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“ONE IN CHRIST”: FEDSEM SPIRITUALITIES OF SOLIDARITY

ABSTRACT

This article focuses on spirituality as the basis of life at the Federal Theological Seminary of Southern Africa (Fedsem) (1963-1993) during the apartheid years, when Fedsem, groups and individuals within it were subjected to regular surveillance and scrutiny. The spiritual life of the seminary, manifested most clearly in its worship life, became its source of strength and sustained its mission and vision: to be and yet, to become “One in Christ”. This was conveyed by means of various forms of denominational and ecumenical solidarity as an expression of Christian love. Many attempts were made to try to understand and formulate policies relating to the practice of spirituality in an ecumenical context. These met with varying degrees of success.

1. INTRODUCTION

The native school that caused all the trouble (Denis & Duncan 2011) virtually ignored the motto of the Federal Theological Seminary of Southern Africa (Fedsem), which bound and kept it together, even when community members did not feel particularly generous to one another – “One in Christ” (Gal. 3:28). This verse affirms that there is nothing in the cosmos that can “separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:38-39) and that all are human beings in God’s sight; any further differentiation is irrelevant and must be engaged with, interrogated and dismissed. This motto stood in the face of all that was designed to separate what God had united. The core feature of Fedsem was spirituality despite impressions given occasionally to the contrary – internal, with God, with others and the cosmos. In this instance, no distinct lines were drawn between worship, academic study, community, and social life. Worship as *leitourgia* was the work of the people of God not bound by the categories of the secular and sacred.

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Consequent on

Jesus' teaching is that the barrier between sacred and secular, worship and daily living, crumbles away. Since worship means the service of God, and this in turn means loving one's neighbour, it follows that every kindly act performed in this spirit and intention is an act of worship (McEwen 1957:288-289).

The very existence of Fedsem as an ecumenical institution was abhorrent to the apartheid government, whose policies thrived on the results of the divide-and-rule principle. The binding influence of the growth of *leitourgia* as an expression of spiritual solidarity was a force that challenged the very existence of the ideology of apartheid.

2. SPIRITUALITY AND SOLIDARITY IN THE STRUGGLE TOWARDS UNITY

Spirituality concerns our relationship to God:

Spirituality is about what human person can become. It is also a process of infusion of divinity into the world (Longkumer 2013:319).

It is about building up the human spirit through devotion to God and in the service of others in the particular relational and physical contexts in which we live out our existence. In the context of this article,

the demands of the twentieth century have revealed the necessity of linking the interior sphere with the engagement of self and community with the struggle for justice and the restoration of relationship with nature and the larger cosmos (Dupre & Sauer 1989:540).

This has to be worked out in the context of the overarching "Christian virtue" (Ortega 1994:136), the value of love conceived as solidarity (*agape*), as confirmed by Tillich (1954:25): "Love is the drive towards the unity of the separated". It has its source within us and impels us away from our egocentricity towards others in the active quest for reconciliation and unity.

Joseph Fletcher (1966:87) defined *agape* as "justice as love distributed".¹ Brueggemann (1986:5) gave this practical expression for "justice is to sort out what belongs to whom, and to return it to them", based in a spirituality of solidarity. Ortega (1994:135) links these ideas in her understanding of solidarity as "love with justice' ... because the final expression of *agape*

1 This paraphrases Augustine's famous quotation "Charity is no substitute for justice withheld". Source unknown. [Online.] Retrieved from: www.albatrus.org/english/potpourri/quotes/augustine_of_hippo.htm (2013, 23 September).

is solidarity”. She links *koinonia* as solidarity in her understanding of the Pauline epistles, particularly a “theology of solidarity” motivated by *agape* in 2 Corinthians. Solidarity is required in the face of a threat in the form of resistance. But it has a solid biblical foundation in 2 Samuel 21. This leads to the performance of a “spiritual ritual of resistance ... [which] challenged the power of men and the strategies of the world” (Ortega 1994:137). It included the ritual liturgy of the vigil with the aim of “keeping alive the memory of the victims” (Ortega 1994:137) as human beings “amidst all the dehumanisation we face in today’s world” (Ortega 1994:137). It is also a liturgical solidarity that nurtures hope; it “instructs us to work for radical change ... the total transformation of this whole world, which God loves so much” (Ortega 1994:140). Clearly, spirituality is not a passive matter, although it may well be passive resistant (see Duncan 2013). It is a mission to the entirety of God’s creation, personal, relational and ecological. From a South African perspective, Karecki (2013:26) argues:

Solidarity recognises a deep bond between us all; a bond that goes beyond family and extends to the whole human race. This bond is in fact a commitment to the common good, i.e. the good of all and of each individual because we are all really responsible for all. Solidarity is what is meant in Ephesians 4:25 when St Paul writes that we are all “members one of another.” So the opposites of solidarity are issues like inequality, exploitation and oppression, as well greed and selfishness.

Solidarity is standing together in pursuit of a common goal, as encapsulated in the mission and vision at Fedsem whose motto was “One in Christ”.

While Fedsem had a federal spirituality, it also had other forms of spiritual expression, especially within the different denominational traditions enshrined in the colleges as well as within the African milieu that was predominantly Fedsem. Wilkinson (1992:314) notes an example of this when Rev. John Thorne (UCCSA) was detained. There was a strong reaction from the Anglicans, including protests from the Bishop of Johannesburg, Timothy Bavin, and the Archbishop of Cape Town. Fedsem’s spirituality was also fluid, not static; it changed with the generations of staff and students, but was also peculiarly resilient.

3. FEDSEM AND THE CALL FOR AN ECUMENICAL SOLIDARITY

Fedsem was birthed in the period following the election of the Nationalist Party in South Africa to power in 1948. A barrage of legislation was enacted

to promote the policy of apartheid, which seriously and negatively affected the domain of theological education. Concurrently, and more positively, there had been moves in the international and national ecumenical scene that promoted an ecumenical approach to ministerial formation. Internationally, the ecumenical impulse had been growing since the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh (1910) (Duncan 2007:71-104; Barnes 2013:93). In South Africa, there had been concurrent developments since the formation of the General Missionary Conference (and its successors) in 1904 (Thomas 2002). These negative and positive forces simultaneously collided and led to the formation of Fedsem in 1963 with four colleges – Adams United (Congregationalist), St Columba's (Presbyterian), John Wesley (Methodist), and St Peter's (Anglican). Adams United and St Columba's united in 1976 to form Albert Luthuli College (Reformed). From the beginning, there were tensions both between the different denominational traditions and with the wider community. Yet, at the base of ecumenism is "a call for solidarity and unity based on common interests, and leads to a deeper understanding of oneself and others" (Gay 2013:368). This was certainly true of the Fedsem experience.

Tensions emerged certainly and expectedly. But this was the result of early identity formation and the failure of mission churches of European origin, such as those represented at Fedsem, to integrate their particular expressions of spirituality with the broader "Protestant" spectrum.

Much negativity has been expressed regarding "tensions" within the Seminary. First, tension is a natural part of any community when people gather together, even when a shared mission and vision is evident. Even Jesus and his disciples experienced tensions in their relationships (Mark 9-10). Each person has a unique personality and way of viewing life. There is no authentic community that does not experience tension occasionally. Secondly, the staff and students at Fedsem were all reared in a tradition that was presented by the missionaries of churches of European origin as the best (and only?) way to salvation. These formed strong commitments that were integrated into their lifestyles. Thirdly, they had all been selected as candidates for ministry due to their call and commitment to their own tradition, and the staff for demonstrating their loyalty to their own tradition. Fourthly, while it is argued that there were no significant differences between the traditions, there were real differences in the means of expressing their distinctive forms of spirituality. Even within the differing traditions of spirituality, there were tensions, most commonly expressed between the "high" church and the "low" church wings of each denomination, between the liturgical and evangelical and between the orthodox and those who had been influenced by the charismatic/Pentecostal renewal. The tension extended even to the vexed subject of morality where a variety of views were extant and most of the

tensions existed between those who followed ‘European’ and ‘African’ forms of morality, both claiming biblical support, as was the case in all the tensions. These tensions stretched understanding and, while many were not resolved, genuine growth did take place for many others.

The constituent Fedsem traditions require consideration in greater depth in order to highlight the source of tensions.

3.1 Anglican – St Peter’s College

There are two main traditions within Anglicanism, the Catholic or High Church tradition and the Evangelical or Low Church tradition. South African Anglicanism tends towards the High Church tradition (Suberg 1999:9). A strong pervasive influence in the Anglican College, St Peter’s for many years, was the Community of the Resurrection (CR), whose members staffed the college for many years until the seminary settled at Imbali, Pietermaritzburg in 1978. The CR was rooted in the Oxford Movement of the Catholic Revival in nineteenth-century England.

[T]he Community of the Resurrection is called specially to public, prophetic witness to the Christian hope of the Kingdom. The common life and corporate worship of its members is properly made visible in its works, which embrace social and missionary concern. ... The dedication to the Resurrection does not indicate an obligation to particular works or particular places, but rather a commitment to make public the fruits of the community life and worship in order to proclaim the world made new in Christ ... its charism ... is to live the baptismal vocation through a commitment to community life, sustained by common worship, and issuing in works that are primarily of a public character (Community of the Resurrection 1991:Prologue).

From the beginning, daily life was based in the offices of Anglicanism. The original St Peter’s in Rosettenville, Johannesburg

was a praying and worshipping community. The day began at 6.45am with Matins, Prime and the Eucharist. At 12.30 it was time for devotions until lunch time. Then in the evening at 7.00pm, evensong (Stubbs s.a.:2),

and later Compline (Wilkinson 1992:318). The other two features of St Peter’s life were academic work and community service.

When, in November 1960, the archbishop of Cape Town raised the suggestion to participate in an ecumenical venture with the CR, some felt that

[t]o join with the Free Churches would be contrary to “the Catholic and Apostolic Rule of Faith” to which CR was bound by its constitution (Wilkinson 1992:316).

However, the CR accepted the plan in January 1961 (Stubbs 1983:3) on the mutual understanding that there would be mutual ecumenical benefits (Wilkinson 1992:316). Stubbs (s.a.:5) later commented that “[c]ontact with students of other Colleges widened the horizon of the St Peter’s College students”. It also

brought into College life new stresses and strains as well as opportunities for growth in its concept of training ordinands for the priesthood and in the understanding of other Christian traditions (Stubbs s.a.:3).

It was non-racial and, in time, intercommunion became the norm for worship (a strong Reforming principle that had been lost since the Reformation). The chapel of Christ the King was the centrepiece of Anglican spirituality: “If the Free Church staff brought higher academic standards, the Anglican contribution was liturgically and spiritually richer” (Wilkinson 1992:317). This was the epitomy of

learned standards of reverence, of decency and good order, of the intelligent marriage of heart and mind and body in a total act of corporate worship (Stubbs 1983:5).

What is interesting in this comment is that, apart from differing forms of expression, any of the other Fedsem traditions could affirm this statement. Stubbs (1983:5) alludes to the mystical emphasis of Orthodox worship, which was more suited to the Fedsem spirit than the Latin ethos “a sense of worship as a total activity, with which the African is in complete sympathy”. The Presbyterians, and others possibly, could also affirm that. Solidarity within the Anglican tradition was extended outwards as in the Maundy Thursday service, where

Liturgy creates the family of God. Equally it is a judgement upon the quality of its life. “*Ubi caritas et amor, ibi Deus est*”. And where charity and love are not, there God is. ... Kneeling to wash the feet of twelve students on Maundy Thursday evening, ... one was not only judged as to the quality of one’s own service, but also the question inevitably asked itself: would a stranger to the Gospel coming among us say “See how these Christians love one another!”? (Stubbs 1983:6).

Stubbs (s.a.:5) commented on the tension between two views of spirituality to which the college was subjected:

The pressure exerted on the Christian conscience by the call of obedience to the demands of the gospel which is then sharpened by the fact that ordinands have to examine the church’s total life with an iron comb before they decide to commit themselves to its ongoing life. The two things combined together then produce an acute awareness

of the South African situation and the Church's inadequacy to deal with it. This in turn often results in anger, frustration, and restlessness which are both necessary and understandable. There is nothing worse than a bunch of placid and complacent theological students who go to sleep while the revolution encompasses them.

Being at the centre of African resistance to apartheid, it was to be expected that this would soon touch the religious community at Fedsem. As early as 1963, sometime before the eruption of the Black Consciousness Movement at Fort Hare in 1968, the CR brothers became involved in ministry to banned students and activists and this, among other staff members' involvement, was a significant contributor to the expropriation order served on the Fedsem community in November 1974. This was an issue where political tension reached such a level that the government acted viciously towards Fedsem on the issue of unnecessary land appropriation. With regard to the deep spiritual connection with land, it is possible to understand the deep issue at stake regarding expropriation (Duncan 2003:397). "Christian struggle cannot be separated from the struggles, hopes and fears of people and nations" (De Gruchy 1986:19). Fedsem existed close to, and serviced the forced removals settlements nearby at Dimbaza. This was obviously a factor in its response to expropriation.

In Umtata, a meditation on what it means practically to be a pilgrim church led to an incident in 1975 that eventuated in Fedsem being forced to leave the Transkei where it had been offered refuge at the Anglican St Bede's College. Yet, "[t]he months at Umtata were very difficult ones both physically and emotionally" (Stubbs s.a.:5). When the new seminary opened at Imbali in 1978, the CR brothers left, having given

an example of discipline and dedication and a conviction that the church must have a particular care for the poor and dispossessed (Wilkinson 1992:318).

This extended to staff and students of the other colleges. The CR left Fedsem at the end of 1977; it had done its work well. Even after they left, their influence continued to guide the college's spiritual life.

With regard to the speed of ecumenical advance, not all Anglicans would agree with Stubbs' (1983:10) assessment, although the other Fedsem traditions would:

Although the slowness of the pace at which we were forced, by external Anglican authority, towards any measure at all of intercommunion put a strain on Free Church patience and charity, perhaps it would now be accepted that the very delay made all of us appreciate more the pain and reality of disunity – and thus brought an element of penitence and humble dependence on God into the ecumenical task.

Stubbs (1971) commented on the view of his CR Superior who:

[n]oticed the difference from his previous visit three years ago [1968]. There is much more openness, and with that the growth of a much more critical attitude. This is part of an emergence of 'black consciousness' among students generally in South Africa. ... there is now a much more healthily critical spirit among our students which co-exists with a genuine affection and care for the staff ...

Despite the restricted ecumenical worship in Alice, "the sense of a common Christian fellowship deepened" (Stubbs 1983:10).

In 1974, the community, not simply the Anglicans, began to use the

draft Mass and offices of "Liturgy 1975" (CPSA 1975), permission having been given by the bishops for this to be done in theological colleges prior to the introduction of the new services in 1975 (Harrison 1970-1978:109).

3.2 Presbyterian – St Columba's College (SCC); Albert Luthuli College (ALC)

In South Africa, Presbyterian spirituality is faithful to the tradition of the Early Church; catholic, evangelical and African "marked by fluidity, [and] tolerance though this might not be distinctively different from other spiritualities" (Duncan 2003:387, 388) resulting from the strong influence of the Ecumenical movement during the twentieth century, and particularly in the former mission fields. Therefore, catholicity (Duncan 2003:391) is an essential ingredient of Presbyterian spirituality and this it shares with the church universal. This resulted in a willingness to engage in ecumenical spirituality at Fedsem. In the earliest period at Fedsem, the Presbyterians used a daily office as a standard of worship as this was normal in their tradition of common order. A Presbyterian spirituality accepts only Christ, the Word of God, as the source of unity, as expressed in the *Scots Confession* (1560 §18, cited in Cochrane 1966:177):

The interpretation of scripture ... pertains to the Spirit of God by whom the Scriptures were written. ... When controversy arises ... we ought ... to ask ... what the Holy Ghost uniformly speaks within the body of the Scriptures and what Christ himself did and commanded.

This is expressed in, and nourished by regular celebration of the sacraments. In the African context, spirituality for Presbyterians and for other Black sections in churches of European origin (such as those represented at Fedsem) speak of spontaneity, freedom, and discipline within the community, for it

relates to the unique notion of communality and collective solidarity that the African society exhibits in all spheres of life. There is a profound sense of interdependence, from the extended family to the entire community. In a very real sense, everybody is interrelated ... (Mtetwa 1996:24).

3.3 Congregationalist – Adams United College (AUC); Albert Luthuli College (ALC)

What began as an ecumenical and missionary venture of the London Missionary Society became, in time, another denomination in South Africa. From the beginning, there was a clear belief that “the ecumenical vision which inspired its founders remains mandatory to this day” (De Gruchy 1999:3). This always emphasised its Christian humanism that “affirms the dignity of all people” (De Gruchy 1999:326), the role of local and prophetic leadership, diversity and racial unity. The marks of Congregationalism are incarnational, relational (internally marked by the covenant), hospitality, personal initiative and responsibility, clear vision, prophetic, perseverance, courage, joy, flexibility, and being part of something larger, tending towards the kingdom of God (De Gruchy 1999:327-329). Congregationalism eschews formal adherence to creeds only requiring the confession “Jesus Christ is Lord”. It also values its historic right to dissent (UCCSA s.a.:8) through its nonconformist conscience: “what is morally wrong can never be politically right” (Wing s.a.:41).

3.4 Methodist – John Wesley College (JWC)

Spirituality was marked by proclamation of Christ, the fullness of saving grace, discernment, holiness, simple lifestyle, ministry among the poor, and Christian community (Olivier 2006:5-8). It is both personal and social and involves mutual accountability (Hudson 2006:90-91). Methodist worship needs to “strike a balance between a sense of order and tradition, and a certain degree of freedom and spontaneity” (Mbete 2006:117) (see Presbyterian). Gqubule (1977:195) summarises the situation well:

There are those who believe that devotional exercises should be compulsory. Most Roman Catholics and Anglicans fall within this school. Certainly at St Peter’s all students were expected to share fully in the devotional life of the college. On the other hand ‘Protestant’ training had tended to stress the primacy of the academic and left decision on devotional life to the individual. The monastic traditions, as represented in this case by the Community of the Resurrection which ran the college, laid stress on compulsory corporate worship which had no real parallel in the Protestant tradition, questioned any exercise which was not freely entered into and always found itself

embarrassed when it insisted on compulsory exercises. However, experience has taught that certain things in education cannot be left to individual inclination.

Consequently, the other colleges realised the value of formal worship and shared in certain common features.

3.5 Common features in Fedsem traditions

All the Fedsem traditions were characterised by a number of features, although they differed in emphasis: adherence to the Word of God, Christocentricity, ecumenicity and catholicity, evangelical, personal and social (relational, prophetic witness, concern for the dignity of all people), spontaneity and freedom, order and discipline.

It is difficult to refer to particular aspects of college traditions, because some were common to all colleges, although done separately, for example, prayer at the beginning and end of meetings and at meals and some lectures, worship in pastoral groups, family meetings (started at St Peter's in 1969), prayers for, and with the sick, prayers for safe travel, denominational traditional courses in spirituality, the opening services at the beginning of the year, and the end-of-year valedictory services. All of these in one way or another demonstrated college, group and individual examples of solidarity.

3.6 The weekly cycle

At the earliest stages of Fedsem's life, each college worshipped separately, coming together for a joint service on Sunday afternoons. Mainly the students conducted the services, but staff also participated as part of the process of ministerial formation. Joint Eucharists were celebrated quarterly until 1974 when the CUC covenant was signed and these services began to be held weekly (Russell 1981:1.4, 4).

Graeme Brown, Principal of St Columba's College and Seminary President,² expressed views about early developments and problems encountered:

We did not share morning worship together but retained our own traditional forms ... but a form of late afternoon worship had been devised which had a strong liturgical structure, to which all were prepared to adhere. It was rather a 'lowest common denominator' anaemic form of worship, which was not very attractive and became somewhat routine, and our experience of this rather suggested that it would have been wiser, eventually, to have allowed the members of the community to experience the best that each had to offer and learn from this. We did not, in fact, experience much of each other's traditional forms of worship.

2 See Brown to Duncan, 12 January 2004, Duncan correspondence.

Yet, plans for a united evensong were drawn as early as 1970, along with instructions for worship leaders and explanation of the service to be included in the worship folder (FTS, Worship Committee, S2451/17/10/70).

But as time passed and the seminary experienced the trauma of expropriation in 1975 and a period “in the wilderness” at Umtata and Edendale, change became necessary. But the essential question remained the same: Should we have deeper spiritual formation, more doing, and study interwoven in preparation for the ministry (Ian Thomson, letter on the future preparation of men and women for the ministry, Whitsunday 1975, S4109/21/2/75)?. By the time Fedsem settled at Imbali, a new worship system had emerged.

Anglicans worshipped on campus on Sundays, while the students of other colleges were sent into their denominations’ congregations for practice-based worship. On Sunday afternoon, the Anglicans had their own evensong. In the evening, the Young Mens’ Guild would hold their own service (see below). On Monday to Friday each week, there was morning prayer and evening prayer. Prior to this, the Anglicans had meditation and Eucharist every morning, except Mondays and Wednesdays when the entire community worshipped together. On Wednesday morning, there was a seminary Eucharist and this was held monthly in the evening so that families could attend. This was begun at Umtata (Russell 1981:1.4.4).

The Methodists, Presbyterians and Congregationalists worshipped together from the union of the Presbyterian and Congregationalist colleges in 1977. This was not problematic, since all these traditions were derived from, and influenced by the dissenting tradition; their spirituality was based on strong adherence to the Word of God.

The most distinctive feature of student spiritual life was their strong commitment to the Young Mens’ Guild (AmaDodana) in their respective denominations, although they always worshipped together. The Anglicans did not participate regularly, although a few students were members of their own Bernard Mizeki Guild. The Guild’s common aim is summed up in the objectives of one of the participating Presbyterian churches (BPCSA 1957:2):

- a. limited to Sunday evening meetings to bring to fulfilment the kingdom of God in our Church and other related churches throughout the world;
- b. to cause spiritual growth in our young men and to encourage them to read and search scripture so that they may lead upright lives mentally, socially and spiritually;
- c. to encourage integrity in the worship of the church and within the universal Church of Christ.

Meetings were “marked by a high degree of sociability and mutual support ... display a combination of social activism and evangelistic commitment” (Duncan 2003:398). It is important to note that many young men had found their call to ministry through the AmaDodana. Their activities were not restricted to worship. Toyi-toying, they led the community from worship to the dining hall daily; significantly, they left dinner on a Wednesday, changed into their uniforms and moved into the community in the college combis to hold prayer meetings, mostly at the request of the community, especially in time of stress and bereavement, but also to celebrate with them. Students were also called upon to officiate at funerals when ministers were not available or willing to do so such as, for example, during the late 1980s and early 1990s as the result of violence in the community. In this they were excellent ambassadors of solidarity beyond the confines of the campus. They were deeply respected and were a catalyst to negative views held by some in the Imbali community. This was predominantly a student initiative, yet during the 1980s Rev. Dr Ian Darby (Anglican) and Revs Graham Duncan and Vusumuzi Mdlalose (Presbyterian) participated. In time, a common source of worship emerged to meet common liturgical needs.

3.7 The Seminary Worship Folder

As noted earlier, Fedsem used liturgical resources from the onset. As time passed, these were developed into what became known as the Worship Folder. This contained suggested orders for morning and evening prayer, notes on worship services, including holy communion, suggested orders of service and prayers, the Church Community Commission (CUC) and Lima Liturgy orders for communion, as well as a section of nearly two hundred hymns in the majority of the South African languages. A lectionary for daily readings and a list of former members of the community were also appended for use in daily prayer. After the closure of Fedsem, the worship life of the community was maintained by those who returned to the University of Fort Hare, and later at the University of Pretoria, using the last edition of the Folder. Rev. Dr Gideon Khabela, student and lecturer at Fedsem, commented that this was

the foundation for its spirituality. ... Worship had been an integral part of the Federal Theological seminary's life since its inception in 1963. Over the years there had been a growing respect for and appreciation of the ecumenical traditions of worship and liturgical practices (Khabela 1995: Introduction).

The Folder was used in many informal acts of worship as part of the spiritual compass of the seminary.

4. FEDSEM SPIRITUALITY

An early cause for concern was how much, or how little could be done together; in this instance, everyone trod warily. Rev. Al Myrick (cited in Stubbs 1973:11), a Congregationalist, commented at an early stage in 1964:

The Anglicans seemed so different from us. ... And when the Anglicans said we should all worship together ... it was clear to me that the integrity of FTS was vital to them.

However, all was not to be plain sailing, particularly in terms of inter-communion:

Yet there was a danger in the creation of such a unity; the Seminary a lusty yearling, might canter on ahead of the old brood mare churches. Hence the tensions often felt in College and Seminary Councils, nowhere more painfully than at St Peter's over the delicate issue of inter-communion. The Anglicans were different from the others in their ecclesiastical traditions, and it would have been unwise, as well as dishonest, to pretend otherwise. How could this impasse be overcome? (Stubbs 1973:11).

This impasse can be overcome, first, by the other traditions holding back and not pursuing the issue, however strongly they feel about it; secondly, by focussing on the building of a seminary chapel; thirdly, the broad vision of Bishop Gordon Tindall. Eucharistic solidarity was accomplished in 1968 (Stubbs 1973:12).

In 1971, solidarity within the Seminary was demonstrated when the Rector of Fort Hare University requested the Seminary to sell its campus to the university. As the result of Black solidarity, the offer was rejected. It was fortunate that, by this time, Black Consciousness was beginning to make an impact on student life. Stubbs (1973:13, 17) viewed this as a source, but not as THE source of unity:

The solidarity which so violent a threat serves to foster is not the same as unity – as the painful experiences of the last three months testify. However important black consciousness, Black solidarity may be in the political sphere – and they are vital – for the life of a Christian family they can never be enough to create or preserve unity – and that not only because of the supra-racial nature of such a family. ‘Make every effort, therefore’ – and this is the lesson of the growing pains and joys of the last ten years ‘make every effort to keep that unity which the Spirit gives ...’ (emphasis in original).

The formal acts of worship within Fedsem, as part of the formal diet of spiritual development, were supplemented by academic studies. There was an academic course on worship (course 239 *Blue Book* 1987:66).

As the need became apparent, a course on spirituality (course 291 *Blue Book* 1987:75) was introduced to provide a more ecumenical approach to the subject. This also complemented the course on African Studies (Course 294 *Blue Book* 1987:76), which afforded staff, visitors and students the opportunity to offer prepared papers on aspects of interest in the African context; these were often related to spiritual issues.

A significant event in the Fedsem calendar was the annual Passion Play, which, for several evenings during Holy Week, attracted thousands of people from the community. This was not an easy event to prepare, as there was no fixed script and from year to year different and often controversial interpretations were given to the passion. In 1984, the context adopted was the apartheid situation in South Africa.

In addition, there were special memorial days (for example, 16 June) when those who suffered and lost their lives in the struggle for freedom were remembered. Involvement in social justice and community issues centred on prayer opportunities. Hence, issues relating to spirituality were never far from the surface of Fedsem life.

4.1 Commissions of enquiry

From the time of Fedsem's opening, spirituality matters had to be dealt with and periodically in the broader context of ministerial formation, leading to a number of commissions being established, all of which raised issues of spirituality. These commissions are useful sources, because they reveal not only the state of affairs within the seminary, but also the views of the churches whose representatives served on them.

4.2 Ministerial Training (Zulu) Commission 1972

"There is widespread dissatisfaction with the present training of the clergy" (MTCFTS 1972).

This was a common complaint that required attention. With particular reference to a residential seminary, it was clearly stated:

Seminaries tend to assume that the spiritual life of the students will be maintained and will develop with little direct assistance. This is not the case; it must be made clear to the student that spiritual growth is of first importance and is regarded by the seminary as an essential part of his preparation for the ministry (MTCFTS, WCL AB2414, B8, 3.v).

The Russell Commission (Russell 1981:2.3, 7) reaffirmed this point. Graeme Brown (Contribution to the Discussion on the Future of Theological

Education, MTCFTS, WCL AB2414, B8), Principal of St Columba’s, claimed that two serious issues needed to be addressed:

‘lack of contact between all races’ and ‘lack of contact with the world’. These are related to the dehumanisation of black people in general and candidates for ministry in particular and their need to ‘find their own humanity dignity’ (MTCFTS, WCL AB2414, B8, M6).

This is the prime human spiritual search, which, it was believed, could be achieved at least, in part, by including “periods of practical pastoral work and field studies” (MTCFTS, WCL AB2414, B8, M6). This was conceived as formation for the future rather than the current needs of ministry:

This involves the development of the person himself, his integrity and his sincere search for truth. The student in a seminary will at first tend to be confused, but he should find a faith which is not borrowed but is genuinely his own at the deepest level. Theology is not a subject to be memorised but is a challenge to a man at the depth of his self-understanding and his understanding of the world, a challenge to know what he is and to be himself (MTCFTS, WCL AB2414, B8, M6).

This presupposes that no formation has occurred prior to formal training. Theodore Simpson, Principal of St Peter’s, submitted a Memorandum to the Ministerial Training Commission of the Federal Theological Seminary (June 1972, WCL AB2414, B8), in which he saw the role of a seminary as a place for skills development and creative thinking as well as spiritual development:

... it should be a workshop for prayer and worship, and should provide an opportunity for students to get to know their God and their neighbour more intimately. The growth in personal qualities of responsibility and mutual respect and tolerance, as well as in faith ... (Simpson, Memorandum, June 1972, WCL AB2414, B8).

The final report (MTCFTS, 6 December 1972, WCL AB2414, B8, 1) stated explicitly:

it must be made clear to the student that spiritual growth is of first importance and is regarded by the seminary as an essential part of his preparation for the ministry.

That this was integral to the entire curriculum is clear from the restructuring that took place following the commission (MTCFTS, 6 December 1972, WCL, AB2414, B8, 1). It also recommended, *inter alia*, that one of the qualifications for staff members was “spiritual maturity” (MTCFTS, 6 December 1972, WCL, AB2414, B8, 5). This clamant need was not fully dealt with until the mid-1980s, although it was constantly under

review. The churches and community still complained about the lack of spirituality:

The seminary should give direct assistance in the spiritual life, through teaching on the use of the Bible, prayer, worship and the Eucharist. Students should have regular time for private prayer and might benefit from 'monthly seminars' on the spiritual life. They should meet in groups in which the members could get to know one another more deeply, trust one another more fully, and talk to one another more freely. Where students are so suspicious of one another and of staff that they are unwilling to form such groups, we have a terrible commentary on the appalling state of their spiritual life (MTCFTS, 6 December 1972, WCL, AB2414, B8, Appendix D, 4).

However, it is difficult to conceptualise what was going on if all this was not taking place already, because all of them are integral to spiritual formation and, after all, the staff and students were only human. Even at this early stage, there appears to have been dissonance between the process and the product: "We cannot train men to 'rock the boat', but we must not stifle their ability to do this" (MTCFTS, 18-19 July 1972, S3050/21/7/72, WCL AB2414, B8, M6). This issue made the task of spiritual formation virtually impossible for staff and students. But it provided some churches and individuals with an anti-ecumenical outlook with a rod to beat the recalcitrant staff, students and colleges. An example is provided by Maluleke (student from 1982 to 1984) (2002:2) provides an example:

Not only did I find at FEDSEM space and permission to think – but I was first introduced to Black Theology and Latin American Liberation Theology at FEDSEM. It was with great fascination that I read the likes of Bonhoeffer, James Cone and Gutierrez. Suddenly, theology came alive for me and I slowly started to question the theologies of my own upbringing – (so much so that soon after starting my ministry, I was at loggerheads with the church leadership).

That this was significant is noted in a second remark made a few years later in the context of a discussion of Fedsem's inherent and enduring problems:

... Fedsem was not paradise. By its very nature and its very mission to provide an alternative and liberating educational experience. Fedsem itself became a contested social space, an intellectual as well as a denominational battleground which in the bitter end could not be owned by anyone. Not only did the government and its notorious police force keep a watchful eye on Fedsem, harassing and haranguing it across the country, but the isolationist and "artificially" constructed Fedsem community often came apart in bitter internal wars of ideology, race, ethnicity and denomination. At such times, the enemy within proved to be as formidable as the enemy outside.

Yet, an aspect of Fedsem’s problems emanated from its amazing and consistent success rate in producing a crop of young radical priests who went out to shake things up in both church and society. In time, even the churches began to “fear” Fedsem (Maluleke 2006:305-306).

The churches had created the monster they came to resent and fear, but they had invested too much in promoting Fedsem and a successful ecumenical and non-racial experiment to give it up.

4.3 Kempton Park Commission 1975

The context of this Commission was the expropriation of Fedsem from Alice and the need to re-evaluate the purpose and prospect of ecumenical theological education in South Africa. Two particular foci were the issue of non-racial training and the residential nature of theological education, but these were not separate entities. The following was noted among the advantages of residential formation:

- a. A residential seminary is a place where students and staff are continually meeting each other at a point where creative thinking is stimulated and spiritual formation takes place.
- b. A residential seminary provides a valuable experience of community living in an environment where it is possible to reflect upon it and, hopefully, to seek a Christian approach to the problems that arise (Russell Commission [RC], Duncan papers, ANNEXURE 2.3, Kempton Park Consultation [KPC] B. ii:2).

This is important, because there was a sense of trying to create as normal a community as possible. This was significant, because community life can be intense and problems can be exaggerated in a context where people of different values and interests are exposed to one another over prolonged periods. This is natural and to be expected. The issue at stake is how were these issues to be dealt with? The students’ response, *inter alia*, noted the

[u]rgent need for Blacks to examine together the significance of Black consciousness and Black Theology. For this, time, equipment, environment and reciprocal wrestling amongst Black people themselves is needed (RC, APPENDIX II, KPC, 2). Hence, plant was a spiritual issue. In this instance, this is an early example of Maluleke’s need for contested space.

4.4 The Bill Report (1980)

This was prepared in the wake of the opening of the new campus and dealt primarily with administrative arrangements. It noted that,

[e]ven before the expropriation, signs of a growing oneness became evident in more common worship, exchange of students between colleges, and a strongly motivated student body which undertook many projects in the surrounding community as a united group (Bill 1980:2.1).

Yet, it was recognised that “unity cannot be imposed, it must grow. The conditions for growth are trust and the acceptance of one another” (Bill 1980:5). For this to happen, there needs to be a certain level of spiritual maturity.

4.5 The Russell Commission

This section is briefer than the sections that preceded it, due, in part, to the fact that each report subsumed and was built on its predecessors. This report was convened substantially to deal with the administrative arrangements (Russell 1981; Terms of Reference b). However, it did contain a specific section on worship (referred to earlier) and the spiritual life context was described as:

... the feeling of trust and fellowship which had grown made it possible to make arrangements for more common worship despite the many tensions which this inevitably caused (Russell 1981:1.4, 4-5).

The new campus was architecturally designed to emphasise unity; there was only one chapel (Russell 1981:2.9, 11; 2.3.1, 12). The control of the chapel led to it becoming a seriously contested space. However, it was used by all worshipping groups, while the tensions and stresses were being worked out.

4.6 Spiritual Life Task Force

This was entrusted to a Seminary Council Spiritual Life Task Force, which held a number of meetings with the college communities. The only new outcome was the development of the three-year course in Spirituality. Apart from this, it achieved no more than earlier commissions except to highlight and intensify areas of tension.

4.7 The aftermath

Notwithstanding all the efforts to ameliorate the situation, tensions remained. In 1986, as a result of a resolution by the CPSA Synod of Bishops, it was decided to move from discussion to action after a review of earlier commission reports. It became clear that there were unresolved issues. Commitment to ecumenism was an issue in both the staff and student bodies. While some were committed to close cooperation, others had as strong a commitment to maintaining their own traditions intact. Hence, regular common acts of worship in the life of the seminary “have often fractured, rather than fostered, fellowship” (Church Leaders’ Memorandum, WCL, AB2414, B3.3, 4 December 1986, 3). In this instance, the churches failed in that they expected the seminary to go in a direction they themselves failed to commit to go in word and deed. There was an issue regarding the nature and purpose of theological education on which there were also a variety of views. On this matter, the church leaders were adamant:

IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT THERE SHOULD BE UNITY IN THE PRAYER AND WORSHIP LIFE OF THE SEMINARY OTHERWISE THE ESSENTIAL NATURE AND CENTRE OF UNITY IN CHRIST IS UNDERMINED. THE SPIRITUAL FORMATION OF CANDIDATES FOR THE MINISTRY SHOULD BE SEEN AS A PRIORITY BY ALL THE PARTICIPATING CHURCHES AND SHARING IN EACH OTHER’S WORSHIP AND PRAYER LIFE WILL HAVE THE EFFECT OF ENRICHING AND DEEPENING THE SPIRITUAL FORMATION OF THE STUDENTS (Church Leaders’ Memorandum, WCL, AB2414, B3.3, 4 December 1986, 3) (emphasis in original).

But the tension between ecumenical and denominational approaches to spirituality manifested in the worship life of the seminary persisted, aided and abetted by the churches. One point raised in connection with the appointment of a full-time President of Fedsem was the unenviable task

to develop a devotional and worship life within the Seminary which would express the ecumenical nature of the institution, without detracting from the religious practices and obligations which are an integral part of the devotional life of the clergy in participating churches.

This reinforced an earlier unresolved dichotomy, which the Russell Commission had clearly defined:

A distinction needs to be made between College autonomy at a constitutional and structural level and College identity at a spiritual and community level. The latter can exist without the former (Church Leaders’ Memorandum, WCL, AB2414, B3.3, 4 December 1986, 6).

It was not clearly defined which level of community was being referred to – college or seminary. It could be inferred from this that the failure of the churches was superimposed on the seminary.

5. LACK OF SPIRITUALITY

Throughout its life, Fedsem was subject to challenges, confrontations, investigations, and comments regarding its spirituality. While there were accusations of Fedsem having poor relations with the Imbali and wider community, this cannot be taken as normative for its entire history. During the 1980s, students were active in the community through practical work placements, congregational work and pastoral and devotional amaDodana activities.

The issue of claims of a lack of spirituality is confusing. This community's very life was suffused with prayer – personal prayer, small group devotions, weekday morning and evening prayer, daily meditation and Eucharist, weekly Eucharist, prayer at the beginning and end of meetings and at meals and some lectures, worship in pastoral groups, family meetings, monthly compline, the weekly meetings of the AmaDodana and their weekly visits to the community to lead services, prayer meetings, funeral vigils and celebrations, Sunday worship in local congregations, the opening services at the beginning of the year, the end-of-year valedictory services, courses in spirituality and denominational traditional courses in spirituality as well as the annual Passion Play which for several evenings during Holy Week attracted thousands of people from the community. Then there were the special memorial days when those who suffered and lost their lives in the struggle for freedom were remembered. Involvement in social justice and community issues centred on prayer opportunities. Nothing happened without prayer. Yet, the Anglicans, mainly, complained constantly about the lack of spirituality. Perhaps the problem was that the types of spirituality fostered at Fedsem did not accord with the monastic spirituality of the Anglican tradition. Yet, even the CR brothers had been involved in community development issues as part of their spiritual commitment.

It is not surprising that tensions arose within Fedsem. These reflected the same tensions that existed between the CUC churches. It was the close proximity of living together that made these issues critical. Had these been dealt with more creatively, substantial ecumenical advances could have been experimented with and could have the potential for denominations to make similar advances.

6. CONCLUSION

Fedsem was immersed in ecumenism through solidarity: a partnership of forgiving, sharing, caring for and loving one another and building a fairer world. This can be no better described than by the last lecturer to leave Fedsem on its closure, the late Rev. Dr Gideon Khabela (1998: iii):

... theological reflection was hammered out of action in the worship life of the community and in its struggle for liberation. Fedsem provided a spirituality for the liberation struggle. Its worship life went beyond the personal to encompass the community and beyond race to embrace humanity in its entirety. It was in the worship life of Fedsem and in the spontaneous eruption of *Amadodana* singing after chapel that a new ethos for the church was created and continued to be reshaped over many decades of theological training at Fedsem.

The Fedsem badge proclaims ‘One in Christ’. May all those who train here find that unity and learn to live it that the Church in South Africa may witness more effectively to the Kingdom of God. To God the glory, great things he has done! (slide show script, “Fedsem Saga: 1963-1980”. UKZN, Alan Paton Centre Francois Bill papers: 8).

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