical inquiry that is disciplined and orderly" (Kelsey 1993:303). One of the founders of the Berlin University was Friedrich Schleiermacher who defended the place of theology in universities by demonstrating the scientific character of theology (Conradie 1997:354).

This model was widely adopted, and knowledge and teaching content came to be emphasised in theological education. Students were encouraged to think for themselves rather than to respond in obedience to the teachings of the Church or merely repeat the traditions. This approach tends to be independent from the churches and allows and even encourages critical inquiry and rational investigation of all sources of authority including ecclesiastical ones. The Bible is not unquestioningly accepted as the sacred truth but rather subjected to socio-historical analysis and testing (Kelsey 1992:84). Bosch (1991:5) points out the danger that "theology is often based on the doctrine of universal doubt rather than the affirmation of doctrinal convictions." Naidoo (2011:139) fears that there may be "a struggle between guarding the free inquiry and scientific objectivity revered by scholars, and protecting the beliefs and religious traditions valued by local churches."

This emphasis on knowledge led to the division of the curriculum into what is known as the fourfold paradigm, namely, biblical studies, church history, systematic theology and practical theology (Conradie 1997:355) These sub disciplines each evolved their own methodology, expertise, goals and agenda. A further problem with this fragmentation is that ethical issues that arise within a theological discipline are not sufficiently emphasised, integrated throughout the curriculum or linked to current social affairs (Kretzschmar 2015:2). Even where ethical thinking is encouraged, it is not always linked with spiritual and moral formation in the lives of the staff and students.

Although the Berlin model incorporates spiritual formation, its focus is on the acquisition of knowledge. The emphasis is on rational analysis, research and the application of theories that can change in nuance according to the changing world circumstances and secular

understandings. This contrasts with the Athens model that understands theory as the “unchanging and eternal” that is obtained more from contemplation (Kelsey 1992:84-85).

In the Berlin model, the teacher is the one who passes on learning, skills and knowledge. In the Athens model, the students learn to imitate the example of the teacher until they too have the character and wisdom of the teacher, not just the knowledge. Kelsey (1992:91) describes the teacher-learner relationship of the Berlin model as “an unequal relationship where the teacher has a greater fund of knowledge and more highly developed research skills and the student acquires both indirectly through the process of apprenticeship in research.”

This paradigm of theological education dominates in many seminaries and universities and reflects the preoccupation with academic achievement. As Banks puts it, “Seminaries have often adopted secular models of education, rather than subject them to rigorous theological or practical evaluation” (1990:6f). It is argued that the academic institution must resist any evaluation of students apart from strict academic evaluation (Campbell in Neuhaus 1992:16). This may lead to a separation of character formation and academic ability and a false dichotomy between the two. The theological institution fulfils the role of examiner on academic matters and absolves itself from any responsibility for moral (or spiritual) formation or suitability for ordination or ministry in the Church. There is a separation between the seminary and the Church. This leads to an emphasis on academic excellence often at the expense of moral and spiritual formation rather than holding the two in creative tension.

Despite the criticisms of the Berlin model, it does offer insights for moral formation through a critical understanding of the faith and reflecting on the implications for daily living. Knowledge is required in order understand and weigh up what God’s will is and to get to the point where Christian habits of virtue come naturally (Wright 2010:173). Academic learning helps people to ‘love God with all their minds’. Moreover, knowledge facilitates mission, as people are able to engage with the secular world philosophies and to confront the world. In the church community, it can help to avoid fundamentalism and simplistic, ‘proof text’ use of scripture.

However, where the theoretical, academic paradigm predominates, there is a danger that ministry is seen as cerebral rather than relational and as being about ideas rather than holiness and integrity. The inclusion of spirituality, ethics and practical theology in the programme of study can help to overcome this dichotomy between academic classroom work and moral and spiritual formation (Neuhaus 1992:104). Including formational direction might help to avoid the danger that students treat their studies as an academic

exercise in pursuit of a qualification unrelated to their everyday life and ministry. Distance teaching models of theological education that are content based and which concentrate on the acquisition of facts and knowledge run this danger as they offer little if any personal formation and practical training such as is provided in a residential institution. Such studies can create an obsession with obtaining a degree and fostering a professional objective without a vocational spirit (Gaikwad 2008:96). Conradie (1997:356) points out a further danger that this model of theological education becomes internalised and ministers tend to assume the dominant role of lecturers in the congregation which entrenches hierarchical patterns of relating rather than patterns of mutuality.

4.4.4 The vocational model

Schleiermacher understood the study of theology not just as an academic task as described above but also as a vocation or profession comparable to that of a doctor or lawyer. Similarly, Trull and Carter (2004:185-214) and Marshall (2009:62, 68-69) emphasised that those who were to be ministers in the church needed to acquire the skills necessary to carry out their ministry. In this model, the rational study of theology as a science with a theoretical grounding of knowledge was still important, but the professional skills that are required to fulfil the vocation of minister are also requisite. The emphasis is on ministry and the skills needed for ministry. "Students are coached in techniques of preaching, liturgy, pastoral care, catechism, youth work, congregational management, charity, community development, evangelism etcetera" (Conradie 1997:356). These practical skills are acquired through experience, practice and fieldwork in a relevant setting. Where this experience was gained in the context of the poor and vulnerable, such as one of Mother Teresa's projects in Calcutta, the need to train ministers to address and be effective in such situations became clearer, and the Calcutta model developed.

4.4.5 The Calcutta model

The Calcutta model emphasises ministry with the poor and the skills that are necessary to address the concerns of the poor and oppressed. As church leaders grapple with how to make theological education relevant to impoverished and struggling communities and how to train ministers who are able to make a difference and minister in a relevant manner in such communities, this model gained in momentum and relevance. Theological institutions at the urging of liberation theologians started a re-examination of the traditional way of teaching theology as being too Western, white and patriarchal. Instead, they embraced the writings of liberation theologians and others such as Paulo Freire. This model acknowledges that students come with existing knowledge, and education becomes a process of making people fully active in their particular situations (Wheeler & Farley 1991:

84).⁴⁵ This is very different from the traditional approach as used in the Berlin model that sees theological education as imparting objective knowledge of specialised fields of study to empty receptacles.

Liberation theologians urged that theology should be taught contextually and in a way that is relevant to the most pressing problems of the world regarding power and poverty. They raised concerns regarding justice, empowerment, peace and creation and argued that these should be at the centre of theological education.

In the Calcutta model, critical awareness is important as it encourages freedom of thought and an analysis of the world in which people live. If students are to engage with the world, they need to know their context. On a practical curricular level, this meant that disciplines that raise an awareness of sociological factors, economic issues, young people, patriarchy and other concerns need to be studied. The practical outworking of this is a theological education that is from the bottom up and that is not just book learning. This follows the hermeneutical spiral in which praxis and theory interact. Together they shape theology and what is taught and so prepare students for engagement with the world. Banks (1999:144) sees this as “hands-on partnership in ministry based on interpreting the tradition and reflecting on practice with a strong spiritual and communal dimension.” Those such as Harkness (1998:45) who affirm this model believe that theological education has to go beyond intellectual-cognitive activity to embrace emotional-social activity. Education should be the “means by which both individuals and the communities of which they are a part are shaped and fashioned holistically towards freedom and liberation – a concept seen clearly in both the Old and New Testament records” (Harkness 1998:45).

The Calcutta model is designed to equip students to deal with issues of justice, poverty and transformation in society by focusing on practical community skills (Conradie 1997: 351). It attempts to make theological education relevant to the grass roots and to relate faith and life. It emphasises social aspects and transformation of society, in other words, relationship with others. While this is commendable and essential, relationship with God (spiritual formation) and with self (knowledge and character) are also vital. This model does not exclude these, but the emphasis lies in equipping for practical ministry among the poor and needy. The Durban model as described by Kretzschmar moves towards incorporating this understanding of relationship more seriously.

⁴⁵ Freire’s educational philosophy as freedom can be found in his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968).

4.4.6 The Durban model

Kretzschmar describes this model which has grown from the African context and adds relationality to the other goals of theological education. This incorporates the African understanding of *ubuntu*. It also embraces the Christian stress on relationship as articulated in Jesus' summary of the law. It includes relationship with God, self, others and creation. "Such relationships are central to being human and mirror the relationality within the Trinity" (Kretzschmar 2011: 69).

This emphasis on relationality reminds students and educators that all of life is dependent on God. Spiritual formation is about relationship, mentoring and spiritual disciplines. It is more than outward conformity to ritual. It is about self-growth and understanding, acknowledging our shadow side while also affirming that we are created in God's image. It reflects the fact that morality is inextricable from relationships and that ethical theory must be weighed up in the light of relationship, whether it enhances the relationship or damages it. This stress on relationality also reminds people of their rootedness in and responsibility towards creation (Kretzschmar 2011:69). This emphasis on relationality helps students to relate what they learn to their life.

Many theological institutions, particularly those in the two thirds world, are wary of the highly rational, critical, academic models of theological education where head knowledge is elevated higher than any other knowledge (Kinsler 2008:131). This can lead to an obsession with obtaining qualifications rather than with growth and learning. A model that emphasises relationship reminds students of the importance of ministry and service in the Church rather than simply focusing on obtaining a qualification. Christian education must include a "transformation of oppression to freedom, dehumanization to humanization, poverty to self-sufficiency, religious intolerance to religious tolerance" (Kumalo 2005:62).

If theological education considers service and advocacy for the poor to be important, then it will grapple with the issue of ministering in a context of poverty and deprivation and take relationship seriously. An example of this is the deliberate establishment of a seminary in Kibera, a slum area in Nairobi. This is an example of contextual theological education where the gospel is articulated in a manner that listens to, engages with and empowers those in situations of poverty and deprivation (Smith 2007:15). Another understanding of theological education that incorporates "the testimonies of our own lives and faith journeys" has relevance for this model. In contrast to traditional modes of theological education such as that of the Athens and Berlin models, students are encouraged to explore their own backgrounds and how their life experiences have impacted on their faith journey and who they are now. "Telling one's story" becomes an integral part of theological

training. Musa Dube's (2003) use of stories, as described in chapter 3.4.2.9.2 in which students reflect on their environment including their own family and church and on their roles and functions within their environment and the power forces at play, helps student to realise the role that social forces play in their oppression. Dube believes that if students see their oppression "as a social construct then it can be deconstructed and reconstructed to affirm all members of society" (Dube 2003: 107). From a very different context, that of the United States, Marshall (2009: 66-67) also asks questions regarding the way in which people experience their history and narratives and their sense of self and agency. The question of "Who you are" is more important than the question of "What you do." Marshall identifies social context and location as being critical for moral formation (:67).

4.5 A feminist approach - Sophia

An approach to theological education that takes women seriously could be called Sophia after the feminine word for wisdom. This approach is grounded in feminist theology, takes women seriously and argues for the equality of women and recognition of the uniqueness of their perception and contribution. It calls for new models of God, Church and community and for ways of 'doing theology' that are more in tune with the feminine.

Besides calling for women's issues and concerns to be included, it promotes 'sapiential learning' a recovery of the wisdom of women. Such wisdom gives direction for our lives and is a breath of the Divine (Rupp 2004: xiii). This wisdom of women is holistic and concerned with all aspects of life. This kind of feminine sapiential learning comes from immersion in the chaos and messiness of ordinary living as contrasted with an objective body of knowledge undisturbed by the complexities of life (Grey in Astley & Francis 1996: 80).

Integrity and educating the whole person are important themes underlying this approach. Grey (in Astley & Francis 1996:80) expresses it thus: "to explore the way in which feminist theology in some of its contemporary expressions is enriching traditional Christian concepts of redemption and salvation by engaging with these creatively across the disciplines in a way which could be helpful for theological education." This approach goes deeper than simply including women in theological education which is now fairly widely accepted. Rather, it examines the nature of what is taught and the theology that underlies the educational programme. It attempts to expose patriarchal discourse and disordered patriarchal relationships and replace them with integrated whole narratives that avoid dualism and affirm the whole of life. Inclusive language becomes important so that the invisibility and subordination of women are not reinforced. The study of theology should be

gender sensitive and include the often forgotten or hidden role of women in the Bible and in the church.

Feminist theology has been included in the curriculum in many institutions but on the periphery, as an elective. New courses are written that deal with 'women's issues or feminist theology', but such courses do not alter the main structures and male assumptions that dominate the study of theology. For example, New Testament studies are seen as core while a course on "Women in the New Testament" is a peripheral course, and the basic educational issues and patriarchal assumptions in the institution are not addressed (Cornwall Collective 1980). The problem is that very often feminist studies are included in the curriculum rather than the curriculum being re-worked in the light of feminism, and hence the basic nature of theological studies remains patriarchal. Yet, many of the problems identified by feminist theologians regarding theological education are the same as those identified by other researchers into theological education (Chopp in Wheeler & Farley 1991:73). It is argued that what is needed is a feminist approach to theological education which is contextual and responds transformatively and creatively across all the theological disciplines and contributes to moral formation.

4.6. The models of Cheesman

Cheesman (1993) describes five models of theological education: the academic model, the monastic model, the ministerial training model, the business model and the therapeutic model. There are many similarities between these models of Cheesman and the models that have been described above. For example, the academic model emphasises knowledge and so is similar to the Berlin model and the ministerial training model is similar to the vocational model.

The **academic model** of Cheesman focuses on knowledge and learning about God and the Bible. As pointed out, it has similarities to the Berlin model. It helps to combat ignorance and inappropriate proof-text use of Scripture. Its strength lies in the acquisition of knowledge and thinking skills that lead to loving God with all one's mind. Cheesman (1993:486) explains that the biblical concept of knowing often involves relationship. The weaknesses of this model surface if the pursuit of knowledge comes to overshadow faith and knowing God. If theology is abstracted from faith and the life of the Church, students might have difficulty in making the connections between what they are learning in the theological college and what they are doing in their local church. They learn about God in a theoretical manner that may bear little or no relevance to their lives. Another problem is that theological educators are considered as academic lecturers and do not necessarily

teach from a faith perspective. This can lead to the seminary being distanced and alienated from the churches.

The **monastic** model seeks to develop personal and spiritual growth through a firmly structured, residential community. This is based on the tradition of training priests in monasteries and cathedral schools where the focus was not just on acquiring knowledge but also on formation. This formation took place in the context of a Christian community through spiritual disciplines such as prayer, fasting, reading and meditating on the Bible, the confession of sins and the practice of care and compassion. Such priests were to be examples of a Christian lifestyle for others in the Church to follow. This does not mean that academic teaching and vocational skills are not important but the community that develops in a residential setting is considered to be crucial. "It is this aspect of theological education which is remembered by the student as having the most impact on his or her life" (Cheesman 1993:489). This full-time study in a residential college is often the preferred choice of the churches for training those going into the ordained ministry (De Gruchy 1986:135-136; Kumalo & Richardson 2010:267-268). There are, however, criticisms of this monastic model. The atmosphere of a seminary may be artificial, and when students return to their 'real world', things are different. Another danger in the monastic model is that the theological colleges may become inward looking rather than serving the local churches. If this happens, the teaching may become less relevant and cease to really serve the needs of the local churches (Morgan 2008:258).

The **business model** arose to a large extent as a response to the competition between seminaries for students but also from the secular influences of providing education on an affordable business model. Here, the theological college is run on business terms, and courses are developed as required by the market. In the extreme, the college would not teach what was not popular but rather gear courses for student success and what the churches want in order to register more students and become more economically viable. This kind of pragmatism can lead to relativism, and what works in economic terms becomes the criterion for right and wrong (Groome 1991:79). Theological education needs to walk a careful path between being irrelevant in its teaching and conforming to popular demand; otherwise, marketability rather than theology determines curriculum design (Cheesman 1993:493).

The ministerial training paradigm is a task orientated model which, while incorporating an academic focus, tends to concentrate on teaching skills in order to equip people to perform ministerial functions. It places the vision of ministry at the centre of its analysis. Theological education is seen as inculcating the dispositions, skills and knowledge that are

needed and appropriate to a ministerial vocation. This model incorporates a theological understanding of ministry, but students are “trained to do the task of theology” which is seen as a skill rather than as a body of knowledge (Cheesman 1993:491). This means that practical and professional skills for ministry such as effective preaching or dynamic mission take precedence over ideas and philosophy. Theological education is seen as professional education for the ministry. Its focus is on the preparation of ministers or clergy for their tasks. More than just good theology is needed because a good theologian is not necessarily a good preacher or counsellor, and these are the skills that are needed for ministry. It aims to help “bridge the chasm between the classroom and the world” by teaching very practical skills and specific techniques that are needed in ministry (:491). The danger is that it “elevates technique above conviction and relevance above truth” (:492).

This model uses a functionalist approach that considers what a minister, whether lay or ordained, does and equips the person to do it successfully. It incorporates fieldwork to develop skills such as preaching and counselling and block placements, where students work in churches to learn skills that are needed. Ministry tends to be understood as a “range of professional activities” (Neuhaus 1991:114).

One of the criticisms of this approach is that it is orientated towards ministerial functions and has lost its theological focus. A further danger is that the minister learns to follow a pragmatic approach tuned to the wishes of church leadership rather than a prophetic approach. The seminary ceases to pioneer the way and instead conforms to popular demand without rigorous intellectual leadership. The emphasis is on the fulfilment of the needs of church congregations so that the prophetic dimension of ministry is jeopardised.

Further criticisms of this ministerial training model include its emphasis on technique and skills and its focus on doing rather than being. There is a fear that until theological education ceases to be orientated to purely ministerial functions, it will not serve adequately as preparation for ministry or any other end (Wheeler & Farley 1991:9).

A variation of this training model that is sometimes termed the **therapeutic model** includes a greater emphasis on the insights from the social psychologies which are incorporated into the curriculum. There is an emphasis on pastoral care and paradigms such as Freud’s depth psychology and Rogers’ humanistic psychology. Johnson (1989:32-37) warns that this emphasis on the insights of counselling and psychology might have more to do with analysing the human psyche than caring for the human soul. There is a danger of insufficient integration between the experiential emotional sides of human life

and the cognitive, conceptual and volitional sides. The pastoral counselling emphasis could be in opposition to the prophetic tradition of Christianity and lead to a lack of concern for societal issues and justice (Cheesman 1993:493). This model runs the risk of encouraging an individualistic, privatised or therapeutic spirituality or even substituting psychology for spirituality (Johnson 1989: 30ff ; Schuth in Neuhaus 1992:98).

Harkness (2001:141) considers that all these models are based on a schooling paradigm. He, among others such as Banks (1992) and Kinsler (2008), advocate a non-schooling option which he calls a discipling model.

4.7 The discipleship or non-schooling model

Harkness (2001:141) moves away from the models of theological education that are based on what he calls a schooling system. He advocates “an integrated, formational, and missional community paradigm modelled on the relationship of Jesus with his disciples.” Harkness contrasts this discipleship model with the practices of formal theological institutions. In the discipleship model, the student should participate together with the teacher in ministry in a similar way that the disciples of Jesus participated with him and reflected on what had transpired.

Banks (1992:2) too looks at a mentorship or discipleship model. His thinking came from finding that the formal theological studies gave too much information too fast that could not be evaluated and integrated into meaningful ministry. So he suggests that students should spend significant time with a mentor, learning from him or her both theological content and ministerial skills.

Kinsler (2008: 131) worries that traditional, seminary based theological education has resulted in “a universal highly middle class, highly academically trained ministry that de-churches the masses; disqualifying for ministry the very class of people Jesus chose as His disciples.” Kinsler concurs with Milton Barker of the Evangelical Foreign Missions Association that they “are training people in irrelevant concepts, segregating our trainees as professionals and spending too much money doing it” (Kinsler 2008:131).

Instead, Kinsler (2008:24) with his emphasis on extension or diversified education follows a modified discipleship model in which people are mentored and coached in small groups within their churches. This model of theological education does not remove people from their communities and issues of poverty and environmental degradation. Hence, as well as learning ministerial skills, concerns for the poor and the environment are taken seriously.

This is an important aspect of moral formation that should be included in theological education.

Another version of the discipleship model is to create partnerships and networks between seminaries and other church educational groups in order to share and broaden theological education. This has been described as moving theological education to diocese and parish. Cheesman (1993:496) sees this discipleship model as potentially working alongside what he considers the formal, fragmented, specialist academic model.

If this discipleship model is to work, the quality of what is taught and the character of the mentor are crucial. As Martin Buber said, "The teacher must himself be what he wants his pupils to become" (quoted in Cheesman 1993:495). This discipleship model has potential as a means of moral formation depending on the community of faith in which the student is placed and the character and ability of the mentor. A danger is that there may be a lack of academic rigor and teaching. This debate does raise the possibility of churches and theological institutions working together to foster moral formation in a non-schooling or at least a less formal institutional setting.

4.8 An evaluation of the models for moral formation

All these models attempt to achieve the lofty purposes of theological education and to incorporate knowledge, skills for ministry and moral and spiritual formation. They seek to address one or more difficulties that face theological education in its search to achieve the goals and the high principles that are espoused and to conduct effective training of Christian leaders. Some criticisms and advantages of the models were included in the discussion of the models. Here the weaknesses and strengths of the models in terms of the way in which they promote or hinder moral formation are discussed.

Theological education needs to go beyond merely imparting information linked to compartmentalised disciplines and the acquisition of professional skills without spiritual and moral formation. There needs to be a balance between Christian knowledge, ministerial skills to lead and nurture the church community and spiritual and moral formation. An awareness of issues around justice and poverty and loving care and compassion are also required particularly for those who minister in contexts of poverty and oppression. The difficulty is how to achieve this balance and to include spiritual and moral formation, critical reflective thinking, competence in ministerial skills and transformative action.

The emphasis on knowledge of the Berlin or academic paradigm is important and of value in moral formation. If students do not know what is right and have no understanding of their faith, they are impoverished and lack cognitive foundations for moral living. As Charry (1997:4) recognises, “knowing goodness precedes being good” and as Kretzschmar (2015:5) affirms, true faith cannot be separated from the intellect. Hence, any theological education must include knowledge, skills of critical analysis and reflective thinking that can lead to insight into ethical issues and the realities of the world and hence moral formation.

The shortcomings of the Berlin model for moral formation revolve around the over emphasis on intellectual development and cognitive growth which neglects the affective and spiritual dimensions. The danger is that academic learning becomes separated from the real world and from the issues that students face in their lives. This was the experience of the Church in Nepal particularly with regard to the traditional subject centred curriculum at a seminary (Bisset in Kinsler 2008:116-117). This can be ameliorated if personal narratives and testimonies of students’ own faith journeys are included rather than limiting knowledge to abstract cognitive constructs. Experience as well as knowledge of scripture, tradition and the ability to reason is important (Connors & McCormick 2002:15). Reason and knowledge must be applied to the whole person in their total situation (Kretzschmar et al. 2009:91). This kind of teaching fits with the emphasis in the Durban model on relationship. As the academic, the emotional, the relational and the spiritual are integrated, wisdom is born which is crucial for moral formation.

One of the strengths of the Athens model for moral formation is that it acknowledges the importance of and seeks to develop relationship with God. The difficulty is how to do this in practice. One option is the residential seminary as described in the monastic model of Cheesman. Residential seminaries are able to generate a very powerful sense of community which can instil values and spirituality and develop moral leaders. This is the potential value of such a model of theological education. De Gruchy (in Werner, Esterline, Kang & Raja 2010:43) believes that the Church sacrifices the immense value of seminary based practical reflection when students are trained using distance education methods and have no opportunity to be part of a formative community. Others contend that the local community and tutors could possibly replace the residential seminary community. However, this depends to a large extent on the quality of the local faith community and tutors. The values, spiritual maturity, pastoral care and social involvement of the local faith community are the benchmark and what are likely to be passed on in practice. They have the potential to play a disciplining role, but in practice, this seldom happens. On the other hand, the relationship between the student and the community can be a reciprocal one as

students share with the community the challenges and new insights from their studies while being formed by the community.

The vocational, ministerial and Calcutta models all claim that they approach theology as “a task to be done in the real world of today, answering the real questions which are in the students’ heart and mind” (Cheesman 1993:492). Vocational skills are necessary and can help to develop competence and self-confidence as students are empowered to minister. This can lead to an improved relationship with the self which in turn can promote moral formation. The Calcutta and the Durban models are aware of context and the need for justice and transformative action in society and enable students to grow in this regard.

There is a danger with these models if they focus on social action and the acquisition of ministerial skills without at the same time developing skills of critical theological reflection and spiritual and moral formation. This can lead to these models being narrow and task orientated rather than broad and inclusive. If this occurs, a comprehensive moral formation is likely to be hindered.

Discipleship or the non-schooling model has much to offer for moral formation. It recognises that for moral formation to occur, theological education must go beyond a restrictive, cognitive qualification to more integrated human development (Harkness 2001:145). The danger with a non-schooling model is that there is little if any challenging theological reflection and input, and even where there is, the student does not have the time to do justice to what is being learnt. It is not easy to study amidst the pressures of daily living, and students benefit from ‘coming apart’ to focus on their studies. The results of the Methodist ministerial candidates in 2007 reflected the benefits of full-time study. Kumalo and Richardson (2010:267) found that the results of the full-time Methodist ministerial students showed that over 90% of courses were passed by them while less than 50% were passed by those studying part-time in congregational placements.

Any model of theological education that takes moral formation seriously should take issues of justice, commitment to the poor and care for creation seriously as these are inherent characteristics of morality. Theological education needs to be contextual and relevant to the life situations of students if it is to lead them to full humanity. The achievement of a theological qualification should not take precedence over or alienate students from those they are meant to serve. Smith (2007:22) points out, “When attainment of academic qualifications is inversely proportional to a presence in marginalised communities, then theological education has to recognise that somewhere it has taken a wrong turn.”

4.9. Conclusions

This chapter started with a brief overview of the history of theological education which traced the various movements in theological education and indicated how moral formation was addressed through the ages.

In biblical times, moral formation was integrated with spiritual formation in a covenant community and was primarily practiced as part of everyday life. Moral formation started with love of God which led to right relationships with others. Jesus' model of theological education was informal and relational while at the same time requiring critical reflection that was integrated with and applied to everyday life and the issues that people faced on a daily basis.

With Constantine, the Church became the official, established church, and theological education moved from small groups to formalised catechetical schools such as at Alexandria. Monasteries such as the one at Iona were established (in 563) as places of learning. Religious orders, for example, the Jesuits and the Dominicans played an important role in theological education and moral formation as they integrated study, simplicity, work, prayer and service. Alongside the monasteries were cathedral schools. Many universities had their roots in these medieval institutions. There was a gradual shift in these institutions away from faith, towards reason, debate and critical argument. The cognitive and transmission modes of moral formation took precedence over those of discipline and socialisation.

With the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, the split between the rational and the spiritual grew to the detriment of moral formation. Pietism with its emphasis on the personal devotional life and emotion in religion, while not without its problems such as an anti-intellectualism, did challenge the over reliance on reason and critical thinking. So too did religious revivals, such as Methodism, and the ministry of many churches contributed to the moral formation of their members through the practice of spiritual disciplines, mutual accountability, social action, personal holiness, prayer and hymn singing as well as the study of scripture.

Theological education in South Africa developed in response to the need to train ministers. The first seminaries were to a greater or lesser degree race-based and gender exclusive. Theological education was also offered at universities. With the growing opposition to apartheid, seminaries such as Fedsem that offered an integrated theological education were established. This ecumenical endeavour came to an end in 1993, and the churches, in general, "retreated into their denominational ghettos" (Richardson 2005:558). Today

there are many models of theological education in South Africa, some full-time, residential, others part-time and others using distance education.

Through the ages, different ways of advancing the moral formation of students were used. Among these were mentoring, socialisation, role models, learning in small groups, community support and involvement, question and answer learning, spiritual disciplines and exercises, critical reflection, study, prayer and singing hymns. Many of these are still incorporated to a lesser or greater extent in theological education today. This chapter described the interrelationship between the purposes of theological education and the models of theological education. While many theological education institutions attempt to follow the threefold purpose of theological education, in practice, one or other is more strongly emphasised, sometimes to the detriment of the moral formation of students. For example, those who emphasise knowledge and the acquisition of information to the exclusion of being and doing, run the danger of ignoring moral formation and action. Those who place great value on doing, on acquiring skills for ministry, run the danger of a lack of theological insight and reflection that can blunt moral formation. Even where these skills for ministry are developed in the context of the poor, there is a danger that a lack of theological reflection, ethical knowledge and understanding limits moral formation and practical action. For those institutions that focus on character formation, there is a danger that morality is seen in narrow moralistic terms rather than embracing wisdom and relationships of justice, mutuality and compassion.

A number of models of theological education were described, and their strengths and weaknesses in terms of nurturing morality in students were evaluated. Most theological education institutions attempt to link the personal, social, intellectual and transcendent dynamics of formation (Percey 2008:286). To a greater or lesser degree, all the models of theological education seek to integrate academic, vocational and spiritual formation. Often, moral formation is not mentioned but is subsumed under spiritual formation.

The dangers of the intellectualisation and fragmentation of theology into various specialised subjects were highlighted. These included a lack of integration between what is taught and the experiences of the students as well as a failure to integrate moral and spiritual formation throughout the programme. The requirements for accreditation of theological institutions in South Africa have meant that more emphasis is placed on academic achievement and vocational skills.

Difficulties with both full-time, residential study and part-time or distance learning were identified. If students remain in a congregation and study through distance mediums, they face challenges and difficulties such as a lack of time, family and work responsibilities,

potentially poor role models in the church and a lack of community support. These negatively influence their moral formation. On the other hand, it is costly for students to attend full-time residential seminaries. There are questions regarding the relevance of the teaching and a fear that students will become alienated from the very people among whom they are called to minister. This indicates that theological education needs to be more integrated into the entire life of the Church rather than being seen as a separate activity. The extent to which moral formation depends on the presence of a moral community capable of bearing and transmitting ethical values and visions is important (Connors & McCormick 1998:148). This relationship between the institutions and the Church forms part of the research and will be further explored in the following chapters.

Any theological education institution that neglects spiritual and character formation may fail to speak to the students' relationship with God, self, others and creation. This can lead to an intellectual understanding of religion separated from living the Christian life. Harkness (2001) critiques the worst aspects of such theological education which has become dislocated from a caring, faith community. He quotes Henri Nouwen who distinguishes between 'violent' and 'redemptive' teaching:

Violent teaching is competitive (knowledge is property to be defended rather than a gift to be shared); unilateral (from teacher to student and never the other way); and alienating (it is often not contextual to the students world and experience). Students then replicate this model in their ministry as they, the learned, impart knowledge to the congregation, the ignorant. This reinforces patterns of hierarchy and disempowers the laity. (:145)

This chapter set the background for the analysis of the findings from the three selected institutions to determine the extent to which they promote moral formation. Together with chapter three, it provides the basis for evaluating the moral formation teaching and practices of the theological education institutions. Through the exploration of the various models of theological education, it highlights the immense task facing theological education which, as hypothesised, could lead to the neglect of moral formation. The following chapters document the experiences of three theological education institutions regarding moral formation, leading to recommendations regarding the best practices to promote moral formation in theological education.

Chapter Five: Findings at the institutions

“What does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God” (Mi 6:8 NIV)

5.1 Introduction

The examination and analysis of the data from the empirical research in this and the following chapter are set against the preceding framework of relational morality and the discussion of theological education. The focus of this and the following chapter is to answer the research questions and meet the research objectives using the data from the empirical research. The chapter starts with a description of the profile of the students and their purpose for studying theology. An examination follows of the moral formation programme in the three theological institutions in order to address the objectives of the research which were:

- To ascertain the extent to which moral formation is included in the teaching and practices at the selected theological institutions.
- To investigate the teachers’ and students’ perception of the moral formation process at the selected institutions and what had the most influence on the moral formation of students. This objective will be partially addressed in this chapter and more fully in the following chapter.
- To make recommendations regarding the teaching and practice of moral formation in the specific theological education institutions under consideration.

In order to meet these objectives, it was necessary to:

- Clarify what is meant by moral formation; in other words, what is it that is being formed in people? Of what does a good life consist?
- Discover the extent to which and how moral formation is included in the programme at the institutions.
- Assess the effectiveness of moral formation efforts at the institutions.
- Determine the extent to which moral formation is left to the churches rather than being addressed by the theological education institutions and to investigate the effectiveness of a partnership or working relationship, where it exists, between the Church and the theological education institution to promote moral formation.

In this chapter, the findings from the selected institutions are collated, described and reviewed and then some initial comparisons made. The data was scrutinized and from this, certain concepts and categories started to emerge and the central themes and story

lines began to surface as well as the sub themes and the unique themes. Chapter six builds on this and interprets the data within a framework of relationship using the criteria or 'signposts' developed in chapters three and four to evaluate the extent to which the institutions have a moral formation programme and whether this programme makes a difference to the moral formation of the students. This leads to the third research objective which is to make recommendations regarding the teaching and practice of moral formation in the specific theological education institutions under consideration.

It follows that in this thesis I am researching the moral formation of the students rather than their academic or ministerial skills, although there are overlaps and these cannot be neatly separated.

The research was conducted at St Augustine College, the South African Theological Seminary (SATS) and the College of the Transfiguration (COTT). My choice of the three sites was influenced by particular commonalities and differences. The commonalities include the fact that all these institutions are used by the churches for developing Christian leadership and ministerial training and that they are all accredited institutions offering three-year qualifications. The differences for which they were chosen include very importantly that they use different modes of instruction, namely, distance, face to face and residential ones and they have different church affiliations. For this study, I focused on students in their final year of study as they had a fuller, more complete experience of the institution and so were able to assess the ways in which moral formation was implemented. For example, certain assignments, projects or responsibilities might have taken place only in their final year of study.

St Augustine College uses face to face lectures but is not residential. It is a Catholic university that includes non-theological courses, and the students are not necessarily all Catholic. SATS is a distance learning institution which emphasizes that it is Bible-based. It is evangelical and Baptist in its foundations, but the students are drawn from a number of different churches. COTT is a residential college with a student body that stays together in community. It has a single denominational focus, an Anglican one.

This research used a qualitative approach rather than a quantitative approach, and so evidence is drawn from the participants' comments and feedback rather than statistical evidence. However, rating scales were used with regard to the inclusion of certain practices that promote moral formation. The findings are discussed under the following headings:

5.2 The profile of staff and students;

5.3 The vision, mission and purpose;

5.4 Clarification of ethics and morality;

5.5 The moral formation programme;

5.6 The relationship between the institution and the Church.

The changes and growth in the moral formation of the students through their studies will be discussed in the following chapter. The questionnaires can be found in appendix A and B.

5.2 The profile of the staff and students

The first section of the questionnaire garnered information regarding the staff and students. These questions elicited information regarding their gender, age, marital status, whether the students had children, their economic background and qualifications as well as church tradition and family background. These questions were considered important for the following reasons:

1. Age might be relevant in that the older, more mature students might have greater life experience and wisdom and so come with more moral insights but also possibly with more firmly held convictions and prejudices.
2. To identify whether gender made any significant difference to the moral formation of students.
3. Being married and having children means that students have family relationships that may make a difference to their moral formation in a way that is different from that of single students. Hence, this information was considered relevant.
4. Economic background too might be significant in moral formation especially as morality is considered in terms of relationship and economic justice is inherent in the understanding of morality.
5. Higher education qualifications might make a difference to moral formation as knowing is one of the factors in relationships and moral formation.
6. Finally, family background, whether the students grew up in Christian families or not, could make a difference in their moral formation as families are strong socializing agents and play an important role in moral formation.

The ethical considerations in this research included the principle of anonymity. As a relatively small number of staff participated from each institution, I found that, even though

a code was used, their anonymity could not be assured.⁴⁶ Therefore, codes were not used for the staff. Due to the larger number of students, codes were used except if I thought the use of the code might compromise the anonymity of the student. As the number of staff members interviewed was small and the number of women interviewed even smaller, there is a danger that the use of the pronouns 'he' or 'she' could identify a staff member. For this reason, I chose to use the masculine pronoun where unavoidable for ease of reading for all staff responses. The students are referred to as 'he' or 'she' as this does not compromise their anonymity. Below is an analysis of the profile of the staff and students at the three institutions.

5.2.1 The College of the Transfiguration

5.2.1.1 The staff

The staff at COTT are from diverse cultural backgrounds. The fact that the majority of them are men seems to be per chance rather than planned. This is said in the light of the fact that the newly appointed rector for the college is a woman. However, historically, there have been more men in leadership positions in the Anglican Church than women.⁴⁷ I interviewed one woman member of staff and three male staff members. The current rector of the college was interviewed as well as other members of staff involved in the moral formation of students.

5.2.1.2 The students

The students have usually gone through a process of selection for the full-time, ordained ministry by their Diocese and been sent to study at COTT. They are committed church members and Christians who have chosen to study full-time for the ordained ministry.⁴⁸ For some, this involves financial and family sacrifices. The student body at COTT is diverse with students from many different backgrounds. Ten students who were in their final year of study completed the questionnaires. Of these, six were men and four women. Three were over fifty, one over forty, two over thirty and the rest (four) in their twenties. Five were single, two divorced and three married, and five had children. They were mostly from middle class backgrounds, but three described themselves as poor. Half of them had another tertiary qualification. They were all Anglican and all described their families as Christian. Among the reasons given for this were that they were "baptised and confirmed",

⁴⁶ The codes for the students use a letter for each institution and a number for each student. The institutions are identified with A for St Augustine College, S for SATS and C for COTT.

⁴⁷ Women were not allowed to be ordained to the priesthood until 1992.

⁴⁸ For some, it is a requirement that they study at COTT if they are to be ordained and they are sent by their Diocese. In this sense, it is not their choice – but they have accepted the condition as part of the process of ordination.

they “went to church and were church members”, they “taught Christian principles”, they “prayed and worshiped together and they loved God’s people.”

Past formative influences in their lives included “discipline and teaching in the family and in church”, a spiritual director and “input of my uncle on my life and the death of my children” (C2), and (C7) identified “Sunday school, primary school and working with Gift of the Giver.”

There was greater change among the COTT students than students from the other institutions with regard to the way they understood morality (question 2.3). Seven students had always understood Christian morality to involve social justice, care and compassion for those in need, equal treatment for men and women and care for the environment. One student had not realised the need to be involved in social justice and thought that ministry was only about church (C3). Since studying, student (C6) realised that care for the environment is part of Christian moral behaviour. Before student (C9) started his studies, he did not consider morality to include equal treatment of men and women as “in our societies women are subjects to men.” His studies changed this perception. In the light of this comment, it is noteworthy that some students would have fitted most closely into the classical communal paradigm of ethical thinking as identified by Conradie (2006:72-77) as the norms of the society (women are subject to men) are accepted and followed.

5.2.2 St Augustine College

5.2.2.1 The staff

St Augustine College has a small number of full-time staff members in the theology faculty who are supplemented by a number of part-time or guest lecturers. The staff complement is made up of both men and women. Two staff members were interviewed using the questionnaire as the basis for the interview. One other member did not wish to complete the questionnaire but was happy to be interviewed. Some of his comments and insights are included in the data analysis where they add value and further insights.

5.2.2.2 The students

Most of the students studying theology at St Augustine College are mature students. There is a small group of students (ten) who are completing the Bachelor of Theology. Of these, two men and five women answered the questionnaire. Of these, three were over fifty and one was in her twenties. One was between thirty and thirty-nine years and two between forty and forty-nine. They were all married, and all had children. Four of the seven had studied previously and obtained a tertiary qualification, which was not

necessarily a theological one. However, this did not appear to make a difference to the way in which questions were answered. Despite the fact that St Augustine is a Catholic university, three of the seven students were Anglican. All the students came from Christian families which were involved to a greater or lesser extent in the Church. The reasons students described their families as Christian included that they “prayed together as families” and “my parents brought us up in a strict Catholic tradition.” The students came from a mixture of poor to middle class backgrounds.

Some of the most formative influences on the students included community sharing, marriage, raising children, parents, siblings, church tradition, a spiritual director, a home group, friends and “war in my country”.

Before they started their studies, six of the seven had an understanding that Christian moral behaviour involves social action for justice, care and compassion for those in need and equal treatment of men and women. Before his studies, one of the students had not regarded care for the environment as part of moral behaviour. The students had an understanding of Christian virtues. It is useful to view their responses in the light of this, as the changes in their moral formation were subtle rather than obvious as they were already deeply committed Christians.

5.2.3 The South African Theological Seminary

5.2.3.1 The staff

Because SATS is a distance learning institution, the staff members are not necessarily based at the college. I interviewed two staff members who completed the questionnaires and one other who was happy to give some insights into moral formation at SATS.

5.2.3.2 The students

The students from SATS are drawn from a wide variety of backgrounds. They do not necessarily live in South Africa let alone near the college. Sixteen questionnaires were sent to the students who were near the completion of their studies, and there were thirteen responses from the students.⁴⁹ Of these, eight were men and five women. Four students were over fifty, four over forty, two over thirty and the rest (three) under thirty. All except one was married, and eight had children. They were mostly from middle class backgrounds, with one person describing himself as wealthy while two people described themselves as poor. Most of them (eleven) had another tertiary qualification. They came

⁴⁹ As SATS is a distance learning institution, students choose how many modules to study, so they do not necessarily complete the qualification in three years. For example, one student indicated that he had been studying for six years.

from a number of different church backgrounds. These were variously described as Church of the Nazarene, non-denominational (Bible church), evangelical church of Cameroon, Baptist church, Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM), Anglican, Evangelical, Pentecostal, Methodist, Presbyterian and Charismatic.

Eight students said that they came from Christian backgrounds while five said they did not. Among the reasons for describing their family as Christian were that “the family went to church and had an interest in religion” (S1), “parents took us to Sunday school and had devotions at home” (S2), “my grandfather was an evangelist and my father an elder” (S11) and “there was regular church attendance with family discussions on biblical issues and we prayed together” (S12).

Four students described their families as Christian and going to church but as not having a personal relationship with God. For example, (S5) remarked that they grew up going to church and good values were inculcated but that he had no personal relationship with Jesus until he was twenty-one. This separation between being nominally Christian and attending church but having no relationship with God was mentioned by other students as well (S4, S8 and S9). This understanding of Christian background is seen again in the response of (S10) who described the family background as not a Christian home even though they were fairly moral and said grace and went to church, but there was no prayer or spiritual conversation. One student (S3) described an interesting background as the mother vacillated between Christianity and African Traditional Religion (ATR) not ever really deciding for one or the other while the father followed ATR. One student (S13) clearly said that their home was abusive and did not reflect Christian values. The comparatively low number of students coming from Christian backgrounds compared with the other two institutions was partly due to the fact that families were not considered Christian simply because they attended church. There needed to be a relationship with God.

The formative influences in their lives included family members such as brothers and parents and other people who acted as role models or mentors, church members including elders in the church, disciples and Bible study groups. Interestingly, the students also mentioned times of tragedy and hardship as being formative. This research considers experience to be important, and suffering is an intense and formative experience whether for good or bad.

Most of the students had an understanding that Christian moral behaviour involves social action for justice, care and compassion for those in need, equal treatment of men and women and care for the environment. One student (S13) said the equality between men

and women had become clearer in terms of “worth and value but not in the secular egalitarian sense of breaking down gender barriers.” Whether he meant gender stereotyped roles or whether he was referring to sexual orientation was not clear. However, it raises further questions regarding gender that will be addressed later. Some students said that their studies had given them a deeper understanding of justice, equality and care and that they were now living out their beliefs.

5.2.4 Conclusions

The students at all three institutions reflect a range of ages and come from a mixture of genders and economic backgrounds. The students at COTT were slightly younger than at the other two institutions. There were a larger percentage of women at St Augustine College than men while at the other two institutions, there were more men than women. However, these differences were not large and did not make a significant difference to the answers given.

All the students from St Augustine College and COTT came from Christian families while those studying at SATS were from more diverse family backgrounds. Part of this was due to the fact that students at SATS considered the family to be Christian only if they had a personal relationship with God rather than simply going to church.

The students were morally mature, committed Christians before they started studying. Where there were changes in moral understanding, they were linked to deeper understanding of working for justice, greater gender equality and a responsibility to care for the environment. These changes in understanding of morality may have been influenced by changes in the students’ ethical thinking paradigms (as described by Conradie) and their Christian development (according to the stages of Von Hügel), due to their study experiences. The indications are that some students’ ethical thinking was based on external authorities such as the Church or society (an ‘institutional’ or ‘classical’, ‘communal’ ethical paradigm), and this was challenged by their studies. Students appear to have moved from unquestioning obedience to external authority to more critical individualistic reasoning or ‘mystical reasoning’ as described by Von Hügel.

5.3 The vision, mission and purpose

In chapter four of this research, the threefold purpose of theological education was described in various terms such as knowledge, skills and character; heads, hands and hearts; knowing, being and doing. These descriptions mark the three fundamental requirements of theological education, namely, to develop knowledge and academic learning, to develop practical skills for ministry and to focus on personal and spiritual

growth. The vision, mission and purpose of the institutions are viewed in the light of this threefold understanding. Data regarding the vision, mission and purpose was obtained from documents from the institutions such as their websites and prospectus and well as from question 3.1 of the staff questionnaire. The purpose is now discussed for each institution and then compared with the students' purposes for studying theology (question 3.1 of the student questionnaire).

5.3.1 The College of the Transfiguration

The vision of COTT is to become a “premier residential centre for theological education and for the training of Anglican clergy in Africa with a worldwide reputation for academic excellence” (COTT 2015:2). There is a strong emphasis in their mission statement on social change, transforming humanity and the healing of the world (COTT 2015:6). The college aims to do this by preparing men and women for ministry in the church “by advancing a method of theological reflection that is interdisciplinary, contextual and critical, anchored in the Anglican tradition and ethos, catholic in spirituality, evangelical in teaching and praxis, and ecumenical in outlook, for the renewal of the church.”

COTT is “dedicated to the development of future Anglican clergy that can operate effectively in the context of Africa (and beyond) and offer educational and formational courses in a residential setting that focuses activity around the chapel, dining hall and classroom so as to develop ministerial, social and academic skills.”⁵⁰

The theological education provided at the college incorporates the threefold purpose of theological education, namely, spirituality (a godly habit of life), intellectual integrity (wisdom) and practical engagement (mission and ministry). The learning programmes focus on those aspects of the Christian life and faith which are relevant to the spiritual, moral and intellectual challenges of the Church and society in Southern Africa. It concentrates mostly on candidates for the ministry, aiming to “provide them with a professional preparation that will enable them to function as church practitioners with high level skills in theological analysis, interpretation and application, to function as acknowledged leaders in church and society, and to be agents of transformation.”⁵¹ The purpose incorporates knowledge with the assertion that “pursuit of this qualification will equip students with a thorough and in-depth knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith, particularly as it is manifested in the Anglican tradition.” It also affirms ‘doing’ and asserts that students will be able to apply the theoretical and practical skills to live a life of service and transformation in the church and the local community. Skills for ministry are

⁵⁰ aboutus_vision, viewed 27/7/2014, from www.cott.co.za/aboutus_vision.html

⁵¹ aboutus_vision, viewed 27/7/2014, from www.cott.co.za/abuotus_vision.html

also included as the programme provides a foundation for Christian ministry from which graduates may go on to distinguish themselves and benefit both church and society. In this way, personal transformation and moral leadership are encouraged.

The college fosters values of faithfulness, justice and compassion which are all important for a relational moral ethic. Equality and mutual respect are affirmed and diversity and difference valued.

“Moral formation is included in the mission and purpose of the college,” said one staff member by “being holistically planned throughout the espoused and hidden curriculum.” Moral formation is included in a dynamic rather than a static manner as it calls for the participation and self-engagement of the students. The key to moral formation is the community as students are shaped by being together. This appears to be borne out by the students who valued difference and diversity which encouraged equality and mutual respect. This holistic approach to moral formation and community was echoed by another staff member who said, “Classroom, dining room, outreach programme are all part of the moral formation process.” Another staff member had a more esoteric view, saying that “there is integration between being in relation to what emerges and what one can dare.”

Four themes surfaced from the students’ answers to the reasons they were studying. Firstly, four of them were studying because it was a pre-requisite of their Diocese for ordination to the ministry. Secondly, six students wanted to understand God and their faith better. A third theme closely linked to this was the need to study in order to “teach God’s people.” And lastly, two students studied in order to engage with social justice and moral values and to understand their context (C8, C9). All except one student felt that their purpose for studying was being met or they were in the process of discovering whether it would be met. For example, “from my studies I have a better understanding of the world around me” (C3). The only reason the dissenting student (C7) gave was that he did not like some courses, but later in the questionnaire, he acknowledged that his studies were a formative influence.

5.3.2 St Augustine College

The mission statement of St Augustine College expresses the desire “to educate morally responsible leaders who think critically, act wisely and work skilfully to advance the common good and promote respect for the dignity of the human person.”⁵² Concern for moral formation is inherent in their emphasis on human good and the recognition of the “dignity of the human person.” They aim to challenge the rigid distinctions made between

⁵² Why St Augustine, viewed 22/7/2014, from <http://www.staugustine.ac.za>

fact and value and to integrate the public and the private so that moral issues are not simply pushed to the academic side-lines. The college encourages critical examination of standards of rationality and inquiry operative in the public realm and integrative and evaluative thinking and an interdisciplinary approach.

St Augustine College aims to promote ethical as well as intellectual leadership and to ensure justice is an ethical foundation for thinking about global issues which face the students. They aim to keep the balance between a focus on the integrity of the individual as well as a concern for justice and responsibility in the political, economic and social spheres.

The reason most commonly identified by the students for studying theology was to increase their understanding of their faith. While most (70%) wanted this in order to enhance their ability to minister in their churches or more broadly in their communities, a few (30%) saw this in relation to personal growth.

The staff understood moral formation to be included in the vision and purpose of the institution through the theological and ethical programme offered. As a staff member put it, moral formation is included in an “ethos rooted in a catholic (universal) and Catholic (Roman) understanding of education of persons and personhood.”

The students’ answers indicated some relation with the vision, mission and aims of St Augustine College which emphasises critical thinking and intellectual excellence but also puts great emphasis on the dignity of the individual. As these students were studying theology, they generally emphasised their desire to understand their faith better, which is a secondary focus in the vision and mission statements which are for the whole college not just the theological department. St Augustine College comes closest to acknowledging the importance of the self as their purpose focuses on “respect for the dignity of the human person.”

5.3.3 The South African Theological Seminary

SATS describes their mission as being “to provide Biblical, Christocentric distance education and training to Christians, and leaders in particular, within their local church environment, to equip them to be Holy Spirit empowered members of God’s household” (SATS 2013:4).⁵³

SATS emphasises that their theological training is Bible-based, Christ-centred and Spirit-led (SATS 2013:3). Within this context, their purpose includes the following aspects: To

⁵³ Our mission, viewed 22/11/2013, from <http://www.sats.edu.za/about-us/mission/>

provide lifelong learning opportunities in theological church-related and ministry studies that are academically sound and relevant to ministry requirements (SATS 2013:4). SATS aims to contribute to the development of South African society by “aiding the restoration of the moral and ethical fibre of society by inculcating Biblical values and principles” and addressing societal issues such as AIDS (SATS 2013:5).

Moral formation is implicit in their mission and purpose. As one staff member put it, “We are intentional but indirect about moral formation as a goal of our theological training.” The college seeks to aid the restoration of the moral and ethical fibre of society by inculcating Biblical values and principles. A staff member said, “This is most explicit in a statement we use often in our courses which is that the goal of the Christian life is to become as much like the Lord Jesus Christ as is possible in this life, and to help others to do likewise.” The staff understood that personal transformation and moral formation are a by-product of a healthy relationship with Christ. “Relationship cannot be taught,” said a staff member. “There is an expectation that students will live according to the statement of faith of SATS but again that cannot be prescribed or enforced.”

Like the students at St Augustine and COTT, the SATS students often linked the purpose of studying to wanting to know the scriptures better and to be better equipped to minister. All thirteen of the students mentioned this in one way or another, saying they were studying in order to minister to others, to teach others, to know God better, to know the scriptures better and to know how to interpret them. For example, “I believe one has to be prepared and trained to teach from the Bible at all times, in a church facility and in the work place.” The Christ-centred, Bible based emphasis as stated in the mission of SATS is likely to help the students achieve this purpose of gaining greater knowledge of scripture and doctrine. However, there is a difference between knowing about God and knowing God as was highlighted in chapter three in the words of McGrath (1999:4): “To know about God is inadequate and needs to be replaced with knowing God in a relationship of growing intimacy.” Be that as it may, all except one student felt that SATS courses were meeting their purpose of “getting to know God better.” One student differed and was rather negative stating that “much is irrelevant and inadequate” (S9).

Six students were studying in order to gain more knowledge. Some of the ways in which this was expressed include “to learn more in the academic way of reasoning”, “to have formal theological training” and to “gain more knowledge about the Bible and God.” As one student said this was so that he could be “a better advocate of the faith.” The following descriptions from the students give examples to show how this academic purpose, to learn more, had been met. Student (S5) said that her studies had given her a broader

perspective on Christian doctrine and shaped her thought processes. Student (S7) wrote of gaining wisdom from scripture to live a better life. Student (S12) who was prompted to study by “a deep desire to experience greater faith” affirmed that “it all makes more sense now.”

5.3.4 Conclusions

The three institutions all include a threefold purpose for studying. They may express this in slightly different terms, but they all include academic excellence, training for ministry and formation that will lead to Christ-likeness. While all three aspects were included in the mission, vision and purpose of the institutions, the students’ predominant concern was with ministry. They wanted to increase their understanding of their faith in order to teach others and to gain skills for ministry. Moral formation, except in the general response that the students desired to get to know God better, was not described as a reason for theological study.

The vision, mission and goals of the institutions are broad and comprehensive as they attempt to “address the daunting if not impossible task of preparing wise, compassionate, theologically astute and pastorally proficient servants who can lead the church and our societies through the crises of the twenty first century” (Dearborn 1995:7; Harkness 2001:143).

These institutions do not fit neatly into one or other of the models of theological education as described in chapter four. SATS with its Christocentric emphasis seems on the surface at least to follow the Athens model, but as it is a distance college and relies so heavily on content centred courses, it also fits with the Berlin model. However, there seems to be little emphasis on the Calcutta and Durban models as social transformation of society and relationships are not prominent in the purpose and vision of SATS. St Augustine College has an emphasis on academic excellence and social transformation. Their use of words such as ‘critical examination’ and ‘integrative and evaluative thinking’ appears to follow the Berlin model. However, they attempt to ‘hold fact and value’ together, so there are also elements of the Athens model as well as Calcutta with the emphasis on respect for human dignity, human rights and social justice.⁵⁴ COTT incorporates aspects of the Athens, the Berlin and the Calcutta models. This they can do more easily in the residential context where ‘chapel, dining room and classroom’ are all integral to the programme. The vision

⁵⁴ Mission and Vision 2014, viewed 9/10/2014, from staugustine.ac.za/vision-and-mission/

statement affirms “our own need of God” and the COTT mission is to “work for the empowerment of others in building Christ-like communities.”⁵⁵

Using the models of Cheesman, COTT fits with the monastic model as it is a residential seminary predominantly training ministers for the church. It has an element of the academic model as the courses are accredited and there is an emphasis on academic excellence. There is a danger (see Kinsler 2008) that residential students are taken out of their context. Since coming to college, it appears that students are certainly being challenged with new ethical reflection paradigms.

SATS fits into the academic model in as far as transmission of knowledge is core in the provision of courses. It also fits with the business model as courses are provided to meet the needs of ministry and the requirements of churches and other groupings (SATS 2013:16). SATS relies predominantly on student fees, and this necessitates the provision of courses that are popular in the market place (SATS 2013).⁵⁶

St Augustine College fits with the academic model of Cheesman but avoids reducing theology to rational thinking alone. Knowledge and academic excellence are promoted, but so too is faith and knowing God. St Augustine also consciously includes concepts of human dignity, justice and solidarity as proposed in my relational model of morality and in the Calcutta and Durban models of theological education.

5.4 Clarification of ethics and morality

Section two of the questionnaire contained questions to help clarify the staff and students’ understanding of morality. The first question in this section did this imaginatively, asking them to describe a person whom they considered as a good, moral person and why they considered that person to be good. Question 2.9 delved deeper by asking people to list actions that they believed were right and those they believed were wrong.

Questions to the staff included definitions of ethics (2.7) and morality (2.9) and the distinction between them (2.8) as well as question 2.3 that gave them some choices and asked them to rank these according to what they understood as being most important in living out the Christian faith.

Questions 2.3, 2.4, 2.5 and 2.6 established whether students understood social action and justice, care and compassion for those in need, equal treatment of men and women and care of the environment as part of Christian moral behaviour. There were some changes in

⁵⁵ Our vision 2014, viewed 9/10/2014, from cott.co.za/aboutus_vision.html

⁵⁶ SATS Prospectus 2013

the students' understanding as discussed earlier in the student profile section (5.2) but most students accepted that these are part of morality.⁵⁷

Two questions (namely, 2.2 and 2.5 on the staff questionnaire and 2.2 and 2.8 on the student one) involved ranking different options in order of importance for morality and for making ethical decisions. These elicited similar information. Question 2.6 and 2.12 of the staff and student questionnaires respectively concerned the duty of Christians. These questions helped to clarify what was considered as the essence of morality and gave an indication of the extent to which knowing, being and doing were included in the understanding of morality. Question 2.7 and 2.11 were directed at the students and explored the links between spirituality and moral behaviour.⁵⁸

5.4.1 The College of the Transfiguration

5.4.1.1 The staff

Morality is about human flourishing and the call to be Christ-like. "Remove the 'human' as that is too anthropocentric," said one staff member whose answers to living out the Christian faith and the duty of Christians also showed a strong emphasis on care and compassion for all creation not just for humans. This strong concern for the environment came through in the answers of the staff members at COTT.

Attending church and spending time alone in prayer were ranked low down which is interesting as the staff attend chapel every morning and the service starts with half an hour of silent prayer. Perhaps these are taken as givens, things that Christians simply do and so are not considered as duties or living out of faith. This was borne out by a staff member who focused on consequences of actions to bring about good results as being the most important in ethical decision making while other staff members followed principles of justice and care.

Definitions of ethics included "ethics is a consideration of how to be together" and "action behaviour regulated by context." Another definition was "ethics is the map and morality is the being – like an internal compass that regulates how to be together."

⁵⁷ From the triangulation process (described in chapter six), it appears that some students do not fully subscribe to equal treatment of men and women. Questions that required narrative style answers indicated that subordination of wives to husbands based on Ephesians 5 was followed by some students.

⁵⁸ Question 10 asked whether students stood up for what they believed was right. This question will be further analysed in chapter six with changes in moral behaviour.

5.4.1.2 The students

Many students did not identify a specific person as being a good person. Instead, they identified characteristics of a good person, and these included obeying biblical laws, being supportive, being encouraging and compassionate, respect for others and creation and love for others and self. People who were identified as being good included Mandela (C8), a bishop (C3), and a person who “leads from the back as she engages with the youth on their level, she does not look down on them but encourages them to respect and be committed in all they do” (C7).

Characteristics that indicated goodness that were mentioned by the students included listening to others, thinking before acting, straight talk, honesty, love, compassion, truth, faith, respect and loyalty. These would all contribute to healthy relationships as do the Christian values that were identified by the students which included compassion, gentleness, humbleness, perseverance, love, justice, serving, sharing, respect, loyalty, self-discipline, solidarity, hope, grace, kindness, peace, obedience, patience, integrity and honesty.

From questions 2.2 and 2.8 most (60%) of the students felt that morality has to do with human flourishing and being Christ-like. Some (30%) thought it was to bring about the best consequences in a situation and used this as the criterion for ethical decision making. Acting according to virtues (30%) and biblical principles (30%) were considered as most important in ethical decision making while obedience to the teaching of the church and biblical rules was chosen by one student (10%) as being most important.

The equal distribution of opinion about making ethical decisions was also reflected in the students' answers regarding the main duty of Christians (question 2.12). Witnessing to the gospel by showing care and compassion for others was chosen by three students while none saw it as least important. Two students saw evangelism as most important but two considered it as least important. Working for justice was chosen as most important by two students and least important by one. No one thought that caring for creation was the most important.

All the students agreed that as one grows in relationship with God, one will grow in personal goodness (question 2.11). And all of them either often or sometimes felt a prompting from God to act in certain ways when they prayed (question 2.7).

5.4.2 St Augustine College

5.4.2.1 The staff

One staff member identified Pope John Paul II as a good person because of his search for truth. Another staff member described good people as honestly striving and seeking for the good while having the humility and realism to see the limitations of any action. They ranked working for justice and caring for people in need as most important in terms of living out one's faith while obeying church teaching. Rules were seen as least important.

The staff understood morality as having to do with human flourishing and being Christ-like. When making decisions, they felt that following certain principles and acting according to certain virtues were crucial to how they made their decisions. Doing what the Bible commanded was the least important. There was less unanimity regarding the main duty of Christians. One staff member identified evangelism and preaching the gospel as a priority while another chose showing care and compassion for others as the most important. All the staff agreed that working for justice and showing respect for all were important. The differences in their answers seemed to come from a difference in understanding of evangelism rather than from disagreement about the importance of care, compassion and justice.

Definitions of ethics given by the staff included "what we ought to do" and "discourse – a critical reflection on moral behaviour in the light of circumstances, experience, reason, sacred texts and traditions and it is also practice that is moving from reflection to action in the light of the above." They defined morality in terms of practice in the light of or inspired by "honest, critical reflection on moral issues." The staff emphasised critical reflection rather than human flourishing and living in a Christ-like manner, which is the way morality was defined in this thesis.

5.4.2.2 The students

The students responded with a mixture of answers regarding who they considered to be a good person. Some choose well known figures while others chose people who they knew personally. Aung San Sun Kyi, Mother Teresa and Desmond Tutu were all selected as good people. The students' choices reflected an understanding of goodness being to do with issues of justice and courage and standing up for the rights of the poor.

Characteristics that indicated goodness that were mentioned by the students included having a belief in the goodness of people, compassion and being concerned for the dignity of all, being able to control one's behaviour, putting one's own needs second and working

for justice using non-violent means. Being kind, firm, friendly, humble and honest, showing compassion for the poor and seeking the best approach were also mentioned.

The Christian values that the students named were similar to the characteristics that they identified for good people which showed consistency in their understanding of morality. Many of these are crucial for healthy relationships. These values included love, justice, care, kindness, understanding, hope, humility, generosity, peace, joy, respecting others and the environment, integrity and honesty. These are important in forming relationships, indicating that the students had an awareness of the centrality of relationship in moral behaviour.

Question 2.9 examined this in more detail as it asked what actions and ways of behaving the students considered right and good. Good behaviour included treating others as they would like to be treated, acting compassionately, being kind to and treating all people with equal dignity, doing justice, showing respect for others and the environment and acting with integrity and honesty. These were mentioned by a number of the students. The behaviours that they considered wrong included many of the opposites such as dishonesty, disrespect, prejudiced behaviour, fighting, injustice, racism, gossip, selfishness, arrogance, unfaithfulness, ignoring poverty and following the crowd.

All the students agreed that morality is primarily about “human flourishing” as asked in question 2.2. They ranked this higher than obeying the teaching of the church, the laws and principles in the Bible or acting to bring about good consequences. They also all acknowledged a social not just an individual dimension to morality.

When asked about making ethical decisions, four students ranked the use of principles such as: “what is just?” or “what is most caring?” as the way in which they make ethical decisions. However, acting according to certain virtues such as honesty was also an important factor (four people ranked this first or second). Less important were a consideration of the consequences of actions or biblical commands, but one person put consequences as most important, and one chose biblical commands.

So, while the students’ understanding of morality was not explicitly based on relationship, they saw the characteristics and virtues that make for relationship as important, and they showed an awareness that morality involved the way one related to others and to a lesser degree to the environment. This seemed to be borne out by the students’ responses regarding the main duty of Christians where they ranked witnessing to the gospel by showing care and compassion for others and working for justice in the world as the most important for Christians. Two students (A2, A7) had caring for the environment as most

important while one (A6) had this as the least important. The least important duties for Christians were consistently seen as evangelism and attending church.

The vision and mission of St Augustine College uses terms such as “development and transformation of human culture” which indicate that they have a social understanding of morality and that ethics is more than simply personal. However, this is balanced by the aim to “focus on the comprehensive human good that gives a central place to the dignity and transcendence of the human person.”⁵⁹

Values that are espoused by the college include human dignity, solidarity, stewardship, ethical leadership, academic excellence, critical realism and creative and imaginative thinking. They are committed to justice while recognising that justice must be tempered with mercy and reconciliation.⁶⁰

5.4.3 The South African Theological Seminary

5.4.3.1 The staff

The staff members at SATS had a Christocentric view of morality considering that what makes a person good is their relationship with God. One staff member expressed this saying that a good person is one “who lives according to a value system that accords fairly well with the ethics and values taught in Scripture.” He added that “theologically Jesus Christ is the only truly *good* person” but “any believer in Jesus Christ who is born of the Spirit and being transformed into the image of Christ is also good.”

The staff members understood morality as primarily to do with human flourishing and the call to be Christ-like. In line with their belief that relationship with God is primary, they ranked spending time alone with God in prayer as most important for living out the Christian faith, and secondly caring for others. The priority is to be as Christ-like as possible and to grow in relationship to Jesus. “Living the Christian faith means developing a relationship with Christ and becoming as much like Him as is possible in this life.” This leads to caring for others and working for justice.

The staff definitions of ethics included the following: “ethics is [the branch of study that engages in] philosophical (or in our case ‘theological’) reflection about what is right or wrong (and good or bad). It attempts to describe how people should behave, whether individually or corporately.” When asked if there was a distinction between ethics and morality (question 2.9), the answer was “yes and no.” This ambiguous answer was

⁵⁹ Mission and Vision 2014, viewed 14/1/2014, from www.staugustine.ac.za

⁶⁰ Mission and Vision 2014, viewed 14/1/2014, from www.staugustine.ac.za

explained as technically speaking, yes there is a distinction: that *ethics* is more philosophical and prescriptive (how people *should* behave), whereas *morality* is more practical and descriptive (how people *do* behave). However, one staff member commented that “for all practical intents and purposes, neither I nor SATS really bothers too much about this distinction. We tend to use the words rather interchangeably. Simplistically, what is ethical is whatever God wants (and has revealed to be His will), while to be moral is be and do what God wants.” Another staff member had a similar answer saying, “You can’t live a moral life if there are no ethics. So morality is the outcome of ethical principles and in a Christian perspective the result of your personal relationship with God based on the Bible.”

All the staff agreed that living out the Christian life means spending time alone with God. Caring for the environment was seen as least important by them all. Staff members agreed that “do what the Bible commands” when making decisions comes first, and one staff member nuanced this in the following way, saying that “reflecting deeply on the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ as a model of God’s will more accurately reflects how decisions should be made. It is similar to do what the Bible commands, but makes allowance for the fact that what is ‘biblical’ is often more complex than simple imperatives. We would hold biblical imperatives to be non-negotiable, but we recognise that a literalistic hermeneutic that simply tries to obey commands in Scripture is inadequate.”

One staff member saw evangelism as the main duty of Christians, and another staff member identified witnessing to the gospel by showing care and compassion as most important with evangelism as second most important.

5.4.3.2 The students

Only three students named a specific person whom they considered to be good (question 2.1). Their answers tended to be very general with a number saying that a moral or good person is one who follows the teachings of the Bible or Jesus. One added that the law was in their hearts and came from relationship with God. An interesting answer was “an individual who inadvertently or purposefully commits an action reflecting the nature of God” (S2). This answer would seem to negate the importance of intention and motivation although it may just have emphasised that even without meaning to and without thinking, one acts from one’s character in a moral manner. A couple of students asserted that good actions could only be known by God. In the eyes of people, a person might be seen to avoid obvious evil actions such as dishonesty and adultery and might be respected, but it

is only God who knows (S4; S14). This failure to identify a specific person might indicate that they struggle to describe the actual characteristics of a Christ-like person.

The three who did describe a person whom they considered as moral, all described a personal friend or family member. For example, one spoke of her husband who is faithful and devoted but is calm, able to get on with others and stand for his beliefs. Another made an interesting choice of an older friend who was not a Christian but did good works, “is kind and generous, has raised her granddaughter and is faithful to her husband” (S17).

Characteristics that indicated goodness that the students mentioned included having a belief in the goodness of people, compassion and being concerned for the dignity of all, being able to control one’s behaviour, putting one’s own needs second, working for justice using honest and non-violent means, being kind, firm, friendly humble and honest, showing compassion for the poor and seeking the best approach. Actions and behaviour that the students believed to be right included loving, self-sacrifice, care, being fair, showing respect, honesty and doing what Jesus would do. One student (S1) included opposing authorities who are harming the defenceless and said that e-tolls were example of a harmful action by the authorities.

They could all name virtues and had an understanding of these. Being loving, just, caring, kind and understanding, respecting others and the environment, integrity and honesty were all identified as virtues. These virtues are important in forming relationships, indicating that the students had an awareness of the centrality of relationship in moral behaviour.

Actions that were seen as wrong included the destruction of property, violence, murder, dishonouring others, stereotyping others, using others for gain, envy, self-worship, world-worship, people-worship, not recognising God and so thinking that we have it right all the time, lack of love and humility.

There was a mixed response to question 2.2 which asked students to rank whether morality was about obeying the teaching of the Church and the rules and laws in the Bible, or about human flourishing and being Christ-like or about acting to bring about the best consequences. Six students ranked obeying the teaching of the Church and the rules of the Bible as most important for morality, and two ranked this as least important. Eight considered human flourishing to be most important, and two ranked it as least important. Four thought consequences were what mattered. However, consequences were generally seen as less important with eight ranking this lowest. Obedience to biblical rules was

chosen by nine of the students as the most important for ethical decision making with consequences being the next most important consideration (question 2.8).

From this, obedience to church teaching and even more so to biblical teaching are considered to be very important. To be Christ-like is also important. There was a mixed response to the importance of consequences of actions with some seeing this as important, but quite a few believed it was not important. The Bible centred emphasis of SATS showed in their rankings.

The students said that they had a relationship with God and either often or sometimes felt a prompting from God when praying. All the students linked relationship with God and growing in personal goodness (question 2.11).

When asked to rank what they understood as the main duty for Christians (question 2.12), witnessing to the gospel by showing care and compassion was chosen as the most important duty for Christians by four students and as the second most important by five. No one felt it was unimportant. Evangelism was the next duty most frequently chosen as important, with just one saying that it was the least important duty. Care of creation was not seen as important by any of the respondents, and eight of them said it was the least or second least important. Not many chose attending church or justice as being important. Overwhelmingly, witness to the gospel through care and then through evangelism were considered to be most important. The findings are summarised in Table 5.1. Those who are marked as being unsure ranked them all of equal importance.

Table 5.1

Tabulated results of SATS responses to question 2.12 - the main duty of Christians

| | Most important | Second most important | Least important |
|---------------------|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| Evangelism | 4 | 1 | 1 |
| Care and compassion | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| Attend church | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Work for justice | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| Care for creation | 0 | 1 | 4 |
| Unsure | 4 | 4 | 4 |

The morality of SATS students was not explicitly based on relationship, but virtues that make for relationship were included and an awareness of the need for morality to go beyond the individual to embrace justice and care and compassion for others and, to a much lesser degree, the environment.

5.4.4 Conclusions

Human flourishing and being Christ-like are themes that came through strongly in the understanding of morality with both the staff members and the students agreeing but with one person, a staff member at COTT, objecting to the anthropocentric nature of the statement.

St Augustine staff and students tended to choose good people who were involved in social issues and who stood up for the rights of the oppressed. COTT students did this to a certain extent while SATS students tended to focus on being Christ-like. Jesus of course stood up for the rights of the poor and the oppressed, so being Christ-like could include social action and working for justice. A personal relationship with God has social implications and involves working for justice. Liberation theologian Gutiérrez (1984:vii) affirms that liberation spirituality is Christ centred and it is through experiencing God's love in a personal way that we are sustained in working against the evils of hatred, destruction, exploitation and oppression. These can only be overcome by the power of love that emanates from God. However, this aspect did not come through clearly in the way the SATS students tended to follow biblical commands in ethical decision making. They emphasized a personal relationship with God which in terms of social action involved care and compassion for the poor and those in need but not an analysis of structural injustices.

In many ways, the same could be said of the students from the other institutions who put less emphasis on personal relationship with God. Their understanding of morality tended to involve care and compassion for others rather than action for social justice. This could be due to the general lack of social analysis and opposition to corruption and injustice that characterizes many churches in South Africa at present. However, the students from St Augustine College tended towards a more critical reflection on issues while COTT students varied and were more diverse in their answers.

Students from SATS emphasised obedience to the Church and to biblical rules. Biblical rules and Church teaching do lead to human flourishing. The danger is that they can become legalistic with adherence to outer conformity rather than inner transformation. This can be avoided if, as Vest (2000:59) proposes, our desires are trained and shaped to meet our hunger for a life of goodness.

The characteristics that indicate a good person supported a relational understanding of morality, and these were identified by members of all the institutions. St Augustine and COTT placed more emphasis on relationship with the environment as well as with others

and God. SATS emphasised relationship with God but with the presumption that other relationships would follow from this primary one.

5.5 The moral formation programme

5.5.1 Introduction

The moral formation programme will be reported on under the following headings:

1. The structure and content of the programme and moral formation
2. The modes of moral formation

The moral formation programme is of crucial interest to this research. It is answering the question as to how and to what extent moral formation is included in the institution. In chapter three, Van der Ven's modes of moral formation, which are discipline, socialisation, transmission, cognitive development, value clarification, emotional development and character education were described. To these, I added spiritual formation and the role of the community. Spiritual formation included inward spiritual disciplines such as prayer and fasting, corporate ones such as worship and confession and outward ones such as service to others.

The questionnaires asked both staff and students which of these modes of moral formation were present and used at the institution (Question 4.2). In the questionnaire, moral formation was described as a "process by which people become genuinely committed to being good persons and acting rightly, justly and compassionately towards others and creation."

5.5.2 Programme structure and content and moral formation

Information regarding the programme structure was gathered mainly from the staff as they are responsible for the programme. Section three of the staff questionnaire was designed to elicit information regarding the inclusion of moral formation in the programme and particularly in the ethics course. Question 3.1 started by asking the staff how they understood moral formation to be included in the purpose and mission statements of the institution. The staff were then asked to identify which courses were the most important for moral formation and what aspects of ethics were the most important to teach (question 3.2 and 3.5). The staff were asked to describe three ways in which moral formation was encouraged in the ethics course and in other areas of the programme at the institution (question 3.3) and to identify how they thought the students' theological studies had helped them to understand ethics and live a moral life (question 3.4). There was a later question (4.3 staff and 4.5 students) to compare which aspects of the teaching of ethics

the staff viewed as most important and which the students felt had the most influence on their moral formation.

As spiritual formation and moral formation are so closely linked, the staff members were also asked (3.6) in what ways relationship with God is fostered as part of the teaching programme at the institution.

5.5.2.1 The College of the Transfiguration

At COTT the whole diploma is designed to be aligned with the vision and mission of the college which is directed, among other things, towards moral formation, said one staff member. This means all the courses are important. Another staff member expressed this by saying that moral formation is encouraged through “teaching, chapel and outreach.”

Key factors in moral formation are formation groups. These groups are given responsibility for activities such as worship, projects in the community and presentations. The students’ feedback regarding the formation groups was that they often do not have time to become really involved in them and to give of their best because of the pressure of studies. Formation groups are scheduled once a week and are influenced by the commitment to the group and the personality and pastoral care skills of the responsible staff member as well as by the students themselves. A staff member described the formation groups as “moulding students together in character as they engage with and ‘flash’ one another – being sensitive to well-being of the others and their personality and diversity and gelling and not undermining others.”

Moral formation is encouraged through communal dining. Students are required to sit in their formation groups, which are diverse in nature, rather than simply being allowed to gravitate towards their friends. Etiquette is seen as part of the moral formation process as well as respect and care for one another, as demonstrated in the moderate use of voice and language. As an extension to this, once a term, students are invited to the Rector’s dinner. These are formal occasions with formal dress and sometimes an outside speaker. It is a time for the students to gather and form relationships. One staff member commented that “external conformity is required from students.” This raised the question as to whether the students internalized these good habits or simply conformed to the expectations of the college.

Moral formation is also encouraged by asking students to think deeply on their contextual experiences and to reconsider assumptions and preconceived ideas. This is done specifically in the context of feminine and gender theology and what it means to be men

and women. A staff member said that in the ethics course moral formation is encouraged through inclusiveness which accommodates all God's people.

The most important aspects to teach in ethics were considered by the staff to be "reflection, reflexivity and creativity" and "context, biblical principles and history." Answers to what was most important in ethics were fairly similar for the staff and the students with both groups identifying what Jesus would do, biblical ethics and ethical theories as important. Decision-making methods and value clarification were included by four students, but not as the most influential.

In response to question 3.4, the staff thought that theological studies helped students to understand ethics and live a moral life by "emphasizing context and being sensitive to difference" and through "transmission of ethical principles and cognitive development." A fear was expressed by one staff member that the students did not always connect academic study and spirituality, and suggested this was due to a lack of emphasis on virtue and character formation.

Relationship with God (question 3.6) is fostered through a daily routine of prayer with access to spiritual advisors. There is a structured programme with chapel and classroom engagement. There is formal worship which is liturgical, and students are expected to be there. Worship at COTT embraces diversity, language, culture and gender. There is an expectation that students will conform to the structure of worship. As one staff member said, "Discipline to the form of worship whether and even if not used before or not liked is expected as worship is not just about you, others matter. You can be diminished for the corporate so step back, listen and grow rather than being selfish." Another staff member was unsure of the extent to which relationship with God was encouraged and felt that there is very little fostering of relationship with God and little encouragement to self-knowledge through counselling.

5.5.2.2 St Augustine College

Moral formation was encouraged through a focus on virtue ethics and through encouraging students to think critically and reason for themselves. This corresponds strongly with the cognitive development mode of moral formation as described by Van der Ven. One staff member identified the need for skill in handling discussions regarding ethics, moral dilemmas and the experiences of the students. Space had to be given for reflection and sharing, and this had to be a safe space where confidentiality was respected. This was described as the 'Las Vegas Rule' - what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas. The lecturer had observed that this deep, honest kind of sharing only started three

quarters of the way through the course. Another staff member emphasized that principles had to be grounded and students had to use their reasoning but to do that “within the Christian call.”

Moral formation takes place in many ways as discussed, not just through the teaching of ethics. However, ethics was identified by all the staff respondents as important for moral formation because it is overtly concerned with right and wrong. Scripture courses and pastoral studies were also mentioned by them, with pastoral studies being probably more important than scripture. In the ethics course, the lecturers indicated that they placed an emphasis on moral discernment, conscience and character or virtue ethics. However, they explained that all the courses feed into one another and scripture.

Question 4.5 probed a bit further and asked what aspects of the ethics course were considered the most influential. Most of the students thought that biblical ethics was very important and influenced their moral formation. The second most frequently chosen aspect (chosen by 4 students) was ‘what would Jesus do?’ This the students interpreted in a similar way to biblical ethics – rather than seeing it as a literal following of Jesus. The teaching and use of practical decision-making methods was chosen by three students, showing that this was important. Closely linked to this was the solving of case studies and dilemmas which was also chosen by three students. Clarifying values was chosen by only two students. The teaching of ethical theories did not seem very important to the students as only one person selected this as an important aspect to be taught. No one mentioned the characteristics of a good person.

On the other hand, the staff considered ethical theories and decision-making methods as the most important aspects to include in the teaching of ethics. Then followed biblical ethics and knowing the characteristics of a good person or virtue ethics.

There was congruence between the staff and students’ answers in that they all ranked biblical ethics and decision-making methods as the most important. The differences were that students (5 of the 7) ranked ‘what would Jesus do?’ as important while none of the staff chose this answer. The staff selected ethical theories but none of the students did.

5.5.2.3 The South African Theological Seminary

“Moral formation is inherent in the statement of faith of SATS and there is an expectation that students and staff will live according to this statement.” Other than this expectation, SATS is indirect about moral formation as a goal of their theological training as they understand moral formation to come from relationship with God.

The courses considered to be the most important for moral formation was answered by one staff member thus:

The superficial answer would probably be “Christian Ethics,” though I am not sure that is clear-cut. I would think that our courses “Biblical Worldview” and “The Words and Works of Jesus” are serious contenders. But there is a meaningful sense in which we think of moral formation as a by-product of correct belief in and thinking about God and creation, so in that sense moral formation is a product of a student’s entire journey with each course playing a part.

This perception of the most important course was borne out by the comments of a student (S6) that the Biblical Worldview course had the most influence on him. He wrote, “This subject changed the way I think, and caused me to see the world through the lens of Scripture. As a result, I base right and wrong on Scripture rather than what seems right to me.”

Other courses that were identified as important contributors to moral formation were Christian Foundations, Christian Relationships, Human Development, Spiritual Growth and Christian Ethics. The staff felt that the most important aspects to teach in ethics are sound relationship with God, sound knowledge of the Bible and a Spirit-led lifestyle. Staff members thought that moral formation is encouraged through the application of biblical knowledge in the students’ personal life and in the local community. The staff believed that the students’ theological studies helped them to live a moral life through self-discovery, in course discussions stimulated by the facilitator or tutor and through involvement in the local church. It is interesting to note that only one of the thirteen students said there was any discussion and tutoring. This one student commented that tutoring from one particular staff member made a huge difference to her studies and moral formation. This seems to indicate that there should be more interaction with facilitators and tutors.

In relation to question 3.6 regarding the ways in which relationship with God is fostered in the teaching programme, one staff member felt that this was impossible to itemize as it was such an important focus. Another staff member spelled this out: “Students are stimulated to take biblical knowledge and apply it in their own lives. They are motivated to have a personal relationship with God through Jesus and the Holy Spirit.”

In answering question 4.3 regarding the most important aspects to teach in ethics, the SATS staff differed from the staff members at St Augustine College but showed similarities to the staff at COTT. The SATS staff chose ‘what would Jesus do?’ and then, biblical ethics and clarifying values as the most important to teach in ethics. The students also

chose 'what would Jesus do?' as most important and then biblical ethics. One staff member but no students mentioned ethical theories as being important.

5.5.3 The modes of moral formation

The questionnaires asked both staff and students which modes of moral formation were present and used at the institution. Question 4.2 listed the modes of moral formation as identified by Van der Ven and added spiritual formation to the list.⁶¹ Staff and students were asked to indicate if these modes were used often, seldom or never.

The students were asked to rate (question 4.1) which aspects of their theological studies contributed to their moral formation, and the staff rated the extent to which these same aspects were included in the theological studies programme. Answers to these questions were scrutinized for consistency. Question 5 asked how moral formation was integrated into the programme. A five-point scale was employed for this question in which staff and students rated the extent to which they agreed that certain elements which promoted moral formation were integrated into the programme at the institution. These elements were selected on the basis of their relevance for moral formation as seen in the literature. Overlaps between question 4.1 and question 5 were designed to check consistency of answers. This lent a quantitative element to the otherwise qualitative findings.

Some of the aspects of the programme as listed in question 4.1 and question 5 are not equally applicable to the three institutions as some can only be done in a residential or face to face setting. Hence, the lack of presence of certain practices at the non-residential institutions is to be expected. The question then is how to manage this lack of face to face teaching and whether these aspects are actually as influential for moral formation as often presumed.

5.5.3.1 The College of the Transfiguration and modes of moral formation

There was a large degree of agreement between the staff and the students' perceptions of which modes of moral formation were used. In line with the residential nature of the college and the strict adherence to routines of worship and dining room behaviour (sitting in formation groups), it is not surprising that the students said that discipline and socialisation were frequently used. Cognitive development and spiritual formation were also chosen as often used. The staff emphasized socialisation rather than discipline and included transmission as being frequently used.

⁶¹ The role of the community was not added as students from the non-residential colleges may have been unclear on which community it was referring to. In distance learning situations, the local church might take on the role of community.

Table 5.2

Tabulated results to question 4.2 for COTT

| Modes of moral formation | Used often | | Seldom used | | Never used | |
|--------------------------|------------|-------|-------------|-------|------------|-------|
| | Learners | Staff | Learners | Staff | Learners | Staff |
| Discipline | 7 | 2 | 2 | 2 | | |
| Socializing | 7 | 4 | 1 | | 1 | |
| Transmission | 5 | 4 | 3 | | | |
| Cognitive development | 7 | 4 | 3 | | | |
| Value clarification | 3 | 3 | 5 | 1 | | |
| Emotional development | 3 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 1 | |
| Character development | 3 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 1 | |
| Spiritual disciplines | 7 | 4 | 3 | | | |

Answers to question 4.1 regarding the use of various teaching methods and practices that were identified in the literature as promoting moral formation are tabulated in Table 5.3. (L indicates a learner or student and S a staff member.)

Table 5.3

Tabulated results to question 4.1 for COTT

| | Often | | Occasion-ally | | Seldom | | Never | |
|---|-------|---|---------------|---|--------|---|-------|---|
| | L | S | L | S | L | S | L | S |
| The use of inspiring stories (for example, stories of saints) | 6 | 4 | 2 | | | | 1 | |
| Teaching spirituality and ethics together | 3 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 1 | | 1 | |
| Activities that helped you clarify your values and increased self-knowledge. | 3 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 2 | | 1 | |
| The inclusion in lectures / study notes of facts about the environment | 4 | | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | |
| Biblical teaching regarding justice and care for the poor | 8 | 4 | 1 | | | | | |
| Projects and or field work with communities | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 | | | |
| Explanation of the ethical implications of Christian doctrines | 3 | 3 | 5 | 1 | 2 | | | |
| Learning decision-making methods and thinking skills | 6 | 3 | 3 | 1 | | | | |
| Group discussions about ethical issues (for example, death sentence, sexuality) | 3 | 4 | 4 | | 2 | | | |
| Times of worship at the theological institution | 7 | 4 | 2 | | | | | |
| The encouragement to be involved in human struggles –with the poor, needy | 6 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | | | |
| Music and singing groups | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 | | 1 | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Small study / prayer groups where there is mutual accountability | 2 | 3 | 7 | 1 | 1 | | | |
| Soul friends and relationships | 3 | 3 | 4 | | 2 | 1 | | |
| The mentoring by tutors / lecturers | 3 | 2 | 5 | 1 | 1 | | | 1 |
| Spiritual disciplines such as meditation, | 5 | 3 | 4 | 1 | | | | |
| Spiritual direction by tutors / lecturers | 3 | 2 | 5 | | 1 | | 1 | |
| The encouragement of private devotions | 4 | | 4 | | 1 | | | |
| Learning what the Bible says about moral behaviour | 6 | 4 | 2 | | 2 | | | |

Some students left blank spaces, but from the above, it appears that the use of inspiring stories, biblical teaching regarding justice and care for the poor, decision-making methods, worship, encouragement to be involved in human struggles, spiritual discipline and biblical teaching about moral behaviour were seen as frequently used. They were identified by 60% to 70% of the students. Mostly, the staff identified the same practices as being frequently used. Where there were differences, they were small, being more a matter of whether practices were frequently or occasionally used rather than seldom or never used. One interesting finding was that students felt study groups were often used but not group discussions while the staff saw both these as often being used. The table below shows the number of students who said that moral formation was integrated into the programme in the following ways.

Table 5.4

Tabulated results to question 5 for COTT

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Dis-agree | Strongly disagree |
|--|----------------|-------|----------------------------|-----------|-------------------|
| Teaching of moral laws as found in the Bible | 2 | 7 | 1 | | |
| Biblical teaching on various moral issues such as divorce, abortion | 3 | 3 | 3 | 1 | |
| Teaching models of decision making | 5 | 5 | | | |
| Encouraging relationships of respect | 6 | 2 | 1 | 1 | |
| Many assignments that involve projects with those in need in the community | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | |
| Projects that involve care for the environment | 1 | 1 | 1 | 6 | 1 |
| Praying in lectures or prayers in lecture notes | | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| Assignments that involve work in a church community | | 5 | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| Encouraging students to form small groups for study, prayer and support | 1 | 4 | 2 | 3 | |
| Value clarification | | 4 | 5 | 1 | |

| | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| Staff acting as mentors / counsellors | 1 | 4 | | 4 | 1 |
| Opportunities for students to reflect upon and develop their relationship with God | 3 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Encouraging students to worship together | 2 | 6 | 2 | | |
| Requiring students to attend local church | | 6 | 3 | 1 | |
| Encouraging students to apply what they learn to their particular life context | 2 | 5 | 3 | | |
| Retreats organised or encouraged | 4 | 4 | 1 | 1 | |
| Critique of social and cultural evils included in the programme | 2 | 4 | 2 | 2 | |
| Critique of sexism particularly in the church | | 4 | 5 | | 1 |
| Case studies and stories are used in teaching | 1 | 3 | 6 | | |
| Narrow, fundamentalist interpretations of the Bible are questioned | 1 | 5 | 4 | | |
| Staff act as spiritual directors | | 4 | 3 | 3 | |
| Emphasizing that men and women can hold the same leadership roles in society | 4 | 2 | 4 | | |

From the above table, it can be seen that the students thought moral formation was integrated into the programme through moral decision making, encouraging relationships of respect, opportunities to develop a relationship with God, encouragement to worship together, encouragement to apply what is learnt to one's own particular context, retreats and the emphasis on equality between men and women. Other practices that were mentioned but which were not as influential were teaching of moral laws in the Bible, biblical teaching on various moral issues and assignments that involved projects with those in need in the community. Projects that involved care for the environment were definitely not included by most students (two did agree that projects are used, but seven disagreed).

5.5.3.2 St Augustine College and modes of moral formation

Table 5.5

Tabulated results to question 4.2 for St Augustine College

| Modes of moral formation | Used often | | Seldom used | | Never used | |
|--------------------------|------------|-------|-------------|-------|------------|-------|
| | Learners | Staff | Learners | Staff | Learners | Staff |
| Discipline | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | |
| Socializing | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | | |
| Transmission | 6 | 3 | | | | |
| Cognitive development | 7 | 3 | | | | |
| Value clarification | 5 | 2 | 1 | 1 | | |

| | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|---|---|---|---|--|---|
| Emotional development | 3 | | 1 | 1 | | 2 |
| Character development | 3 | | 1 | 3 | | |
| Spiritual disciplines | 4 | 2 | | 1 | | |

The students felt that cognitive development and moral reasoning were used the most. Student comments such as “he liked to push buttons” (A1) and “we were given a broader understanding of God, humanity and the world and encouraged to think in a more analytical way” (A3) illustrate this and confirm the use of these modes.

Transmission and value clarification were seen as the next most commonly used. Value clarification at St Augustine College is based on Christian values and so does not necessarily follow the non-directive, individual choice of values. A couple of students thought that emotional development had been used even though emotional development was not identified by any of the staff as often being used.

The staff agreed that transmission was used as a mode of moral formation as transmission or the giving of information was part of the teaching programme. However, it was not just facts and information that were taught but also principles that needed to be interpreted and applied in different situations. These principles were derived from the Bible and Church teaching as well as more broadly from philosophy and ethics. The students were encouraged to “use reasoning”, and so the use of cognitive development was affirmed by the staff. Students were encouraged to think about and identify their values and to live by them. A spiritual element was identified by the staff with one saying that teaching was “a call”. Three students also acknowledged spiritual development as being used.

The staff identified socialisation as a mode that was used. As they explained it, students were socialised to accept and internalise the moral ethos of the institution. This included an element of discipline as students were taught obedience to rules and good habits which led to self-discipline.

In response to the question to the staff regarding the ways in which moral formation was encouraged in the ethics course or in other parts of the programme at the institution, one staff member identified that it was through a focus on virtue ethics and encouraging students to think for themselves. He hoped that students’ theological studies would move them beyond a fundamentalist, legalistic understanding to taking responsibility for their own actions and choices. Relationships of respect among staff and students were an important part of the programme with all the students and staff agreeing to this.

Table 5.6

Tabulated results to question 4.1 for St Augustine College

| | Often | | Occasion-ally | | Seldom | | Never | |
|---|-------|---|---------------|---|--------|---|-------|---|
| | L | S | L | S | L | S | L | S |
| The use of inspiring stories (for example, stories of saints) | 5 | 2 | 2 | 1 | | | | |
| Teaching spirituality and ethics together | 4 | | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | |
| Activities that helped you clarify your values and increased self-knowledge. | 5 | 3 | 2 | | | | | |
| The inclusion in lectures / study notes of facts about the environment | 1 | | | | 3 | 1 | 3 | 1 |
| Biblical teaching regarding justice and care for the poor | 3 | 3 | 3 | | | | 1 | |
| Projects and or field work with communities | | | 1 | | 3 | 1 | 4 | 1 |
| Explanation of the ethical implications of Christian doctrines | 5 | 3 | 2 | | | | | |
| Learning decision-making methods and thinking skills | 5 | 3 | 2 | | | | | |
| Group discussions about ethical issues (for example, death sentence, sexuality) | 6 | 2 | 1 | 1 | | | | |
| Times of worship at the theological institution | | | | 1 | 4 | 1 | 3 | |
| The encouragement to be involved in human struggles –with the poor, needy | 3 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | | | |
| Music and singing groups | | | | | 2 | | 5 | 2 |
| Small study / prayer groups where there is mutual accountability | | | | | | | | |
| Soul friends and relationships | 4 | | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | | |
| The mentoring by tutors / lecturers | 4 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | | | |
| Spiritual disciplines such as meditation, | 3 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 1 | | | |
| Spiritual direction by tutors / lecturers | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 | | | 1 | |
| The encouragement of private devotions | 3 | 3 | 2 | | 2 | | | |
| Learning what the Bible says about moral behaviour | 4 | 2 | 2 | | 1 | | | |

The staff indicated that they often made use of inspiring stories and biblical teaching regarding justice and care for the poor as well as biblical teaching regarding moral behaviour. This was done critically, and students were encouraged to engage sympathetically and critically with secular philosophical theories and movements as well as the biblical material. The staff often referred to and explained the ethical implications of Christian doctrines. They also often encouraged the students to use decision-making methods to help them work through and deal with ethical dilemmas. Group discussions

about ethical issues were a regular feature. The lecturers attempted to include exercises and activities that promoted self-knowledge as often as possible. These included value clarification exercises and encouraging students to work through the issues, examining their own beliefs and feelings, rather than simply giving answers that they thought were the 'right' ones.

The students' responses tied in with the staff responses regarding decision making, exercises and activities that helped to clarify their values and increase self-knowledge as they all agreed or strongly agreed that these were integrated into the programme. Inspiring stories and case studies were used as part of the lectures, and five of the seven students found these to be well integrated and to help with moral formation. Biblical teaching on justice and care for the poor and explaining the ethical implications of Christian doctrines were identified by five students. Teaching ethics and spirituality together and learning what the Bible says about moral behaviour were identified by four of the students as contributing to their moral formation. This was borne out by the staff responses, and it appears that the teaching of spirituality and ethics together was sometimes done by some lecturers and seldom by others. Six of the seven students affirmed the value of group discussions during lectures.

Biblical teaching about laws such as the Ten Commandments did not feature strongly as most students took a neutral stance and did not agree or disagree that it was part of the programme. The students felt that there was some encouragement to be involved in human struggles with the poor, needy and vulnerable, and one student mentioned that her resolve to do this was strengthened (A5). From the student and staff answers, it was unclear as to how much time was given to the inclusion of facts about the environment and increasing the students' appreciation of the environment. Three students said this was never done while three identified it as happening occasionally and one even as often. However, what stood out as being agreed to by the students and particularly noted by the staff was the fact that narrow, fundamentalist interpretations of the Bible were questioned.

The students were encouraged to enter into spiritual direction, and some students did follow spiritual disciplines such as fasting and meditation. The staff claimed that they did encourage private prayers and devotions, but only three students thought that there was encouragement.

There was a mixed response from the students to the mentoring role of staff members. Four students indicated that staff often acted as mentors, but two said they seldom or never did. The mentoring role of staff was very influential for the moral formation of the students as well as their academic growth. Some of the staff were more aware of this role

and spent more time with students, more consciously mentoring them. One student, (A3) commented, “My interaction with students and lecturers has been a gift to me that has taught me much about life. I feel ‘rich’ to have been given this opportunity to study theology.” One of the staff members saw his role very clearly as a mentor and spiritual director. Student (A3) as well as three others identified soul friends and a network of relationships are formative.

Projects and field work, practical assignments in the community or church, music and singing groups, small study groups and times of worship together did not form part of the programme, so none of these were mentioned by the students. The staff also indicated that these were not included as part of the programme.

There were some anomalies in the students’ answers. For example, biblical teaching regarding justice and care for the poor was identified as often being used by one student while another said that it was never done.

Table 5.7

Tabulated results to question 5 for St Augustine College

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Dis-agree | Strongly disagree |
|--|----------------|-------|----------------------------|-----------|-------------------|
| Teaching of moral laws as found in the Bible | 1 | 3 | 3 | | |
| Biblical teaching on various moral issues such as divorce, abortion | 1 | 4 | 2 | | |
| Teaching models of decision making | 2 | 4 | 1 | | |
| Encouraging relationships of respect | 3 | 3 | 1 | | |
| Many assignments that involve projects with those in need in the community | | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| Projects that involve care for the environment | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 |
| Praying in lectures or prayers in lecture notes | | 1 | 3 | 3 | |
| Assignments that involve work in a church community | | | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| Encouraging students to form small groups for study, prayer and support | | 2 | 3 | 2 | |
| Value clarification | 3 | 2 | 2 | | |
| Staff acting as mentors / counsellors | 1 | 3 | 2 | 1 | |
| Opportunities for students to reflect upon and develop their relationship with God | 4 | 2 | | 1 | |
| Encouraging students to worship together | | 1 | 4 | 2 | |
| Requiring students to attend local church | | | 5 | 2 | |
| Encouraging students to apply what they | | 1 | 5 | 1 | |

| | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|--|
| learn to their particular life context | | | | | |
| Retreats organised or encouraged | | 1 | 3 | 3 | |
| Critique of social and cultural evils included in the programme | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | |
| Critique of sexism particularly in the church | 1 | 4 | 2 | 1 | |
| Case studies and stories are used in teaching | 3 | 3 | 1 | | |
| Narrow, fundamentalist interpretations of the Bible are questioned | 5 | 2 | | | |
| Staff act as spiritual directors | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | |
| Emphasizing that men and women can hold the same leadership roles in society | 1 | 2 | 4 | | |

One student felt that there were not many opportunities for students to reflect upon and develop their relationship with God, but the others all felt that this was strongly integrated into the programme. The responses of the staff were also divided on this.

Most students felt that they were encouraged to integrate and apply what they learnt to their particular context and that a critique of specific social and cultural evils was in the programme. This included a critique of sexism particularly within the church as it relates to leadership roles of men and women and that men and women could hold the same leadership roles in society. The staff also agreed that this was done. The application of theological principles and knowledge to the contemporary world was seen as important by the staff, but only one student considered this important.

One student said that praying and prayers were included as part of the lecture notes and encouraging students to form small groups for support and study was not integrated into the programme, but two thought they were to a certain extent. The staff felt that there was some inclusion of these in the programme.

From the responses to this survey, it appears that relationships of respect, decision-making models, critical reflection on scripture, the exploration of personal values and case studies were the ways most often used to integrate moral formation into the programme.

5.5.3.3 The South African Theological Seminary and modes of moral formation

Table 5.8

Tabulated results to question 4.2 for SATS

| Modes of moral formation | Used often | | Seldom used | | Never used | |
|--------------------------|------------|-------|-------------|-------|------------|-------|
| | Learners | Staff | Learners | Staff | Learners | Staff |
| Discipline | 9 | 3 | 4 | | | |
| Socializing | 5 | 2 | 6 | 1 | 2 | |
| Transmission | 4 | 3 | 7 | | 2 | |
| Cognitive development | 9 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | |
| Value clarification | 8 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 1 | |
| Emotional development | 4 | | 3 | 2 | 6 | 1 |
| Character development | 4 | 1 | 7 | 2 | 2 | |
| Spiritual disciplines | 11 | 3 | 2 | | | |

All the modes of moral formation except emotional development were identified by the staff as being often used at SATS. One staff member explained how socialisation could be included saying, “It depends on what is meant by ‘socializing’ as a distance education seminary. We are very intentional about communicating and inculcating the norms, values, and convictions of SATS, but it is not done through face to face ‘socializing’.” In terms of the practice of virtues he explained that

We probably do encourage the habitual practice of virtues, but it is not really our core philosophy of moral formation. In other words, we do not try to get people to become good by doing good things all the time. We would, for instance, exhort and encourage sexual purity, love of neighbor, integrity, etc. over and again in our teaching materials, but not primarily because we believe that our students will develop character through the habitual practice of virtues.

This view contrasts with those who, following Aristotle, advocate the practice of virtues, as it is through the practice of just actions that people become just. The students’ perceptions of what was often included in the programme were fairly similar to those of the staff. The staff and student responses to questions 4.1 are tabulated below.⁶²

⁶² Three students did not fill in this section of the questionnaire.

Table 5.9

Tabulated results to question 4.1 for SATS

| | Often | | Occasion-ally | | Seldom | | Never | |
|--|-------|---|---------------|---|--------|---|-------|---|
| | L | S | L | S | L | S | L | S |
| The use of inspiring stories (for example stories of saints) | 3 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 4 | | 4 | |
| Teaching spirituality and ethics together | 7 | 3 | 1 | | 4 | | 1 | |
| Activities that helped you clarify your values and increased self-knowledge. | 4 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 6 | | 1 | |
| The inclusion in lectures / study notes of facts about the environment. | | | 3 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 6 | |
| Biblical teaching regarding justice and care for the poor. | 3 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 5 | | 2 | |
| Projects and or field work with communities | 2 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 2 | | 6 | |
| Explanation of the ethical implications of Christian doctrines | 5 | 3 | 5 | | 2 | | 1 | |
| Learning decision-making methods and thinking skills | 4 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 3 | | 3 | |
| Group discussions about ethical issues (for example death sentence, sexuality) | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 4 | | 6 | |
| Times of worship at the theological institution | | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| The encouragement to be involved in human struggles – with the poor, needy | 1 | | 4 | | 2 | 1 | 7 | 1 |
| Music and singing groups | | | | 1 | 3 | | 1 | 1 |
| Small study / prayer groups where there is mutual accountability | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | | 7 | |
| Soul friends and relationships | 1 | | 2 | | 3 | | 8 | |
| The mentoring by tutors / lecturers | 2 | 1 | 3 | | 4 | 2 | 4 | |
| Spiritual disciplines such as meditation, | 1 | 2 | 5 | 1 | 2 | | 5 | |
| Spiritual direction by tutors / lecturers | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 5 | | 4 | |
| The encouragement of private devotions | 4 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 2 | | 3 | |
| Learning what the Bible says about moral behaviour | 7 | 3 | 4 | | 2 | | | |

Not surprisingly, most students identified that certain practices such as projects, group discussion, study groups and friendships that are difficult in a distance education setting were seldom or never used. There was a fair degree of consensus between the staff and students, although the staff felt that they did act as tutors more often than the students felt they did. On an institutional level, the staff did not act as mentors, but some students (two often and three occasionally) experienced mentoring from certain staff members. Four

students felt that the staff acted as spiritual directors, but most did not (two strongly disagreed, and two disagreed).

Both the staff and students agreed that spirituality and ethics are often taught together at SATS. They also all felt that moral laws as found in the Bible are often taught. Other practices that were often employed include explaining the ethical implications of Christian doctrines and teaching what the Bible says about moral behaviour (five students agreed to this). Some but not all the staff members considered that biblical teaching about justice and care for the poor were often included. However, only three students out of the thirteen thought so.

Most students (ten) felt that facts about the environment were seldom or never included. Practices that the students considered to be occasionally or seldom included (as opposed to often) were inspiring stories, teaching decision-making methods and exploration of personal values. These could form part of the lecture notes even in a distance context.

Group discussions via electronic media are encouraged. As one staff member described the practice: "We do group discussions in two ways. Some courses use online discussion forums in which people explore these things. Other courses require students to engage in discussions with church or community leaders and report back." However, only one student responded that discussions were often used and two said they were used occasionally. These findings were mostly confirmed in the responses of the students as tabulated below.

Table 5.10

Tabulated results to question 5 for SATS

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither agree or disagree | Dis- Agree | Strongly disagree |
|--|----------------|-------|---------------------------|------------|-------------------|
| Teaching of moral laws as found in the Bible | 5 | 1 | 3 | 1 | |
| Biblical teaching on various moral issues such as divorce, abortion | 6 | 2 | 2 | | |
| Teaching models of decision making | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| Encouraging relationships of respect | 5 | 2 | 1 | 2 | |
| Many assignments that involve projects with those in need in the community | 1 | 3 | 3 | | 3 |
| Projects that involve care for the environment | 1 | | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Praying in lectures or prayers in lecture notes | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 3 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Assignments that involve work in a church community | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| Encouraging students to form small groups for study, prayer and support | | 3 | 4 | 2 | 1 |
| Value clarification | 1 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| Staff acting as mentors / counsellors | 1 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 1 |
| Many opportunities for students to reflect upon and develop their relationship with God | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | |
| Encouraging students to worship together | | 2 | 1 | 4 | 3 |
| Requiring students to attend local church | 1 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| Encouraging students to apply what they learn to their particular life context | 5 | 2 | 3 | | |
| Retreats organised or encouraged | | 1 | 2 | 4 | 3 |
| Critique of social and cultural evils included in the programme | | 3 | 4 | 2 | 1 |
| Critique of sexism particularly in the church | 2 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 1 |
| Case studies and stories are used in teaching | 2 | 3 | 5 | | |
| Narrow, fundamentalist interpretations of the Bible are questioned | 2 | 1 | 4 | 3 | |
| Staff act as spiritual directors | 1 | | 4 | 3 | 2 |
| Emphasizing that men and women can hold the same leadership roles in society | 2 | | 3 | 3 | 2 |

Encouraging relationships of respect was seen to be included, and there were many opportunities for students to reflect upon and develop their relationship with God (four strongly agreed, two agreed and no one disagreed). Some students felt they were encouraged to apply what they learned in their context (five strongly agreed and one agreed). All the students felt that biblical teaching on moral issues was included.

Regarding the roles of men and women, two students strongly agreed that equality was promoted, but four disagreed and one of these strongly. There was also a mixed response to whether they were encouraged to attend a local church and to prayers in lecture notes. They mostly agreed but not strongly and two disagreed.

The use of case studies elicited an interesting response as four students agreed that they were used, but earlier in question 4.5 no one had chosen them as being important and often used. The students either disagreed or were non-committal regarding questioning narrow and fundamentalist interpretations of scripture.

Certain things were not included in the programme due to the distance, non-residential nature of the seminary. For example, singing, small study groups, soul friends and worship were generally seen as not included. All the students agreed that retreats were not done. Facts about the environment were perceived to be seldom or never included.

5.5.4 Conclusions

There was a fair degree of similarity between the three institutions. For example, the importance of relationships of respect was identified by all.

The most frequently used modes of moral formation were transmission, value clarification and cognitive development. In the residential setting, spiritual formation and socialisation were more possible, and worship was an integral feature of the programme.

Biblical ethics and biblical teaching featured prominently in importance, whether it was through courses such as 'Biblical Worldview' as taught at SATS or applied with careful, critical reflection as at St. Augustine College. While students valued being introduced to different perspectives and views and encouraged to think critically, they also seemed to revert back to a simplistic understanding, expressed as 'what would Jesus do?' The staff members considered ethical theory to be important to teach while the students hardly acknowledged its value. For them, values clarification and imitation of Jesus had more immediate appeal.

The use of inspiring stories, solving case studies, decision-making methods, explanation of Christian doctrines, exercises that encouraged self-knowledge, value clarification and the encouragement to be involved in human struggles with the poor were all strongly identified by students as being influential for their moral formation even if not much used at SATS.

A difference that emerged between the institutions was the extent to which narrow, fundamental interpretations of the Bible were questioned. While the students at COTT and St Augustine commented that such thinking was challenged, the students at SATS did not. Their answers tended towards a rather direct application of biblical knowledge.

Where group discussions and mentoring by staff members occurred, both of which directly promote relationship, they were affirmed as important. From this, it appears that more group discussions and mentoring would lead to greater moral formation.

Spiritual formation and relationship with God were encouraged at all the institutions and especially at SATS. Growing spiritually and morally through the practice of spiritual

disciplines was chosen by most of the students as being used, and the staff affirmed this too. However, in the questions that sought information on the use of particular spiritual disciplines such as meditation, fasting, retreats and spiritual direction, there was a discrepancy as these were not seen as frequently used. So, for example, the extent to which students perceived meditation and fasting to have contributed to their moral formation was seen as often by five students from COTT, two from St Augustine College and one from SATS. Other spiritual disciplines such as retreats and spiritual direction were chosen even less frequently, except by the COTT students. COTT has a chapel and regular silence and worship, but the extent to which relationship with God is fostered by these activities was not overwhelmingly acknowledged by students or even by all the staff members.

5.6 The relationship between the selected institutions and the Church

In order to meet the research objectives, it was necessary to determine whether there was a working relationship between the institutions and the local churches. Exploration of this relationship between the institution and the Church was done to determine the following:

- The extent to which the theological education institutions feel that they are responsible for the moral formation of students.
- Whether the institutions consider it the duty of the church of which the student is a member to be responsible for moral formation rather than it being the prerogative of the theological education institution.
- Whether moral formation should be left to the students themselves as they are responsible for themselves. It has nothing to do with the institution.

Theological education institutions might recognise that they have a responsibility for the moral formation of students but lack the resources to fully achieve this, so they rely on the local churches to help. For example, a distance education institution is not able to provide times of worship for students but could insist that students attend a local church. Assignments could be set that required students to work in a local church. This could, for example, consist of doing talks or projects at the church.

From the literature, there is an indication that being part of a church and worshipping together is important for moral formation and a significant factor in moral formation. While acknowledging that full-time seminaries have far more opportunities for worship together and for forming a faith community, the role of local churches in the lives of distance and non-residential students may be significant for their moral formation.

5.6.1 The College of the Transfiguration

COTT has a policy of encouraging students to find spiritual directors outside of the college, so the staff do not take on the role of a spiritual director. People from the local church and community are recommended as spiritual directors and counsellors, and the students are encouraged to go to them.

COTT has a relationship with the local churches, and projects in local churches are done as part of the students' assignments and studies. However, to a large extent, the college community and worship at the college take the place of local churches.

5.6.2 St Augustine College

St Augustine College is a Catholic institution and understands itself to be "immersed in human society as a leaven".⁶³ In this way, it seeks to make a unique contribution to the Church and to society. It does this through the programmes that are offered at the college rather than through formal agreements with the church. As a college that offers non-theological courses and is open to all, there is a code of ethics in which the integrity of each person is preserved, and this includes respecting the moral and religious choices of each person and avoiding proselytising.⁶⁴

St Augustine has a chapel, and there are regular times of worship. However, students are not overtly encouraged to attend these, and in fact one student felt excluded from the worship because she was not Catholic. Worship services are not strongly integrated into the programme either through the encouragement of students to worship together at St Augustine or to attend a local church.

While the lecturers recognised the value of retreats and said that they did encourage students to go on retreats, the students felt that they were not actively encouraged to go on retreats whether organised by the institution or by the local church.

Lecturers felt that the responsibility for moral formation lay with the community and the Church but not the college. The lecturers hoped that they were influential and that what they taught would make a difference for the students and the way they lived but as one lecturer put it, "I am not an enforcer."

⁶³ Mission and Vision 2014, viewed 29/8/2014, from staugustine.ac.za/mission-and-vision/

⁶⁴ Mission and Vision 2014, viewed 9/10/2014, from staugustine.ac.za/mission-and-vision/

St Augustine's drew on the Catholic intellectual tradition linking faith and reason.⁶⁵ However, there are no formal connections between the college and the church that involve the students.⁶⁶

5.6.3 The South African Theological Seminary

SATS does try to work with the local churches as they recognise that as a distance education seminary, SATS cannot offer certain activities, such as worship. Therefore, students are assumed to be involved in activities in their local church and/or in study groups. For example, one staff member responded, "We have many students in such groups, where they can do things together which they cannot do directly with the seminary. This is monitored in the sense that courses require students to engage in discussion with church or community and to report back." However, this was not mentioned by the students. Another staff member had a similar response saying that, "for the most part, we expect the local church to serve as the primary formative influence on students' moral and spiritual formation, and we try to design assignments and activities that can serve as catalysts for that."

SATS has a mentoring program in operation, in which each student is strongly encouraged to find a mentor. However, this mentor comes from outside of SATS. From the students' comments, this programme is not very effective, and many students have not found mentors. Where a staff member has played the role of mentor, the student found this very helpful.

5.7 Conclusions

Neither the differences nor the similarities of the students in terms of age, gender, economic background or marital status seemed to make a significant difference to their answers. The vision and purpose of all the institutions included the three key aspects of knowledge, skills for ministry and character formation or knowing, being and doing. The way these were expressed reflected the character of the institutions and their concerns. So, for example, SATS includes the terms 'Christocentric' and 'biblical' as they aim to restore the moral and ethical fibre of society by inculcating biblical values and principles. COTT aims to do this through empowering students to become co-creators of communities of faith and healing of the world and contributors to social change and the

⁶⁵ Mission and Vision 2015, viewed 22/6/2015, from staugustine.ac.za/mission-and-vision/

⁶⁶ St Augustine College is supported by the Catholic Church and works collaboratively with the Catholic Schools Organisation, the Catholic Institute of Education and the Jesuit Institute of South Africa, but these do not directly involve students in the local church.

transformation of humanity. This purpose is grounded in relationship as together people contribute to change. St Augustine College recognises the “dignity and transcendence of the human person” and aims through critical examination and evaluative thinking to restore society.

The first research objective was to investigate whether there is a conscious inclusion of moral formation in the teaching and practices at the institutions. An answer to this, based purely on the stated purpose of the institutions, would have a resounding yes. Moral formation is inherent in, even if not central to, the purpose of all the institutions. This led to further investigation of the understanding of morality, the students’ responses with regard to their moral formation and the actual teaching and practices at the institutions.

While not expressed in the same terms as the model of morality that I developed in chapter three, the staff and students did have a relational understanding of morality that included relationship with God, self, others and, to a lesser extent, creation. They recognised the need for relationship with God for morality and human flourishing. There was an understanding that good and right actions on a personal and a societal level are part of morality. They could identify Christian values, and the acquisition of knowledge, especially biblical knowledge, was seen as important for moral formation. There was, however, little emphasis on character development and virtues. For example, a lecturer from SATS felt that character was not primarily developed through the habitual practice of virtues. Instead ‘being Christ-like’ was emphasised.

The transmission and cognitive modes of moral formation were identified by many at all the institutions as being used. Since all the institutions emphasised academic excellence and learning in their aims, this is hardly surprising. The pressure that the institutions face to offer accredited courses that meet government standards of sound learning adds to the emphasis on academic excellence and knowledge. If this academic emphasis is overly content based, mark driven and competitive, it could become what Nouwen (in Harkness 2001:145) called violent rather than redemptive education. The transmission mode relies heavily on knowledge which is essential for understanding and wisdom, but it can become unilateral if it is always from the teacher to the students and never the other way and alienating if it is not contextual to the students’ world and experience. The danger here is that while relationship with self grows in terms of knowledge, there is little moral formation as it is not acted upon. Instead, students replicate this model in their ministry as “they, the learned, impart knowledge to the congregation, the ignorant” (Harkness 2001:145). This does not help to develop relationship with others in the Church. The cognitive mode of formation allows for discussion and new perspectives and challenges prejudice and

stereotypes. The responses of the students which are recorded in the next chapter show that this was indeed the case and that they were morally challenged and formed.

Discipline which was described in the questionnaire as teaching obedience to rules and good habits which lead to self-discipline was chosen by many of the staff and students. In contrast to this, character formation which was described as the habitual practice of virtues was seldom chosen. This was the case even at St Augustine which is steeped in the Catholic tradition of moral theology and where one of the lecturers identified virtue ethics as important in the teaching of ethics. The other mode of moral formation that was seldom identified was that of emotional development. Students felt that they were not helped to be more aware of their emotions. While head, heart and hands are often mentioned in education, the actual cultivating of the heart, of emotions and of virtues may be overlooked.

The extent to which spiritual disciplines were actually promoted and encouraged appeared from the responses of the students to be seldom. The COTT students, however, felt that they were used more frequently. All the students at COTT are expected to attend chapel times. However, other spiritual disciplines were not used to any great extent at any of the institutions, including COTT. This rather sporadic use of spiritual disciplines would fit with research carried out in other seminaries, even though it was a few years ago. Naidoo (2005) found that conscious, clear spiritual formation programmes were lacking in the institutions she studied.⁶⁷

The common teaching practices that were identified by students from all the institutions as promoting moral formation were biblical teaching, biblical ethics, decision-making methods, value clarification and the explanation of Christian doctrines. The staff identified ethical theory as important in the teaching of ethics, but the students felt that trying to follow what Jesus would do was more influential for their moral formation. Following Jesus involves discernment of his actions within his context, and imitation of his character. This involves building a relationship and getting to know a person, which appeals to the heart as well as the head. Ethical theory, while important to know, appeals to the head, unless it is taught in a way that engages the heart and touches on relationship. This was an unexpected finding as following what Jesus would do is often associated with a fundamental approach which ignores the difference between the modern context and that of Jesus. However, the students from all the institutions identified with Jesus and considered this important for moral formation.

⁶⁷ These institutions were not the same ones as I researched. They were all full-time residential institutions.

The aspects of the programme that involved relationship were the ones that were identified as the most important for moral formation. The students affirmed the discussions, the interaction with other students and staff members and the mentoring role of staff as making a difference to their moral formation. Practices that built relationship were not frequently used in all the institutions but where they were present, they were identified as being important for moral formation. The use of inspiring stories and case studies as well as mentoring from staff members, group discussions and the encouragement of critical thinking and reflection, all of which involve relationship, contributed to moral formation.

Students from all the institutions thought that there had been change and growth in their moral understanding and behaviour, and these are now explored and analysed using the criteria raised in chapters three and four.

Chapter Six: Changes and growth in moral formation

“By moving into the reality of divine presence and substance for which we were created we can fully understand ourselves and by extension how we are to live with others” (Julian of Norwich in Charry 1997:195)

6.1 Introduction

In chapter five, the data regarding the inclusion of moral formation at the institutions was collected and reviewed, and some initial comparisons between the three institutions were made. The age and economic background of the students was found to make little difference to their responses. The vision, mission and purpose of all three institutions included character formation, but they each had a distinctive approach. COTT emphasised restoring and transforming society through empowering students, St Augustine through developing respect for all and critical thinking, while SATS focused on following biblical principles and being Christ-like.

The modes of moral formation most often used at the institutions were identified using the data from the questionnaires. All three institutions emphasised the importance of knowledge, and the modes of transmission and cognitive development featured prominently. This was consistent with the aims of the institutions. Other modes of moral formation such as socialisation, spiritual formation and character formation were more readily and easily included in the residential setting of COTT. The significance of this greater use of socialisation and spiritual formation in the residential setting is explored in this chapter which builds on the findings of chapter five.

In this chapter, there is further analysis regarding the effectiveness of the modes of moral formation. The students' moral formation is described using their own words in terms of growth in their relationship with God, self, others and creation as explained in the model of morality in chapter three. There is an investigation and discovery of the correlations between this growth and the modes of moral formation used at the institutions. In this way, the important question as to what it was about the teaching and practices of the theological education institution that enabled and promoted moral formation is addressed.

Following the appreciative inquiry approach, the staff and students (in section 7.1 and 6.1 of the questionnaire) were encouraged to dream of ways in which moral formation could be further encouraged, supported and deepened at their institutions. These are described for each institution. Finally, having analysed the staff and students' perception of their moral formation and discovered the teaching and practices that encouraged moral formation and having noted the dreams of the staff and students as to how moral

formation could be enhanced, all these are compared with the literature, and certain recommendations are made in this regard. In the appreciative inquiry approach, making recommendations forms part of what is called design. The fourth and final step in the appreciative inquiry approach is destiny, which involves the implementation of the design. Whether the recommendations are implemented or not is up to the institutions.

One of the principles followed in this research is to use the words of the participants wherever possible to describe the way in which they understand themselves to have grown morally through their studies. Certain themes common to students from all the institutions emerged from the students' voices in the questionnaires with regard to their relationship with God, self, others and creation as well as some unique themes from students from just one of the institutions. These themes, which illustrate the moral formation of the students, are documented below. Their moral formation as articulated by them is correlated with the teaching and practice of moral formation at the institutions and the literature regarding moral formation. From this, the extent to which moral formation is consciously carried out at the institutions and further ways in which it can be addressed are suggested as the most effective teaching methods and practices begin to surface.

In this research, morality is understood in terms of relationship with God, self, others and creation and incorporates knowing, being and doing. This involves knowledge and wisdom as well as good character leading to right actions. Knowledge and deep, critical reflection, the habitual practise of virtues to build Christ-like character and actively living these out in the world combine to form moral living. Central to this moral living is being in relationship with God.

Certain 'signposts' that point towards moral formation were identified in chapter three and will be used to elucidate and evaluate the moral formation of the students in the theological colleges. The word 'signpost' is used deliberately as it suggests the image of a journey, an on-going process. These 'signposts' point towards moral formation and indicate that the students are travelling on a journey that started long ago. The hope is that their studies have contributed to the journey which will continue throughout their lives. As a student from St Augustine expressed it, "having studied does not mean we have arrived but only means we are better equipped for life's journey. We travel with a better understanding."

6.2 Recalling and linking the signposts of moral excellence with the questionnaires

The biblical concept of knowing God involves a relationship of growing intimacy, not simply objective knowledge about God (McGrath 1999:4). It is from this deep, personal

relationship with God that lives are changed and people embark on a new way of life, transformed by the Holy Spirit (Rm 12:2). Signposts that indicate a growing relationship with God include more time spent in prayer, a life of love and service to others (Hughes 2004:161), a desire to be good, a freedom from conformity and the need to find one's identity in status and material goods, an experience of God as mystery and a sense of awe and wonder (Hughes 2004:23). Question 2.13 asked, "Has your image of God changed due to your studies? What image do you now have of God?" Question 4.8 asked if the students' relationship with God had grown and how this had made a difference to the way they live.

Relationship with self is linked to relationship with God as "our relationship with God is the origin and destiny of human happiness and the foundation for human self-knowledge and direction" (Charry 1997:4). Relationship with self involves knowledge and understanding and greater clarity about beliefs, principles and values. This moral self-knowledge or conscience is a vital element in relationship with self that integrates reason, emotion and will in self-committed decisions about right and wrong, good and evil (Callahan 1991:14). To act according to our conscience requires profound self-examination, self-knowledge and a willingness to confront oneself honestly (Egan 2010:65). This deep reflection, emotional self-awareness and courage to follow one's conscience as well as the importance of knowledge were investigated in questions 2.10 and 2.15 as signposts of growth in relationship with self. Question 3.4 regarding the formative influence of the students' theological studies also provided data regarding growth in relationship with self.

The extent to which the characteristics of 'the fruit of the Spirit' (Gl 5:22-23) as well as other virtues such as justice, compassion and honesty are present in the students' relationship with others in the church community and in society are explored. These are detected in the students' comments about engagement with and service to the vulnerable and those in need, as well as in their relationships with church and family members. One of the questions brought to the analysis included whether the course content helped to provide students with the knowledge, tools and volition to challenge structures of injustice and oppression and work for justice. The signposts looked for are based on the triune nature of God which indicates the kind of relationships that should exist between people as well as the life and teaching of Jesus, God incarnate. Structures and systems based on discrimination whether in terms of race, class, gender or in fact of creed are condemned (Gl 3:28). Hence relationship with others includes a concern about and challenge to destructive attitudes of sexism, racism, classism, consumerism and narrow nationalism that can lead to xenophobia (Hughes 2004:45).

Relationship with others includes those in the Church, in the family and in society. The questionnaires asked students how as a result of their theological studies they were practicing Christian values in their church, family and community (question 3.6). These questions were narrative in nature. Question 4.4 asked students to describe how they would approach certain ethical dilemmas that had implications for relationship with others in society. Question 4.7 asked them to give an example of how their studies had made them more aware of social justice. From these specific questions and others such as question 4.9 that asked students to tell a story about how their studies contributed to their moral formation, their voices are heard. This served to confirm the data gathered from the more quantitative type questions (4.1 and 5.1) and helped to corroborate the responses from the dilemmas.

Question 2.10 that asked students to describe a time when they had stood up for what they believed to be right helped to provide greater insight and reliability to the students' answers as more stories emerged. Responses to question 7.2, which asked students to explain how studying theology had helped to make them better people, and question 7.3, which asked for examples of how living a Christian life had been costly, also indicated changes in the students' relationship with others.

Relationship with the environment is integral to moral formation as humans are part of God's creation rather than separate and superior to creation. People tend to care for, respect and appreciate nature as they get to know the wonders of nature and become familiar with the rhythms of life (Ahlers et al. 1996:229). So question 4.1.4 asked staff and students whether information about the environment was included in their studies. Question 4.6 explored changes in the students' attitude to the environment due to their studies. For example, was recycling part of the lifestyle and encouraged in the teaching and practices at the institution?

Further changes and growth in the students' relationship with the environment and a corroboration of answers from direct questions were gleaned from their responses to the dilemma in question 4.4.1 regarding pollution of the environment.

The research sought to discover growth in the students' moral formation and to understand what it was about their theological education studies that had brought this about. From a study of the literature as discussed particularly in chapter three, it appeared that it was likely to be a combination of a number of factors that would contribute to moral formation rather than a single one. Van der Ven notes this when he selects 'character formation' as the culmination of all the modes of moral formation, understanding it to

include elements of the other modes of formation such as transmission and emotional awareness.

6.3 Discovering signs of moral formation of the students at the theological institutions

Chapter five documented what the students thought was most influential about their studies for their moral growth. In chapter six, from the responses of the students and the insights of the staff, the ways in which students see themselves as having grown morally are analysed. This was a process of 'discovery' to use the language of appreciative inquiry which was described in chapter two. The analysis of the responses to the questionnaires indicated that their theological studies had made a difference to at least some of the students. There is a discovery of the ways in which they had grown and what it was about their studies that brought life and where and how moral formation was taking place at the institutions.

6.3.1 The College of the Transfiguration

COTT has a very intense and full programme. It is different from the other institutions as the students are residential and their time is programmed with little free time during the day. What is interesting to note is the influence of the residential community on the COTT students and the intensive moral formation programme in terms of chapel, classroom and dining room. One student (C9) expressed this sense of community beautifully saying, "At first I was thinking that Christianity is about individualism and going to heaven. But now it is not about individualism but about community." The students at COTT did grow morally as seen, for example, in the comment that "I now understand that we are called to relate with one another, nature and God."

6.3.1.1 Growth in relationship with God

Two themes came through strongly in the responses of the students from COTT with regard to their relationship with God. The first was that knowledge about God led to **knowing God** and growth in their relationship with God. Four students identified knowing about God as important in their relationship with God. The following are two examples of their comments. Student (C4) affirmed that "from information that we get we begin to understand God better" and student (C10) asserted that "engagement with academics has changed my relationship with God."

Secondly, students experienced a greater desire to spend **time in prayer** that led them to action. This corresponds to the literature that affirms that our love for God finds expression in spending more time with God and in love and service for others.

Seven students felt that their relationship with God was deeper as they spent time with God, and as a corollary to this as their relationship with God deepened, they then wanted to spend more time with God. As student (C2) expressed it, “I have deepened my relationship with God and look forward to spend time with Him every day.”

One student was negative and said that because they were overworked, it felt “like my relationship with God is not growing”, and another student felt that he had a good relationship all the time and there was no change. One student (C7) felt that it was “not studies so much as fellowship of vocation, a spiritual director and a mentor” who made a difference. This ties in with the findings as described in chapter five that relationship was most important for moral formation. Many students mentioned that the relationships they formed with staff members, who mentored and tutored them, made a difference.

6.3.1.2 Growth in relationship with self

The students’ studies helped them to grow in relationship with self, particularly in the areas of **increased knowledge and understanding** but also in greater self-acceptance. Themes that emerged from the students’ comments regarding the ways in which they had grown included an increase in knowledge and understanding, more critical and reflective thinking about issues, greater self-awareness and self-esteem and being more accepting rather than judgemental. For Christians, it is likely that as we grow in self-knowledge and understanding, we grow in knowledge of God, and this makes a difference to the way we relate to others.

This theme of increased knowledge and understanding emerged from the students at all three institutions. Some examples of comments from the COTT students are: “My theological studies have made a difference as today I can stand with confidence in any debate” and “I can strengthen argument based on concrete evidence not just personal opinions.” This increased knowledge and awareness led a student to “think twice before I do anything.”

Through their studies, the students gained greater insight and understanding of their Christian faith which helped them to **think more critically** about the world around them and to reflect on their experiences in the light of their faith. They started to subject their biases and cultural assumptions to the light of the gospel and question their ‘cognitive

paradigms' (Charry 1997:43). As student C7 said, "I am equipped with principles I can apply in various situations. This has led to questioning and analysing what I read in the papers, news, TV." Another student (C3) experienced this new insight particularly in the area of sexuality and she became "more open to different perspectives on human sexuality."

Seven students at COTT felt that their studies helped them to grow in **self-understanding and self-esteem**. Some of their comments include the following: "I grow in self-knowledge as I understand God better, because He is the one who makes me understand myself" (C5) and "Yes by getting to know self it will make a difference in the way I live" (C7). Similarly, there was an increase in self-knowledge in student (C8) who wrote, "Recognising the image of God in me allows me to understand myself better." Another student felt that growth in self-knowledge came through "getting to know principles that one believes in."

An increase in self-confidence and self-esteem helped student (C7) to stand up for herself. In response to question 2.10 which asked students if they stood up for what they believed, she said that she was now able to stand up for herself and "not allow another person to destroy what I have made." She explained that this greater self-value enabled her to assert herself and stand up to family members even when they threatened to "get her out of the house." Self-assertion is not always considered a Christian virtue, but what came through in this answer was a person who knew that she was a wonderful creation of God and worthy of love rather than exploitation.

Student (C7) explained how her time at COTT had helped her to be more open to new ideas and concepts and **less judgemental**, for example, with regard to sexual ethics. This she said "makes place for relationship. It allows others rather than shutting them out." "When I find something I don't like (in others) I reflect on what that says about me" (C5) is another comment that reflects a more accepting attitude. "Through my studies I began to have insights into myself and others," said student (C9). This comment shows the congruent growth in self-knowledge and at the same time, relationship with others. Another response that "to love God is to love the image of God in human beings" shows growth in all these relationships and that "the way we see ourselves and feel about ourselves is important because it affects our quality of life and the way in which we treat others" (Tutu & Tutu 2010:7).

6.3.1.3 Growth in relationship with others

The changes in the way the COTT students related to people in the Church and the community need to be seen in the light of their living in a residential college community rather than attending the local church or living in their home communities, even though the students are involved in local communities in Grahamstown doing projects. The students were committed Christians with a mature moral understanding when they came to COTT, but there was further moral formation through their studies. Comments of the students that indicate this moral formation revolved around a greater commitment to the Church, a recognition of the dignity of all, greater care and compassion and more awareness of the need for justice.

The fact that the COTT students are all studying for full-time ministry seems to have given them a sense of **commitment to the Church** and involvement in church activities. For example, student (C9) expressed this saying, “As a church we make a difference by doing what is right then people get attracted to the way we live [and] in that way [comes] transformation.” Student (C7) built up the youth “by faithfulness and commitment.” Student (C6) felt it was important to “be a person of honesty and integrity and a role model to them [the youth] to look up to.” These values were practiced by the students in their churches and in their families. As student (C9) said, “People in my church are treated with **dignity and respect** with an understanding that each and every one of us is unique,” and student (C2) felt that there was a need to “show respect.” “Try to treat others as Jesus would,” commented student (C8). Student (C6) showed an awareness of the dignity of those in need asserting, “Charity is no longer something done unto others but something done with others.” Eight of the students’ responses showed greater awareness of the need to **care for others**. Examples were “Visit the elderly and bereaved” (C2); “be more helpful and caring towards neighbours and strangers” (C3); and from student (C8), “have compassion for your neighbour.” A similar comment from student (C6) was “show compassion to the poor and sick as well as the abused.” Student (C9) tried to “**live in peace** with others regardless of who they are and what they did to us.” Two other students expressed this as “live in peace and harmony” and “love one another.”

The students from COTT were very aware of the **need for justice**. For student (C6), the most important thing learnt in the ethics course was “more awareness of issues of social justice” and of “what is morally correct to ensure that justice is being done.” This concern for social justice featured in a number of responses. Student (C10) said that his studies had helped him to be more aware of social justice, but he gave no details as he said they were sensitive issues. In their answers to the dilemmas, the students had an awareness of

the importance of justice. As student (C8) put it, “I will go until the end of justice and make it known to the world that I have been threatened for the sake of justice.” And another student would “report unjust behaviour to the authorities.” Student (C9) had learnt that God is on the side of the poor and the oppressed and it was this she thought would give her courage to “raise my voice and speak for the right of the people.”

6.3.1.4 Growth in relationship with the environment

The following themes emerged from the COTT students with regard to growth in their relationship with the environment. Firstly, they grew in **knowledge of the biblical mandate** to care for the environment. This showed in their answers to the dilemma regarding pollution of the environment. For example, “Approach him and teach him about the doctrine of creation” (C8) and “Advise friend re the importance of nature” (C9). Student (C6) would “approach my friend and address the issue how to care for the environment.” This student felt it was important to teach about care for the environment, but his answer gave no further action. This may indicate that the relationship with the person was considered to be more important than care for the environment. The same student seemed to consider the issue of corruption as more crucial as in the following dilemma regarding corruption, he said, “I will pursue this matter and write a letter to the city manager to address my concerns.” Other students too felt it was important to teach about care for creation. For example, student (C10) came out strongly saying, “I will lay a criminal charge against him.” Students from all three institutions were aware of at least some biblical teaching regarding the environment and the need to care for the environment.

The next theme was with regard to the **importance of recycling**. “Respect creation,” said student (C6) in response to question 4.6 regarding change of attitude to the environment. He added, “We are conscious to recycle items and to look at items that were manufactured from recycled materials. In church we are going green instead of printing the pew leaflet we email parishioners copies of the pew leaflet” and in the community “creating drop off points to collect recycle materials.” When student (C3) first started studying theology he was not aware that morality involved care for the environment but now he was.

There was a greater awareness regarding **care of creation**. Student (C8) said people must “look after the things around you.” Another student (C9) had learnt to look at the bigger picture and mentioned that he was more aware of environmental issues such as soil erosion and poor farming. A theme that came through from the COTT students was

that of gardening. This may be because there are opportunities for gardening at the college.

One student (C4) responded honestly: “not yet I am still in the process.” The honesty in this answer is encouraging. The student could recognise that becoming more aware of and caring about environmental issues is a process.

6.3.1.5 Formative influences

Chapter five contained a detailed breakdown of the various modes of moral formation and the teaching and practices that influence moral formation. What follows is an analysis of which modes of formation are most frequently used at COTT and so are likely to have the greatest influence on the moral formation of the students.

Both the staff and the students identified discipline, socialisation, transmission and cognitive development as the most frequently used modes of moral formation. While Van der Ven understands discipline and socialisation to apply most closely to the family, there is a sense in which the residential community of a seminary such as COTT resembles a family. There is discipline, and rules have to be followed. For example, the students take a solemn pledge to “prayerfully abide by the rules and to honour and obey the nature of the community.” It is likely that the college community does play a role in the socialisation of the students as so much time is spent at the college, worshipping, studying and eating meals together. Meal times are used for learning. However, if there is no internalisation of virtues and no self-discipline, there may be limited long-term benefits for moral formation.

Transmission and cognitive development were used in the teaching programme and increased the students’ knowledge. Students were presented with different viewpoints that challenged long held beliefs and encouraged them to think critically. Christian doctrines were taught, and the implications of these doctrines were explained. Narrow, misinterpretations of the Bible that ignored context were avoided, and the dangers of such were addressed. Teaching was also related to the context of the students, and they were encouraged to see what the teaching meant in their own situation. There were opportunities for discussion both in class and in the formation groups where students could raise issues. The discussions and teaching time allowed for critique of society, culture and sexism, and issues of justice became clearer. Biblical teaching regarding justice and care for the poor stood out for all the students as being prominently taught and related to their context.

Students identified inspiring stories, case studies, decision-making methods, value clarification and exercises that encouraged self-knowledge as being frequently used and influential in their moral growth. Students felt that ethics and spirituality were taught together. Environmental ethics is included as part of biblical ethics, but not many facts about the environment were taught.

The staff acted as mentors, and some students formed study groups. This may have contributed to the sense of community, which not surprisingly came across more strongly from the COTT students than from students at the other two institutions. The mentoring role of the staff was seen as helpful for moral formation.

Spiritual formation was seen to be used as there was a time of worship starting with half an hour of silence every morning. However, interestingly, the students did not identify silence as helping them to grow in their relationship with God. It is possible that they are not given enough direction on the use of silence. For example, one student worried that his thoughts wandered during the times of silence. Many contemplatives and spiritual giants have had similar experiences and suggest ways to centre one's thoughts and avoid distraction. This may not have been explained, and the spiritual dimension may not have been carried through to the rest of the day. One of the staff members felt that "spiritual formation should be an integral aspect of the whole programme and all should take responsibility as all are part of the totality of the learning-teaching activity." Similarly another staff member insisted that "moral formation is through chapel, classroom and dining room."

6.3.2 St Augustine College

The students at St Augustine College felt they had grown through their studies. In response to question 7.2 as to whether studying theology had helped her to become a better person, student (A5) agreed resoundingly saying, "Absolutely!"

6.3.2.1 Growth in relationship with God

The students from St Augustine felt that they had grown in knowledge of God, but the theme that came through most strongly was a change in their **image of God**. For many, their new and greater knowledge of God led to a changed image of God. This theme was identified by five of the seven students at St Augustine College and eight of the students at SATS, but none of the students from COTT reported a changed image of God. Their image of God was that of 'father' and this remained the same. This does not necessarily mean that their relationship with God did not grow

The changed image of God of the St Augustine College students' appeared to have consequences for their moral formation. For example, student (A1) had previously simply accepted God as father. Now, she was more hesitant about her image of God saying, "possibly hands reaching out to the world." Another student (A2) used to see God as "a scary big man looking like the worldly kings" but her current image is "more like a mother." Another student (A3) has a far deeper understanding of the Trinitarian nature of God, rather than a one dimensional father image. She commented that she had a broader understanding of God. Even the one student (A5) who felt his image of God had not changed from 'father' did acknowledge an awareness of God as mystery. This perception of God as mystery reveals something of the sense of awe and wonder which can be a sign of holiness (Hughes 2004:23). The more hesitant, mystical images of God reverberate with the biblical understanding that experience of God cannot be confined or described in words; it is a mystery and beyond our comprehension.

A second theme that was similar to that of the students from COTT was that their growing relationship with God had led them to **more prayer and action**. The following comments illustrate this change. "I was more convinced that God acts when I pray for a solution and that this action might often be God asking me to act" (A1). Another student (A3) commented that she had learned to pray more meaningfully. She also felt more content and happy in discussing matters of faith. A third student said, "I needed to have a deeper prayer life and to serve God through people and an emptying of self so that we can better understand what God wants us to do. And then be obedient." Student (A6) had a greater awareness of the need for prayer and that prayer could have practical implications and involve action. He wrote, "Through meeting with Christ a change has to happen."

These comments indicate that the students' relationship with God had changed through their studies. Student (A3) expressed this as "my spirit has often jumped for joy at things that I have learnt."

If one compares the comments from the students' perceptions with those of the staff regarding ways in which relationship with God is fostered (question 3.6) it emerges that the staff at St Augustine thought that relationship with God was not explicitly fostered. However, one of the staff members said, "From the course material and teaching there was an expectation that this image should change from that of a judgemental tyrant to that of a loving and forgiving God who is always calling us to embrace our better nature." The students' image of God and relationship with God did move from patriarchal type images to more mystical, loving images which is recognised as an indication of growth in relationship with God.

6.3.2.2 Growth in relationship with self

Like the students at COTT, the students at St Augustine College also felt they had greater understanding and insight from their studies, more self-knowledge and self-awareness and that they had become less judgemental. Another theme that emerged from the St Augustine students was that of greater clarity, with one student saying, “You don’t have to compare yourself with others or follow others.”

Six students from St Augustine College felt their studies had contributed to a **deeper understanding**. Student (A1) put it succinctly saying,

I was challenged to think more deeply and consciously about issues and to recognise the complexity surrounding moral issues and not to simply accept easy answers. There are no easy solutions. Nothing is black and white but rather there are many of shades of grey.

A similar comment from student (A5) was that his studies “had helped to explore the fundamentals of who I am and why we are here.” Student (A3) said, “My thought patterns have been challenged and conceptions have changed.”

Two students felt that they had **greater clarity** and they were more able to follow biblical principles and natural law and had a greater understanding of Christian values and teaching.

Six of the seven students from St Augustine College felt that they had grown to ‘**know themselves better**’. “When you discover who you really are and what you deeply hold to be true you will act from that, rather than following others” (A1). Another student said that “understanding my humanity leads towards the mystery of God” and felt that her studies had led her to “living more authentically” (A3).

Jesus assured his disciples that he had come to save rather than to judge the world and warned the disciples against judging others (Jn 12:47). This theme of **non-judgement** surfaced in the comment that “One can’t judge as you don’t have all the knowledge.” Students felt that they had a deeper understanding of people and that it was more important to pray for people than to judge them. Student (A2) felt that she could “easily understand and forgive, help and care for others” as she got to know her true self.

6.3.2.3 Growth in relationship with others

Many of the changes in moral formation with regard to relationship with others described by the students from St Augustine College apply to the family, the Church and society. Through his studies, student (A4) experienced a sense of the importance of relationship.

He said, "I am more sensitive and reasonable in my relationships and better able to face challenges." In the family, this extended to a greater awareness of the "responsibility of fatherhood."

This growth in relationships also applied in the Church, particularly for student who said, "I became more **attached to the Church** than before. I always try to bring unity by speaking the truth and caring for others." Another student commented, "I have learnt that praying together is a necessity and I became more involved in the church which makes me practice the gospel and Christian ministry to all. I choose to be hurt rather than to hurt others" (A2).

This theme of commitment to the church was not as strong among the students from St Augustine as it was for the students from COTT. However, similar themes to those of COTT included actions of **care and compassion** and the need to treat all equally and uphold justice.

Student (A1) commented:

I have had to reconsider exactly what I believe which has consequences for the way I live and the way I treat other people. Instead of reacting impulsively to issues and people I now try to consider the whole issue. I think it has made me more compassionate.

Consistent with the perception of the importance of relationship, student (A3) said, "I look at those suffering with compassion and am generous towards those in need. I am no better than those who are marginalised by society." Student (A2) cared practically as she said, "I visit the sick, help the poor, and listen to women who are abused."

The students recounted a number of practical examples where they had stood up for what they considered to be **just and right**. Student (A6) reported being "a voice against injustice" and gave an example of this when he defended "co-workers from unjust decisions in the work place." Another student (A7) refused "to sign an illegal deal" when requested to do so at work. "I am more aware of issues of justice and able to think more critically," said a student. Her studies had given her more courage to become involved in issues of racism at her child's school where there was injustice in terms of employment.

In response to one of the dilemmas, two students (A1 and A2) considered the need for social action, saying they would speak out and organise peaceful protest. "I do believe prayer is key to know a way forward," said student (A3), showing an integration of relationship with God and with others.

Five of the students thought that they had grown in terms of **virtues**. They indicated that they gave greater consideration to what they said and “listened more” and “tried to be more encouraging.” They were more humble and patient and accepting that all is not perfect. Student (A7) learnt patience, honesty and compassion. She said that she had “learnt patience in her marriage.” Student (A2) “learned to ask for forgiveness from co-workers and fellow students who I may have hurt.” Student (A5) mentioned, “My habits and thought patterns have been challenged.” Student (A1) said, “My studies have given me more courage and helped me to think critically.” And another student (A3) was able to have “an honest, non-judgemental conversation.” This student also reported, “I feel my mind has broadened and in turn I am more aware of my fellow human beings as being equal in all ways to myself.”

6.3.2.4 Growth in relationship with the environment

In response to the dilemmas, the students immediately saw the problem to the environment. Yet, it appeared they did not want to break relationship with the person polluting and damaging the environment. Rather their initial response was to talk about it, appealing to scripture. For example (A6) said,

There are many biblical passages to refer to appeal to his conscience, from the harmful effects to himself, spiritually and to long term environmental impact. If this did not work a last resort would be the law.

Like the students from COTT, they became more aware of the need to **recycle**. Students, (A2) stated quite clearly that before her studies, she did not consider care of environment as part of Christian moral behaviour. Four others said that they had always thought of it as necessary and were engaged in recycling

6.3.2.5 Formative influences

The staff and students at St Augustine College thought that transmission and cognitive development were the modes most frequently used. The use of both of these is borne out by comments from the students such as this: “The different subjects have all contributed to give me a broader understanding of God, humanity and the world. I have learnt to think in a more analytical way” (A3).

Some students felt that they had greater clarity regarding ‘natural law’, and student (A2) mentioned Catholic teaching concerning contraception, saying, “I have a deeper commitment to following Catholic, Christian teaching and a commitment to stop using artificial family planning.” This conviction was based on the sacredness of life and learning

about bio-medical issues. Transmission, as Van der Ven describes it, touches on knowledge and volition, and this was apparent in the students' desire to live by their beliefs and commitment to following Catholic teaching.

Alongside this clear, directed teaching, students were encouraged to think critically and to reflect on what was being taught. They were given different perspectives and made to think further on issues and why they held certain beliefs. It was not enough to blindly accept beliefs, and at least four students indicated that they were more open to moral complexity and the lack of "black and white" answers. Discussions in lectures were mentioned by both staff and students as being important. To this end trust and honesty were actively built. One staff member commented that it took nearly three quarters of the year before there was enough trust to really share honestly and openly and to be sure of confidentiality. However, the time taken to build these relationships bore fruit in terms of moral formation.

The answers of the staff and students indicated that not one specific practice but a combination of a number of factors led to moral formation. So, for example, there was a critique of simplistic biblical interpretations of society, culture and sexism that imposed biblical injunctions with no consideration for changed context of the world today. Decision-making methods, case studies and dilemmas encouraged moral formation in that they promoted discussion and critical thinking and helped students to relate what they were learning to a specific context. Value clarification was done with the students. The research did not reveal whether the choice of values was limited to Christian ones or whether the choice was wide open, but staff indicated that secular ethical theories were taught, alongside biblical and Catholic teaching.

Like the students at COTT, these students also identified the mentoring by staff as an important contributor to their moral formation as were respectful relationships.

6.3.3 The South African Theological Seminary

SATS is a distance education institution, so certain modes of moral formation are more difficult to use with no face to face contact. "Striving to be more Christ-like" was very important and a theme that surfaced prominently among the SATS staff and students. Even though SATS is a distance institution, many of the same issues and themes as in the other institutions did emerge. For example, the SATS students too experienced growth in knowledge and understanding, and in care compassion for others.

6.3.3.1. Growth in relationship with God

Similar themes emerged for the SATS students with regard to their relationship with God as did for the students from COTT and St Augustine. They too said that **knowledge** about God had helped them to know God better. For some of them, this greater knowledge of God changed their image of God, but most importantly, as they got to know God better, they spent more time in prayer, and this led to action.

Studying doctrine about the nature and purposes of God helped to grow their relationship with God. Knowing about God can be very different from knowing God, and the one does not necessarily lead to the other. However, in this case, as students got to know about God, they did also grow to love God more. Comments that indicated moral growth included ones that showed the kind of knowledge of God that touches our deepest being, forms our character and transforms our understanding of who we are and how we relate to one another. As student (S9) said, “My studies helped me to have a more ‘Trinitarian’ view of God in the sense that I realise the different persons of the Trinity reflect different elements of the Godhead. Perhaps I have a somewhat fuller view of God than before.” Student (S6) felt that she had “learned more about God through Scripture, and how to apply Scripture to my life.”

Eight of the thirteen students at SATS saw God as father. Of these eight, five had always seen God as father, and this had not changed through their studies. Three students had understood God as father or king, but a distant God whom they could not really trust. This had changed. They might still see God as father but now as “a friend”, “a God who cares for us”, “God loving us and working within us” and “a caring, loving, gracious God who can be depended on.”

For student (S2), the **image of God** had moved from “God as creator to God as caring father.” Student (S4) felt that her image of God had completely changed from being a disciplinarian to “a loving father who uses discipline for my good.” Student (S13) clearly saw moral implications saying,

My relationship with God has matured from thinking of Him as the Father who is there to meet my needs to the Father who is to be respected and obeyed and loved and worshiped. I would like to believe that my lifestyle has become less selfish as I have grown closer to my Father.

This changed image of God could deepen the students’ relationship with God. This has implications for moral formation as it is through a deepening relationship with God that the desire and ability to love one’s neighbour, to practice proper self-love and to live according

to moral norms and values in relation to others and creation is rooted (Kretzschmar 2007:27).

“Relationship with God is central in SATS work and understanding and in all that they do,” responded a staff member. Hence one would expect students to have grown in this area. However, not all the students felt that they had grown in their relationship with God. This is reflected in some scepticism regarding the value of theological education as expressed by two students at SATS. One said that “it is the Holy Spirit who changes people, not studies,” and the other that “theological studies have not changed anything. The simple guidance and instruction of the Holy Spirit (through prophecy or prayer) has.” Two others were unsure if their studies had really helped. One student (S12) felt that his studies “were more geared towards an intellectual pursuit than towards growth in personal holiness.”

There was a tendency in the answers from students at SATS to follow the ‘blow theory’ described in chapter one, that denies the serious nature of theological education, relying instead on an erroneous perception of the work of the Holy Spirit. As one student (S2) put it, “No my studies were not influential because if any areas are contrary to the gospel or scripture they would be discarded.”

6.3.3.2 Growth in relationship with self

From comments regarding the way in which their purpose for studying was met, a number of students at SATS indicated that they had grown in **knowledge and understanding**. For example, student (S13) said, “Studying has led to an increased understanding of the Scriptures. I honestly enjoy studying the Bible and yearn to understand God's message to us through this medium.” And for student (S4), greater knowledge led to change in behaviour: “I often get convicted of an area related to the subject being studied and called to make adjustments in the way I believe and behave in those areas.”

While the majority of students at SATS tended to see Christian knowledge as clear cut and unquestionable, two students’ answers were more nuanced and accepting of other perspectives. Student (S11) said, “I get in contact with controversial issues and that there are Christians with **different points of view**.” And student (S10) was “more aware of grey areas.” He acknowledged that “some moral dilemmas exist in which it is not at all easy to decide what the right or wrong action would be. Previously I thought that there was always an obvious right response.”

One of the students found herself reflecting critically on church teaching. She said,

Since the commencement of my studies, I have discovered that much nonsense has been taught from the pulpit and is being printed in popular books. Thus this has motivated me to study even more! (S13)

Another student who showed greater awareness of the need for critical thinking also had greater clarity about the 'truth' as she said,

I think I am more patient with those who blindly believe what is taught from the pulpit without reasoning for themselves as I have come to realise that I used to blindly follow the leaders before studying for myself. I now encourage people to read the Bible for themselves, and when asked my view on what is taught, I have to be gentle in how I present the truth.

A sense of **self-worth** and **self-acceptance** came through strongly from the students. As one student said, "I am more aware of sin and yet also of God's love" and

without sounding negative, I have discovered how holy and perfect and loving God is as I have come to the realisation of (a) how imperfect I am compared to God's holiness and (b) how wonderfully created I am as I accept my God given personality and gifting.

Similarly, student (S13) said, "As I accept who I am (as God has made me unique), I will no longer reject myself nor strive to resemble or compete with others." Student (S12) said,

Self-acceptance allows for acceptance of where one comes from, how one looks etc. It promotes confidence. One does not need to compromise values etc. to please others when one believes that one is acceptable without changing anything. I tried for years to "act" like an extrovert because I kept receiving a message that introverts were a "lesser creation". Once I embraced my introversion and in fact became proud of it, even promoted it when speaking to people, I found my leadership abilities increasing.

6.3.3.3 Growth in relationship with others

The SATS students included many stories and examples of the ways in which they were living out their faith. They showed enthusiasm and a sense of commitment to God and to being disciples of Jesus. On further analysis of the stories, I felt a little unease that a dogmatic following of Christian principles and rules as understood by certain students might be jeopardising the principle of relationship. This will be explored further as these stories are recorded.

Students became aware of the need for **social action and justice**. For example, student (S13) reported that there was "no emphasis on those in need" in her church as emphasis was "placed upon striving for church leadership and excelling in the spiritual gifts." Her studies had changed this. With regard to social action for justice and care for others, a

student felt that previously she “didn’t live them out or intentionally seek for ways to live them out and I suppose that is what has begun to change during my theological studies.” Another student (S2) explained that

One of the courses ...studied was called ‘Conflict and Reconciliation’ (I think). This course was completed through examining the Biblical teaching on this matter whilst reflecting on one’s relationships and behaviour, past and present. What a soul searching and emotional experience this was. With hindsight, this course was essential for growth and healing in personal family relationships. It taught me what God expected and required, not what mankind had taught me. I learnt how to value people (especially my parents).

Increased respect for others in the church was mentioned by another student who said, “I have become more tolerant and now and I am learning to respect the view point of members in my church” (S11). Similarly, student (S6) said,

My studies played a part in the values I practice in my community. I try to show all people their value - especially people who aren’t often valued by others. For instance, I try to show kindness and interest to car guards, security guards, those who live on the street, etc.

Student (S7) was “attempting to overcome daily conflict as a peacemaker” and “forgiving the financial debts of others.” Another student showed respect through listening and encouraging others. He is employed as youth pastor and “takes many hours a week to patiently and lovingly come alongside teens who are being led into sin by this world and inflicting [sic] the gospel on their lives, helping them through it.”

Many (80%) of the students saw practising Christian values in the church in terms of church **projects in the community**. Students’ responses were about what they were doing in the community, the projects that their churches were involved in and the way they were helping the needy and vulnerable. Among the activities were the following:

We go out and teach others the gospel, care for the poor and elderly with community outreaches, create jobs for the people by getting the poor involved in projects to create items which are then sold, teaching the communities to care for themselves and become a part of the solution to heal the world. Due to the outreach we have in the community, we collect clothing and food, which are distributed to the children and used to care for the aids orphans. (S1)

Another student said, “Sharing the love of Christ compelled me this year to reach out to townships and neighbouring countries and love the unlovable.” There was a similar response from student (S7): “Bringing our Church to be active in caring for under-privileged children.” Another student said, “It (study) has made me more aware of the

teachings in scripture on helping the poor. I try to help those in need as much as I can - helping with physical needs, but also with skills” (S6).

The comments of one student (S4) suggested that the motive for helping people was to “the advancement of the Kingdom”. This possibly indicated a lack of love and respect for people because they were not being helped for their own sake, but for that of the kingdom. While the spread of God’s kingdom is a worthy goal, care for the poor and love for all are integral to spreading the reign of God. I was left wondering how care for those in need might not “spread the kingdom of God” and what circumstances would lead to not getting involved.

One student said the equality between men and women had become clearer in terms of “worth and value but not in the secular egalitarian sense of breaking down gender barriers” (S13). This combined with an earlier comment from this student regarding the need to “submit to her husband” seemed to indicate a one-sided adherence to and a literal interpretation of biblical texts such as Ephesians 5:22-24 while other texts such as Galatians 3:28 which affirm the equality of all humanity are overlooked. Another comment by student (S9) “I understand the manifestation of love in the family and the relationship between the Christian husband and wife better as a result of some of the classes taken during my studies” contained the implication that there is one set way that husbands and wives should relate. This has the potential to be prescriptive and patriarchal.

Gender inclusive language had not become important for student (S1) as he wrote,

Christ is your true design. He is not just the example for man but of man, what God initially intended for man. Sin took that away, but Christ restored that original design. In other words I am enabled and empowered to demonstrate the same kind of life that Jesus did.

Jesus treated women and men equally and opposed all forms of discrimination. Hence as students were trying to live Christ-like lives, they too should not practise gender discrimination. Due to their lack of sensitivity towards inclusive language and their avoidance of direct answers to the questions that dealt with gender issues, it seemed that there was some **ambiguity regarding gender equality**. Love and care for women were affirmed, but the issue of equality was avoided. Justice was important in relationships as seen below, but did not necessarily mean equality for men and women.

Student (S1) recorded a change in his understanding of social justice. Before his studies, he saw social action as “opposing the government and creating chaos.” But now he sees it as “keeping the rulers honest.”

Student (S5) gave an example of just living as

Walking out of a shop and realising I have not paid for the sugar and walking back into the shop to pay for it. It is definitely not always the easiest road, but the most rewarding, because it brings glory to God.

Student (S10) found that stressing doing what is right makes one unpopular. He reported,

I have sometimes had to tell a fellow worker in our mission organisation that mission funds should not be used for this or that matter for which private funds should be used. I was scolded for being unloving and stingy. I saw it as avoiding mismanagement of funds.

Student (S4) felt the cost of discipleship in terms of a job that “had to be left because the company did not act ethically in its billing methods used towards its clients and I no longer would conform.” Student (S11) described a situation where he had to stand against corruption saying, “I dealt with many unjust issues where a person lost her house because she was drinking too much.” Student (S3) said, “Instead of paying a bribe for my child to get into a governmental training institution, I prefer to pay money for training into a private one” (even though this would cost more).

With regard to question 6.3 about the cost of moral living a student responded,

I would not say costly BUT I have found myself in situations where I have had to risk losing friendships. For example, by refusing politely to view certain films which were known to have blatant sexual content. My one friend made much fun of me at the time and for months thereafter but our friendship grew stronger through the honesty. I am still praying for her salvation.

Student (S4) said,

Studying and knowing God and His word better has resulted in me being less open to being drawn into situations which do not bring Him glory. What appears ethical may not be Godly or spiritual. I am better equipped and feel less guilty when refusing invitations to attend events which involve excessive use of alcohol and immoral behaviour which results from that.

One response showed commitment to principles at the expense of relationship as student (S10) faced “rejection from those who oppose my Christian view” and “a loss of friendship due to conflicting views.”

6.3.3.4 Growth in relationship with the environment

Four students from SATS said that they had a greater awareness of the need to care for the environment with student (S5) linking care of the environment and care of people and

asserting that what was needed was “community involvement to take care of those in need and care for the environment.”

Three of the SATS students were very conscious of **littering and recycling**. One of them, student (S6) said,

My studies taught me the importance of taking care of creation. We work in many communities across South Africa where there is not really a concept of putting trash in a trash can. We have taught many of our disciples in those communities the importance of keeping their community clean.

A similar concern for recycling and not littering was expressed by students (S11 and S13) who said, “I teach my family to respect the environment and not to throw plastic or any litter around but in a bin” and “I started to consider how much waste my household was contributing to the detriment of the environment.”

A unique theme that came from a student at SATS possibly due to his previous experiences, rather than his studies, was that there should be **no more trophy hunting**. If this conviction came from his studies, it shows a growth in relationship with the environment. The same student wanted to take others to the bush. His answers showed a real sense in which the environment is important.

Two students were less sure that it was their studies that had influenced their relationship with the environment. “My studies did not change my attitude but affirmed the need to care for the environment,” said student (S4); and “it was not studying theology but my studies in anthropology that gave a greater awareness of the environmental care” (S2).

6.3.3.5 Formative influences

As seen in earlier comments, some students clearly stated that their studies had made a difference.

The staff at SATS felt that it was most important to teach sound relationship with God and a Spirit-led lifestyle, stemming from sound biblical knowledge. “Students are motivated to have a personal relationship with God through Jesus and the Holy Spirit.” As one staff member expressed it, “everything is to do with relationship with God and it is from this relationship that everything else follows.” Ethical behaviour comes from relationship with God. This teaching is found throughout scripture. Paul emphasises that righteousness is a gift of God (Rm 5:17). Hughes (2004:18) follows Paul reiterating that “holiness is a gift freely given; indestructible and always accessible ... it is God.” Even though holiness is a gift, it does not mean that theological institutions do not have to do anything to foster

relationship with God. To do nothing is to avoid serious consideration of how relationship with God is fostered. Rather there should be a spiritual formation programme that explicitly seeks to develop relationship with God.

As with students from the other two institutions, SATS students also identified transmission and cognitive development as the modes of moral formation most often used. Because SATS is a distance institution, these are the easiest modes to use as information is communicated through courses using the written word. Comments from students and staff suggested a strong emphasis on what the Bible teaches and an encouragement to form a relationship with God. The students identified biblical ethics as being taught and as being influential for their moral formation. Nine of students identified discipline as one of the modes of moral formation used, but it was not clear how this was done or how they understood discipline.

Students considered that ethics and spirituality were taught together and this made a difference to their moral formation. The ethical implications of Christian doctrines were explained, and students were encouraged to apply what they were learning in their context. This was seen as important by the students, and the staff confirmed that they did try to help the students to apply what they were learning to their context. Value clarification was used, but from comments, it appears that only Christian values were promoted, rather than the open-ended value clarification as understood by Van der Ven in his description of the modes.

Two students felt that their theological studies had not helped them to become better people. They said they had grown morally through a personal encounter with God or through their church rather than from their theological studies. So, for example, when asked how the teaching of ethics had influenced their behaviour, one student said his studies had helped him not to smoke or drink but added that this came more from being part of the holiness movement. And student (S3) said that it was “personal encounter with the Lord rather than studies that caused the change in living out values.”

From these comments, it appears that, for some of the students, what happened in the church community had a stronger influence than that of their studies. The influence of the faith community versus the theological institution is an area of further research. This may mean that for distance education institutions, formal links with local churches are essential if moral formation is to take place to a greater extent. Students who are already part of thriving, moral communities will grow through their studies and apply what they are learning to their context and develop habits of virtue. For example, a student’s studies had made a difference, and he said, “I am committed to Scripture to a greater degree than

before and understand the need for pursuing social justice better than before” (S9). In situations where there are poor role models, there may be difficulties with moral formation.

6.3.4 Conclusions

Different themes regarding the ways in which students perceived themselves to have grown morally emerged from each institution. For example, one of the themes that featured strongly from COTT was commitment to the Church while “growth in virtues” came from St Augustine College students and SATS students emphasised care projects that they were involved in. There were differences between the themes that surfaced as most prominent from the three institutions, but there were also many similarities.

As noted in chapter five, the relational aspects of the modes of moral formation were selected by the students as having the most influence on their moral formation. The staff at St Augustine felt that “relationship with God is not explicitly fostered” while at SATS the staff believed that “relationship with God is central.” These divergent views did not seem to make a difference as students from both institutions reported a change in their relationship with God. In fact, if anything, the relationship with God of the students from St Augustine College seemed to have grown more, in terms of their image of God. Students from COTT also reported growth in their relationship with God, but their image of God had not changed from that of father. The greater time spent in worship and silence had not challenged or changed their image of God. From the students’ responses to what had brought about growth in their relationship with God, it appeared that there were gaps and a more systematic, comprehensive and deliberate spiritual formation programme was needed.

In theory, relationship with God and spiritual formation were affirmed as very important, but few spiritual disciplines were actually included in the programme. Having said this, the students at COTT were required to worship together and spend time in silence and encouraged to go on retreats. For the non-residential institutions, it was more difficult if not impossible to offer times of worship and retreats; instead, they rely on student participation in local churches. However, from the responses of the SATS students, it appears that students were not actively encouraged by the college or the local churches to go on retreats as seven students disagreed or strongly disagreed that retreats were encouraged and only one agreed.⁶⁸

Students at all the institutions grew in relationship with self. This was fostered through increased knowledge that, as noted in chapter five, came particularly through interaction

⁶⁸ Five were neutral or did not comment on this.

and discussion with others. The students' responses showed that knowledge particularly in the area of biblical ethics made a difference to all their relationships. They grew in their understanding of their faith and learnt to think more critically and reflectively about the world around them and the need for justice and care for others and the environment.

Modes of formation such as value clarification and emotional development were hardly recognised as being used by staff or students. More could be done in terms of emotional development and fostering the growth of virtues in the students.

All the institutions included character formation in their aims which in the Christian milieu implies spiritual and moral formation. However, in practice, the institutions put more emphasis on the acquisition of knowledge and academics which is important as knowing is part of relationship with God and contributes to character formation. However, elements of being and doing are also required.

Interaction with the church community grew the students' relationship with others and with the environment. From the comments of some students from COTT that they were required to work in communities, it appears that COTT does encourage students to be involved in projects in the community. Students from SATS were involved in a number of projects among the poor and needy. Their care and compassion for the vulnerable came through strongly in their responses. The number of care projects and the enthusiasm and conviction of students that God was calling them to be involved affirmed the motivation they experienced through being involved in a church and from their relationship with God

Has your attitude to the environment changed as a result of your studies (question 4.6)? "Yes," responded a student from COTT, "I have more regard for creation. I work more in the garden. In the church we work together as a group." Students from all the institutions recorded changed attitudes to the environment and understood the biblical call to care for creation. From this, it seemed that environmental ethics is taught at the institutions as part of biblical ethics. However, environmental information was not taught which meant that this avenue for acquiring an appreciation of nature was not developed.

The staff and the students were aware of gaps in the moral formation programme due to limitations in time and resources. When asked to dream how moral formation could be supported and deepened in theological education, they had many valuable suggestions as can be seen in the next section.

6.4 Dreams of the staff and students regarding moral formation

In the appreciative inquiry paradigm, people are asked to dream of how things could be even better. The questionnaire gave the staff and students this opportunity. Many of their dreams revolved around the creation of relationships. These were relationships between staff and students, between the students themselves, with the environment and a deepening of relationship with God. This concern for relationship is shown, for example, in a response from a staff member at St Augustine to “encourage students to form small groups which will enable them to share and discuss.” This corresponds with the identification of discussion as an important formative influence by students at St Augustine College. Hence it follows and is not surprising that they ‘dream’ of more discussion and debate. This has similarities to the Iona Document which identified ‘soul friends’ as a factor in spiritual formation and friendship (Amithram & Pryor 1989:162). This was identified by Conradie (2006:77) as a condition to sustain people on the journey of moral formation. The staff and students at COTT also dreamt of building better relationships by having “a mentorship or buddy system.”

Closely linked to this was the dream of a staff member from St Augustine College:

... more debate on campus regarding contentious and emotional issues. This could include invited speakers and could lead to healthy discussion. Students should however be encouraged to think for themselves and be empowered to enter into debate with principles and reasoning and to make positive contributions in the public sphere on moral issues.

Due to the nature of distance learning, discussion is more difficult at SATS. Instead, the staff at SATS emphasised teaching from the Bible. A student from SATS also dreamed of this:

Moral formation comes from the study of topics within the Bible. God laid out the way in which we should behave, and because of that we already have a set of laws which govern us to be able to create a society in which all can live. If these were taught at schools we would have half of the crime which we have at present. The Ten Commandments, Leviticus and Deuteronomy are part of the teachings which we need to give our children. It is because of the lack of these biblical studies that we have the society that is here today.

This comment could be interpreted as a legalistic, dogmatic teaching of what is in the Bible. The student’s reference to laws from the Old Testament in Leviticus and Deuteronomy could raise questions and fears of a literalist interpretation with little contextual exegesis. However, study and knowledge of the Bible are essential, and the importance of intellectual comprehension of faith that is grounded in the Bible is affirmed,

for example, by a liberation theologian, Gutiérrez (1984:36) as it makes it possible to take the experience of faith deeper. Wright (2010:151) too affirms the need to weigh up and consider what God's will actually is.

Another suggestion was for students to have time to do practical training at a church and for church leaders to arrange conferences, retreats and discussions with church members and people from other church denominations. Both students and staff at St Augustine College thought that there should be a practical aspect to the course. They felt that students should be encouraged to put into practice what they study and look for practical applications. There was a similar dream from a student at SATS that "there should be more practical tasks set and then assessed by the leader of one's local church. He can then sign/witness that the task has been achieved." There are a number of opportunities for students at COTT to do practical assignments and tasks such as planning worship or working in a local church. These were affirmed as being of significance. A staff member at SATS believed that it is the Church that is best able to prepare students for ministry. He said, "In a modern liberal environment the Church will have to play a significant role." This indicates the need and awareness of the need for a closer relationship between Church and seminary.

There was an appeal from a student at COTT to "give students chance to do their formation in the way they want." The exact meaning of this response is unclear, but it is likely that because COTT is steeped in the Anglican way and worship is based on the Anglican offices and prayer book, there are few opportunities for other forms of worship. While valuing the richness of the Anglican tradition, there is a place, it would appear from this appeal, for other Christian traditions that could add value. The Iona Document states that ecumenical contact is enriching for spiritual formation. Students' relationship with God could be enriched by an ecumenical approach to spirituality. This could include African expressions of spirituality as a student from St Augustine College dreamt that "African spirituality would be more supported."

An aspect of moral formation that did not receive much attention at any of the institutions was that of emotional development. This mode was seldom used. A student at St Augustine College thought that there should be time for self-examination and own reflection on what was being taught. A similar comment from another student was that they "be required to look at assumptions and attitudes behind our values." If this was done, opportunities for emotional formation might be created. A student from SATS thought that "a course on transformation that helped to clarify Christian values and included decision-making methods" might help.

“Work in the garden” was a wonderfully refreshing comment from a student at COTT. Amongst the pressure of academic work, there is not enough time to develop relationship with creation. Conradie (chapter 3.3.4) rejoices in the nourishing and substance we receive from God’s providence displayed in creation. Working in the garden, which is possible for students at COTT, might place them in a sacred space to be nourished and sustained through God’s providence in creation. Too often, lip service is given to care for creation. Students and staff blithely accede to the need to care for creation, frown on littering and try to recycle, all of which are good, but they may lack any real connection with the earthiness of the earth, with the labour of production of flowers and food.

Many of the ‘dreams’ of the staff and students for supporting and deepening moral formation are similar to the insights from the literature and link with the signposts, modes of moral formation and models of theological education as discussed in chapters two, three and four.

From the discoveries of the empirical research, insights from the literature and the dreams of the staff and students, suggestions are made below for a moral formation programme for the theological education institutions. Insights from this empirical research, together with wisdom from the literature, are used to make recommendations (design) for the teaching and practice of moral formation at the institutions.

6.5 Designing a moral formation programme

Design is the term used in the appreciative inquiry approach for the planning and implementation of discoveries and dreams. Design in the context of this research addresses the question of how the moral formation of students at the selected theological institutions can be supported and deepened.

The staff and students identified a number of modes of moral formation that contributed to moral formation. A theme that ran through all these was that of relationship. Transmission and cognitive development, the passing on of knowledge and the development of thinking skills were chosen by students and staff from all the institutions as being frequently used, but often knowledge that was discussed, debated and critically reflected on was what really led to deeper understanding and wisdom. Without this interaction with others whether through discussions or through mentoring and tutoring, information and knowledge were less influential for moral formation. As one student wrote, “My studies felt more general towards intellectual pursuit than towards growth in personal holiness and practical ministry.” It was the discussion of facts and ethical theories combined with mentoring that were most influential for many of the students. This importance of

relationship for moral formation was further confirmed by the negative comments regarding theological education such as “theological education did not contribute to my moral formation. It was the church community and fellow disciples that made the difference.” From this, it is apparent that the modes of moral formation that involved relationships were the most influential.

A number of recommendations for supporting and deepening moral formation are identified. They are categorised in terms of fostering relationship with God, self, others in the Church, others in society and the environment. However, these relationships influence one another, so many of the recommendations help to nurture all these relationships.

6.5.1 Relationship with God

Spiritual disciplines should be part of the programme and practised at the theological institutions. Many theologians such as Charry, Kretzschmar, O’Keefe and Gutiérrez (chapter 3.4) note the importance of relationship with God for moral formation. Chapter three explains that spiritual disciplines associated with the ‘inner, the shared and the outer journey’ (Foster 1980:13-173; Kretzschmar 2006:344; Thiessen 2005) nurture spiritual formation. The inner spiritual disciplines which include meditation, prayer, fasting, silence, study and retreats were not used to any great extent except at COTT. Students from the other institutions, though affirming that spiritual formation was part of the programme at the institutions, indicated that specific spiritual disciplines were seldom practised. While both the staff and students at the institutions acknowledged the importance of relationship with God for moral formation, there were many gaps in the way this relationship was fostered. While acknowledging and being aware that it may be difficult to include spiritual disciplines in non-residential settings, some possibilities for doing so are suggested as these should be present and encouraged in the theological institutions.

Teaching regarding the spiritual disciplines and their value for developing relationship with God is important. Teaching regarding silence and meditation could be included in lecture times and recommended in course material for the distance learning institutions. Time could be made to experience silence and to try various methods of meditation and prayer. These could be included in the teaching programme. Setting assignments that require a time of meditation could be considered, and this is possible in distance learning. This can include the encouragement of the practice of journaling as students record their experiences of prayer and meditation. Self-awareness can be promoted through meditation, silence and journaling. This will help students to be more in touch with their feelings and emotions as well as deepening their relationship with God. In full-time residential settings, students could be given time to meditate and journal.

Prayer cannot be legislated, but time can be set aside for prayer, as is done at COTT. Students could be more actively encouraged to make use of the chapel at Saint Augustine College. It is difficult for the institutions to hold retreats, but students could be encouraged or even required to go on retreats that are held by other organisations or by their churches.

Study is central to theological education. However, study needs to be understood as a spiritual discipline that can deepen relationship with God, not just as an academic requirement. It is the difference between knowing about God and knowing God. The need to engage in scholarly study for spiritual formation is recognised in the Iona Document (Amithram & Pryor 1989:158). Study forms part of the monastic tradition that focuses on character development as described in the Athens model of theological education as well as in the Berlin model that focuses on knowledge.

Study of the scriptures and other devotional books as well as lecture notes can all contribute to moral and spiritual growth. This requires time for reflection on the study material as well as analysis and retention of the material for assignments and exams. Students recognised the value of study for their relationship with God. For example, new insights regarding the Trinitarian nature of God helped to deepen a student's relationship with God.

Knowledge of God and knowledge of self grow in relation to one another, as Catherine of Sienna (in Kretzschmar 2012:153) affirmed. We are more aware of our sinfulness but also of God's acceptance. Study that deepens relationship with God should be part of the programme at the institutions. Study, as explained in the next section, also promotes the development of relationship with self and others.

The corporate disciplines which Foster (1980) describes as confession, worship, guidance and celebration are important for moral formation and nurture relationship with God. These are also described as the shared journey. In a residential setting, these can form part of the life of the community. The practice of worship at COTT is affirmed and should be continued. This can include times of celebration using dance, noise-making, creativity and the celebration of festivals and rituals (Foster 1978:169-171). Dance and song, the celebration of rituals and African oral and written literature that promote the caring and sharing aspects of community life, could be used to build links with African culture and traditional thought patterns of students (Mulandi 2002:56). Further ways in which the corporate disciplines can be encouraged at the institutions are included in relationship with others in the Church. The disciplines that form the outer journey include simplicity,

solitude, submission and service, and these will be discussed further under relationship with others.

6.5.2 Relationship with self

Study is an inner discipline that nurtures relationship with God and self as one grows in knowledge and understanding. Scholarly study opened new vistas for the students and gave them deeper understanding of and insight into their faith and its implications for their lives. They appreciated and learnt from the explanation of the ethical implications of Christian doctrines and found this helpful for their moral understanding and formation. Hence, the use of the transmission and cognitive modes of moral formation is affirmed and should continue to be used at the institutions.

More ways need to be found to help the students to build relationship with themselves in the sense that they become more self-aware and in touch with their feelings and have greater clarity regarding their beliefs and values. For example, this can be done through value clarification exercises, times of prayer and self-reflection, spiritual direction, journaling and deepening their relationship with God. Telling one's story as proposed by Dube (2003) also offers possibilities for self-growth. Greater self-knowledge is the first step towards becoming a person of integrity and is part of the journey towards finding our true selves and discovering freedom in Christ (Rm 6:1-23; 7:14-25).

Emotional development is often not considered to be part of theological education, but ways of including emotional development should be found. Wesley used singing which touched the hearts of people (chapter 4.2.1). A choir in a residential setting can play a role in moral formation. Music and the arts could be explored as ways of educating the heart and touching emotions, so forming character. Van der Ven (chapter 3.4.2.6) argues that for healthy moral development, there needs to be healthy emotional development.

Theological education institutions are not psychotherapeutic institutions, but questions about feelings could be included in course material. For example, questions about what students feel as well as about what they think can be asked. This is part of what Van der Ven calls observational learning (1988a:39; 382). Students can be encouraged to notice feelings and their responses to situations. Through ordering and processing emotions, students gain insight into their true self and are helped to analyse experiences and actions. Emotional maturity is a prerequisite for authentic living which is part of living morally (Rogers in Van der Ven 1998a). Institutions should include awareness of emotional responses to situations and rational analysis and ordering of emotions. In this regard, an atmosphere of acceptance rather than judgement is important.

The Iona Document indicates that spiritual formation is encouraged in an atmosphere that is respectful and non-judgemental (Amithram & Pryor 1989:160). Relationship with self as well as with others deepens as students become less judgemental and more accepting of others. Morality is not about judging others but having an awareness of one's own weaknesses and limitations as well as those of others. It is in an atmosphere of acceptance that students are more likely to participate and take risks that could lead to self-growth.

In respectful relationships, the different ethical thinking paradigms of students are acknowledged. It is important to respect the ways in which students reach ethical decisions while challenging them through discussions and the presentation of new ideas. Students can be helped to see the dangers and the strengths of decision making based on tradition, community and external authority. Likewise, the strengths and pitfalls of critical, individualistic thinking should be addressed. Mutual accountability that promotes relationships within the community can be affirmed while being wary of reducing moral formation to simply shaping a person to be a member of the community, who never questions group values, traditions and authority. However, the pitfalls of such unquestioning obedience and acceptance need to be balanced against the danger of relativism in individualistic, critical decision making. Mulandi (2002:54) warns that a personalised process of spiritual formation that encourages freedom of choice and avoidance of conformity is contrary to traditional African formation which was group orientated. However, aspects of critical thinking and freedom of choice are not necessarily opposed to the well-being of the group. The two can complement one another, helping to avoid the pitfalls and enabling people to reflect more deeply and make responsible ethical decisions, moving to what Von Hügel (1928) termed 'mystical thinking'.

Respectful relationships should extend to all, regardless of gender, race or sexual orientation. These relationships should have the qualities of the mutual, equal and loving relationships as found in the Trinity. This means that patriarchal interpretations of scripture and patriarchal culture should be questioned. The full humanity of women should be affirmed. The institutions need to be aware of patriarchal interpretations of scripture and practices in the Church that limit the full humanity of women. Feminist interpretations of scripture and concerns of women should be integral to all courses rather than included as peripheral courses.

The institutions should make sure that the teaching of theology is connected and holistic. This involves helping students to make the connections between the different disciplines so that the dangers of the 'fragmentation of theology' as described by Farley (chapter

4.2.1) are avoided. Further to this, ethical principles and biblical teaching should be applied in the context of the students so that they are able to make the connections between real life situations and theological ethics. If the teaching is not related to the students' context and concerns, it is of academic interest only and may make no difference to the way they live. Therefore, ethical teaching needs to be relevant and related to the lives of the students. It should critique culture and society and challenge students to reflect on their assumptions and to be open to new ideas. This leads to making recommendations that are linked to and enable relationship with others.

6.5.3 Relationship with others

Students should be **treated with respect**. Students from all the institutions identified respectful relationships as contributing to their moral formation. These made a difference, and although no concrete examples of what was meant by respect were given, it was important to the majority of students. Christians are called to 'love one another', and this involves relationships of mutuality and respect (chapter three, 3.2.3). The Iona Document recommends that students should be respected and seen in their totality, as whole beings (Amithram & Pryor 1989:160). Wesley's affirmation of the value of each individual as created by God with the potential to become a leader contributed to the Methodist revival.

Being introduced to different viewpoints, critical thinking and ethical decision-making methods were all identified as helping moral formation and should continue to be included. This could be through lectures, but from the students' responses and the insights from didactical practice, giving information without requiring some form of interaction is not the most effective way of presenting information to learners. Students need to interact with the information. Hence, the institutions need to find ways to make learning more participative and interactive.

One way of doing this is to have **discussions**. This kind of interaction with other students, particularly when it was guided and directed by the lecturers, was valued by the students. Discussion groups should also be encouraged and planned for even though group discussions are difficult in distance learning situations. SATS has attempted to have such discussion through the use of technology. It appeared that the students did not participate to any large extent in such discussions. This should be further investigated to understand the reasons for this and to propose ways in which to encourage online discussions and interaction.

Closely linked to discussion is the **use of stories**. The modality of storytelling was included in the questionnaires and affirmed by the students as important and effective for

moral formation. In the narratives of stories and case studies, the students are presented with relationships of others. They identified this as helpful and influential for moral formation. Therefore, use should be made of stories. The narrative nature of stories touches heads and hearts and has the potential to positively influence moral formation. Students should be allowed to tell their own stories. In one way or another, stories deepen relationship with self, as well as with others, as values become clearer and there is a deeper understanding of the way in which decisions are made. Hearing the stories of others and telling one's own life story play a role in moral formation. This is corroborated by the experiences of Dube (chapter 3.4.3.9.2) who used personal stories in teaching. She found that reflection on their own stories helped students to confront and challenge situations, empowering them to transform society and themselves. Similarly, De La Torre (chapter 3.4.2.9.2) promoted the methodological inclusion of one's own story into an ethical dilemma as it powerfully connects theory and reality.

Marshall (2009:66-67) also found that asking students to reflect on their history and narratives was helpful for moral formation. McClendon (1990) was convinced of the value of stories in the teaching of ethics and moral formation (chapter 3.4.3.9.2). Richardson (2009a:144-152) found that stories as well as the role of ritual and of the 'saints' had much in common with traditional African ethics, and this contributes to moral formation. Brown (2002:17) believes that stories are more powerful than facts and theories as they engage imagination and emotions as well as the intellect. Using stories can be a way of helping students to relate what they are learning to their life situation. Other creative methodologies such as poetry, drama, art and music could also be used.

Relationship with the staff and the **mentoring of students** by staff members was frequently selected as making a difference to moral formation. This came through as much in the negative comments as the positive ones. Mentoring is easier to do in face to face situations, but there were a few students from SATS who were mentored and who found this made a difference in their moral formation. Therefore, the institutions should develop a system of tutors who can mentor the students and to whom students can go if they have problems. It appears that greater contact with staff, however this is implemented, is effective for learning and for moral formation. Tutoring can work in a face to face, residential setting, and tutors can also connect with students online for those engaged in distance learning. It may also be possible to find tutors, mentors or spiritual directors in the local churches and communities with whom they could meet regularly.

Closely linked to mentoring is the **role of friendship**. Jesus developed deep, loving friendships with men and women (for example, Jn 11:28-37). He mentored these disciples,

using critical reflection and real life experiences. Together, he and his disciples reflected on their experiences and what they were learning. Paul wrote letters to the churches but longed to be there with them. This longing may well have been because he was aware of the importance of relationships and being present for really building disciples.

Friendships play a powerful role in moral formation. The institutions could investigate ways of setting up viable study groups. These would allow for discussion, the sharing of ideas, challenging preconceptions and assumptions and could spark creativity and imagination. The formation groups at COTT have the potential to do this and should be continued and developed to be even more effective. From the students' responses, it would appear that more time should be given to community building. This could be free time or time that is not structured that could encourage friendships. Friendship cannot be prescribed, but time and opportunity to form friendships can be encouraged.

Involving students in a church can help with the need for mentoring and moral formation, and it is a way of making theological education more participative.

6.5.3.1 Relationship with others in the Church

The important role of the Church and Christian communities in forming disciples is affirmed by writers such as Hauerwas, Westerhoff, Connors and McCormick, Bujo, Murove and Richardson (chapter 3.4.3.9). For example, Hauerwas (1983:28) argues that moral decision making cannot be separated from the character and the worldview of the moral agent which is acquired through the community to which the moral agent belongs. Richardson (1994:91) concurs that it is the character of people as developed through faith communities that influences ethical decision making rather than abstract ethical theories of right and wrong. Bujo (2001:1) and Murove (2009:29) understand that the individual is moulded by the community. The Iona Document too affirms that spiritual formation takes place primarily in community (Amithram & Pryor 1989:158).

In the early Christian communities and monasteries, relationships played a central role. People learned discipleship in such communities and were encouraged to practice virtuous living, embodying the love of Christ. This was done through a programme of work, formation and prayer as well as study. There was surely less pressure for members of the community to pass exams than there is for students today, and this allowed more time for work, prayer and study. Today, with the emphasis on qualifications, there is pressure on students and staff to achieve academic excellence, which, while good, can take precedence to the detriment of moral and spiritual formation. One of the strengths of a

residential institution is that it can implement such a programme. An institution like COTT could explore the possibilities of work and formation as well as study and prayer.

It is recommended that students at the theological education institutions should be encouraged to be part of a Christian community, whether in a local church or the college community. Wesley recognised the importance of regular attendance at classes, commitment to a community and mutual accountability (Bentley 210:556). The shared or corporate spiritual disciplines that involve worship, celebration, confessions and guidance require a faith community. Worship should be encouraged. In a residential setting, times of worship can be organised as part of the daily routine. This is the case at COTT, and students are expected to attend. Attendance at worship for students studying at institutions where worship is not an integral part of the study programme is a challenge and difficult to implement, but in those situations students can be part of a church community.

The Iona Document encourages ecumenical and cross-cultural exchange so that students can expand beyond their own cultural confession and look beyond their own narrow context and “see oneself with the eyes of the other” (Amithram & Pryor 1989:161). This COTT does in terms of formation groups and dining room seating as the groups are culturally diverse and the students cannot simply sit with those who are ‘like’ themselves.⁶⁹

Ecumenical contact and experience of different forms of worship could be included in the programme. This can help moral formation and relationship with God. One way of worshipping does not suit everyone as we are all different. This could apply even in a denominational seminary with its own distinctive way of worship.

COTT has a strong Anglican ethos which is consciously fostered as it is an Anglican college and aims to instil the Anglican way of doing things in the students. This militates against the ecumenical principle as identified in the Iona Document (Amithram & Pryor 1989:158). The students at SATS are from different church backgrounds, but most have a strong evangelical, Pentecostal ethos. Ecumenical exposure and encouragement by the college for them to experience different forms of worship was not mentioned by the students. At St Augustine College, students were challenged with different perspectives despite the strong Catholic ethos. An interesting comment from student (A5) in response to a question regarding what more could be done to support and deepen moral formation was “encouragement to discover an ecumenical approach to spirituality.” Naidoo (2005:142) also recognised the value of more ecumenical contact and exposure to different forms of worship in her study of spiritual formation in theological education. She

⁶⁹ This ‘like’ was described as students with the same language and cultural group.

found that ecumenical contact and experiencing various liturgical and worshipping traditions was a means of enriching spiritual formation and encouraging inclusivity of all God's people.

Thiessen (2005:60) encourages what he terms connection with the community as it fosters "understanding of one's weakness and limitations and of one's strengths and capacities." In the residential setting of COTT, chapel, classroom and meal times were consciously used to build community. This is affirmed and should continue. COTT, being a residential institution, takes the community aspect very seriously. SATS assumes that students are part of a local church and uses the fact that students do not have to leave their church in order to study as a selling point. However, there appeared to be little overt encouragement or monitoring of this involvement at least in terms of assignments and projects that had to be done in the local church. The staff at St Augustine College were more ambivalent about the need for students to be involved at a local church.

For a community to help people become aware of their weaknesses and strengths, there needs to be trust and a sense of working together rather than competition. This kind of connection in a close, trusting community is hard to achieve in a competitive atmosphere where some pass and others fail. Ways of developing a trusting, respectful community need to be found because the role of community is important in moral formation. There is a need for students to "come apart" and spend time studying and being nurtured in a Christian community where there are role models and mutual accountability. Those studying in full-time residential settings recognised this as very influential in their lives (Tinyiko Maluleke in Denis 2003:72). The non-residential institutions should carefully consider ways in which community can be fostered, whether through planned conferences, retreats, workshops, lecture blocks or through local churches. This moves towards the concept of blended education where distance learning is combined with times of residential, face to face learning.

Official networking between the theological institutions and the churches is recommended as this means the interactions are planned rather than haphazard or non-existent. This is particularly important for the non-residential institutions, but COTT can also be enriched, and enrich the churches through more interaction with the churches. Specific tasks and assignments could be set for students to do in the churches. The students can enrich the churches through sharing what they are learning and keeping the churches abreast of theological developments. This recommendation needs further research. However, already, from this research, there is a clear indication that a working relationship between the theological education institutions and the local churches would benefit both.

While it is recommended that the institutions, especially those that are not residential, work with the churches, it is recognised that, in reality these partnerships are difficult. For example, the quality of the community and the role models in the local churches might be a problem. Some churches are wonderful places of care and nurture while others are riddled with power conflicts and selfishness. Appropriate churches would need to be identified and measures put in place to limit negative aspects while building on the positive.

6.5.3.2 Relationship with others in society

In the theological institutions, relationship with others in society can be developed through including biblical ethics. Learning what the Bible teaches regarding the poor, justice, compassion, the prophetic role and witness to the world, to mention a few topics, is vital for Christian discipleship. This kind of knowledge and understanding led to a closer relationship with God and self and provided a greater incentive to the students to care for others, to work for justice and to act against corruption.

In the research, it was found that many of the students were involved in service to others and in projects that offered care to those in need. For example, a student (S9) from SATS felt a greater commitment to “scripture than before and understood the need for pursuing social justice better than before.” The institutions should continue to affirm and encourage this growth in awareness of the outer spiritual disciplines and the students’ reaching out to the community in loving service. However, this concern for the poor needs to find effect in a willingness to improve or change social structures, policies, and the way government functions.

Projects and assignments in local churches and communities can help the moral formation of students as they involve students in situations of human struggle. An example of this was the student described in chapter one whose involvement with those infected and affected by AIDS made a difference to her.

The Iona Document recommends that students have direct exposure to the harsh realities of life and direct involvement in areas of human struggle (Amithram & Pryor 1989:158). Such situations are a daily reality for many living in South Africa. Human struggles and the harsh realities of life are part of existence for students from poor communities. While this means that this requirement is present, it does not necessarily mean that the students’ studies provide any systematic analysis of the situation in the light of faith.

In chapter three, the seminaries established by Dietrich Bonhoeffer were noted as contributing to moral formation, and a student from SATS made an interesting response:

The theological formative model of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and his illegal seminaries during WWII were a prime example of true theological formation for seminary students. Contemplation, meditation and experience were given priority at these illegal institutions.

These seminaries functioned in situations of human struggle, where the 'cost of discipleship' was high, but there were deep, loving, committed relationships between the students founded on their relationship with God and their struggle against injustice. It is interesting that a student from SATS where contemplation and meditation are not part of the programme should see them as crucial for moral formation.

6.5.4 Relationship with the environment

Knowing about the environment is identified by Ahlers (1996:229) as helping to develop a sense of care and love for it. Therefore, some teaching about the environment would be helpful in forming a deep, passionate relationship with the environment. If there is to be greater commitment to care for the environment, people need more knowledge of it and appreciation of the wonder of nature. This is possible in all the institutions. Recycling, projects to clean-up rivers or parks, care for animals and work in the garden can be encouraged, but except at COTT, they are part of what students do in their own homes.

6.6 Conclusions

This chapter recorded the changes in moral formation as perceived by the students, using their own words wherever possible. It then identified the modes of moral formation that were used at the institutions and that the students felt had contributed most to and were most influential in their moral formation.

The appreciative inquiry approach, which concentrates on the positive, was used. This meant that the focus was on the ways in which moral formation is included in the teaching and practices at the institutions. This helped to counter the tendency to create a favourable impression. The staff and students reported on the modes of moral formation that were present and working. These were affirmed while gaps in the programme were also identified.

There was growth in the moral formation of students. In terms of their relationship with God, the students identified these changes as coming primarily through the transmission and cognitive modes of moral formation in which they learnt about God. Despite the times

of worship and silence at COTT, these were not mentioned as having a great influence on their moral formation. "A spiritual director and the fellowship of vocation" were identified by one student as being more influential. This seems to corroborate the importance of relationships in moral formation. A far more conscious and sustained spiritual formation programme could be implemented in all the institutions, making use of more of the spiritual disciplines.

There was also growth in the students' relationships with self, others and the environment. The institutions are helping with the moral formation of the students. The modes of moral formation that were identified by the students as the most influential and effective for their moral formation included those that involved relationship. Relationship was the thread that ran through all their answers. For example, mentoring, discussions and the use of stories were all chosen as helpful.

Dreams and ideas for further means of moral formation were explored. These ideas for moral formation were compared with the literature for synergy and greater reliability. From a comparison of the responses from the staff and the students with existing ethical theory and teaching regarding moral formation, several recommendations for moral formation in theological education were made. These included mentoring, small discussion groups, use of stories and case studies and the encouragement of spiritual disciplines.

Chapter Seven: Conclusions - discover, dream, design, destiny

“Let us sing a new song not with our lips but with our lives” Saint Augustine

7.1 Introduction

The heading for this chapter comes from the four steps of the appreciative inquiry approach which maps the stages of this research journey. The journey started with a process of reading, reflecting, talking, asking and analysing that led to **discoveries** about moral formation in theological education settings. Then the participants in the research were encouraged to **dream** of ways of promoting moral formation, and these were compared with and added to the dreams and ideas regarding moral formation of others as recorded in the literature. Next, **design** included ways in which the discoveries and dreams could be implemented. This involved making recommendations regarding how moral formation can be made to work more effectively at the theological education institutions that formed part of the research. Finally, **destiny** involves the future as these insights and plans are implemented to form good, wise and moral people.

This concluding chapter recalls the reasons for this study and provides a summary of the research and the conclusions. The hypothesis is revisited, and the research design and methodology used to test the hypothesis and achieve the aims are recalled. The contributions and significance of each chapter are outlined, and the recommendations for a moral formation programme in theological education are reiterated. Finally, issues for further research are identified.

7.2 Why this research topic was chosen

In chapter one, a number of students who had studied theology were described. One student was moved to compassion through conversations with those infected or affected by HIV and AIDS, another became aware that apartheid was wrong, but another followed an opulent lifestyle in the midst of an impoverished community. They had all studied theology, yet two were moved by suffering, and the other seemed to be unmoved by the needs of the poor. I wanted to research what it was from their theological studies that resulted in these differences. What had contributed to their moral formation? I wondered if there were any factors in the theological education institutions where they had studied that could contribute to moral formation.

This was my **motivation** for choosing this topic. My own experiences as a theological student and as a theological educator as well as those of other students contributed

further to the desire to find out what it is about theological education that influences moral formation.

Theological education institutions face huge challenges. Chapter one described the difficulty of adequately addressing the issue of moral formation amidst all the other requirements demanded of students in their training as church leaders. They have to be equipped with knowledge and skills and with the ability to organise liturgy, to preach and to teach. They are expected to be skilled at church development, social ministry, mission, pastoral counselling and spiritual direction as well as empowering and training others (Van der Ven 1998b:117). With so many demands, conscious, deliberate planning for moral formation is overlooked. It is assumed to happen rather than consciously planned. It is the hypothesis of this study that with the numerous priorities and goals facing theological education institutions in the task of equipping people for ministry, effective moral formation is inadequate and more attention should be given to the deliberate and conscious inclusion of moral formation in tertiary theological education. This proved to be the case. While students did grow morally, it was not through a planned, conscious programme of moral formation. More attention needs to be given to moral formation by the institutions. This could be done in partnership with the churches. Moral formation should form part of the purpose of the theological education institution. Theological colleges need to find ways of including moral formation in their teaching and practice as well as teaching ethical theory.

Chapter one described the moral problems facing the Church and society. Even within the Church, there are attitudes of selfishness, greed, entitlement and disregard for the poor. There are pockets of moral integrity and faithfulness, people who despite all odds and at great cost to themselves stand up for what is right and care for the needy and vulnerable. Theological education should contribute to forming people of moral integrity, but the excerpts in chapter one regarding the behaviour of students reveal that this is not always the case. I wondered what made the difference to the moral formation of students in their theological studies. What was it that opened their eyes to injustice and their hearts to care and led them to do something about the situation? This started me on this research journey to discover what it was about the theological education experience of some that formed morally mature, good, compassionate and wise people.

If theological education institutions include moral formation of students in a more conscious and systematic manner, it is hoped that they will be better prepared to address the urgent moral questions and issues that face the Church and the world. To this end, I was motivated by the need for theological education institutions to find and develop the

most effective methods to address this mammoth task as they are training future leaders and ministers who are in a position to help tackle the moral crisis in the Church and in society.

7.3 Aims of the research

The aims of the research grew out of the motivation for the study. The first aim was to identify the extent to which and manner in which moral formation occurs in the theological education institutions. The second aim was to make recommendations regarding the most effective ways of promoting moral formation in the theological education institutions that participated in the research. Through the implementation of such recommendations, the teaching and practice of moral formation could be made more effective. This, it was hoped, would help to develop 'true disciples of Jesus' who will make a difference in their churches and communities and who will become agents of moral transformation. In order to do this, the literature regarding ethics, morality and moral formation was studied to establish a framework for the empirical research and a better understanding of ethics, morality and moral formation. A model of morality was required, and certain measureable signposts needed to be identified that would indicate moral formation.

7.4 Research design and methodology

The research framework that guided the research was developed in chapter two. Reading in Christian ethics, spirituality, moral philosophy and practical theology was required to establish an understanding of ethics, morality and moral formation. A theoretical framework was developed. This was based on theological and philosophical foundations as well as experience. The importance of relationship for moral living is found throughout scripture, from the narratives of Adam and Eve, through the covenant community of Israel, to the life and teaching of Jesus and in the fellowship of the early church. The doctrines of the Trinity and the incarnation, the philosophy of *ubuntu* and Gilligan's use of the relational self all support the importance of relationship as more fully described below in section 7.6. This framework of relationship was further developed through a historical review of ethical theory which showed that, throughout the ages, relationships of love and justice were central in ethical discourse.

Once the theoretical framework was established, a model of morality was developed. Signposts that provide measureable criteria to research and assess the moral formation of the students were identified. Having explored what constitutes the moral life, the question regarding how the moral life is formed was addressed. Van der Ven's modes of moral formation formed the basis for the exploration of how moral formation takes place. Spiritual

formation and the role of the community including vision, narratives, friendships and mentoring were added to Van der Ven's modes.

A small empirical research study using qualitative methods was conducted in order to address the research aims which were to:

- ascertain the extent to which moral formation is consciously pursued and included in the teaching and activities at the three selected theological institutions,
- investigate the teachers' and students' perception of the moral formation process at the selected institutions and
- discover what had the most influence on the moral formation of students (i.e. what were the most effective teaching methods and practices for moral formation).

The data from this research was used to make recommendations regarding the most effective ways of promoting moral formation in the theological education institutions described below.

The empirical study was done in three theological education institutions, namely, St Augustine College, the College of the Transfiguration and the South African Theological Seminary which were chosen as they used different modes of learning. COTT is a full-time, faith based, residential seminary. St. Augustine College has a number of departments, including the theology department. There is face to face learning as students attend lectures. SATS is a distance learning institution which makes use of written and electronic communication. All three institutions are used by various churches for the training of ministers and other church leaders. Some of these, especially at COTT, are entering the full-time ordained ministry. All the institutions are accredited by the Council on Higher Education.

The empirical research was informed by the theoretical understanding in what was described as a hermeneutical spiral. The empirical research was designed in the light of the theoretical interpretation which was constantly turned to throughout the research as it corroborated and enriched the empirical data from the staff and students at the institutions. The empirical data and life experiences of the staff and students in turn informed, developed and redeveloped the theory (Ezzy 2002:26). The theory used a relational framework to investigate moral formation. This informed the empirical study that then researched whether growth in relationship with God, self, others and creation did influence moral formation. The data showed that relationships and relational teaching methods were important for moral formation. There were indications of this from the literature, for example, in the importance of spiritual formation and the role of the community. The

findings from the empirical study further developed these insights and applied them to moral formation in theological education.

7.5 Boundaries

Boundaries were set for this study as the focus was on moral formation rather than the entire programme at the institutions. The focus was not the evaluation of the academic soundness of the programme or the proficiency acquired in ministerial skills such as preaching, teaching and leading worship.

The empirical research was limited to three institutions, namely, St Augustine College, the College of the Transfiguration and the South African Theological Seminary. Comparisons between full-time, residential study as opposed to distance learning or face to face lectures in a non-residential setting were made with regard to moral formation, not to the whole programme and the many other aspects of theological education and training for ministry and leadership in the Church.

As the focus of this research is moral formation, the overall benefits of these different modes of learning go beyond the scope of this research and cannot be fully evaluated. De Gruchy (1986:135-136) and Kumalo and Richardson (2010:267) have questions regarding distance education and fear that it does not provide an adequate setting, time or resources for disciplined study. This research does not evaluate the benefits of full-time or part-time study in relation to cognitive learning. It considers the difficulties and strengths of the different types of institution in terms of their ability to foster moral growth in the students. To this end, it emerged that certain modes of moral formation were difficult to practice in distance education, and in the recommendations, ways of overcoming the limitations of part-time and distance learning are suggested. However, it was found that some degree of moral formation had taken place in all the institutions.

7.6 The discoveries: what were the findings?

In **chapter one**, morality was defined in terms of following Christ and human flourishing. Relationships with God, self, others and creation were identified as key factors for human flourishing. The problem regarding the moral crisis in the Church as well as more broadly in society was described. In this morally challenging context, it was found that some students who had studied theology and were in positions of leadership in the Church tried to live morally and justly, standing up for what is right and making a difference in their communities and churches. Others seemed unable to make a significant difference to this crisis or, worse still, perpetuated wrong practices and action. The vision, mission and

purpose statements of the three selected theological education institutions include moral formation or at least spiritual formation, but it appeared that this aim was not always achieved. This led to the question whether with all the numerous priorities and goals facing theological education institutions in the task of equipping people for church leadership and ministry, the moral formation of students is adequate and effective. The hypothesis formed was that moral formation should be deliberately and consciously included in tertiary theological education, whether this is done by the theological institution itself or in partnership with the churches.

In **chapter two**, the relational understanding of morality was further explored using scripture, theological ethics, Christian doctrine, moral philosophy, African ethics and philosophy, practical theology and experience. The biblical basis for a relational understanding of morality was grounded in relationship with God which was foundational for the covenant community of Israel as expressed in the command to love God with heart, soul and strength (Dt 6:5) and mind (Mt 22:37). It was noted that Jesus affirmed the importance of relationship through, for example, his teaching that the essence of the law was to love God and one's neighbour (Lk 10:27-28; Jn 13:34). He used the language of covenant rather than contract (Verhey 2002:496). For Jesus, remaining in relationship with God (Jn 15:1-10) was the basis for right relationships with others and all creation.

The theological grounds for the relational understanding of morality were found in the doctrine of the Trinity with the co-equal, loving, mutual relationships between the three Persons of the Trinity. Human beings are created in the image of God and should reflect this same quality of relationship. This was further developed in the doctrine of the incarnation as God's love for the world and God's passion for human and cosmic flourishing was revealed in Jesus becoming human (Jn 1:14). Embodiment is relational (Holness 2008:111). As Ahlers et al. (1996:49) affirm, "We are by our nature, as beings created in God's image, relational." Buber's I-Thou concept encapsulated the sacredness of relationship and the importance of relationships for moral living.

It is not only scripture and theology that support a relational understanding of morality. So does the African philosophy of *ubuntu* which defines people through their relationships (Gathogo 2008:45). Theologians such as Tutu (quoted in N. Tutu 1989:71) affirm the concept of *ubuntu* and that "we are made for the delicate work of relationship, of interdependence. All kinds of things go horribly wrong when we break that fundamental law of our being." We are embedded in relationships, and it is in loving and being loved that we become fully human and all that God created us to be.

This relational understanding of morality was further developed through the concept of wisdom. Wisdom involves acting according to virtues but after they have been considered in the light of justice and then applied wisely in practical situations involving relationships (Van der Ven 1998a:9). Fiorenza (2001) explains that the Bible is not just a book of words, but the living word of God and wisdom is not just ideas but a person – Sophia – with whom we are in relationship (Pr 1:20-33). Wisdom comes through being open to and remaining in relationship with God (Fiorenza 2001:13). Several stories, based on experience, illustrated the power of relationship (Birch & Rasmussen 1989:58; Schluter & Lee 1993:72).

Chapter two was important as it established a relational framework for the research and clarified the assumptions about and understanding of morality that guided the process of data collection and analysis.

Chapter three built on this relational understanding of morality. It traced the ways in which relationship featured strongly in ethical theory from the virtue ethics of the ancient Greeks to the present. Through the ages, despite the different contexts, there are common relational themes such as love and justice. Love is central in the Bible and present in the writings of theologians from Augustine to Fletcher. The centrality of relationship with God is emphasised by theologians such as Augustine, Aquinas, Luther and Barth. Aquinas, among others, recognised the synthesis between faith and reason and showed the importance of knowing and wisdom for a relational ethic.

Using the prophetic tradition and the teaching of Jesus, this chapter established that morality incorporates both the personal and the social. It involves personal holiness and right relationships with others that challenge and transcend racism and sexism, that confront injustice, analyse socio-economic systems and actively promote justice. This also includes care for the environment.

Virtues, the habitual practice of which builds good character, were shown to be needed for well-being and good relationships (Van der Ven 1998a:383). Paul affirms the importance of virtue, exhorting the early Christians to put on the new life of virtue (Col 3:1-17) through meeting together regularly in fellowship, prayer and mutual Christian support (Phlp 2:1-5; Eph 4:2-4). Later theologians such as Hauerwas and Richardson also emphasised the role of the community of faith in the growth of character and virtues.

Having established the relational nature of morality, I developed a model of morality based on five categories of relationship, namely, relationship with God, self, others in the Church, others in society and creation. This model includes three vital formative factors, namely,

knowing, being and doing which, when flowing from relationship with God, are rightly ordered. An explanation was provided of the way in which knowing, being and doing work together. Knowledge and understanding of norms and values inform good actions which become habits and develop good character. In order to develop and enjoy good, loving relationships, one needs knowledge that comes from spiritual understanding combined with the qualities or virtues which are referred to as the fruits of the Spirit by the apostle Paul. All are necessary for moral living and to develop relationships that are good, right and wise. Godly wisdom, good character and right action are all characteristics of a true disciple of Christ. Honest, intellectual seeking should lead beyond knowledge to practical wisdom that is shaped by experience and discernment in the light of the mystery of God (Fiorenza 2001:3). Paul's exhortation to the Colossians (3:9-10) to "put off the old human being and put on the new" showed that every aspect of our lives must be changed so that our thinking, being and doing become aligned with the radical new life in Christ.

In order to assess the moral formation of students, signposts that indicate moral formation were identified. Among these were a sense of awe and wonder, a desire to spend time with God, understanding and knowledge regarding Christian norms and values, self-awareness and emotional maturity, care and compassion for others and a sense of justice which leads to social action, treating all people equally and with respect and care for and appreciation of all creation. These were researched in terms of the students' relationships with God, with self, with others and with the environment.

The chapter included an examination of the ways in which people are morally formed. It is relatively easy to identify what constitutes a good life and what attributes and virtues should be nurtured in people. How this can be achieved is less straight forward. As Kretzschmar (2015:2) points out, some institutions teach ethical theory and issues to the exclusion of moral formation. The seven modes of moral formation as identified by Van der Ven were explained and used as a basis to identify how the moral life is nurtured. To these were added spiritual formation and the role of the community of faith as other important modes of moral formation. The relevance of the institutional, critical and mystical stages of spiritual formation as identified by Von Hügel was explained. For example, teaching should not be too authoritarian or too theoretical and critical as the students may struggle to integrate such teaching in their lives.

Chapter four traced the ways in which moral formation was included in theological education through the ages. It was shown that in biblical times, theological education was included as part of everyday life and integrated with moral and spiritual formation. Moral formation started with relationship with God, and this love of God led to right relationships

with others. Jesus used relational ways of discipleship which incorporated knowledge and critical analysis and which was applied to everyday issues.

The early church continued using mentoring and other relational ways of discipling believers. At the time of Constantine, as Christianity became the dominant religion, catechetical schools such as that of Augustine of Hippo (354-430) were founded. Augustine combined faith and reason as did Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274). Monasteries and religious orders also became centres for Christian learning. They followed a rule of life that promoted spiritual and moral formation through a life of simplicity, work, learning, prayer and service. The Jesuits developed formation practices such as retreats and spiritual exercises to “teach prayer, to enable discernment of God’s will, to lead to and sustain conversion” (O’Malley in Neuhaus 1992:83). The inclusion of study, prayer and service in many religious orders promoted moral formation. Similar aspects from the Methodist revival such as the practice of spiritual disciplines, self-denial, service to others, the singing of hymns and study of the scriptures in a setting of mutual accountability all contributed to moral formation.

It was found that one of the threats to moral formation was the separation of faith and reason. The Enlightenment led to a split between the rational and the spiritual. Emotional development and spiritual formation diminished in importance while the cognitive and transmission modes of moral formation received more attention. This emphasis on science and logic led to the fragmentation of theology into specialised disciplines. This lack of cohesiveness in the teaching of theology is still of concern, and writers such as Edward Farley (1983) highlight this problem. Mentoring, being part of a community where there is mutual accountability, study, critical questioning applied to everyday experience, spiritual disciplines, service to others and an integration of theology and faith all featured in the historical review as contributing to moral formation.

In this chapter, the growth of theological education in South Africa was traced from its start in small, racially segregated, gender exclusive seminaries to the many theological education institutions found today.

A number of models of theological education were discussed. The continuum of approaches to theological education as developed by Overend (2007:143) was useful in categorising them. At one end were models that emphasised ministerial formation while at the other end were models that emphasised the development of knowledge and cognitive skills. A threefold purpose for theological education was identified by a number of writers including Bosch (1991:16). These three basic dimensions were linked to the aims of

imparting knowledge, developing professional skills for ministry and spiritual and moral formation.

The models discussed were based on this threefold typology and included the Athens, Berlin, Calcutta and Durban models, each of which emphasises different aspects of theological education in order to achieve a particular purpose considered of primary importance. The Athens model emphasises spiritual formation and character, the Berlin model, knowledge and professional skills for ministry, the Calcutta model, transformative action, and the Durban model, relationships.

The five models of Cheesman, (1993), namely, the academic, the monastic, the business, the therapeutic and the ministerial training models were discussed as they contribute to an understanding of the way in which moral formation is affected by the structure and purpose of the institution. A further non-schooling model was identified by Harkness (2001:14) in which he raised concerns, shared by others such as Banks (1992:2) and Kinsler (2008:24), that full-time, seminary-based theological education was costly and ineffectual and distanced students from their communities.

The findings from the empirical research were set out in chapters five and six. In **chapter five**, no significant difference was found in the responses between younger and older students, men and women or those of different economic backgrounds. Some students tended to follow a traditional, communal pattern of ethical reflection while others approached ethical decision making more individualistically and emphasised freedom of choice and critical thinking. These different ways of ethical reflection were not used exclusively by any of the above categories of students. Many of the students from all three institutions were morally mature, committed Christians before they started studying, but most of them considered that their theological studies deepened their moral understanding and behaviour.

It was found that the staff and students had a relational understanding of morality that included relationship with God, self, others and, to a lesser extent, creation. They recognised the need for relationship with God to advance moral growth and human flourishing. There was an understanding that good and right actions on a personal and a societal level are part of morality. They could identify Christian values, and the acquisition of knowledge, especially biblical knowledge, was seen as important for moral formation.

The mission, vision and purpose statements of the institutions were reviewed, and it was found that all of them included a concern for moral formation. The concern for moral formation as expressed in these statements reflected the character of the institutions and

their concerns. So, for example, SATS includes the terms Christocentric and biblical as they aim to restore the moral and ethical fibre of society by inculcating biblical values and principles. COTT aims to do this through empowering students to become co-creators of communities of faith and healing of the world and contributors to social change and the transformation of humanity. St Augustine College recognises the “dignity and transcendence of the human person” and aims through critical examination and evaluative thinking to restore society.

The three institutions all included elements from the ABC models of theological education. Knowledge was taken seriously, as was reflected in the predominance of the use of the modes of transmission and cognitive development. Skills for ministry were taught at all the institutions. As a full-time institution, COTT is able to concentrate more on spiritual formation and includes many features of the monastic model as described by Cheesman. The students’ aims for studying mostly revolved around learning more about the Bible, increasing their understanding of their faith in order to teach others and gaining skills for ministry. A few students also included getting to know God better as a reason for study.

Next, the modes of formation that were used at the institutions and the influence that they had on the moral formation of the students as perceived by the students were analysed. This analysis showed a fair degree of similarity between all three institutions with, for example, all identifying respectful relationships and mentoring by staff members as contributing to moral formation.

Overall, it was found that the students most frequently selected the relational aspects of the modes of moral formation as having the greatest influence on their moral formation. Students from all the institutions identified relationships with staff members and other students as important. They also found the use of inspiring stories and case studies which recounted people’s experiences and awakened imagination and moral vision contributed to their moral formation. This included the Christian story and their personal stories. Decision-making methods, explaining and relating Christian doctrines to their lives, exercises that encourage self-knowledge, value clarification and encouragement to be involved in human struggles and with the poor were practices that the students identified by as being influential for their moral formation, even if not much used at certain institutions.

Van der Ven (1998a:354) corroborated this centrality of relationship: “Character does not unfold from within the person in isolation, but is called out through interaction with others in the situation and through grappling with tasks and challenges that are part of that situation.” The Iona document too affirms the importance of relationships identifying the

role of the community in spiritual formation and recognising that involvement in the harsh realities of life and situations of human struggle can lead to spiritual growth. Groome (1980) also recognised the need for relationship and used the students' own experiences and beliefs, including their experiences within socio-economic settings, as the starting point for formation. Dube developed the use of the students' own stories as a means for reflection on social systems and oppression. De La Torre (2014:29-30) affirmed the use of stories as they help to apply theory in real situations. The model of relationship that I developed in chapter three emphasises that all these relationships are crucial.

While those modes that involved relationship were the ones that the students identified as having the most influence, they were not the most frequently used modes. It was found that those most often used were transmission and cognitive development. Since all the institutions emphasised academic excellence and learning in their aims, this is understandable. The pressure exerted on the institutions to maintain their accreditation contributes to the emphasis on academic excellence and knowledge. Possible dangers such as competitiveness, unquestioning acceptance of what the teacher says, repetition of knowledge without integration into one's ethical reflection paradigm, no application of what is being taught to one's life and even alienation from what is taught were identified.

Spiritual formation and relationship with God were encouraged at all the institutions and especially at SATS. Growing spiritually was considered important, but how this was achieved was less clear especially in a distance setting. In a residential setting such as that of COTT, times of worship, celebration and silence are possible. These were helpful, but a more comprehensive spiritual and moral formation programme is needed in COTT as well as the other institutions. Partnerships with local churches were seen as necessary to implement such a programme. I return to this point below.

It was found that the modes of moral formation least used were character formation and emotional development. Students felt that they were not helped to be more aware of their emotions. While head, heart and hands are often mentioned in education, the actual cultivating of the heart, of emotions and of virtues maybe overlooked. While ethical theory is important, and this was acknowledged by the staff members, the students hardly acknowledged its value for their moral formation. For them, values clarification and imitation of Jesus had more immediate relevance. Following Jesus involves discernment of his actions within his social context and imitation of his character. Following Jesus appeals to the heart as well as the head, and it involves building a relationship with Jesus. Ethical theory, while important to know, appeals to the head unless it is taught in a way

that engages the heart and touches on relationship. The institutions need to seek ways to integrate ethical theory with spirituality and getting to know Jesus.

Chapter five also detailed the relationship between the educational institution and the Church. The responses from the questionnaires showed that there was at best a tenuous relationship between the institutions and the churches. This was despite the recognition of the importance of the Church and some efforts to interact with the local churches. In the chapter, I raised the difficulties faced by the students in the distance learning situation at SATS and argued that there needs to be a more explicit engagement with the local churches. The staff and students identified that a closer relationship between the Church and the seminary could be beneficial but that they currently lacked the resources to fully achieve this.

In **chapter six**, the voices of the students, reflecting on their moral formation through their studies, suggested that moral formation does take place in the theological education institutions. This was corroborated by the purpose statements of the institutions which were highlighted in chapter five. The students' relationships with God, self, others and the environment did grow. For example, they had a deeper understanding of justice, a greater commitment to the poor, more awareness of gender issues and an increased sense of responsibility to care for the environment.

The literature indicates the importance of spiritual disciplines for growth in relationship with God. The students mostly identified that their relationship with God grew in terms of knowledge and understanding of God and that this led to knowing God more deeply. Their image of God had changed and become more tentative, incorporating mystery, rather than that of 'a god who is there to meet our needs' or 'to judge us'. This indicated a greater sense of awe and wonder, which is a signpost that indicates growth in relationship with God. Another signpost that was present was the desire to spend more time in prayer.

From the students' responses, it was found that relationship with self had grown. Students had grown in knowledge, particularly in the area of biblical ethics and understanding of their faith. They had been exposed to different perspectives and learnt to think more critically and reflectively about the world around them. The most effective way of doing this was through discussions with others and interaction with lecturers. In the distance setting, interaction with staff was identified as formative, and the lack of contact with others was missed. Their studies contributed to the growth of virtues in the students. This was from a renewing of their minds but also through interaction with church communities and exposure to situations of need. Students found that they had a greater sense of compassion, love and care for others.

The students' relationship with others and with creation also grew as indicated through their stories of service and compassion towards others. Students had a better understanding of the need for justice in society. However, some students, despite their studies, still interpreted biblical texts with little regard for their context. This was seen, for example, in attitudes towards women and the fact that a few students still accepted patriarchal gender relations. There was an increased awareness that morality involved care for the environment.

While the moral formation of the students in terms of their relationship with God, self, others and creation is affirmed, it appeared that there were gaps in the formation programme and a more systematic, comprehensive and deliberate moral formation programme was needed. Some of these gaps were identified by the staff and students as they dreamt of what could be done to support and deepen moral formation. These suggestions as well as insights from the literature were recorded in chapter six and are revisited below to make recommendations for moral formation that could be used at the theological education institutions.

7.7 Recommendations

From the literature, many ways to enrich the moral formation programme were identified. These, together with the analysis of the findings from the empirical research, were used to make recommendations regarding moral formation in theological education. Firstly, moral formation should be more deliberately and consciously included in tertiary theological education, both by the theological institution itself and in partnership with the churches.

Moral formation and spiritual formation go hand in hand, so ways of encouraging spiritual formation need to be found. If spiritual formation is to be taken more seriously at the institutions, far greater use of the spiritual disciplines is required. The inner and corporate spiritual disciplines such as prayer, meditation and worship can quite easily be included in full-time residential settings. It is more challenging to find ways of including them in part-time and distance education settings. Recommendations for doing this were made in chapter six and included teaching about the spiritual disciplines, encouraging the use of silence and meditation, setting assignments that require students to journal and report on their practice of the disciplines and encouragement for the students to be part of a faith community. Making the connections between study and spiritual growth and teaching ethics and spirituality together could also help. There should be teaching about the outer disciplines such as service and simplicity, and the shared disciplines such as worship and celebration should be part of the programme. This is not always possible, and partnerships

with local churches are important for helping students to practice these disciplines and grow as disciples.

Journaling and reflection on what is being taught are ways of developing a relationship with the self which is important for moral formation. Music and the arts could be explored as ways of educating the heart, of touching emotions and so forming character. Other relational modes of learning such as stories from the Bible and the students' own stories can be incorporated as they appeal to the heart as well as the head. Friendships were also identified by the students as being important for moral formation.

More formal and deliberate partnerships between the churches and the theological education institutions should be developed. The importance of the Church community and worshipping and working together for moral formation was highlighted by numerous writers in the literature, and students should be encouraged to be part of a faith community. In distance education, it is particularly important that closer relationships should be built between the seminary and the Church. Among other things, this could require students do projects and assignments in the local churches.

The use of the transmission and cognitive development modes of moral formation was affirmed as scholarly study opened new vistas for the students and gave them deeper understanding and insight into their faith and the implications for their lives. If this can be done in an interactive way, it is of greater value and contributes more to the students' moral formation. The students affirmed the value of group discussions and mentoring by staff members for moral formation. Therefore, more group discussions and mentoring should be included where possible. Ethical theory and teaching using the transmission and cognitive modes of moral formation need to be related to the students' context and concerns; otherwise, what is learnt may be of academic interest but may make no difference to the way the students live. Teaching regarding Christian norms and values should enable students to critique their culture and society and challenge students to reflect on their assumptions and to be open to new ideas.

For students studying in distance education settings, opportunities should be made to spend time with others in, for example, seminars, lectures, workshops, worship, meditation, silence and service. This concept of blended or block education is being explored by a number of institutions. Greater use can also be made of electronic communication.

Importantly, there should be relationships of respect for all. This means taking issues around gender seriously. Institutions should try to use gender inclusive language and to

include feminine images of God as well as masculine ones. Feelings as well as thinking should be included, and students need to be exposed to situations of need which can encourage the practice of virtues so that they become habits and a way of life. Reflection on and an analysis of their experiences of the harsh realities of life can help the students to develop an awareness of oppression, a prophetic ministry and the moral courage to confront issues of injustice.

7.8 The contribution of this study

This study makes a contribution to the body of knowledge regarding moral formation and theological education. Through a survey of the key literature, it offers insights regarding moral formation which can be applied to theological education.

The research contributes to what should be included in the teaching and practice of theological education institutions if they are to advance the moral formation of students. It does this through a review of the literature in which modes of moral formation are identified and through an empirical study at the theological institutions. The empirical research identified which modes are used and their effectiveness for the moral formation of the students. Through this, suggestions were made for the more effective moral formation of students.

Another significant contribution comes from the empirical data regarding moral formation and theological education. Through the findings from the empirical data, the importance of relationship for moral formation was affirmed. While the importance of relationships is well known for human flourishing, the need to incorporate relationships more consciously into pedagogical practices in theological education is an important contribution. The education institutions tend to emphasise the transmission and the cognitive development modes of learning, but these are not the most effective for moral formation. This research contributed to the identification of a number of practices that involve building relationships in theological education. The following are some of the implications of the importance of relationships for moral formation:

- Developing a relationship with God. Spiritual disciplines should be included in theological education. Spiritual disciplines are also relevant for developing relationships with self and with others. For example, simplicity counteracts avarice which has implications for one's lifestyle and for economic systems (Kretzschmar 2015:9)
- Developing a relationship with self. This was understood as growing in knowledge and self-awareness. This involves emotional and cognitive learning and behaviour

which will lead to the virtues identified in this study being lived out in the lives of the students.

- Developing a relationship with others. These are developed through, for example, mentoring, discussions, sharing and being exposed to situations of hardship as part of the teaching and learning programme.
- Developing a relationship with the environment. Students should learn about the environment and develop behaviour and become involved in activities that respect and care for creation.

The application of the key insights from the literature regarding moral formation and from the empirical study contributed new ideas and suggestions for moral formation in theological education. This study helped to highlight and apply the practical implications of using the modes of moral formation in theological institutions. Spiritual formation, stories and case studies, group discussions and mentoring have long been used and recognised in the pedagogical field. However, this research makes a contribution in identifying the importance of using them to nurture moral formation in students at theological colleges. The suggestions and recommendations included in this thesis regarding the facilitation of moral formation contribute to the study and practice of theological education.

7.9 Issues for future research

Issues for further research include the relationship between theological education institutions and local churches. This is a complex question that requires sensitivity and insight. However, a closer relationship between the Church and the seminary has the potential to enrich theological education and to benefit the Church. In this research, it was suggested that partnerships be formed between the theological education institutions and the churches and that theological education should be more integrated into the entire life of the Church rather than being seen as a separate activity. These relationships, it was suggested, are important as the extent to which moral formation occurs depends on the presence of a moral community capable of bearing and transmitting ethical values and visions (Connors & McCormick 1998:148).

The value of full-time residential theological training compared with part-time distance learning or part-time face to face learning is another area for further study and research. This study could not investigate these modes in any detail as its purpose was to identify ways in which moral formation takes place and how this can be improved. Inevitably, comparisons were made between the institutions, but conclusions as to which mode of education was best for moral formation were deliberately not made as there are strengths

and weaknesses in them all. For example, if students remain in a congregation and study through the medium of distance education, they face challenges such as the lack of time, family and work responsibilities, potentially poor role models in the Church and a lack of community support. On the other hand, there are questions regarding the relevance of the teaching at the seminaries and a fear that students will become alienated from the very people among whom they are being trained to minister. Besides these concerns, it is costly for students to attend full-time residential seminaries. This means that some students have little choice but to study part-time.

A further suggestion that needs more exploration was the use of blended education and block teaching which, while avoiding the cost to and possible alienation of students from their local community, could address some of the weaknesses and limitations of part-time study.

The role of parents and family was hinted at in this research. The value of discipline and socialisation was acknowledged, but more research regarding their role in moral formation is recommended.

7.10 Conclusions

The findings showed that moral formation is practiced at the institutions but not in a very conscious and systematic manner. Further, the findings indicated that modes of moral formation that involve relationship with God, self and others had the greatest influence on the moral formation of students. Hence relationships are of vital importance. Many educators and theologians concur with this. However, the recognition of the importance of relationship often remains theoretical. Teaching and practices that involve relationships such as mentoring, tutoring, group discussions, the use of stories, building self-esteem, emotional awareness, meditation and prayer are not consistently planned for and used in theological education. While all the institutions recognise the importance of relationship, in practice, they focus on imparting knowledge, cognitive development and practical skills for ministry, using teaching and practices that do not necessarily or consciously foster relationships. Often, character development is neglected as institutions are unsure how to accomplish the moral formation of students. Knowledge can be imparted; it can be taught and the retention of information can be tested. The measurement of good character is not as easy and straightforward. Ascertaining whether students have a relationship with God and self goes beyond tests and evaluations. However, this does not mean that teaching methods and practices that build relationships should not be used.

The churches tend to rely on the theological institutions to impart knowledge and skills necessary for leadership in the Church as well as spiritual and moral formation. Ultimately, moral formation is the responsibility of the students themselves but in partnership with the churches and the theological institutions. All have a role to play. The students need the will to be good and to do what is right. This can come from being in relationship with God. The Church can provide the community where there are opportunities to serve and be involved in situations of hardship. If the theological institution is not residential, the Church has an even greater role, for example, as the worshiping and serving community. The role of the theological education institution is multi-faceted. It offers unique opportunities for cognitive learning, reflective and critical analysis and the challenge of new ideas and thought patterns. Often, the theological institutions and churches do not have the time or resources to do this.

Despite the differences between the institutions, there were many similarities in the responses regarding what had the greatest influence on moral formation. The power and influence of relationship was a common theme that emerged either in the affirmation of the presence of relationships or in their absence. Knowledge (content and information that is taught) was important and necessary, but this information became most meaningful and influenced character and behaviour when it was discussed, debated, related to the students' context and presented in the form of stories and case studies. What can be done and how the recommendations can be implemented will depend on each institution. However, the fact that there were so many commonalities leads to the conclusion that despite the differences, relational teaching and practice of moral formation is most effective.

Finally, in closing, I affirm and I am awed by the work that is done in the theological education institutions. The calibre and commitment of the students and the staff was inspiring. I was delighted that my initial reservations regarding the moral formation of students in theological education were largely unsubstantiated. While there are a number of areas of concern that could be addressed through the implementation of the recommendations, there are also many aspects to be celebrated and affirmed.

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Appendix A: Staff Questionnaire

Dear staff member participant

Thank you for your support and agreeing to allow me to do research at your institution. This questionnaire that I will do with you forms part of the research for my doctorate in theological ethics. The purpose of this study is to investigate the teaching and practice of moral formation at selected tertiary theological education institutions. The research findings will help me to develop a workable model of moral formation for theological education institutions. The intent is that these findings should benefit institutions such as yours that are striving towards excellence.

In this research project moral formation refers to the process by which people become genuinely committed to being good persons and acting rightly, justly and compassionately towards others and creation. As I am researching moral formation in a specifically Christian context, relationship with God is considered to be foundational.

The data gathered from the questionnaires will be treated with the strictest confidence and your responses will remain anonymous. You will have the opportunity to add to or explain the answers you provide in the questionnaire. Moreover, you may withdraw from the research at any time.

Thank you for giving of your time to this endeavour.

Blessings

Caroline Tuckey

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Student number: 3283704

1. **GENERAL INFORMATION**

1.1 Institution.....

2. **ETHICS AND MORALITY**

2.1 Who would you describe as a moral / good person?

.....

What is it about them that makes you think they are a good/ moral person?

.....

.....

2.2 Rank the following in importance for morality: (Rank them from 1 – 3 with 1 being the most important)

2.2.1 Morality is about obeying the teaching of the church and the rules and laws in the Bible.

2.2.2 Morality is about human flourishing and the call to be Christ-like.

2.2.3 Morality is about acting to bring about the best consequences in a situation.

2.3 Living out the Christian faith means: Rank them from 1 – 5, with 1 being the most important.

2.3.1 Obeying church teaching and rules

2.3.2 Working for justice

2.3.3 Caring for people in need

2.3.4 Caring for the environment

2.3.5 Spending time alone in prayer

2.4 While praying do you feel a prompting from God to act in a certain way, e.g. to apologise to someone, help someone, or get involved in a particular ministry?

2.4.1 Often

2.4.2 Sometimes

2.4.3 Never

2.5 When making ethical decisions do you tend to: (Rank them in order of importance, with 1 being the most important and 4 the least important)

2.5.1 Think of the consequences of your actions and what would bring about a good result.

2.5.2 Follow certain principles such as "What is just?" "What is the most caring thing to do?"

2.5.3 Act according to certain virtues such as honesty.

2.5.4 Do what the Bible commands, for example "Do not steal"

2.6 The main duty of Christians is:
(Rate these from 1 to 5 in order of importance, with 1 being the most important)

2.6.1 Evangelism – to preach the gospel

2.6.2 Witness to the gospel by showing care and compassion for others

2.6.3 Attend church regularly

2.6.4 Work for justice in the world

2.6.5 Witness to the gospel by caring for creation

2.7 How would you define ethics?
.....
.....

2.8 Do you make a distinction between ethics and morality?
.....
.....

2.9 How would you define morality?
.....
.....

3. THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

3.1 How is moral formation included in the mission and purpose statements of your institution?

.....
.....

3.2 Of the courses which make up the BTh, which do you consider to be the most important for moral formation?

.....
.....

3.3 Describe three ways in which moral formation is encouraged in the ethics course or in other parts of the programme of your institution.

.....
.....
.....

3.4 How do you think their theological studies help students to understand ethics and to live an ethical or moral life?

.....
.....
.....

3.5 The most important aspects to teach in ethics are:

3.5.1

3.5.2

3.5.3

3.6 In what ways is relationship with God fostered in the theological education programme?

.....
.....

4. MORAL FORMATION

Moral formation can be described as a process by which people become genuinely committed to being good persons and acting rightly, justly and compassionately towards others and creation.

4.1 To what extent are the following aspects included in the theological study programme?

| | | Often | Occasion -ally | Seldom | Never |
|--------|--|-------|-------------------|--------|-------|
| 4.1.1 | The use of inspiring stories in lectures / study notes (for example, stories of heroes and saints) | | | | |
| 4.1.2 | Spirituality and ethics are taught together | | | | |
| 4.1.3 | Exercises / activities that promote self-knowledge | | | | |
| 4.1.4 | Facts about the environment in order to increase students' appreciation of the environment | | | | |
| 4.1.5 | Biblical teaching regarding justice and care for the poor | | | | |
| 4.1.6 | Projects and or field work with communities | | | | |
| 4.1.7 | Explanation of the ethical implications of Christian doctrines | | | | |
| 4.1.8 | Decision-making methods and thinking skills | | | | |
| 4.1.9 | Group discussions about ethical issues (for example, social ethics, the death sentence, sexuality) | | | | |
| 4.1.10 | Times of worship | | | | |
| 4.1.11 | Involvement in human struggles – that is with the poor, needy and vulnerable | | | | |
| 4.1.12 | Music and singing groups | | | | |
| 4.1.13 | Small study / prayer groups where there is mutual accountability | | | | |
| 4.1.14 | Soul friends and a network of relationships | | | | |
| 4.1.15 | The mentoring of students by staff members | | | | |
| 4.1.16 | Inner spiritual disciplines such as meditation, fasting | | | | |
| 4.1.17 | Outer spiritual disciplines such as service and care for others | | | | |
| 4.1.18 | Learning what the Bible says about moral behaviour | | | | |
| 4.1.19 | Would you like to add anything else? | | | | |

4.2 Various ethicists and theologians have identified a number of ways in which moral formation takes place. Indicate which of these modes of moral formation are used at your theological institution.

| | | Used often | Seldom used | Not used |
|-------|---|------------|-------------|----------|
| 4.2.1 | Discipline – teaching obedience to rules and good habits, which lead to the development of self-discipline | | | |
| 4.2.2 | Socializing students to accept and internalize the moral ethos (convictions, norms and expectations) of the institution | | | |
| 4.2.3 | Transmission, that is, the teaching of moral traditions that lead to the growth of knowledge of specific moral norms | | | |
| 4.2.4 | The cognitive development of moral reasoning | | | |
| 4.2.5 | Clarifying one’s values by reflecting on the values one has chosen and how one acts on them | | | |
| 4.2.6 | Developing an awareness of one’s emotional development | | | |
| 4.2.7 | Developing character through the habitual practice of virtues | | | |
| 4.2.8 | Growing spiritually and morally through the practice of spiritual disciplines | | | |

4.3 In the teaching of ethics, which three of these are most important? Tick the three you regard as the most important.

| | | |
|-------|--|--|
| 4.3.1 | Biblical ethics | |
| 4.3.2 | Ethical theories | |
| 4.3.3 | Clarifying values | |
| 4.3.4 | Decision-making methods | |
| 4.3.5 | What would Jesus do? | |
| 4.3.6 | Solving case studies/ dilemmas | |
| 4.3.7 | Knowing the characteristics of a good person | |

5. INTEGRATION OF MORAL FORMATION IN THE PROGRAMME

(Circle one of the following for each statement below as shown:

| | | | | |
|------------------------|------------|------------------------------------|---------------|---------------------------|
| 1 strongly agree | 2 agree | 3 neither agree nor disagree | 4 disagree | 5 strongly disagree |
|------------------------|------------|------------------------------------|---------------|---------------------------|

At your institution moral formation is integrated into the programme through:

1. Teaching of moral laws as found in the Bible (for example the Ten Commandments)

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

2. Biblical teaching on various moral issues such as divorce, abortion, sexuality, civil disobedience

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

3. Teaching models/ methods of moral decision making such as SEE, JUDGE & ACT

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

4. Encouraging relationships of respect among students and staff

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

5. Many assignments that involve projects with those in need in the community

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

6. Projects that involve care for the environment e.g. vegetable gardens, recycling and addressing issues of pollution form part of the study programme

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

7. Praying in lectures and prayers being included as part of the lecture notes

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

8. Requiring students to do assignments that involve work in a church community

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

9. Encouraging students to form small groups for study, prayer and support

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

10. The exploration of personal values i.e. value clarification is part of the ethics course

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

11. Staff acting as mentors / counsellors

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

12. Many opportunities for students to reflect upon and develop their relationship with God.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

13. Encouraging students to worship together

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

14. Requiring students to attend a local church

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

15. Encouraging students to apply what they learn to their particular life context

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

16. Retreats are organised by the institution, or the institution encourages students to attend retreats that are organised by other institutions.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

17. Including a critique of specific social and cultural evils in the programme

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

18. Including critique of sexism particularly within the church as relates to the leadership roles of men and women.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

19. Using case studies and stories in the ethics course

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

20. Questioning narrow and fundamentalist interpretations of the Bible.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

21. Staff acting as spiritual directors

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

22. Emphasising that men and women can hold the same leadership roles in society

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

6. COMMUNITY LIFE and RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHURCH

6.1 What role does the institution play in the socialisation of students? Can you provide an example of how a student's behaviour has been influenced / socialized?

.....

.....

.....

Does the institution / faculty expect significant involvement of staff members alongside students in worship, witness and service? If so, how do you think this contributes to the moral formation of students? Give an example.

.....

.....

.....

.....

6.2 Are there certain guidelines for behaviour that students have to follow? How do you think these contribute to the moral formation of students?

.....

.....

.....

6.3 To what extent should staff members be responsible for the moral formation of students? Or, should the responsibility for the moral formation of students be left either to the students themselves or assumed by other bodies, such as the church?

.....

.....

7. FINAL COMMENTS

7.1 In your opinion, what are some ways in which moral formation can be supported and deepened in the theological studies of students?

.....
.....
.....

7.2 Are there any other comments you would like to make?

.....
.....

7.3 I would like to receive overall feedback on this questionnaire.

| | | |
|-------|-----|--------------------------|
| 7.4.1 | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7.4.2 | No | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Thank you very much

Caroline Tuckey

Appendix B: Student Questionnaire

Dear student participant

Thank you for agreeing to fill in this questionnaire. This questionnaire forms part of the research for my doctorate in theological ethics. The purpose of this study is to investigate the teaching and practice of moral formation at selected tertiary theological education institutions. The research findings will help me to develop a workable model of moral formation for theological education institutions. The intent is that these findings will benefit students, the theological institutions and the Church.

In this research project, moral formation refers to the process by which people become genuinely committed to being good persons and acting rightly, justly and compassionately towards others and creation. As I am researching moral formation in a specifically Christian context, relationship with God is considered foundational.

The data gathered from the questionnaires and interviews will be treated with the strictest confidence, and your responses will remain anonymous. Moreover, you may withdraw from the research at any time.

Thank you for giving of your time to this endeavour.

Blessings

Caroline Tuckey

Contact details: cally@gam.co.za

0829015857

Student number: 3283704

1. **GENERAL INFORMATION**

1.1 Institution.....

1.2 Are you male.....female.....

1.3 Which age group do you fall into?

1.3.1 Under 20

1.3.2 20-29

1.3.3 30-39

1.3.4 40-49

1.3.5 Over 50

1.4 Are you

1.4.1 Single

1.4.2 Married

1.4.3 Divorced

1.4.4 Widowed

1.5 Do you have children? Circle your answer. YES / NO

1.6 Would you describe yourself as

1.6.1 Wealthy

1.6.2 Middle class

1.6.3 Poor but managing

1.6.4 Struggling financially

1.7 Do you already have a tertiary qualification?

Circle your answer YES / NO

1.8 What is your church tradition or denomination?

.....

1.9 Would you describe the family you grew up in as a Christian family?

Circle your answer: YES / NO

Why would you say they were or weren't a Christian family?

.....

2. ETHICS AND MORALITY

2.1 Who would you describe as a moral / good person?

.....

What is it about them that causes you to think they are a good / moral person?

.....

.....

2.2 Rank the following in importance for morality:

2.2.1 Morality is about obeying the teaching of the church and the rules and laws in the Bible.

2.2.2 Morality is about human flourishing and the call to be Christ-like.

2.2.3 Morality is about acting to bring about the best consequences in a situation.

2.3 Christian moral behaviour involves social action for justice YES / NO

2.4 Christian moral behaviour involves care and compassion for those in need YES / NO

2.5 Christian moral behaviour involves equal treatment for men and women YES / NO

2.6 Christian moral behaviour involves care for the environment YES / NO

Which of the above questions (2.3, 2.4, 2.5 and 2.6) would you have answered differently before your studies and why?

.....

.....

.....

2.7 While praying, do you feel a prompting from God to act in a certain way, e.g. to apologise to someone, help someone, or get involved in a particular ministry?

2.7.1 Often

2.7.2 Sometimes

2.7.3 Never

2.8 When making ethical decisions, do you tend to: (Rank them in importance with 1 being the most important and 4 the least important).

2.8.1 Think of the consequences of your actions and what would bring about a good result

2.8.2 Follow certain principles such as “What is just?” or “What is the most caring thing to do?”

2.8.3 Act according to certain virtues, such as honesty.

2.8.4 Do what the Bible commands, for example, “Do not steal”

2.9.1 List four actions or ways of behaving that you believe to be right.

.....

.....

2.9.2 List four actions or ways of behaving that you believe to be wrong.

.....

.....

2.10 Do you stand up for what you believe to be right, even in the face of opposition?

If so, describe a time when you stood up for your beliefs.

.....

.....

.....

.....

2.11 Tick which of these two statements best reflects what you see as the relationship between Christian discipleship and personal goodness.

2.11.1 As one grows in relationship with God, one will grow in personal goodness.

2.11.2 One's relationship with God is not linked to personal goodness.

2.12 The main duty of Christians is: (Rate these from 1 to 5 in order of importance with 1 being the most important).

2.12.1 Evangelism – to preach the gospel

2.12.2 Witness to the gospel by showing care and compassion for others

2.12.3 Attend church regularly

2.12.4 Work for justice in the world

2.12.5 Witness to the gospel by caring for creation

2.13.1 What image would you have used most frequently to describe God at the beginning of your studies?

.....

2.13.2 Has this changed? If so what image would you use most often now?

.....

2.14 Some say that "We understand God better as we grow in self-knowledge". Do you agree with this viewpoint? Explain your viewpoint.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

2.15 Will finding 'your true self' have an impact on the way you live your life? Why?

.....

.....

3. THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

3.1 What is your purpose for studying theology? Provide 2 reasons.

.....
.....

3.2 Describe briefly how your theological studies have or have not met your purpose for studying.

.....
.....

3.3 What are some of the most formative influences in your life that have shaped the person you are? (Formative influences are people and experiences that influence who you become and what you believe)

.....
.....

3.4 Would you include your theological studies at your theological training institution as a formative influence? YES / NO

If yes, explain why?

.....
.....
.....

If no, explain why?

.....
.....
.....

3.5 Love and faith are examples of Christian values. List 4 other Christian values.

.....
.....

3.6 Give an example of how, as a result of your theological studies, you are now practicing Christian values:

3.6.1 in your church

.....
.....
.....

3.6.2 in your family

.....
.....
.....

3.6.3 in your community.

.....
.....
.....

3.7 In the teaching of ethics at this institution the aspects that influenced my behaviour the most were:

3.7.1

.....
.....
.....

3.7.2

.....
.....
.....

4. MORAL FORMATION

Moral formation can be described as a process by which people become genuinely committed to being good persons and acting rightly, justly and compassionately towards others and creation.

4.1 To what extent did the following aspects of your theological studies contribute to your moral formation?

| | | Often | Occasion-ally | Seldom | Never |
|--------|--|-------|---------------|--------|-------|
| 4.1.1 | The use of inspiring stories in lectures / study notes (for example stories of heroes and saints) | | | | |
| 4.1.2 | Teaching spirituality and ethics together | | | | |
| 4.1.3 | Exercises / activities that helped you clarify your values and increased self-knowledge. | | | | |
| 4.1.4 | The inclusion in lectures / study notes of facts about the environment. | | | | |
| 4.1.5 | Biblical teaching regarding justice and care for the poor. | | | | |
| 4.1.6 | Projects and or field work with communities | | | | |
| 4.1.7 | Explanation of the ethical implications of Christian doctrines | | | | |
| 4.1.8 | Learning decision-making methods and thinking skills | | | | |
| 4.1.9 | Group discussions about ethical issues (for example, social ethics, the death sentence, sexuality) | | | | |
| 4.1.10 | Times of worship at the theological institution | | | | |
| 4.1.11 | The encouragement to be involved in human struggles – that is with the poor, needy and vulnerable. | | | | |
| 4.1.12 | Music and singing groups | | | | |
| 4.1.13 | Small study / prayer groups where there is mutual accountability | | | | |
| 4.1.14 | Soul friends and a network of relationships | | | | |
| 4.1.15 | The mentoring by tutors / lecturers | | | | |
| 4.1.16 | Spiritual disciplines such as meditation, fasting | | | | |
| 4.1.17 | Spiritual direction by tutors / lecturers | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|--------|--|--|--|--|--|
| 4.1.18 | The encouragement of private devotions / prayers | | | | |
| 4.1.19 | Learning what the Bible says about moral behaviour | | | | |
| 4.1.20 | Would you like to add anything else? | | | | |

4.2 Various ethicists and theologians have identified a number of ways in which moral formation takes place. Which of these modes of moral formation are used at your theological institution?

| | | Used often | Seldom used | Never used |
|-------|---|------------|-------------|------------|
| 4.2.1 | Discipline – teaching obedience to rules and good habits which lead to the development of self-discipline | | | |
| 4.2.2 | Socializing students to accept and internalize the moral ethos (convictions, norms and expectations) of the institution | | | |
| 4.2.3 | Transmission that is, the teaching of moral traditions that lead to the growth of knowledge of specific moral norms. | | | |
| 4.2.4 | The cognitive development of moral reasoning | | | |
| 4.2.5 | Clarifying one’s values by reflecting on the values one has chosen and how one acts on them | | | |
| 4.2.6 | Developing an awareness of one’s emotional developments | | | |
| 4.2.7 | Developing character through the habitual practice of virtues | | | |
| 4.2.8 | Growing spiritually and morally through the practice of spiritual disciplines. | | | |

4.3 What was the most important thing you learnt in the ethics course?

.....

.....

.....

How did this change your attitudes and impact on your behaviour?

.....

.....

.....

4.4 Having studied ethics, how would you approach these ethical dilemmas?

4.4.1 A friend runs a business that makes household cleaning products. You find out that he is cutting costs and not disposing of the waste products from his business in the correct manner and that this is causing pollution of the nearby wetland. A number of endangered birds, fish, frogs and other creatures have died. How would you respond to this situation?

.....

4.4.2 You know that the local council is corrupt and has misappropriated funds that were meant to be used to build new roads and an orphanage. When you start to raise questions regarding this you are told to stop if you know what is good for you and your family. What would you do?

.....

4.5 In the teaching of ethics, which of the aspects listed below are the most important? Tick the three you regard as the most important and have had the most impact on your own moral formation.

| | | |
|-------|--|--|
| 4.5.1 | Biblical ethics | |
| 4.5.2 | Ethical theories | |
| 4.5.3 | Clarifying values | |
| 4.5.4 | Decision-making methods | |
| 4.5.5 | What would Jesus do? | |
| 4.5.6 | Solving case studies / dilemmas | |
| 4.5.7 | Knowing the characteristics of a good person | |

4.6 Has your attitude to the environment changed as a result of your studies? If so give an example of how this has changed your behaviour / made a difference in the way you live:

4.6.1 in your family

.....
.....

4.6.2 in your church

.....
.....

4.6.3 in your community

.....
.....

4.7 Have your studies helped you be more aware of issues of social justice? Give an example of how you have acted on the basis of justice in a particular situation.

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4.8 Has your relationship with God grown as a result of your studies? If so in what ways? How has this made a difference in the way you live?

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4.9 Tell a story of how your studies contributed to your moral formation.

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5. At my theological institution moral formation is integrated into the programme through:

(Circle one of the following for each statement below as shown:

| | | | | |
|---------------------|------------|------------------------------------|---------------|------------------------|
| 1 strongly agree | 2 agree | 3 neither agree nor disagree | 4 disagree | 5 strongly disagree |
|---------------------|------------|------------------------------------|---------------|------------------------|

1. Teaching of moral laws as found in the Bible (for example the Ten Commandments).

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

2. Biblical teaching on various moral issues such as divorce, abortion, sexuality, civil disobedience.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

3. Teaching models / methods of moral decision making such as SEE, JUDGE & ACT.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

4. Encouraging relationships of respect among students and staff.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

5. Many assignments that involve projects with those in need in the community.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

6. Projects that involve care for the environment, e.g., vegetable gardens, recycling and addressing issues of pollution form part of the study programme.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

7. Praying in lectures and prayers being included as part of the lecture notes.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

8. Requiring students to do assignments that involved work in a church community.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

9. Encouraging students to form small groups for study, prayer and support.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

10. The exploration of personal values i.e. value clarification is part of the ethics course.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

11. Staff acting as mentors / counsellors.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

12. Many opportunities for students to reflect upon and develop their relationship with God.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

13. Encouraging students to worship together.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

14. Requiring students to attend a local church.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

15. Encouraging students to apply what they learn to their particular life context.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

16. Retreats organised by the institution, or the institution encourages students to attend retreats that are organised by other institutions.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

17. Including a critique of specific social and cultural evils in the programme.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

18. Including critique of sexism particularly within the church as relates to the leadership roles of men and women.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

19. Using case studies and stories in the ethics course.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

20. Questioning narrow and fundamentalist interpretations of the Bible.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

21. Staff acting as spiritual directors.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

22. Emphasising that men and women can hold the same leadership roles in society.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

6. FINAL COMMENTS

6.1 What are some ways in your opinion that moral formation can be supported and deepened in theological studies?

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6.2 Do you think that studying theology has helped you to become a better person? Please explain why you say this.

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6.3 Some would say that living a moral life is costly; a price needs to be paid. Can you give an example of how acting in an ethical way has been costly for you personally?

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6.4 Are there any other comments you would like to make?

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.....

6.5 I would like to receive overall feedback on this questionnaire.

6.5.1 Yes

6.5.2 No

Thank you
Caroline Tuckey