INTRODUCTION

Problems in Australian Education

I began to think seriously about how we teach at school while serving as Commerce Master at Fort Street Boy’s High School in 1969 and 1970. However, it did not occur to me that there was anything wrong with the paradigm we were using; rather, I thought we needed to improve the techniques we used. When I left teaching in 1971 to study for the Baptist ministry at Morling College I stopped seriously thinking about schooling. It was only in 1974 after I was challenged to help commence a Christian school that I started to realise that the problems confronting Australian society required a different approach to education. The impact of the hippie culture, the Vietnam protests, and the post war immigration had shaken the foundations of Australian society. Parents, in particular, were alarmed at what was happening to their children in school classrooms as Christian values were discarded and children were being taught to make up their own minds about what was right or wrong. In the schools and universities young people were being exposed to secular humanist values based on a worldview that had no place for God and saw human existence as a result of the evolutionary process. While completing my last couple of years at Morling College I had undertaken a Masters degree at Macquarie University leading to a Master in Community Studies. I undertook this to give me a better understanding of community which my study of the Bible had convinced me was the key to being an effective Church. My studies led me to read some of the “deschooling” writers and I began to see that there might be other paradigms of education. So when I was challenged to start a Christian school I quickly realised we needed to form a school based on a different paradigm that was grounded in a biblical understanding of how people are meant to grow to maturity. This eventually led to calling our new school a Christian Community High School and it also led me on a journey that would occupy the next 30 years as I tried to understand what this paradigm should look like.
Australian society continues to suffer from many serious problems many of which have grown out of a sense of disconnection that the emphasis on the individual has brought. Palmer (1993) calls this the “pain of disconnection”. Like an undiagnosed illness, the loss of community affects all of our society and all of us suffer to some extent because of it. We are a wealthy society but the cost of prosperity has been high evidenced in the ever-growing problem of crime, drugs, despair, depression and youth suicide most of which come from this disconnectedness.

A recent study in USA (Institute for American Values 2003 p5) reports on a crisis in the mental and behavioural health of US children with alarming increases “in depression, anxiety, attention deficit, conduct disorders, thoughts of suicide, and other serious mental, emotional and behavioural problems among U.S. children and adolescents” The study found that, “In large measure, what’s causing this crisis of American childhood is a lack of connectedness -close connections to other people, and deep connections to moral and spiritual meaning”. The study (2003 p.6) also concluded that the answer to the lack of connectedness could be found in what it called “Authoritative Communities” or “groups that live out the types of connectedness that our children increasingly lack. They are groups of people who are committed to one another over time and who model and pass on at least part of what it means to be a good person and live a good life”. Christian community schools were formed to be communities like this.

In search of a Biblical philosophy of Education

As Principal of the first Christian Community school I was given the task of finding a philosophical basis of the school from the Bible. My understanding of the importance of community as a basis for Church life and growth led me to study this concept as a basis for the school we were starting. From a study of Ephesians in particular we became convinced that a Christian school needed to be a **learning community** where the truth was taught and learnt in love (Ephesians 4:15). The answer to the sense of disconnection experienced by so many people could only be found in a Christ centred community where members are bound together in love and unity (John 13:35 and Ephesians 4:3-6) that Palmer(1993) calls “a hidden wholeness” hidden because like the disconnectedness we experience is not always obvious on the surface.

The school sought this “wholeness” or community because we believed that God has designed people to live in community as He exists in Trinitarian unity. (Genesis 1:26-27 and John 17:20-23) and thus by His Spirit there is always the possibility of the rediscovery of this “wholeness”, which we experience in being and living as the “the Body of Christ”. The Western church has largely lost sight of this “wholeness” by making the church into an organisation or an institution and by making Christianity more concerned with individual piety than communal life. However, there is an organic reality, the body of Christ which is there whether we realise it or not (Bonhoeffer (1988 p. 18) and it can be experienced wherever “two or three come together in my name” (Matthew 18:20 NIV). This wholeness is possible for any of God’s people who seek “a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus” (Romans 15:5). Though we often live in disregard of the essential unity we have in Christ by God’s Spirit, there is always the possibility of the formation of godly community. Christian Community schools believe that God calls them to the task of forming Christian learning communities. Of course these schools have not always been fully aware of this calling, or faithful to it.
A New Educational Paradigm

Can community be formed in a Christian school in the context of Australian (or other Western) society? To form community requires more than just some good teachers with some good relationships towards their students, it requires more than congeniality, cooperation and warm feelings. It will require nothing less than a change in the educational paradigm of the school. Such a change would be clearly very difficult and some would say it is impossible, especially in a high school setting. While there is no simple recipe for this paradigm shift to an approach based on a Christian learning community such a change offers hope in an otherwise fairly hopeless situation. The starting place for this change must go to the very foundations of how we relate to God and to each other and how we think about education.

The essential issue here is whether we are concerned to find authentic spirituality through setting specific goals or objectives based on our understanding of what they Bible requires or whether we seek spirituality in the character and the relationships of the people who form a learning community. Westerhoff (1976 p. 22-23) believed that the educational program of the Church has been ineffective over the last two hundred years because it has been based on a “schooling-instructional paradigm” which he believes is bankrupt because faith cannot be taught by any method of instruction: we can only teach religion through instruction. Yet Christian schools have almost without question adopted the schooling-instructional paradigm and have attempted to ensure that biblically based outcomes are incorporated in the curriculum and that godly values are taught through both the example of the Christian teacher and the lessons that he or she taught.

Palmer (1993 page xi) challenges such an approach when he claims that schools should be concerned with “a spirituality of ‘sources’ in education rather than one of ‘ends’”. He says, “A spirituality of ends wants to dictate the desirable outcomes of education in the life of the students. It uses the spiritual tradition as a template against which the ideas, beliefs, and behaviours of the student are to be measured. The goal is to shape the students to the template by the time their formal education concludes. But that sort of education never gets started; it is no education at all”. The outcomes approach to education that dominates current educational thought predisposes us towards an education of “ends” and as such limits its effectiveness.

How can a school be concerned with a “spirituality of sources”? It must start in the lives of the teachers themselves who must see the necessity of forming true community or what Crabb (1999 page 10,11) calls a spiritual community “where good friends and wise people turn their chairs towards each other and talk well” in a relationship that is “safe enough for the walls to be torn down, safe enough for each of us to own and reveal our own brokenness. Only then can the power of connecting do its job. Only then can community be used of God to restore our souls”. While we cannot deal with in any depth what is needed to form this community Crabb is indicating that there must be love, acceptance, unity a deep trust in such a community. In a community like this we can experience what Palmer (1993 p. xi) calls “authentic spirituality” which he says, “wants to open us to the truth – whatever truth may be, wherever truth may take us. Such spirituality does not dictate where we must go, but trusts that any path walked with integrity will take us to a place of knowledge. Such spirituality encourages us to welcome diversity and conflict, to tolerate ambiguity, and to embrace paradox” (Palmer, 1993, page xi). This spirituality is very different from the orthodox evangelical spirituality which seeks to find personal and individual
holiness through “sound doctrine”, (that is the accepted dogma of the particular evangelical church where the Christian worships at least on Sundays) and through personally imposed spiritual disciplines. A spiritual community should be Christ-centred rather than Bible-centred and be willing to be led into all truth by God’s Spirit who illumines the Holy Scriptures to the gathered community and not just to the individual believer

While there is profound truth in what Palmer is saying about the truth we need to understand clearly that in talking about “truth” he is not referring our “modern” (and indeed our “postmodern”) understanding of truth, as objective reality that can be logically demonstrated nor is he denying that there is revealed truth. Rather he reminds us that “we know in part” (1 Corinthians 13:9 NIV), and that we need to be humble learners of Jesus so that we may discover the truth of which the Bible speaks (John 8:32, 14:6). “. We cannot even, by our best doctrinal or theological thinking, reduce the complexity of God into the propositional statements that contain all His meaning.

We are to be people who seek, live and teach “the truth in love” so that “we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ”. (Ephesians 4:15 NIV) Biblical truth is personal and relational it is “the truth that is in Jesus” (Ephesians 4:21 NIV). Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me (John 14:6 NIV). He also said, about the truth, “Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:32 NIV). But what do we need to be set free from. When Jesus first made this statement he was roundly abused because the Jews claimed they were freemen. Jesus pointed out to them however that everyone who sins is a slave to sin. (John 8:34). Our pride, self sufficiency, self centredness and our fear can leave us in bondage. Neither empirical facts nor doctrinal knowledge will set us free from our fears, loneliness, oppressions and hurts. It is only the presence of Jesus indwelling his people and showing his love through them that will set us free.

Palmer (1993, page xi) believes that “an authentic spirituality of education will address the fear that so often permeates and destroys teaching and learning. It will understand that fear, not ignorance, is the enemy of learning, and that fear is what gives ignorance its power. It will try to root out our fear of having our ignorance exposed and our orthodoxies challenged – whether those orthodoxies are religious or secular. A spirituality of education will ground us in the confidence that our search for truth, and truth’s search for us, can lead to new life beyond the death of our half-truth and narrow concepts.” How different is this from the somewhat “fearful” attitudes we have towards letting our defences down because we are afraid of what people would think if they could only see us as we really are. The fear that leads us to replace true community with what Crabb (1997 p. 27) calls “surface community” which is no real community at all because there is no real connectedness. Surface community is based on congeniality not on love and it has no real openness to the other person and thus no real community

The Apostle John reminds us of the power of love to release us from fear, “There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love” (1 John 4:18 NIV). This helps us to understand what the writer means in Proverbs, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” (Proverbs 9:10 NIV). When we fear God we need know no other fear. As we know
the living God who is love, then we begin to understand we need to fear nothing else. Any knowledge of God that does not lead to this trust in Him is a very imperfect knowledge.

FORMING A COMMUNITY OF TRUTH

How can we form genuine community that will set us free? Palmer (1993, page xii) speaks about a community of truth and he defines teaching as “creating space in which obedience to the community of truth is practiced”. How can we create the space of which Palmer speaks?” The answer to this can be found in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians (4:15), where says people grow by “speaking the truth in love”. The words “speaking the truth” are a translation of ἀληθεύονται, the present participle of the Greek verb "to truth". English does not have a verb “to truth” so we cannot speak about “truthing in love” but the meaning is clear - we are to live surrounded by truth and in a relationship marked by love. We are to be a community guided by truth in word and action where love is the driving force. This is a central concept for growth or to put it another way it is central to the task of creating space in which obedience to the truth is practiced. If we would see our students grow, we need to see a “community of truth” being formed among them. The growth that occurs is “into Him” who is the Head of the Body even Christ, and it results in each part functioning effectively in the Body by fulfilling his or her role by using his or her particular gifts. Too often we hide behind our protective walls of pretence where we are afraid to say what we really think.

If we are to form a community of truth we need to be clear what we understand by truth. All of us have views about reality that we deep down believe to be true about the world. These views drive our actions. We sometimes refer to them as our worldview. However in talking about worldviews we need to remember that we are not speaking about rationally explained expressions of our underlying beliefs rather our worldview will often depend on non-rational elements; that set of underlying beliefs that motivate our actions and our attitudes. Even though our worldviews themselves may be largely non-rational it can be helpful to think rationally about them and attempt to bring our worldviews into line with our stated beliefs and values.

There are four questions we can ask that help us to understand our worldview. If we know our answers to these questions we can perhaps better understand how these answers relate to the “Truth that is in Jesus” (Ephesians 4:21) which implicitly involves community. The four questions are, "What is the nature of reality?" (Ontology) “How can we know reality?" (Epistemology) “How do we teach and learn?” (Pedagogy) and “How should we live?” (Axiology and Ethics).

What Is The Nature Of Reality?

The World is NOT a meaningless void filled with particles

Our understanding of reality has been deeply influenced by the so-called “modernist” thinking of the early twentieth century, which elevated science and the scientific method as the only way to find truth. Physics, at least in the popular mind, saw the world comprised of particles operating in a meaningless void without any underlying laws or direction patterning them. Biology was based on the belief that the world had evolved and nature “was red in tooth and claw” (Tennyson). The world was seen as a system of inanimate forces, and nature as competitive - the survival of the fittest involved competition at its heart. These two dominant areas of thought are non-
Towards a New Paradigm of Education

communal if not anti-communal. Palmer (1993 xiv) asserts, “at the heart of science itself these images have been challenged and changed”, that “Connections of community are visible at the core of reality”, and that community, not competition, is the metaphor that most deeply informs the work of many biologists today. Among physicists today, the atom is no longer seen as an independent and isolated entity, but in the words of Henry Stepp, as a ‘set of relationships reaching out to other things.’ So Palmer’s reference to ‘hidden wholeness’ turns out to be more than a spiritual fantasy since these connections of community are visible at reality’s core”. As our view of reality changes to be more in accord with the thinkers and philosophers who acknowledge this connectedness, the individualism and competitiveness that underlies so much of life may become more muted and our approaches to education may be reformed as we acknowledge more the importance of what is sometimes referred to as the “hidden curriculum”. As Christian teachers we need to shape our schools around images of reality that are less individualistic and competitive and more cooperative and communal.

**How We know Reality**

**The myth of objectivity**

The thinker of the modernist period (early twentieth Century) understood knowing as a profoundly individual activity that investigated and interpreted objects and sought **objective truth** or **empirical knowledge** which was believed to “out there”. Despite the fact that scholars now perceive knowing as a profoundly communal act, the earlier thinking dominates our paradigms of learning. Palmer (1993, page xv) says, “Nothing could possibly be known by the solitary self, since the self is inherently communal in nature. The myth of objectivity, which depends on a radical separation of the knower from the known, has been declared bankrupt. But it still influences most of our education.

Because the self has been created for community to truly know something is to have a living relationship with it – “influencing and being influenced by the object known”. This newer understanding of how we know reality fits closer to the biblical epistemology than the modernist view, which prevails as the most significant influence on the thinking among most people, including teachers in Christian schools, even today.

**Truth revealed in community**

In the Bible, knowledge is revealed “in community”, not objectively but through personal revelation and through story. Apart from a few isolated instances as for example, when the Ten Commandments were given, what has been revealed has been revealed through the mind of a person who is in relationship with God? In the earliest account we have the picture of Adam and Eve walking in the cool of the evening and meeting with God who apparently was revealing His truth to them in communication. The naming of the animals happened in a conversation between God and man in which the man has an active part. In this process he also learnt a most significant lesson - "It is not good for the man to be alone” (Genesis 2:18 NIV). He is created for community.
Communities are “Story-Formed”

The reality that we learn through the Bible is, characteristically, found in story form. Our western minds, trained to see truth empirically, find this somewhat offensive as it is not neat and compartmentalised enough and there are paradoxes we cannot resolve and inconsistencies that we believe we must be able to explain away. God has chosen to reveal us His truth in story form with good reason. He made us to live in “story-formed” communities. Story is the most powerful way of revealing truth especially truth that is too large to fit into human categories and doctrine. Our efforts to theologise and create doctrinal categories are not wrong in themselves as they can aid our search for truth. However, when we absolutize that form of knowledge and insist that everything must fit into logically consistent categories and be stated in clear and unequivocal propositional form, we challenge the sovereignty of God by insisting on seeking perfect knowledge now, instead of the incomplete knowledge He chooses to reveal (1 Corinthians 13:9-12). In His grace, He reveals that which we in our fallen state can understand. The awesome fullness of the knowledge of God is beyond us “Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain”. (Psalm 139:6 NIV) We too easily overlook the fact that while we seek truth, truth also seeks us.

How We Teach And Learn

Current images are individualistic and competitive

Our dominant images of teaching and learning are also individualistic and competitive rather than communal. They reflect the secular humanist view of the importance of the individual that arose out of the philosophic ideals of the Enlightenment. It is interesting to ask why we refer to one form of communal learning that regularly occurs in our classroom as “cheating”. Cheating is seen as wrong because of the competitive environment in which we place learning. When I “cheat” I steal a position in the pecking order that I am not entitled. This is not defending cheating which in the current context is wrong but it highlights that there might be other ways of looking at cooperative learning.

But real learning and growth of the individual occurs best in relationship, when students and teachers are in a learning/teaching relationship with each other and with the subject that is being learnt or taught. Such a relationship must be a two-way relationship in which teachers understand and recognise their own role - what Fowler (2004, page 120) calls “office” - and the role (or office) of their students. As they work together in a learning community, each is empowered to use their God-given gifts and to function in their God-given office. Palmer (1993 p 31) suggests that there is also a two-way relationship between the teacher and the subject matter. Truth seeks us as well as we seek the truth. If we approach our subject humbly we will go on being lifetime learners always open to new truth. Too many teachers simply are second hand dealers of information previously acquired. Jesus gave us a model for a Christian teacher He said to them, "Therefore every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old" (Matthew 13:52).

If teaching is to be transformed it will happen because we are in the midst of a far reaching intellectual and spiritual revisioning of reality and how we know it. Because reality is communal we learn best by interacting with it. Yet there is no certainty about the future of education. Modern education is facing a challenge from virtual reality. Students are likely to seek reality in cyber space in the relationships they form.
through the Internet. Such cyber relationships are based more on fantasy and imagination than on any true reality. However, they are often compulsive and even addictive relationships.

Good teaching will bring students into community not for the warm feelings it engenders but to do the difficult things that teaching and learning in community requires. Probably the most important of these is learning how to relate to other people and to learn from them.

How We Live in the World

Do we live as individuals or in community?

Modern western societies tend to be destructive of community and to influence people rather to live more individually than communally and to be isolated from others rather than connected to them. This raises the question of whether our classrooms are teaching students to live individually or communally. Are they being taught to compete for scarce rewards as isolated individuals or helping students to learn how to “create communities of abundance in their lives both as learners and as citizens”? This relates to the question of whether we are educating students in ways that make them responsive to the claims of community on their lives or do we educate as if reality is individualistic, and learning is a tool for distancing and disconnecting ourselves from the world? Do we teach students to compete for scarce grades or to work together for communal good? Nouwen (1971 p. 6), writing three decades ago claimed that teaching in a modern community is a violent process in part because modern education has become so competitive. This competitive spirit is evident in, “The way students looks at their fellow students and their teachers, the way they expect their grades and degrees, the way they prepare for their exams and take them, the way they apply to college and graduate school, and even in the way they spend their free time; this and much more is impregnated with an all embracing sense of rivalry”. In addition, Nouwen also claims that our education is unilateral or one way. Even where they use what appear to be cooperative forms of learning teachers are the ones that decide what the information or skills are deemed be important to a student, often regardless of whether or not these appear relevant to the student or whether the students has already learnt the information or acquired the skill.

This unilateral approach is further seen in the way teachers try to help students to develop standards of personal behaviour, which they may personally fail to fully live up to but nevertheless still, commend to their students. These values often stress the personal at the expense of communal ethics. Communal ethics are based on a proper understanding of our interconnectedness and our accountability for others. Paul brings out the contrast between the desire for personal holiness as against our responsibility for communal relationships when he says,

If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus. (Philippians 2 1-5)
If we claim that we are united with Christ we must also be living in unity with each other. If we experience the love of God it should be demonstrated in the fact that we love others and we put their interests above our own. *Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ* (Gal 6:2 NIV).

**A true education is one that “creates a capacity for connectedness” in students’ lives**

Ultimately true education is one that creates a capacity for connectedness in students’ lives and a willingness to undertake responsibility for others as well as themselves. “Education has always been defined as the development of certain capacities (for example critical thinking and the tolerance of ambiguity) that allow the educated person to live more productively and more at peace in a complex and demanding world. But these vital capacities are sometimes taught in ways that break community rather than build it. Critical thinking becomes a tool for disengagement and tolerance of ambiguity becomes cheap relativism” (Palmer 1993, page xviii).

**A true education is one that inculcates a willingness to take responsibility for others**

Education needs to lead students to an awareness that there is a “hidden wholeness” (Palmer (2004 p. 2) on which all of life depends. This is the proper ground for ethics. We are to love God with all our hearts and our neighbour as ourselves. This sums up our total responsibilities to our creator God who created us to live in community. In an education based on a true communal ethic there is no division between intellect and spirit. Teachers and learners live in a vital community seeking to understand the reality that God has created. This reality is greater than any arbitrary division we might impose through our intellectual disciplines.

**TEACHING THE TRUTH IN LOVE**

**Creating space for learning**

Palmer says, “to teach is to create a space in which obedience to truth is practiced” (Palmer 1993, page 88).

**Space for Learning**

Australian schools reflect Australian society in that there is little space for thinking. Our lives are full of busyness and thus we have little time or space to respond to the truth. Palmer suggest that the role of teaching is to create space for responding to the truth “To sit in a class where the teacher stuffs our minds with information, organizes it with finality, insists on having the answers while being utterly uninterested in our views, and forces us into a grim competition for grades - to sit in such a class is to experience a lack of space for learning. But to study with a teacher who not only speaks but listens, who not only gives answers but asks questions and welcomes our insights, who provides information and theories that do not close doors but open new ones, who encourages students to help each other learn - to study with such a teacher is to know the power of a learning space” (Palmer 1993, page 70).

**Openness – Boundaries - Hospitality**

Palmer claims that to develop space for learning there needs to be three characteristics –openness, boundaries and hospitality. Openness for Palmer means a willingness to
create space so that our thinking is not cluttered and we are open to new ideas and different thought patterns - we clutter up our consciousness to protect ourselves. We may speak meaningless words to fill the space. But such openness needs boundaries to protect it.

One of the impacts of the electronic media has been to create an impatience for stimuli. Thus the time space for a message to be gotten across has been shortened. People no longer seem able to concentrate for long periods of time. They need visual stimulation to help them take notice. In such an environment, school periods may be deemed as too long and “chalk and talk” too boring to retain the attention of many students. The net affect of this is that lessons are structured so that there is little time for reflection. We need to create structures and boundaries to allow time and space for leaning. But this needs to be done in “love”, what Palmer calls hospitality - “receiving each other, our struggles, our new born ideas with openness and care. It means creating an ethos in which the community of troth can form, the pain of truth’s transformations be borne” (Palmer 1993, page 74).
Practicing Obedience to Truth

A community of “TROTH”

Palmer uses the phrase “community of troth” to refer to people who have pledged themselves to practise (or live) truth together in a relationship of love as part of the Body of Christ (Ephesians 4:15).

Practice more than Preparation

Education is characteristically more often seen in terms of preparation than practice. Conventional wisdom says that practice is what one does after leaving school. Preparation involves accumulating knowledge and developing skills and competencies. The reality of the present is ignored in education as children learn about the world “out there” or from earlier time in order to prepare for the future. Nouwen (1991 p. 9) claims that this is alienating to the students “because the eyes of the student are directed away from himself and his direct relationships into the future where real things are supposed to happen to him”. This alienation leaves students bored and disinterested in learning that often seems quite irrelevant to them.

To speak about practising the truth is to break down the barrier between the classroom and the world. It also assumes that the classroom is a community of truth. It is where people learn, or fail to learn, to work together and live together as a community. Reality is no longer “out there” but between us, as we bridge the gap between learning and living. Such an education will according to Nouwen (1991 P. 12-13) be redemptive in that it will result in an education that is evocative, calling out the potential from both the student and the teachers, bilateral, involving both student and teacher in a learning community and it is actualising, in that it helps students to learn what is significant in the here-and-now as well as preparing them for whatever might lie ahead in the future.

Obedience to listen and respond

Palmer believes that there is a rule of truth “that can order our inquiries and bring us all, knowers and known, into mutually obedient relationships of troth” (Palmer 1993, page 89). The key to this rule of truth may be found in the word obedience “which means to listen with a discerning ear and respond faithfully to the personal implications of what one has heard” (Palmer 1993, page 89).

Trusting in love

When Paul speaks of “truthing in love” as the basis of growth, he is referring to truth that is personal and relational, the truth that is in Jesus (Eph 4:21). It is personal and relational because it is based on what Paul calls unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God as Jesus himself claimed to be “the way and the truth and the life”. The early Christians were called followers of the way because they adopted the life of Jesus. Paul tells us that as we live out or practise the truth that is in Jesus, so we grow to maturity. True maturity is not individual competency, skills, knowledge, wisdom or insight. It involves playing an effective role in the Body of Christ. It is obvious here that obedience to the truth is not a matter of legal correctness but an outward expression of an inward commitment formed in community, as we reach unity in the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God. “The truth we are seeking, the truth that seeks us, lies ultimately in the community of being where we not only know but are known” (Palmer 1993, page 90).
We need to discover the larger truth that we are not autonomous individuals, each in a private world and each maximising his or her own opportunity and optimising our individual experience, but we are an interconnected community. We cannot grow truly as individuals until we learn to grow in community.

**A New Learning Paradigm**

What is needed is a new paradigm, one based on the concept that learning takes placed best in a Christian learning community. This paper has attempted to demonstrate why such a paradigm shift is needed.
List of References


