



CHALLENGING TRADITIONAL THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

20 YEARS OF WOCATI

Edited by P. Vassiliadis

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The beginnings...

Setting up a World Network

At a consultation held in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, from 16–19th June 1989, the World Conference of Associations of Theological Institutions was inaugurated. Present at the consultation, which was sponsored by the Programme for Theological Education (PTE) of the World Council of Churches (WCC), were representatives from over twenty associations of theological schools, institutions and centres from all regions of the world.

The formation of the World Conference of Associations of Theological Institutions (WOCATI) was a result of several years' preparation. Over the past two decades, many theological institutions have committed themselves to closer cooperation at the local, national and regional levels. Arising from these developments, the need was recognized for a global network and organization which would support and enhance the work for theological institutions and their associations. Since a meeting of the directors of associations in Singapore in 1987, extensive discussions took place between many of the theological associations and the PTE. Then discussions prepared the way for the Yogyakarta consultation at which the concept of a world-wide conference of associations was enthusiastically endorsed and WOCATI formally established.

The main goal of WOCATI is to serve the needs and aspirations of its member associations and their institutions, schools and centres. It will be through this prime focus that WOCATI will seek to serve and support theological education throughout the world. The existence of WOCATI as a global conference is seen to be an invaluable resource for all theological institutions and their associations by providing an established network and resource to facilitate the work of the member associations.

Central to the aims and purposes of WOCATI is its commitment to the twin goals of contextualization and globalization. Contextualization roots theology within the lives and communities of the people in their societies. As it takes serious account of the particular cultural, economic and political realities experienced by the people within their specific histories and societies, contextualization brings forth a wide diversity of theological expressions. The consultation also acknowledged the impact of globalization as a powerful and liberating force within theological education and the fact that several theological institutions are committed to this perspective. Globalization readily accepts the reality of living in one world of interdependence. Theological education is to emphasize the way we are to take responsibility for the globe and to work to ensure that the theological vision of a world-wide community of peace, justice and freedom becomes a reality for all people of our globe.

Membership of WOCATI is open to associations which are constituted at least in part by theological institutions which award degrees and diplomas at the university first degree level and above. However, it is significant to note that member associations include a wide diversity of theological institutions, schools and centres offering programmes and courses in theological education and ministerial practice in a variety of ways. This diversity within theological education is warmly endorsed by WOCATI.

Other purposes of WOCATI include establishing processes which assist member institutions in faculty development, library improvement, women's concerns, resource sharing and providing guidance on accreditation matters. It is anticipated that a consultation and general meeting, with two representatives from member associations attending, will be held at least every four years. These meetings will provide a focus and forum to assist the work of WOCATI.

At the Yogyakarta consultation, the following were elected as WOCATI officers and members at large of its Executive Committee: President: Dr Zablon Nthamburi. Vice-president: Dr Leon Pacala. Secretary/Treasurer: Dr Yeow Choo Lak. Members at large: Rev. Les. Oglesby, Dr Noel Titus, Dr Jaci Maraschin, Rev. Ming Ya T. Tu'uholoaki.

WOCATI PREAMBLE

Theological education is a worldwide enterprise fundamental to the mission of the church. In its most immediate and concrete forms theological education is shaped by the religious, educational, social, political and historical traditions within which it exists. Theological education is carried out in a world which is increasingly being made aware of its interdependence and religious pluralism. Its context is both local and global and therefore, it can function more effectively within a worldwide framework.

These characteristics of theological education have led theological institutions to commit themselves to closer cooperation at local, national, and regional levels. It is appropriate that a global network and organization be established to serve, support, and enhance theological education in its constituent parts. To this end, the World Conference of Associations of Theological Institutions is established. The members constituting this Conference join themselves together for the purpose of advancing their shared vision, purpose, and common cause.

WOCATI PURPOSES

1. To provide an established and continuing forum for members to confer concerning matters of common interest related to theological education;

2. To consider and promote relations of member associations to one another, to other educational organizations and units throughout the world, to appropriate ecclesiastical agencies as they relate to theological education, and to other bodies as may be relevant;

3. To identify and advocate excellence in theological education and ministerial practice and to encourage full compliance with the standards and purposes as established by the member institutions;

4. To provide leadership and understanding of the purposes, role and needs of theological education in the following ways:

By cultivating a broad and informed understanding of theological education;

By serving as an advocate locally and globally for theological education and its implications for church, society and education in general;

By interacting with other appropriate agencies and groups;

5. To provide services to member associations in the following ways:

By facilitating co-operation and co-ordination among associations;

By gathering, maintaining and sharing information and resources that will facilitate the work of member associations;

By encouraging, sponsoring and conducting research on theological education and related matters;

By enabling and supporting member associations in implementing standards, policies and procedures by which they may best serve their constituencies;

By assisting and guiding the establishment of procedures and criteria for equivalency of academic diplomas and degrees awarded by the institutions in the different regions;

By being instrumental in identifying resources for the development of the global nature and implications of theological education;

6. To promote the improvement and advancement of theological education in such ways as may be appropriate.

**The 1st WOCATI Congress
(Pittsburgh 1992)**

REPORT OF THE FIRST WORLD CONGRESS

Ian S. Williams
Australia

The first World Congress of the World Conference of Associations of Theological Institutions, (WOCATI) was held at Pittsburgh, U.S.A., from June 14-21, 1992. Twenty-six delegates from sixteen member associations, together with two consultants and thirteen guests participated. The Congress was able to further the goals of WOCATI as affirmed in the constitution adopted at the inaugural meeting at Kaliurang, Jogjakarta, Indonesia in June, 1989. During the first two days, the WOCATI Congress shared in joint sessions with The Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada (ATS) at its biennial meeting.

At the Congress, the following were amongst the most significant themes discussed:

a. *The inter-relationship between globalization and contextualization.* The importance of globalization was recognized in providing a broad, indeed global perspective for the theological task and also challenging any particular theology which claims to be universal. However, with a significant number of delegates representing associations from the southern regions of the world, questions were raised as to whether some expressions of globalization could be another form of the continuing dominance of the concerns of northern theology. A global perspective needs to acknowledge the range and diversity of cultural contexts in which theology and theological education are pursued. It was recognized that a crucial challenge to theological educators in many regions of the world was to give greater attention to developing forms of contextual theology. Some of these contextual theologies are being developed in regions of considerable religious pluralism. This constitutes a significant challenge to many traditional ways of doing theology.

b. *Who defines excellence of theological scholarship?* In the discussions at the Congress, great emphasis was placed upon the task of theological educators to educate the whole people of God. To engage in this task means to develop new forms of theological scholarship and research, with different criteria for evaluating excellence. Theologies of the people are not to be uncritical. However, at present, there tends to be a dominance of, if not an enslavement to, norms of excellence as defined by the academy and professional and disciplinary guilds, especially those of the northern world. The Congress asked the executive committee of WOCATI to be responsible for a continuing study of ways in which theological education and excellence of theological scholarship are being defined and developed in the various regions of the world.

c. *The contributions of women to theological education.* Congress acknowledged that theological education must take far more seriously the contributions

and perspectives of women. Their partnership within the theological enterprise will challenge many established ways of doing theology, as they bring distinctive concerns and methodologies to bear upon the theological task. WOCATI's commitment to having equal representation of men and women from member associations at the Congress greatly assisted in establishing a positive dynamic partnership within the life of the Congress itself. The importance of the contributions of women to theological education forms one of the continuing areas of study in WOCATI's programme over the next four years.

d. Other issues were related to *the ways theological educators were pursuing their vocation in a wide range of contexts*. It was here, as elsewhere, that one of WOCATI's unique contributions to theological education was experienced, in that WOCATI provides the opportunity for dialogue between theological educators from all regions of the world. Delegates received reports from their colleagues about such issues as:

- (i) the ecumenical nature of theological education;
- (ii) the challenge for faculty members to be involved within the struggles of the people;
- (iii) the need for faculty development;
- (iv) difficulties encountered in evaluating credentials of various associations;
- (v) encouraging theology and theological education to be expressed in indigenous languages;
- (vi) the need to develop more adequate library resources.

The Congress elected a new executive committee with Dr. Yeow Choo Lak as President. It charged the executive committee with the responsibility of furthering the aims and purposes of WOCATI in a number of ways.

It also resolved that the next World Congress would be held in 1996.

CONTEXTUALIZATION FROM A WORLD PERSPECTIVE

By Robert J. Schreiter

Professor, Catholic Theological Union, Chicago, Illinois, USA

A speech was delivered by Robert J. Schreiter on the occasion of the 38th Biennial Meeting of The Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada (ATS) and the 1st Congress of the World Conference of Associations of Theological Institutions (WOCATI). What follows presents the main points in the first two thirds of the address, combined with the complete text of the last sections of the address.

Summary

Robert Schreiter was asked to address the question of contextualization from a world perspective. His speech began with four assumptions behind his approach to contextualization which come from his identity as a Roman Catholic: (1) its theological appreciation for «nature” (and therefore culture) which especially values oral modes of knowledge, (2) its concern for the centrality of the incarnation of Jesus Christ which carries hope about all of creation, (3) its sacramental view of the world which appreciates nature as conveying Divine revelation, and (4) its concern for the «evangelization of cultures” which goes beyond evangelizing individuals. Schreiter examined contextualization:

Contextualization from a world perspective becomes essential because of the inevitability of globalization. Contextualization is finding one’s own voice against the backdrop of global media. It is a way of holding up what is noble and immensely human and humane in local culture—against all forces that would undermine its dignity.

Contextualization and globalization are interdependent. Thinking about context begins when the larger, global reality impinges uncomfortably. At the same time, our concepts of globalization have implications for what we do in our own locales. The two can serve as mutual correctives as we measure our faithfulness and our growth in our educational settings.

3. Globalization is currently profoundly asymmetrical. We are moving from an East- West axis to a North-South interaction. In this new world the North does not look to the South as a partner, but as a resource to be exploited. In this new world the population of the South is expanding and the average age of the North is growing older. New patterns of mission and dependency are emerging, but it is difficult to know the meaning of mutuality in such a profoundly unbalanced situation.

4. Contextualization is coming about more slowly than globalization. Why?

Because the legacy of colonialism is still very strong. The power of the global media culture is pervasive. The North resists contextualization because it is felt to be a rejection of Northern values. The North resists contextualization because it simply does not like to do things differently.

In this situation, according to Schreiter, there are three concrete issues facing contextualization—the uprooting of peoples, the question of reception (or how the Gospel message is received), and the shape of belonging in multiple worlds of reference. He reflects upon the implications of population movements for contextualization. He examines issues surrounding the way the Gospel is offered and accepted in different contexts. And he notes that it is common for people to find themselves with double and even triple religious and cultural loyalties. In this complex situation it is important to understand globalization. The final sections of his address examine globalization and the implications of globalization and contextualization for theological education. The exact text follows:

Globalization: The Long View

Along with our understanding of contextualization, we need a fuller understanding of globalization. I wish to sketch out a proposal here of how we might understand globalization from a perspective useful for theological education and ministry. Space does not permit working out the interaction with contextualization, except to make some suggestions in the closing section.

I wish to present this perspective on globalization by taking a longer view chronologically than we have been wont to do in theological education circles. Most frequently, we trace the interest in globalization back to the late 1970's, just as globalization itself is traced back to the early 1960's in business and education, or to the League of Nations in politics. However, I think that blinds us to those «world» perspectives we are hearing from the southern hemisphere. Globalization is a phenomenon much larger than theological education—something we all know, but tend to forget. It is larger than the phenomenon of religion, although religion plays an important role in it. [1]

To aid in this, I want to make a rough adaption of Immanuel Wallerstein's world-system theory as a basis for understanding globalization. [2] I am proposing that globalization (as seen from the point of view of theological education) has gone through three stages. Each of these stages is shaped by larger developments that serve as the *carrier* of these developments; i.e., they form a frame of reference for which societies of that time articulate their reality. This articulation, in an integrated fashion of all elements of society, creates

that phase's sense of *universality*. Religion in turn responds within the carrier to this universality. This is its *theological mode*. And this brings about certain *results* that reflect what, at that phase, constitutes effective globalization.

Schemata always distort reality. But they can help us see a bigger picture and help us raise questions about what we do, and see relationships that may have heretofore eluded us. The categories here of carrier, theological mode, universality and results are meant heuristically—not to foreclose, but to make us think.

It should be noted too that each of the three phases continues into those of its successors. But as we shall see, what happens to the theological modes of the previous phases is that they meet a different set of challenges than what they had encountered when they were the dominant mode. The phases should not be read in an evolutionary pattern from low to higher, the world and the carriers of those conditions. Let us turn to this long view of globalization.

1. First Phase: 1492-1945: Expansion and the building of empires.

The first phase has its period of dominance from the European voyages of exploration down to the conclusion of the Second World War. It is a time of European expansion and the creation of new European territorial space on the other continents of the world. The *carrier* of this phase of globalization is an image of expansion and establishment of political power over wide areas of the world—empire. The mode of *universality* giving justification or credence to this expansion is the concept of *civilization* that is invoked. In the early stage, the peoples encountered are seen as either animal or demonic; in a later stage, as not fully evolved. [3]

On the religious side, we see a concomitant development, reflecting the envelope of the carrier in which it acts, and the universality in which it works out its own understanding of globalization. Images of expansion of the Church, of a *plantatio ecclesiae* come to the fore. There is a sudden interest in worldwide evangelization (first among Roman Catholics in Spain and Portugal; later among churches of the Reformation as England and the Netherlands become worldwide powers).

The *theological mode* responding to this is *world mission*, understood as saving souls and extending the Church. The *results*, by the height of European empire building in the nineteenth century, is a worldwide missionary movement. Globalization, at this point, means extending the message of Christ and his church throughout the whole world.

2. Second Phase: 1945-1989: Accompaniment, Dialogue, Solidarity.

The Second World War finished what the First World War began: the dissolution of the overseas empires of Europe. From the late 1940's into the 1960's, region after region was given independence (at least «flag» independence) and it looked as though the shackles of colonialism would be cast off. There was an optimism about a new world at that time, fueled by economic expansion in the North and a discourse of «development» of the newly formed nations. All of this presaged a new kind of world. The *carrier* of this second phase was *decolonialization, independence and economic optimism*. The mode of universality was *optimism* about overcoming the evils of the past.

On the religious side, Reformation churches found themselves overcoming their old antagonisms (partially as a result of the student missionary movement and the experience of Resistance in Europe during the Second World War), and started coming together. The Roman Catholic Church abandoned at the official level its fortress mentality against the modern world and embraced that same modernity in the Second Vatican Council. Both of these Western embodiments of Christianity found themselves welcoming a new partnership with the churches of the South. The shift into the new phase called into question the dominant universalities of the previous phase. What «mission» meant came under close scrutiny. Meanwhile, many Catholics and Protestants continued to practice mission more or less as they had in the previous phase, while others sought modifications, and still others called for the outright abandonment of mission.

The response toward ecumenism, the ambivalence toward mission, and a new attention to the churches of the South was developed in the carrier envelope of decolonialization, independence and optimism. The *theological modes* that emerged were those of solidarity, dialogue, and accompaniment. Solidarity bespoke the new partnership that led to a sense of mutuality and commitment to the churches on the churches' own terms; it gave birth to liberation theologies. Dialogue was a reaction to the evangelizing mode of the first phase, and emphasized respect for the other and left the possibility of conversion deliberately vague. Accompaniment was meant to overcome the hegemonic patterns of leadership from the colonial period, and replace them with greater mutuality. The *results* were a new definition of globalization as ecumenical cooperation, interreligious dialogue, and the struggle for justice.

These were all couched in the optimistic universality of the 1960's that the world's problems could be overcome. The tension between mission and

these latter three went largely unresolved, and for many there was a clear divide between mission, on the one hand, and ecumenism, dialogue and justice on the other. Many, however, struggled to create a new synthesis. Globalization came to embrace all four by the 1980's.

3. Third Phase: 1989- : Between the Global and the Local.

Paul Tillich and others said that the twentieth century began in August, 1914 with the outbreak of the Great War. It could equally be said that it ended with the fall of the Berlin Wall. But the conditions leading up to that political event were also shaping a larger understanding of what sometimes is called the postmodern world. It was 1973, the date of the OPEC oil embargo, which is often given as the date when economic power and the concomitant modes of production began to shift. New technologies, especially in communications, marked a move away from largely industrial economies to economies involved more in the flow of information, technologies, goods and services. Just when the South was struggling to attain nation-states, these states were becoming more and more superfluous as information and capital drew their own map of the world—one beyond the eighteenth century ideal of the nation-state.

The *carrier* of this new postmodern reality is a *new global capitalism*. As was noted earlier, the defeat of socialism left no alternative. But the liberal capitalism that had been seen as the implacable foe of Marxist socialism has largely disappeared now into a new form of capitalism that emphasizes the mobility of capital, information and resources rather than the building of large industrial bases. While often having a clear national identity of origin (Japanese, American, German), it in effect moves wherever it needs to in order to achieve its short-range goals. Because profit margins have narrowed since the 1960's, the temptation is to get the short-term profit rather than wait for a long-term return. [4] This global capitalism is characterized by postnationalism, a communication system built on network rather than hierarchy, a multicentered view of the world, and a tendency to operate in the short term. While it brings untold new wealth to some, it also breeds asymmetries, conflict, and a sense of no alternatives for those not included in the flow of its information, technology, capital and goods.

Its mode of *universality* is the new *global culture*, characterized by American cola drinks, athletic and casual clothing, and American movie and television entertainment. It is a culture sent virtually everywhere, but received in considerably different fashions. For example, «Dynasty» is watched differently in Lagos than in Los Angeles; studies have shown that Canadians see

the resolutions of disputes in «All in the Family» differently from the Dutch (Archie tends to be the winner in Canada, while Edith, Gloria and Meathead triumph in the Netherlands). The universality is both real and unreal at the same time. It is real inasmuch as it is found everywhere; it is unreal in that what it signifies means different things in the reception of the local culture.

What becomes the theological *mode* of the third phase of globalization? Discussions of the meaning of mission continue. Worries about the stagnation of ecumenism; the possibility of genuine dialogue with the religiously other and a theology of religions; and speculation about the future of liberation theology in a no-alternative world bespeak the fact that even as we have moved into a new phase, the previously dominant modes continue with us. After all, most Christians still feel the need to spread the Gospel, overcome the scandalous divisions in the body of Christ, understand other religious traditions better, and struggle for justice. But the optimism that marked those earlier discussions has been replaced by a sobered realism (the attitude of the postmodern phase). Can a new mode be identified?

I would suggest that the new *mode* will involve bridge-building, finding symbols of hope, and seeking paths of reconciliation. In other words, the barriers in the third phase are not between Empire and colony, or between older and younger church, but rather they are barriers that run helter-skelter through our communities, created by attempts to hold the global and the local in critical correlation. Even to phrase it as between North and South is too simple, since the South lives in the North and the North in the South. We need to find the cracks yawning in our midst where the global and the local fail to connect. We need to seek symbols of hope in a world that seems less and less able to hold out opportunities for another vision. Our hope is not the optimistic hope of the 1960's; it is a tempered, more sobered hope, but a hope nonetheless. Likewise, in the tensions and conflicts that emerge, we need to seek paths of reconciliation lest an ecologically threatened earth fracture altogether. There are many false paths of reconciliation, to be sure. But in an ever violent world where the majority suffer, reconciliation—the discovery of the gift of true humanity—is something we cannot disdain to seek. [5]

Globalization in this third phase, then, becomes a quest for the bridges between the global and the local. The global has changed; its economic face appears to be even less benign than in the recent past. This has prompted new expressions of the local—the eruptions in Central Asia and in Eastern Europe, the resurgence of native pride in the Americas, but also the rootlessness of much of affluent North America and Western Europe. How shall the

global and the local be configured to one another, within communities and across continents? How shall prophetic challenge be maintained? If the hypothesis about the yoking together of the global and the local suggested above is correct, this could well be the shape that globalization will take in the ensuing period, even as we struggle to integrate the understandings of the first and second phase.

Implications for Theological Education

Let me conclude this already too long presentation with just a couple of suggestions about what all of this means for theological education today. I make the suggestions in three points and a concluding remark about vision.

If the next phase of globalization finds us between the global and the local, we need to prepare ourselves and our students to:

Understand the contextual. Especially for uprooted peoples, for those who receive in a different way from how it is given, and who seek ways (and it is often plural) to belong. The world has shifted such that we can no longer presume (or perhaps should even presume) an Archimedean point.

Build strong local communities. Only communities confident of themselves and imbued with the Gospel will resist the temptation to become enclaves or fortresses rather than the communities Christ intends.

Interpret the global, both in its hegemonies—how it destroys human life; and in its gifts of decentralization, democratization and local empowerment.

To carry these out in the concrete may require some axial changes. The *sin-and-forgiveness* model that has dominated Western Christianity for some many centuries may need to give way to others. One being suggested from the South is a *death-and-life* model, since that hues closer to the day-to-day experiences of the poor of the world.

Certain biblical images have often undergirded, at least implicitly, our understandings of globalization. In the first phase, it was undoubtedly the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19-20. In the second phase, Luke may have provided the key: Luke 4:16-20, in the call to solidarity and justice; Luke 24:13-15, in the call to accompaniment. The Scripture for this third phase may well be Ephesians 2:12-14; «remember you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in this world. But now in Christ

Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us.»

NOTES

- [1] See the collection by Wade Clark Roof, *World Order and Religion* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1991).
- [2] Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the World-Capitalist Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (New York: Academic Press, 1974) 2 vols.
- [3] For a good history of this development of understandings of the «other» encountered, see Bernard McGraw, *Beyond Anthropology: Society and the Other* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989).
- [4] For a general description of this new form of global capitalism, see Robert B. Reich, *The Work of Nations: Preparing Ourselves for 21st Century Capitalism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991); for a critique of the relation between the liberal-industrial and global capitalism, see David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989).
- [5] I have explored these themes of reconciliation more fully in *Reconciliation: Mission and Ministry in a Changing Social Order* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992).

WOMEN IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

*by Maryanne Confoy,
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(ANZATS)*

My first response is to acknowledge the priority that WOCATI has given to women in theological education by requiring that women be given equal representation from each region. This requirement has resulted in my presence in this conference. Thank you!

In addressing the question as proposed: *What are the most significant factors, conditions, forces, or developments that either positively or negatively affect the role and status of women in theological education?* my immediate reaction is that women are not concerned with their *role* or *status*. What is of primary consideration for women is the significance of our contribution to the task of theological education.

One obvious fruit that we would hope for from our contribution to this panel is that there might be a greater awareness of the distinctive insights that women's scholarship offers to the world of Christian theology. An example of women's influence is in regard to methodology. In order to prepare for this panel, we gathered together with other women here, all of whom were prepared to share their insights. Although the daily schedule was crowded, they were still willing to give their free time to this purpose. We also chose a different physical setting, because we believe that every aspect of the experience of learning is significant. So we chose to arrange the group in a circle and to try to operate in a conversational manner rather than for each to offer her own isolated insights.

Conversion seems more linked to conversation than to dogmatic statement. So, collegiality and collaboration are characteristics of the way women engage in theology as a community of searchers. Independent and privatised learning are not characteristic of women's way of knowing—whatever the discipline may be. Concrete examples of this can be seen in a number of women's theological books, but particularly in the book edited by Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Musimbi Kanyoro, *The Will to Arise: Women, Tradition and the Church in Africa*. This book is the outcome of a meeting with African women theologians, their sharing about «the life and dreams, the sorrows and joys of African women in a continent where religion shapes the whole of life.»

While men describe the spiritual life in terms of the «quest for the Grail,» with all the individuality of such a personal quest as a consequence, women are meeting in groups, such as that of the African women, addressing issues related to bonding in community. The relational aspects of the faith experience are of greater significance to women than the achievements of the individual. The group is the focus of consideration rather than one's own personalised efforts and accomplishments. Women are listening with attentiveness to each oth-

er, and the bonding goes beyond boundaries and ideological differences to deeper areas of woman's consciousness.

Among the most critical contributions of women's theology to the Christian world is its reclaiming of the body. Women's theology is an embodied spirituality. Much of the Christian heritage describes people at war with their bodies. Women then become the enemy in men's struggle to address their sexuality in the spiritual life. At best we are ambivalent towards women, in fact if not in theory. The Christian tradition gives classic examples of this ambivalence, in both theory and practice. Women are usually either idealised by men, or seen as a source of temptation.

Women are concerned to befriend their bodies, to be more in tune with them. Their concern is to integrate an embodied spirituality, rather than to accept the dualistic heritage that has been theirs. So women's theology is rich in imagery and language that affirms the wholeness of humanity. Metaphors that celebrate birth, the feminine experience, and the life of passion and compassion abound in women's writing. Desire is seen as an important aspect in theological writing, as thirst for God takes shape within the affective dimension rather than the exclusively rational domain.

With a greater appreciation of the feminine, new images and metaphors for God are being generated. This is not simply an awareness of God as mother, but there is an increasing appreciation of a wide range of biblical descriptions of the attributes of God which transcend some of the more limiting depictions handed on by nineteenth-century spirituality.

New insights on sin and grace are resulting from women's reflection on their own experiences. After listening for years to sermons on pride as a primary source of sinfulness, women are beginning to realise that a far greater problem for them is self-effacement—self-forgetfulness—because they are so oriented towards the needs of others. As women and men dialogue about their human experience a deeper awareness of the diverse aspects of their Christian spirituality will be a consequence. The resulting insights will enrich the faith journeys of women and men of all ages and backgrounds.

As women and men become more sensitised to their attitudes to those who are «other» they become more fully human. Women have been «other» in a male-normative culture which has been oppressive to women as other, but also to those men who did not fit the norm as prescribed by their culture. The gift of women to the endeavour to become more fully human, more fully «alive in Christ» is in raising people's awareness to inner prejudices and bias for whatever cause:

sex, race, age, social status, or lifestyle. A Christian theology which arises out of this heightened sensitivity will be more authentically incarnational. The reduction of theology to a system of thought which maintains an oppressive status quo has hindered the Christian churches for far too long. Exclusiveness and elitism within Christianity are always an aberration.

Finally, women's theologising is focused on the future. While Christian feminist theology has its roots in its heritage, it is not confined to the past. It reaches to the source of light and life. It affirms the future in faith, hope and in a loving embrace of humanity and the cosmos. Women and men are presently working together in creative ways as they respond to the challenges of the future in a world that is often described as paralysed by fears of nuclear catastrophe. The collaborative efforts of women and men who include an authentic feminine as a basis of their theological praxis give witness to a vital affirmation of covenantal promise. Institutional churches will ignore these future-oriented theological activities at their own peril. They may find themselves reduced to the circumstances of a museum of treasures from the past with little to say to the future, or to the identity of a «dinosaur farm» with benevolent creatures whose reality is not related to the present. Women have been incredibly patient in the past; they are now realising that they have a serious responsibility to make their own unique contribution to a future which takes humankind and the created world as seriously as their God intended them to take it.

This conference has acknowledged women's contribution to theological education. As women we have responded with passion and conviction about the importance of this contribution; we offer our support and invite WOCATI to continue these efforts in the transformation of our world

CHOO LAK'S PRESIDENCY

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Yeow Choo Lak

Theological education is what you remember after you have forgotten what you have been taught in seminary. How can this be so? In communication in ministry formation, of course.

In broad strokes, communication in ministry formation involves the attempt to express our theology in such ways that both foster and advance the communication of our theological concepts and practices that result in the ability and capacity to bring about the formation of a people equipped to do the work of ministry (serving God and people).

It has been said that you are what you eat. If so, then in theology one can say that you are how you communicate theologically. This brings to mind a popular saying in the 1960s: What you are speaks so loud I can't hear what you say.

How you communicate theologically is seen in the way you do theology, (*i.e.*, when you do theology with people you are communicating theologically). Your struggles and emotional affinity with and your involvement in their long march against injustice, oppression, and corruption body forth in a theology that makes sense. You are one with them in more ways than one. They not only understand your theology, but they also contribute to your theology by way of making your theology down to earth. In the process, communication in ministry formation takes place.

Among other things, WOCATI is endeavouring to explore ways and means to advance communication in ministry formation. For example, WOCATI has set up sub-committees to research into ways theological educators all over the world can come to a better understanding on:

- a. Academic credentials
- b. Women in theological education
- c. Influence of cultures in theological education
- d. Scholarship and research

I covet your prayers as the four sub-committees attempt to do their work. The impending April 1994 Executive Committee meeting in Paris will try to pool together all our resources and talents as we seek to help each other to understand better communication in ministry formation.

I know that many of you would want to join me in expressing our appreciation of the contributions, ministry, and leadership of Dr. Barbara Brown Zikmund as she touches base with leading theological educators all over the world in her capacity as the Secretary-Treasurer of WOCATI. All this in addition to her work as a seminary president! Thank you, Barbara.

**LIBRARIES:
BRIDGING THE LOCAL AND THE GLOBAL**

*By John A. Bollier
Director of Development
American Theological Library Association (ATLA)**

Introduction

The first World Congress of the World Conference of Associations of Theological Institutions (WOCATI), meeting in Pittsburgh, U.S.A. in June 1992, called for bridging the widening gap between globalization and contextualization. As reported in the first issue of its newsletter,¹ WOCATI emphasized the need for reconciling valid expressions of localism with the relentless advancement of globalization. In an age of inter-dependence and religious pluralism, it sensed that the best expressions of a local culture and the continuing awareness of universality must somehow find ways toward friendly co-existence and even productive partnership.

Theological libraries, with their long tradition of promoting cooperative enterprises, are surely one of those bridges WOCATI seeks to span the ever widening gap between the contextual and the global. North American theological libraries, working together through the American Theological Library Association (ATLA) since its founding in 1947, provide convincing evidence of the validity of this assertion. In numerous programs throughout almost half a century, ATLA has encouraged its 180 library members and its 500 individual members to cooperate in continental-wide efforts for meeting urgent local needs.

With this long experience in bridging local and universal interests and a more recent awareness of globalization in both the theological community and the communications industry, ATLA has begun to expand its vision beyond North America by forging global partnerships with those who share its concerns. These partnerships in both North America and globally focus on the three areas that have traditionally defined ATLA's mission:

the use of technology for providing access to theological literature.

the preservation of library materials for resource sharing.

the providing of ecumenical opportunities for professional development. Technology for Access to Theological Literature

In order to meet the increasing demands of their users, libraries have been adopting and adapting for many years the technology of the communications revolution. Libraries with the appropriate equipment and expertise can now transmit bibliographic records, and even full texts, over high-speed networks that cross the barriers of national boundaries, ethnic origin or religious creed. Or if a local infrastructure does not offer online network access to the database desired, the whole database can be formatted electronically on a CD-ROM (Compact Disc-Read Only Memory), sent via post and read with a computer connected to a CD-ROM player. Thus, the global and the contextual come together as the vast uni-

verse of bibliographic data now becomes accessible to even the most remote locations.

Moreover, in this exchange, the contextual, i.e., the local library, is encouraged to contribute its unique bibliographic records to the global, i.e., the comprehensive database. Thus, the local source becomes a strategic partner in the whole communications network, which depends upon the contextual contribution for enriching the universal database.

However, as the use of automation continues to expand, the bibliographic community is developing an information retrieval protocol to enable one system to search for records and receive data from another system unimpeded by differences in local record formats and hardware configurations.² ATLA is particularly concerned about the compatibility of computer systems being developed by theological indexing services and information centers throughout the world. For if the various publishers producing religion indexing tools in Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas develop idiosyncratic and incompatible systems, it will be impossible for them to exchange their information easily and economically on a global basis. Thus, a new Tower of Babel will develop, with technology widening the chasm between contextualism and globalization, rather than bridging it.

To encourage globally compatible systems, ATLA has developed indexing software that is based on the USMARC (U.S. Machine-Readable Cataloging) standard. This widely accepted «tagged format» for creating cataloging records in any language enables the user to identify up to 44 «fields» in a record, e.g., Main Entry, Title, Edition, Imprint, Series Title, Subject, etc., to search this data in a variety of ways and to transmit it to computer systems using USMARC or a USMARC-compatible format. USMARC or USMARC-compatible systems with national variations, such as UKMARC (United Kingdom), CANMARC (Canada) and UNIMARC (Universal), have now been adopted by the national libraries of Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Japan, New Zealand, Russia, Spain and the United Kingdom. Others in the process of adopting such standards are Brazil, Chile, Italy, Norway and Venezuela. There is also a high likelihood that the systems now adopted by the Czech Republic, Croatia, Slovenia, Georgia, Switzerland, Finland and South Africa will conform to this universal standard.³

As well as using a MARC-based system for its current records, ATLA is converting all its older records back to 1949 into this format. By the end of 1994 ATLA anticipates that all 800,000 records in its database will be in this universally accessible format.

These records, known as the *ATLA Religion Database*, are contained in the

following annual publications:

Religion Index One (RIO). Begun modestly in 1949 and expanded annually, *RIO* now provides indexes by subject heading, by author-editor and by Scripture citation for more than 12,000 articles in approximately 500 international journals published in English and other Western European languages.

Religion Index Two: Multi-Author Works (RIT): Provides indexes by subject heading, by author-editor and by Scripture citation for 783 Festschriften in religion, 1960-1969, and annually since 1970 to the present, for more than 450 multi-author works, including Festschriften, conference proceedings, and congresses.

Index to Book Reviews in Religion (IBRR): Contains indexes by author-editor, by book title, by series, by reviewer and by classified subjects to 12,500 book reviews culled from 500 international journals, 1949 to the present.

Research in Ministry: An Index to D.Min. Projects and Theses (RIM). Offers indexes by subject heading and by author, with abstracts, to these materials produced in North American theological schools from 1981 to the present.

In addition to these four continuing annual indexes, which provide in-depth coverage for all disciplines in theology/religion and related fields, ATLA also published in 1993, with support from The Pew Charitable Trusts, a special index to printed materials in selected U.S. libraries that document Christian life and mission in the non-Western world. The *International Christian Literature Documentation Project Index (ICLDP)*, Vol. 1, Subject Index; Vol. 2, Author-Editor, Corporate Sponsor Index, contains 18,635 bibliographic records for monographs and pamphlets, along with indexing for 6,774 recent essays in 1,843 multi-author works.

All these indexes are available in print format and also online through the U.S. vendor, Dialog. *RIO*, *RIT*, *IBRR* and *RIM* are also available electronically in CD-ROM (Compact Disc-Read Only Memory). The *ICLDP Index* will be available on a CD-ROM in late 1994. *RIO* is available on magnetic tape now, and the other indexes soon will be, for loading into a local library's Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC).

In May 1994, ATLA will publish for the first time its new *Ethics Index* which will be available only on CD-ROM. It is intended not only for theological schools, but also for broader use in schools of medicine, law, business, the social sciences, and humanities generally.

ATLA now produces two CD-ROMs: *ATLA Religion Database*, 1949 to the present, which is intended to support religious and theological scholarship in grad-

uate education and faculty research; and *Religion Indexes: RIO/RIT, IBRR 1975-*, which is tailored for undergraduate academic and public libraries' needs to support current research in religion and related fields. Prices of all these indexes in either print or electronic format, are available from ATLA headquarters.

To foster the compatibility and exchange of bibliographic information, ATLA is willing to share its customized MARC-compatible software with non-profit religion indexes and individual bibliographers throughout the world. This software will enable users to enter data, evaluate it, correct it, transfer it to other systems, provide for various output formats (print, digital and electronic) and distribute it electronically to MARC users. ATLA believes that this format, suitably expanded in the light of further experience, could come to serve as the «lingua franca» for indexing services.

Some religion index publishers have already begun working with ATLA toward adopting this common system. For example, the *South African Theological Bibliography*

plans to implement the use of the ATLA software for its production in 1994. ATLA is also discussing the deployment of this data input and production software with other indexes in the United States, Europe, and Latin America. Indexes using the ATLA software would continue to own and control their data, but ATLA could offer technical assistance and help with distribution and other business matters.

ATLA is also working toward the development of an online bibliographic network among theological libraries and information centers. Such a network will facilitate the global distribution of bibliographic records and enable ATLA to undertake a document delivery service. Currently ATLA is planning a pilot project with the Library of the Biblical Seminary of Latin America in Costa Rica and other Latin American libraries as the first phase of such an online network. The Latin American Bibliographic Network anticipates using the existing international telecommunication network, Internet, as its carrier. In 1994, ATLA expects to establish at its Evanston headquarters an Internet node, which will provide 24-hour access for several service features, such as e-mail and listserv. ATLA will also mount several databases and bibliographies on this system. One of the databases that ATLA plans to develop will contain cataloging records in Spanish, English and other languages. Access to these records would appreciably increase cataloging production and reduce its cost for participating Latin American and Caribbean theological libraries.

Moreover, the conversion of records to machine-readable form would enable a participating library to produce its catalog in electronic format, as either an

Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC) or as a CD-ROM. Such a catalog, especially on CD-ROM, could easily be duplicated and installed in off-campus sites where the library's parent institution offers Theological Education by Extension. Both the main library and the off-campus sites would also have access to ATLA's proposed document delivery service.

These expanding applications of technology enable libraries to provide global access to theological literature and thus, build bridges of understanding between the contextual and the global.

Preservation for Resource Sharing

ATLA's long commitment to providing bibliographic access to current theological literature has been matched by a similar commitment to preserving and making accessible nineteenth and early twentieth century theological literature, which is rapidly disappearing because of its acidic, brittle paper. Thus, as early as 1957 ATLA began a cooperative program for the preservation microfilming of periodicals, especially those which commercial vendors were not likely to film. To date this program has filmed 1,800 periodicals, which libraries may purchase on demand.

In the meantime, ATLA and its member libraries conducted a series of studies which documented the urgent need for preserving nineteenth and early twentieth century monographs before they also were irretrievably lost due to the deterioration of their paper. In a 1976 study of its monographic collection, Princeton Theological Seminary's Speer Library found that the paper in its books published 1860-1929 was so brittle that most of these volumes could not be rebound.⁴ In a 1979-1981 study of 82 theological libraries, ATLA estimated that there are 218,000 unique monographic titles in religion published 1860-1929, representing 25 8,776 volumes. Because of the widespread use of acidic paper in book publishing during this period, ATLA considered virtually all of these works to be on the endangered list.⁵ And in a 1984 study of North American theological libraries sponsored jointly by the Association of Theological Schools and ATLA, it was reported that «70 percent of the printed and manuscript resources which will be available in our theological libraries at the turn of the next century, are, by definition, candidates for advanced deterioration.»⁶ Other studies demonstrated the same deteriorating condition of materials in academic and research libraries throughout the U.S.⁷

The solution to a preservation problem of such magnitude was obviously beyond the resources of any individual theological library, even the largest and strongest, working alone. Thus, ATLA undertook a cooperative monograph preservation program in 1987. This program was soon recognized as an integral com-

ponent of the U. S. national effort to preserve endangered library materials. To date this ATLA program, at a rate of 4,000 volumes annually, has preserved and made accessible 30,000 carefully selected volumes, which form a core collection in theology and related disciplines. Recognizing the urgency of this preservation problem, ATLA plans to increase its annual filming production in 1994 from 4,000 to 8,000 volumes.

After firmly establishing its monographs preservation program, ATLA has now accelerated the preservation of endangered periodicals with a new program begun in January 1993. The first three-year phase of this program will film 300 significant international periodicals published between 1850 and 1950. Staff, assisted by a panel of recognized scholars, have carefully selected these titles to assure the wise use of limited resources.

Both the monographs and the periodicals that ATLA films for preservation are provided to ATLA without charge by its member libraries from both university related divinity schools and free standing, denominationally related, theological seminaries. Libraries receive a positive microfilm or microfiche copy in exchange for the book or periodical they have donated for filming. However, if a particular work is still in fair condition and has bibliographical significance due to an author's autograph, marginal notes, illustrations, etc., it will be returned to the donor library after filming, if so requested.

Some of the major donors of materials to the ATLA preservation programs are the libraries of Harvard Divinity School, Yale Divinity School, Union Theological Seminary, Princeton Theological Seminary, Graduate Theological Union, Candler School of Theology at Emory University, McCormick Theological Seminary, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary and Seabury-Western Theological Seminary.

ATLA, following the lead of the U.S. preservation community, continues to use microfilm for its preservation programs as this medium alone has commonly accepted standards and provides the assurance that its master negatives, if stored under archival conditions, will last for centuries. However, ATLA keeps abreast of current research that is developing the means for digitizing texts from microfilm. When such a process is commercially available at a reasonable cost, ATLA plans to offer its microfilmed texts in electronic format so that they may be read with a computer.

All the monographs and periodicals ATLA has filmed since 1987 have been cataloged according to the USMARC standard, with the records entered into the two U.S. bibliographic networks, OCLC (Online Computer Library Catalog) and RLIN (Research Libraries Information Network) and into the Canadian network,

Utlas. These records will also appear on ATLA's new bibliographic network when it comes online. Thus, users with network access can readily determine whether ATLA has filmed a particular title and order copies as needed. Those without access to these online networks may inquire of ATLA concerning availability of specific titles. Monograph titles include materials published in English and other Western European languages from 1850 through 1917. Periodicals include international titles beginning at the same date, but running to the mid-twentieth century.

Because of the large number of titles ATLA has preserved in microformat, it is no longer economically feasible to publish a printed catalog. However, ATLA has identified groups of materials, such as reference works in Bible or Church History or works documenting particular denominations, which it can supply as sets. It can also produce customized lists of available materials based upon subject requests. Details concerning availability of particular titles and prices will be provided upon request.

Funding for ATLA's preservation efforts since 1987 has been provided by subscription income from over 60 ATLA member libraries and by grants from the U.S. National Endowment for the Humanities, the Pew Charitable Trusts, the Henry Luce Foundation and the Lilly Endowment.

By sharing their unique resources with the whole world of scholarship through ATLA's preservation programs, theological libraries continue to build enduring bridges between the local and the global.

Ecumenical Partnership for Professional Development

Since its beginning, ATLA has considered the professional development of theological librarians as a central component of its mission. In pursuing this goal, ATLA members have discovered that regardless of their denominational affiliation or ecclesiastical tradition, they can improve their service to theological education and research by working together rather than separately. Thus, while ATLA began in 1947 as a Protestant organization, it soon became completely ecumenical so that its membership now represents the full spectrum of mainline, evangelical and pentecostal Protestant, Roman Catholic and Orthodox Christians. It has also expanded in recent years from serving only a theological school constituency to serving also those engaged in religious studies at universities and colleges. Through such broadening ecumenical experience in pursuing professional goals, libraries working through ATLA have long been engaged in bridge-building.

The three day ATLA Annual Conference, and the one day Continuing Ed-

ucation Workshops preceding it, are particularly important in bringing together librarians representing the whole religious spectrum. These events attract approximately 250 ATLA members and visitors at a host institution in the United States or Canada. Guest lecturers, scholarly papers, panels, seminars and discussion groups address current theological and professional issues. Library concerns on the agenda regularly include such areas as technical services, public services, collection development, management, automation, archives, networks, preservation, bibliographic instruction, library buildings and rare books. The Conference also provides for informal conversation and fellowship, through which lasting friendships develop among librarians of different theological and national backgrounds.

ATLA's 48th Annual Conference will be held at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, U.S.A., June 15-18, 1994. The registration fee will be US\$90 and cost for board and room approximately US\$200. The one day Continuing Education Workshops preceding the Annual Conference will cost an additional US\$60. With gifts from members, ATLA expects again this year to pay the Annual Conference registration fee and the Continuing Education fee for all members who are attending for the first time. International visitors are welcome to attend both events. Further information on the 1994 Annual Conference and Continuing Education Workshops will be available by February 1994 from ATLA headquarters.

For its institutional members, ATLA provides a unique service in its Library Materials Exchange Program. This program has developed cooperative guidelines and channels for the exchange of duplicate library materials among member libraries.

In summary, theological libraries, working together through ATLA, build bridges between the local and the global by using technology to provide universal access to theological literature, by preserving their unique collections for distribution world-wide, and by providing opportunity for ecumenical partnership in professional service. These libraries through ATLA are now ready to enter into wider partnerships with all those who share their vision and wish to cooperate in achieving new goals none can attain alone. Any libraries, associations, indexes or individuals interested in joint ventures with ATLA, are invited to contact the ATLA Executive Director, Albert E. Hurd. See the box below for address and further information.

NOTES

- *The American Theological Library Association (ATLA), an independent, non-profit organization of 180 theological libraries and 500 librarians in the U.S. and Canada, works closely with The Association of Theological Schools in the U.S. and Canada (ATS). ATLA Address: 820 Church Street, Suite 300, Evanston, Illinois, 60201, U.S.A. Telephone: 708-869-7788; Fax: 708-869-8513. Executive Director: Albert E. Hurd. Annual dues for individual members in U.S., Canada, and other industrial countries: US\$30 - US\$100, based on salary level; for all student members and for librarians in developing countries: US\$15. Subscription to Annual Conference Summary of Proceedings and quarterly ATLA Newsletter: for members, free; for non-members, US\$30.
1. *WOCATL News* 1 (February 1993):1, 3, 5-8.
 2. ATLA participates in this effort as a voting member of the National Information Standards Organization (NISO).
 3. As reported in an electronically distributed paper, August 8, 1993, by the Foreign MARC Task Group of the Cooperative Cataloging Council of the U.S. Library of Congress, John Byrum, chair.
 4. Louis Charles Willard, «An Analysis of Paper Stability and Circulation Patterns of the Monograph Collections of Speer Library, Princeton Theological Seminary,» in *Essays on Theological Librarianship, Presented to Calvin Henry Schmitt*, eds. Peter DeKlerk and Earl Hilgert (Philadelphia: ATLA, 1980), 163-173.
 5. Ronald F. Deering, Albert E. Hurd and Andrew E. Scrimgeour, «Collection Analysis Project Final Report: Ad Hoc Committee for the Preservation of Theological Materials,» *ATLA Summary of Proceedings* (1981), 162-206.
 6. Stephen L. Peterson, «Theological Libraries for the Twenty-first Century: Project 2000 Final Report,» *Theological Education XX* (Supplement 1984):43-44.
 7. Cf. *Brittle Books: Reports of the Committee on Preservation and Access* (Washington: Council on Library Resources, 1986).

THE 1994 PARIS WORKSHOP

3 working papers

A. THEOLOGICAL SCHOLARSHIP AND RESEARCH

(Working Document of the 2nd WOCATI Congress)

1. Introduction

This paper is one of three submitted by the Executive Committee of WOCATI to member associations in preparation for the next WOCATI CONGRESS to be held in Nairobi, Kenya, in 1996. In 1992, the Executive Committee endorsed the terms of reference of this particular paper as being a study of:

ways in which theological scholarship and research are being developed according to different methods and criteria of excellence.

A working group of five was appointed, and during 1993 two drafts of the paper were prepared. Then in April 1994, the members of the working group met, together with members of the other three working groups and the Executive Committee, and completed this draft. This will form the basis of discussion on the theme of theological scholarship and research at the 1996 CONGRESS.

2. Background

From its beginning, WOCATI has expressed a commitment to excellence of theological scholarship. In its constitution, adopted in June 1989 at its inaugural meeting in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, one of the main purposes of WOCATI is affirmed as follows:

To identify and advocate excellence in theological scholarship and ministerial practice and to encourage full compliance with the standards and purposes as established by member associations. (Section 8)

At the first WOCATI CONGRESS held in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA in June 1992, this issue of excellence of theological scholarship and research was one of the central themes to emerge in discussions. It was linked with discussions on the global nature of theological education, and the unease felt by many delegates about the manner in which globalization had been emphasised within certain Northern contexts. It was felt that much of the emphasis upon globalization within seminaries in the North, commendable as it is, was placed within a framework of theological education that was grounded upon certain criteria of excellence. These criteria were very much shaped by the canons of excellence influential within the Western/Northern academic tradition, with a heavy emphasis upon theological scholarship and education being pursued within discrete disciplines.

This in turn has given rise to a growth in specialization to such a degree that many have pointed to the deleterious effects of fragmentation within theolog-

ical scholarship. However, many of these critiques have tended to assume criteria of excellence in theological scholarship dependent upon the Western intellectual tradition. Thus when theological educators from all regions of the globe came together, as they did in Pittsburgh for the WOCATI CONGRESS, globalization in theological education took on some new perspectives.

2.1 Globalization

A reconsideration of the term «globalization» is seen as necessary. It is recognized that it is a legitimate and important concern for North American theological educators, and the significance of their work is acknowledged. Globalization can challenge all particular theologies and theological methods from claiming to be one authentic, universal theology. However, the working group was aware of serious reservations being expressed about the term, and the way it could be used as another form of imposition upon developing theologies in other contexts. It would be unfortunate if globalization and contextualization were placed in opposition to each other, as both are necessary perspectives in contemporary theological scholarship and research.

The working group sought for another term that could better express the importance contained within the search for a global awareness of the theological task. One suggestion that is offered is: a coherent, ecumenical, global perspective. The force of the adjectives, «ecumenical» and «global» are self-evident. Coherence is important in that it expresses the authenticity and distinctiveness of different contextual theologies, as well as the need to bring these contextual theologies into interrelationship with others. There is also a form of inner coherence required for contextual theological scholarship, in that those engaged in this exercise need to search for coherence between their particular cultural identity and their identity as Christians, as members of the one Body of Christ, the «one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.» Thus the working group concentrated on how this coherent, ecumenical, global perspective to theological scholarship and research could be achieved. Central to the group's considerations was the concept of dialogue and also of the need to answer the question of where does the locus of Christian faith reside. This paper outlines the responses to these questions.

3. Excellence of Theological Scholarship

The interrelationship between contextualization and the search for a coherent, ecumenical, global perspective gives rise to a re-examination of what constitutes excellence of theological scholarship. Criteria of excellence of theological scholarship must include serious consideration of the sources, methods, and purposes of such scholarship.

The working group recognized considerable value in Robert Schreiter's outline of four forms of theological expression that he has identified throughout the world:

- Theology as Variations on a Sacred Text
- Theology as Wisdom
- Theology as Sure Knowledge
- Theology as Praxis.'

Schreiter's twofold purpose in identifying these different expressions of theological inquiry and scholarship corresponds to the two basic points of focus examined in this paper. One is the recognition of the importance of contextualization. Schreiter states that one of his purposes was to show how theology is:

to open church tradition in a different way, by seeing it as a series of local theologies, closely wedded to and responding to different cultural conditions.² The second is related to the purpose of searching for unity within theological scholarship. Schreiter believes that a recognition of the various forms of theology allow local cultural and religious expressions of theology to converse more easily with the church tradition, «thereby offering a better chance of maintaining a genuine catholicity in a local church's expression of its faith».³ Thus the criteria of excellence of theological scholarship must take serious account of the interplay between these two points of focus of the basic purpose of theological scholarship.

3.1 Scholarship

Two other issues related to excellence of theological scholarship are important to be recognized at this point. One is the understanding one has of scholarship. There can be the tendency to identify authentic scholarship only with a limited number of theological methods. It is commonly used in relation to writing and research completed within a university context, and/or published in scholarly and professional journals and books. To limit the understanding of scholarship to these forms can be an undue restriction and a serious disservice to other ways in which theological scholarship can be undertaken and expressed. For example, in addition to the forms of scholarship directed to the search for new information and understanding, and integrating these findings into new perspectives, there is also the importance of the scholarship of *praxis*. In this form of scholarship recognition is given to how learnings can both arise from the life of communities and how these learnings can be applied to address human problems.

3.2 Critical Inquiry

By broadening and deepening one's understanding of both the theological task and of the meaning of scholarship in the ways suggested above, further atten-

tion is required to be given to the importance of critical inquiry. These forms of critical inquiry, as with all criteria for excellence of theological scholarship, must be congruent with the nature and purpose of any particular theology and the method it follows.

One fruitful way of exploring further the issues involved in bringing critical inquiry to bear upon one's theological scholarship and research is an examination of the role played by one's partners. Partners have a twofold meaning. They represent the other disciplines necessary to assist theology to explicate the meaning and truth of Christian revelation. Within the Northern tradition of theological scholarship, the disciplines of philosophy, history, and literary and textual inquiry have been prominent and influential partners. More recently, the disciplines of psychology, sociology, and hermeneutics have become of greater importance. This has meant that much of the bases and direction of critical inquiry within theological scholarship have been shaped by the insights arising from these disciplines.

However, other forms or expressions of theology, especially many from within the southern world, have utilized the insights of different partners and/or appropriated the insights of the traditional partners in different ways. Thus we have seen the emergence of the disciplines of political science and economics as partners to theological scholarship, as well as a different appropriation of such disciplines as history and sociology being followed. The impact of this is to make one aware of the different forms of critical inquiry that will arise from the influence of one's partners in theological scholarship.

Secondly, partners also mean the people to whom theology and theological education is addressed. If theology is to be addressed to the whole people of God, then there needs to be an expansion of one's awareness of the influence of some partners previously overlooked in much of theological scholarship. Increasingly, Christian theology is evolving in contexts that are heavily influenced by the presence of people of other faiths. Also, recent developments in liberation and political theology have been influenced by the recognition of the partnership of the «forgotten» people, or the «non-people»— those crushed by the forces of the dominant culture. When theological scholarship and education accept the presence of these people as partners in the theological enterprise, new forms of critical inquiry are needed.

4. Essential Components in Contemporary Theological Scholarship and Research

In the light of its reflections upon theological scholarship and research from a coherent, ecumenical, global perspective, the working group identified four essential components in such contemporary scholarship.

4.1 Contextualization

There is an increasing recognition that contextualization is a *sine qua non* of contemporary theological scholarship. Reference has been made to Schreier's observation that theology, as a series of local theologies, is «closely wedded to and responding to different cultural conditions.» Thus theologians are faced with a twofold task of establishing criteria of excellence which are congruent with both the historic Christian tradition/s and, at the same time, appropriate for their particular cultural contexts.

It is to be noted that for many the starting point of theological scholarship and research is no longer the common Christian core of doctrine but the experience of the people of God in a given context.⁴ Such scholarship includes a profound recognition of the importance of the experience of the poor and marginalized in their society, whether that be due to social, economic, political, or religious reasons.

Furthermore, theological scholarship developing from such a contextual basis can only be expressed in particular culturally conditioned forms. Thus the cross-cultural theological task becomes important; «cultural» in signifying the specificity and non-repeatability of the particular features and dynamics of each cultural setting; «cross» indicating the desire and necessity of reaching beyond the particular and demonstrating its ecumenical perspective.

4.1. (a) Contextualization and indigenous languages

In discussions at the WOCATI CONGRESS in 1992 and continued in the working group, the crucial importance of the need for theological scholarship and research to be carried out in the indigenous languages of the people was emphasised. Contextualization goes hand in hand with the use of indigenous languages. The reasons for this are many and compelling. In many societies throughout the world the oral transmission of theology is more important than written texts. Allowing people to use indigenous languages makes it easier to recognize the importance of the theologies of the people that are emerging from their experience.

Translation of indigenous languages into English or German, and vice-versa, is never a neutral process and can distort the particularities of many important cultural insights and expressions. The majority of Christian communities throughout the world do not use English or German for their worship and community life activities, nor in their witness and service in their societies. Of particular pertinence to theological scholarship is that many of the canons of excellence and critique developed within theological scholarship have been formulated in Northern languages. This can lead to alien criteria of excellence and of critical methodologies being applied to theological scholarship and education expressed in in-

digenous languages, especially in their oral form.

In our discussions, we recognized the complexity of the issue. Some African countries have many languages. For example, in Zambia there are 72, of which eight are official. Also languages are not confined to the colonial boundaries imposed upon Africa. However, it is heartening to note that some member associations of WOCATI are addressing this issue, and have taken initiatives to encourage the writing and transmission of theology in indigenous languages. In Appendix A, reference is made to two projects that have been initiated by The Association for Theological Education in South East Asia (ATE-SEA).

4.2 Dialogue

The working group became convinced of the importance of dialogue as an essential component in contemporary theological scholarship, not simply as peripheral to, or as a consequence of such scholarship, but as central to its methodology, content, and goal. The content of theological scholarship is grounded upon the divine revelation, centered upon God's self-disclosure in the incarnation. This can be understood as God's dialogue with the people within certain historical settings. The theological significance of dialogue has been emphasised in recent times by several writers, especially by Wesley Ariarajah. Not only does Ariarajah maintain that, in the light of God as Creator, dialogue affirms that this world is God's world, but also that dialogue is at the heart of the cross. He expands his conviction that the incarnation is God's dialogue with the world in this way:

Here the biblical message is unambiguously dialogical. For it insists on the «previousness» of grace, and of God's acceptance of us before our acceptance of God It is this belief that the other person is as much a child of God as I am that should form the basis of our relationship with our neighbours. That attitude is at the heart of being in dialogue.⁵

Thus it is not only from the perspective of God as Creator that brings us to the necessity of dialogue, thereby establishing the basis of inter-religious dialogue. The central events of Christian revelation, focused in the incarnation, also point to the necessity of dialogue. Here is the focus of God's communication with the people and the revelation of God's nature and character as love. Dialogue can be practised as a process of seeking the truth of reality, of penetrating further into the truth of God's revelation, and also leading to a redemptive experience for the people engaged in dialogue.

4.2(a) Dialogue and contextualization

The theological importance of dialogue is strengthened within contextual theologies. For here, the theologians are engaged in a fundamental form of dialogue

between their identity as Christians and their identity as people of a particular culture and society. Mention has been made of the important role partners play in the theological task. Here, we are suggesting that dialogue, the respectful but not uncritical listening and talking with other people, constitutes one essential component of theological scholarship. The importance of dialogue is intensified when we acknowledge as Christian theologians that we, too, are partners on a journey towards appropriating the fullness of God's grace and truth. Thus we must be open to the way our partial insights are to be challenged and enriched through our willingness to enter into genuine dialogue, not only with fellow Christians, but also with people of other faiths and others with whom we live and work.

4.2.(b) Dialogue and theological education

Theological education has shared a common concern with many other forms of education in disclosing reality to people and equipping them to respond in such a way to live fully and creatively in the present and into their future. However, theological education has a particular goal of enabling people to mature in Christian faith and practice, and to be partners with God in God's mission of redemptive love to the world.

Contextual theologies have given attention to the dialogical method of education. Many have been influenced by the insights of Paulo Freire.⁶ In his critique of the traditional forms of pedagogy, (the «banking» concept of education), Freire maintains that this not only tends to prevent the free development of students, but has another, often unrecognized, effect. The «banking» system can be a powerful agent in preserving the *status quo*, which many experience as oppressive and dehumanizing. This tendency has been noted by many educators in the Southern world. It is significant to note that Freire suggests a form of education, the «problem-posing» concept, which is dialogical in nature, whereby both teacher and student become partners on the journey of searching for the truth. The importance to theological scholarship and education of this dialogical approach to education is that it not only promises an atmosphere of creativity, but is also a way of leading oppressed people to liberation.

4.2. (c) Dialogue and contextual theologies

Dialogue is also essential to the way the various contextual theologies are to interact with each other. The unity we share in Christ does not mean the acceptance of any one particular theological expression as being universally definitive, nor does it mean a disregard of one another's witness and theology. Therefore, the dialogical process should concentrate not only on the one gospel, but also the ways its truth is being expressed in different contexts and with a range of cultural resources. WOCATI could provide one important forum, not simply

allowing us to search for what we hold in common, but also encouraging a dynamic interaction between theologians to the mutual enrichment of the global theological enterprise.

4.3 Unity

After affirming the contextual nature of theology, and taking account of the indispensable nature of dialogue to the theological task, the working group faced the inescapable question: Wherein does the unity of Christian theology reside? It has been mentioned that the term globalization can imply another form of domination that would endanger the autonomy of the various contextual theologies.

However, for theology to seek for a coherent, ecumenical, global perspective requires the recognition that Christian theology, no matter how many and varied be its expressions, must have a common point of reference, a unifying element within all forms of theological scholarship and research. The working group focused upon the issue of unity in both general terms and in the specific ecclesiological use of the term as the ongoing search to restore the given unity of the church. This included consideration of the unifying and saving nature of the Christ event, continually re-enacted through his Body, the Church, in the life-giving and communion-restoring Holy Spirit. It was noted that the first sentence in the preamble to the constitution of WOCATI states, «Theological education is a worldwide enterprise fundamental to the mission of the church.»

Thus theology, both as the conscience of the living community and one of the fundamental tasks of the community, is inextricably related to the church. By understanding the church, not in institutional terms but as *koinonia*, as the people of God called to witness to God's restoring presence, then the nature of the theological enterprise needs to be restructured. In particular, theological scholarship and research should be directed in such a way as to educate not only church leaders but the entire people of God. The prime purpose of theological education is not to educate pastors, priests, or missionaries in order that they may preserve and propagate certain Christian truths and ethical norms, but to build authentic Christian communities, proleptic manifestations of the kingdom of God. In this way, theological scholarship is conditioned by the nature of the church with its unity given as gift and demand by God.

This given unity of the church, which does not necessarily mean a strict unified structure, is given expression in an adherence to a broad understanding of Christian tradition. Such an understanding affirms not only the centrality of Christology, but also the constitutive nature of pneumatology, i.e., the normative nature of a Trinitarian understanding of Christian revelation.⁷ This Trinitarian understanding affirms the ultimate goal of the divine economy in terms of Christ becoming all in all, not only in a soteriological, but also in a cosmological way.

The communion God seeks and initiates is not only with the church in the conventional sense, but with the whole cosmos. Thus the unity of divine revelation, as represented in the broad understanding of Christian tradition, is for the entire created world, not only for believers. This understanding of unity is important to keep in mind as it challenges a potential distortion wherein unity is identified with the maintenance of denominational loyalty, which in turn can be an exercise of oppression, excluding suffering people from the community of the people of God.

This understanding of unity in theological scholarship informs and challenges all expressions of contextual theology. It does not locate the unity inherent within Christian theology with any ecclesiastical or doctrinal system, and recognizes the varied forms of human and social existence. In this way, it is congruent with the methodologies and goals of contextual theology. However, it also challenges these theologies in pointing out the indispensability of an adherence to a broad understanding and acceptance of Christian tradition as that which gives expression to the given unity of the church.

4.4 The search for a common understanding of excellence in theological scholarship

After identifying the above three necessary components of contemporary theological scholarship, the working group discussed the impact of these upon the methods of scholarly research. In particular, the question was addressed: Are there common levels or approaches that transcend the diverse contexts in which such scholarship occurs? It was recognized that one standard approach has been that of the critical method, with its varied modes of analysis, critique, evaluation, and historical reference. It was acknowledged that critical inquiry is a necessary dimension of searching for excellence in theological scholarship.

It constitutes the rigorous evaluation of the sources of theology and of the ways they have been transmitted within the variety of historical contexts. It also involves being critically aware of the forces—intellectual, social, cultural, political and religious—that shape the nature of one's perspectives and presuppositions by which one interprets the received tradition. It is important for this critical inquiry to incorporate the subtle nuances of context within its approach and methodology. Critical inquiry must be accountable to the context and thereby assist in enriching one's experience and understanding of the context. This in turn requires such critical inquiry to be conducted in a dialogical manner, incorporating a partnership with one's community and carried out in concert with many disciplines.

This approach recognizes many forms of critical inquiry. The effects of contextualization and dialogue mean the expansion of critical inquiry beyond the rational, historical forms dominant in most Northern theologies. For there are

ways of knowing that are outside the commonly accepted forms of critical understanding. These include the importance of intuitive, artistic, and emotive sources of theological understanding. While these forms must discover means of critical or communal accountability, excellence in theological scholarship must seriously consider such meanings as admissible, indeed desirable.

Thus the importance of the *scholarship of praxis* comes to the fore. As mentioned before, this scholarship of praxis not only incorporates the theoretical issues of theology into its method, but also those «texts» of church practice and the impact of the material conditions of the particular context. A scholarship of praxis embraces both an integrative approach to theological work by incorporating the nonrational elements of understanding, and the goal of personal and social transformation which is at the heart of the Christian message. The liturgical dimension of the Orthodox Church is an important element for consideration. This form of integration of theological method and its responsiveness to the context can contribute to a new unity of theological scholarship and research. It can forge new directions in understanding how the redemptive work of God is inextricably linked to the witness of the church, to the ultimate goal of the communion of the whole cosmos in the Triune God.

5. The Emerging Relationship between Theological Scholarship and Ministerial Formation

The changes suggested above in theological scholarship and research will have considerable impact upon ministerial formation. Many member associations are giving attention to this issue and a significant amount of literature is available in many regions of the world. In particular, note was taken of the project of Ecumenical Theological Education of the World Council of Churches on «The Viability of Ministerial Formation,» involving a number of regional consultations on the theme.

A number of questions were raised in the discussions of the working group. These included: Is ministerial formation a by-product of theological scholarship and research? Or, does the goal of ministerial formation play a significant role in defining excellence of theological scholarship and education? The emphases made in this paper on the purpose of theological education being for the whole people of God and upon the scholarship of praxis allow ministerial formation to contribute to excellence of theological scholarship. However, these emphases also challenge any restriction of theological education to any one group within the church.

The importance of spiritual formation in both ministerial formation and in theological education was noted. Recognition is to be given to the crucial importance of the liturgy in some Christian traditions. In these traditions, the litur-

gy provides a significant means of overcoming the break-down in confidence between scholarship and the church which has been caused, to a large degree, by the fragmentation of theology into autonomous disciplines. The liturgy can provide a means of ensuring a holistic soteriological and ecclesiological understanding of theological education and scholarship.

The nature of contextual theology, with its focus upon the concrete situations of the particular society means that ministerial formation cannot be pursued without those involved in such formation being in a significant and interactive relationship with their society. This could entail a greater involvement by ministerial students in the socio-political life of their society.

6. *Emerging Issues to be Addressed by Theological Scholarship and Research*

In the light of the approaches to theological scholarship and research outlined above, a number of issues were identified as those that demand attention. These issues, which are global in their impact, also impinge upon most particular societies and are of central importance to contemporary theological scholarship and research.

Human rights, especially the rights of women

Economies of countries *vis-a-vis* the Divine economy, with special consideration to levels of international debt

The growth of materialism and the consequent marginalization of religious values

Increasing ethnic and religious conflict

AIDS epidemic

The spread of arms and the incidence of war

Issues associated with the fullness and future of human life and human communities

Prospects for the use of technology for the enhancement of theological scholarship and research, especially in regard to libraries.

WOCATI can provide an environment to foster ways in which theologians can pursue the import of these issues, both by developing coherent, ecumenical, global perspectives on the significance of these issues to theology, and by being informed and challenged by theologians from other contexts.

NOTES

1. Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (London: SCM Press, 1985).

2. *Ibid.*, 93.

3. *Ibid.*, 94.

4. J. Meyendorff, «Theological Education in the Patristic and Byzantine Eras and its Les-

- sons for Today,» *Anaphora* 111, (Geneva: 1989), 401-414.
5. Wesley Ariarajah, *The Bible and People of Other Faiths* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, No. 26, Risk Book Series, 1985), 32.
 6. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, translated by Myra Bergman Ramos, (New York: Herder & Herder, 1971).
 7. John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion* (London: Daarton Longmann and Todd Ltd., 1985).

APPENDIX

Uses of Indigenous Languages in Theological Scholarship and Research

Two projects initiated by The Association for Theological Education in South East Asia (ATESEA) illustrate many of the positive and necessary steps that can be taken to encourage theological scholarship and research to be expressed in indigenous languages.

1. Chinese Theological Education Series (CTES)

This project commenced in 1962 with the purpose of translating a number of theological «classics» from English to Chinese. Support was given by the former Theological Education Fund of the World Council of Churches. Two regional committees were formed in Hong Kong and Taiwan. Qualified translators originally translated approximately 50 books, and these books have contributed greatly to Chinese theological education in the last three decades. A more recent policy has been introduced of publishing indigenous theological writings. Another significant decision recently made is that taken by the South East Asia Graduate School of Theology in adopting the policy of encouraging its Th.D. candidates to write their dissertations in their own languages. The present director and general editor of CTES is Dr. Yeow Choo Lak, and the two regional editors are Dr. Daniel Chow in Hong Kong and Dr. Huang Po Ho in Taiwan.

2. Bahasa Indonesia Theological Education Series (BITES)

This was launched in the 1980s and makes theological material available in Bahasa Indonesia. It is estimated that there are eight million Christians who would not have access to contextual theological literature unless it was available in Bahasa Indonesia. This project is run in conjunction with the Indonesian Association of Theological Schools. It fulfills its purpose by designating persons, especially those involved in theological education, to translate theological books, and then coordinates the publishing and distribution of these books. The coordinator of BITES, Dr. Meno Soebagio, works with a team of three other persons. Each member is responsible for translating one-third of each book, and Dr. Soebagio edits the final draft for publication.

B. WOMEN IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

(Working Document for the 2nd WOCATI Congress)

Introduction

In 1992, the WOCATI CONGRESS expressed concern about gross injustices resulting from "constraints, prohibitions, failures, and denials of persons (particularly women) who seek the services of theological education or who feel called to be theological educators." The CONGRESS expressed the need for "a more holistic representation and fullness in the theological community." Because of this concern, the CONGRESS charged the Executive Committee with the responsibility of specifically addressing the issue of women as an underrepresented group, despite the fact that they constitute half of the theological community.

Therefore WOCATI's Executive Committee chose a group of four women, representing four corners of the world, to present a wide range of perspectives on the role of women in theological education. The task common to all was to study the present status of women in theological formation, to evaluate the presence and absence of women in various positions within theological institutions, and to recommend means of enhancing women's participation in theological education.

Thus, on this rare occasion, the reality of African, European, Latin American, and South Pacific women involved with theological education was compared and contrasted. Initially, each member presented a draft paper that subsequently served as a basis for discussion. This was an opportunity to acknowledge the wealth of experiences that women, as theologians, have not yet been able to fully articulate and reflect upon. In spite of the social, economic, political, and cultural differences that characterize their contexts, there are also many commonalities and experiences shared by women which enabled us to have ground for mutual understanding and challenges.

Our insights are a way to reflect on these commonalities and to offer a contribution to the ongoing discussion on women in theological education. What we present does not aim to be universal, since there are many perspectives not yet represented. But, we speak from our own contexts and our own reality to the wider world of theological education. This is an attempt to build bridges to shorten the distance that still separates us.

I. THE PRESENT CONTEXT

For many years women theologians writing as concerned individuals and meeting together in professional forums have identified a number of problems

that confront women worldwide in theological education. These problems are ubiquitous and enduring and thus they need to be clearly stated. However, it is also important to record the ways in which women have worked creatively, despite their constraints, and to suggest means by which their position might be improved in the future.

1. *While the faith has consistently been passed on from woman's hand to woman's hand, formally organized theological education has been largely restricted to men and dominated by the requirements of clergy training.*

- a. It is important to recall that in some churches and regions theological education is still entirely a male preserve; women are not included at any level, in any role.
- b. In other places women have achieved varying degrees of access to theological education, but must continue to struggle as a minority group whose interests are often unseen. Where tokenism exists in the appointment of women whose voices are not heard, or who are selected because they do not offer an alternate voice, this is detrimental for both men and women.

Women cannot continue to be disadvantaged:

- in the practical arrangements that govern the day-to-day life of theological institutions;
 - in the models of ministerial formation that have been inherited from past traditions rather than reformulated in light of the current needs of the church;
 - in the syllabus based upon a male biblical and theological canon;
 - in the role models presented by faculty members and the "unwritten syllabus" that is discerned in the community life of the institution;
 - in a "token" presence that is simply one-dimensional rather than transformative in intention or situation.
- c. Women students face an insecure future in terms of unemployment, placement, and recognition in light of their studies. This has profound effect on their attitude toward their studies and their vocational aspirations.
 - d. Very commonly a two-tier system of theological education applies. It is considered necessary to equip male students with linguistic and theological skills whereas women may be channeled towards educative and pastoral roles. Their restricted access to theological discourse precludes women from exercising authority within the churches.
 - e. As the full range of ministerial vocation is not available to women, neither is the full range of theological education. Those roles which are made available to women are consequently undervalued in their place in the curriculum of theological education.

2. The world of theological education still remains an alien country which many women are wanting to enter. Women have not yet built their own homes or planted their own gardens.

- a. Theological discourse, including such key Christian concepts as sin, grace, and redemption, are still largely the product of the interpretive world of men. Women students have to forget their mother tongue, which voices their experience, in order to speak the language of their faith.
- b. Concerns that determine women's lives have not been the subject of ethical reflection, and both male and female students are thus unprepared to make a mature pastoral response to:
 - the appalling "everyday" violence women suffer at the hands of men;
 - the many moral and relational conflicts experienced in connection with women's reproductive lives;
 - the complex and specific cultural traditions, such as female "circumcision" and initiation rites that form and deform women's lives.
- c. the ways of cooperative working and the "unsystematic" theology that is often produced from marginal perspectives are frequently misunderstood in a world that values individual academic achievement according to the strict regulations of disciplinary guilds.
- d. Women experience differential access to communication. Heterodox views are less likely to be published than those of the theological mainstream. Further more, research has shown that the use of information technology, such as electronic mail, is frequently gender-based. This is likely to become a very significant issue in the future.
- e. Women who have found their way into positions of potential influence within theological institutions have a great deal to lose if they are labeled as those who continually raise women's issues. Women may become, willingly or unwillingly, complicit in the continuation of the status quo.
- f. However, in some centers of theological education women are teaching and researching, and the faculties are working in ways that encourage women to engage in reinterpreting the tradition, to rethink theological concepts, to propose new methodologies, and to create new hermeneutics. In such situations theological centers are enabling women to move beyond the current expectations of their roles and educational situations.

3. There are many obstacles that still bar the way to women's full participation.

- a. Chronic underfunding operates at many levels, for example:
 - church budgets are first allocated to ministerial training and women form only a small minority of those ordained;

- women find it hard to justify funding for research in new areas of feminist scholarship;
- women find it difficult to secure academic employment with the opportunity this offers both for personal development and structural change. Many women are "kitchen-table," "baby at the breast" theologians;
- women often experience the insecurity of teaching marginal subjects that do not form part of the (securely-funded) prescribed "core" curriculum;
- women find it difficult to meet together to pursue common professional concerns.

b. Because of the difficulties they encounter, many women feel compelled to accept the promise of academic freedom and financial security offered to them in countries which fund and support women's studies. Because academically trained women are in such short supply in many parts of the world, in many cases the results of such international "exchanges" have proved devastating to the home country.

c. The cost of receiving the new potential of women's theology is considerable. Feminist theology is an iconoclastic movement; it is destructive of many former "certainties," and of positions of inertia, as well as being pregnant with new possibilities. The pain of receiving new insights from women is illustrated in church contexts throughout the world. Nevertheless, new life might well be the fruitful issue of this blood-drenched birthing process.

4. *For women to become full partners in theological education will require acts of "liberation."*

- a. Economic recession and the impact of conservative social movements have resulted in an actual worsening of the position of women in many regions. An easy optimism based upon belief in a gradual movement towards women's equality can no longer be sustained. A return to more traditional understandings of women's roles in the churches will inevitably have an impact upon theological institutions, these will face difficult decisions concerning the support they give to women, and the opportunities they make available to them.
- b. Women themselves will need to continue to develop new ventures and training before there is financial or structural support for their initiatives. Women will need to ask themselves hard questions about where they put their energy and resources, and considerable sacrifices will be made.
- as academically trained women continue to support local initiatives in the training of lay women;
 - as Western women learn to share power in dialogue and to keep silent when

appropriate so that other women may speak;

- as women continue to offer their talents within their own cultures and churches when greater freedom and financial security may be enjoyed elsewhere.

In their endeavors women will need to differentiate between those actions that are directed toward change and those that merely serve to ameliorate an intolerable situation.

- c. While it is clear that it is not a feature of human nature to easily relinquish privilege and control it is also the case that many people have faithfully supported the women's cause for a number of years. This consistent work within the system is a vital component of change.
- d. Alongside aspects of feminist liberation are issues of theological imperialism that require a greater openness to dialogue, especially in regard to South-South contributions. Accusations of syncretism need to be reviewed to see if they have a sound basis or if they have their roots in an oppressive attitude to cultures and theological interpretations.

II. WOMEN IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION: THE ACHIEVEMENTS

Despite the many obstacles that women have to overcome in order to participate in theological education, women are claiming their right and obligation to participate in theology. They have manifested a high level of commitment and determination to do theology in spite of the rigidity of theological institutions. This determination and commitment have yielded significant results over the last 25 years.

During this period, a new body of theological knowledge distinctive from traditional theology has emerged, and has even been given a distinctive name, feminist theology. This theology has spread all over the world and many women from the various geographical, social, and cultural contexts have come to identify with it.

For these women, feminist theology is not only a new way of doing theology, it has also become a springboard from which women can do theological reflection, based on their own contexts, and also emphasize women's issues in theology. Women's determination to participate in theology has also resulted in significant efforts to research, write, and publish women's theological perspectives on virtually all aspects of theology, for example, biblical feminist theology and hermeneutics, and feminist perspectives on systematic theology, to name only two key aspects.

Women are also committed to fill the gap in terms of lack of information concerning the role of women in theology. A considerable amount of research and documentation has been carried out in order to highlight the extent of women's

contribution to theology and theological education, as well as the issues of concern expressed earlier in this paper.

Women around the world are carving out space within the discourse of theology by coming together under the umbrella of national and regional associations of women concerned with doing theology from a woman's perspective. One of the most exciting movements in the history of theological education is the emergence around the globe of such associations of women theologians. For example, in Africa, in 1989, the Circle of Concerned Women Theologians was formed. In Europe the Association for Women Doing Theological Research was formed in 1985, while similar associations have also been established in Asia, Latin America, and South Pacific regions.

The refreshing thing about women's theological activities is that this is not merely an additional way of doing theology; rather women are challenging theological narrowness in the curricula in theological institutions. In their theology, women are breaking out of the tunnel vision manifest in establishment theological education, and they are more inclusive in the content of their theological agenda. For example, women are proposing new ways of reflecting on ethics, eco-theological issues, alternate ways of doing systematic theology, and the creation of an inclusive and positive theology of sexuality.

It is also clear that women are not only breaking new ground in terms of theological content, they are also widening the horizons of the space within which theology is to be done. For example:

Women perceive the breadth of the curriculum as going beyond the classroom and the library. Aspects of formal and informal networking and community-building which are conducive to a greater academic and ministerial awareness are being embraced by women in theological education. This has resulted in the creation of formal networks such as Women's Studies Centers, the establishment of a Chair of Feminist Theology in some institutions, as well as occasional consultations on pertinent themes outside the confines of the academy.

Though informed largely by their immediate contexts, experience, and concerns, women are also pointing out the need to reach beyond their immediate contexts to reflect together, not only with local grassroots sisters, but also with women internationally, for example: international consultations, and debate, research, and publications on theological and other themes of concern from various global perspectives are being undertaken with significant success.

It is with a sense of pride and celebration that women claim their space within the theological enterprise. This, however, does not mean that there is no longer cause to be concerned. There is still much to be done, and in some areas, beginnings still have to be made. Women perceive the need for a continuing watchfulness and critical alertness as a vital necessity to ensure the continuity

of a genuine tradition of women's agency, and of women's participation as subjects in theological education, rather than as objects of theological analysis.

To this end, this paper also highlights certain areas of ongoing concern, and concludes by articulating aspects of the vision of women in and for theological education.

III. ISSUES FOR ONGOING CONSIDERATION

WOCATI Associations should continue to engage their constituencies in the discernment of appropriate ways to empower women in the local and regional theological education context.

Present leadership patterns within the various institutions should be examined to see whether they are gender-biased, exclusive, or inclusive of the whole range of human experience — in regard to gender, age, or race.

Present initiatives of teaching institutions within WOCATI directed towards the empowering of women should be surveyed to assess their effectiveness.

Although women have started to research and document ways in which religion impacts their lives, much more needs to be done, in light of the WCC's and other ecclesiastical bodies' affirmative action in trying to enable and empower women's research, writing, and their participation in theological discourse.

Lay theological education for women is to be promoted in theological institutions.

Curricula for theological and ministerial education should be reviewed to see that they are liberating for women and men as members of the human community, and that women's contributions to theological education are recognized as an integral part of the curriculum.

Theological education should take into account matters of more immediate concern to women, such as domestic and sexual violence against women, reproductive issues, taboos, witchcraft accusations. In order to address such issues the sharing of insights, resources, and personnel between the academic and the congregational worlds must be facilitated.

Theological institutions need even more openly to affirm the initiative that women have shown, both materially and morally, by:

- a. supporting research and discussion on women and theology;
- b. enabling women's publications and feminist research. The tension women experience in regard to acceptability, orthodoxy, employability, access to power and to publishing needs to be addressed openly.

Practical issues such as residences, originally built for males and requiring

adaptation for females, need to be addressed.

Theological institutions should offer possibilities for women to study or teach full-time or part-time, and for child care.

The workloads of women and men faculty members need to be examined, taking into account both formal and informal workloads.

The present elitism of much of the theological education available needs to be addressed. Questions about why women find it difficult to take advantage of theological education in terms of expectations, programming, time tables, scholarships, and funding need to be addressed.

The voices of women need to be heard in practical aspects of theological education. Women should be involved in the selection of faculty and students, in budget and building planning, and in curriculum development.

It is a priority that where women are trained in theological education, women should be on the faculty. The value of role models in society is significant.

In light of so many movements of women faculty from less privileged educational contexts to more affluent placements, it may be valuable for institutions to examine attitudes towards women, roles, and circumstances of women faculty to discern some motivations for departure.

IV. CONCLUDING COMMENTS

As we reflect on the present praxis of women and theological education, we perceive signs of hope alongside signs of explicit gender bias or inertia. As women who are engaged in the process of theological education, we affirm the signs of hope, and invite the collaboration of all in the eradication of prejudice and the healing of alienation and inertia.

We recognize that initiatives have been taken by men and women deeply committed to excellence in theological education, and to the affirmation of gospel values in the expression of these standards.

We believe that these initiatives will bear fruit for the total theological education enterprise, and thus for the redemptive work of our churches.

C. ACADEMIC DEGREES AND CREDENTIALS IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

(Working document for the 2nd WOCATI Congress)

I

The purposes of this paper are threefold: (1) To contribute to the understanding of the various systems, structures, and roles of academic credentials used by theological institutions throughout the world; (2) To foster discussion regarding the nature and significance that academic credentials should have in theological education; and (3) To propose ways whereby academic credentials can be assessed and interpreted by academic institutions and communities in countries and cultures other than their sources of origin.

Consideration of these purposes will constitute a part of the agenda of the convening of WOCATI CONGRESS 96. This paper is intended to provide a basis for consideration by the CONGRESS of the issues involved in current systems and practices of theological credentials.

II

Despite the long history of academic credentials, current attitudes, practices, and problems pose new questions regarding their use and significance in theological education.

Some find the idea of academic credentials incongruent, if not inimical, to the purposes of theological education. In many respects this critique of academic credentials is a form of the age-old claim that «Jerusalem has nothing to do with Athens,» and that the standards by which the academic community is structured have no place in determining the competencies that are required for church leadership. In a more general sense, questions regarding the significance of academic degrees undoubtedly reflect the growing separation between the church and the academy in our time.

Many advocates of the «theology by the people movements» are critical of traditional, institutionally based, degree-structured forms of theological education and the values these place on academic credentials as certification for church leadership. They charge that the tradition of valuing academic degrees leads to serious failures to acknowledge leadership competencies that are developed in other ways than academic study.

Others view the practices and uses of academic credentials as fostering the professionalization of the ministry, which is considered to be in sharp contrast to the concept of calling, servant leadership, and spirit-filled graces.

From the standpoint of practice, the relation between academic credentials and ordination is increasingly problematic for many churches. Churches without firmly established educational requirements for ordination tend to minimize the significance of academic degrees. Many churches which traditionally have required a graduate seminary degree or its equivalent for ordination have been moved to reassess such degree requirements out of concerns for feminist and minority interests and commitments to foster more inclusive leadership that reflects the pluralism of church constituencies.¹

5. Developments within theological education add to the mounting issues and problems related to academic credentials. The diversity of degrees that are currently used throughout the world and the absence of universally accepted criteria by which degrees are governed give rise to serious problems regarding the significance of degrees, their equivalencies, and their utility for the world community of theological schools and scholars. These problems are further complicated by the growing proliferation of degrees by theological schools, a trend that is most pronounced in the United States. In addition, in the effort to serve a more inclusive constituency, theological schools in many parts of the world are devising both programs and educational methodologies that are alternatives to degree structured theological education. For example, special certificate programs are being instituted for persons who either do not have the academic prerequisites for established degree programs or are in no position to follow formal programs of study. Still others are adopting educational strategies that acknowledge and build upon forms of learning and experience that may not be based on formal academic study. Finally, attitudes and practices within the academic community, especially the tendency to define academic degrees according to the number of course units accumulated rather than educational competence acquired, add further motivation and reason to question the significance of academic degrees.

But there are other, more positive mandates for reassessing theological credentials. It is implicit in the ongoing task of contextualizing theological education. This task consists of at least a two-step process. First of all, the significance and uses of theological credentials should reflect and serve the educational and ecclesiastical needs and influences of their indigenous cultural contexts. In order to accomplish this end, the academic traditions that have been inherited from the past need to be critically reviewed and revised as needed. Secondly, as this task is carried forward effectively, it entails a correlate one. The indigenous systems of theological credentials need to be related to the global community of theological schools. Both elements of this mandate, contextualization and globalization, constitute timely challenges to theological educators seeking to advance their callings both locally and in concert with their peers throughout the world.

III

Academic degrees are related to both the ends and the means of theological education.² For the degree recipient, degrees signify the completion of formal courses of study or the certification of educational achievements. As such, degrees may serve as proof of acquired abilities, qualification for professional position or appointment, or a requisite for further study. For theological institutions, degrees are formal mechanisms for structuring the pace, type, duration, and sequence of courses of study.

The social role of theological schools is twofold: to educate and to certify the recipients of education.³ In the latter case, theological schools function on the presumption that they are the appropriate and qualified agents of confirming to the church and the world at large that degree recipients have fully attained the educational purposes to which the credentials bear witness.

The terms, academic degrees and academic credentials, designate the formal means that institutions use to recognize and certify academic accomplishments. For such purposes, theological schools use a variety of forms. *Certificates* are used to recognize completion of courses of study that are often more limited in scope and subject matter than are degree programs. *Diplomas*, on the other hand, are documents that formally confirm the degree and the privileges that pertain to the degree, regardless of whether or not a formal system of degrees is in effect. In its more limited sense, *degrees* signify a rank or distinction conferred by an institution as mark of proficiency or completion of a designated course of study.⁴

This paper focuses on the academic degrees that are distinctive to theological institutions and which are granted on the basis of the authority and jurisdiction that theological institutions have in their own right.

Seven or eight years of study were required for the doctor or master's degree. The baccalaureate or bachelor's degree was conferred after four or five years of study and qualified a student to perform limited teaching responsibilities in a master's school. From the beginning, it designated the completion of the first course or period of study leading to the more senior degree. As such, the baccalaureate was not considered an end in itself but the initial stage of formal university studies.

In France, the baccalaureate came to signify the completion of secondary schooling, and the license became the first university degree. In England, the Bachelor of Arts became the major university degree and the Master of Arts something of a formality based upon informal study or research. In Germany, the bachelor's degree disappeared and the doctorate became the first university degree.

In the United States, the English model of degrees prevailed. The Bachelor of Arts was awarded after four years of study, and in the beginning, the Mas-

ter of Arts was granted «in cursu» to students who remained for three years and paid regular fees. As early as 1853, however, the Master of Arts was established as an earned degree and was termed «pro meritis» to distinguish it from the Master's Degree offered «in cursu.» The Doctor of Philosophy degree was introduced in 1860 and rapidly became mandatory for faculty appointment to leading universities. However, it was not until the beginning of the 20th century that the granting of the Ph.D. as an honorary degree was ended by American universities and colleges.

IV

In the West, theological degrees were well established as early as the 13th century at the universities of Paris and Bologna.⁵ They were conferred on students who completed designated years of study, passed exams, and were formally admitted into the guild of teachers. Degrees were titles that carried certain rights regarding the teaching office, the most important of which was the right to teach. Thus, degrees originally bore the significance of certifying to academic competence and conferring the right to practice the profession of teaching. Throughout the Middle Ages, the terms master, doctor, and professor were synonymous and remained so until modern times.

At Paris and later at Oxford, the master's degree was the prevailing rank. At Bologna, it was the doctorate. Both carried the right to teach anywhere without further certification. However, later in the development of universities, the prerogatives of the degrees changed. The right to teach was no longer automatically conferred with the degree. Hence, the titles came to designate not the conferral of an office but the certification of academic accomplishment or completion of formal courses of study. By and large, it is this meaning of degrees that has continued into modern times and is dominant for theological schools.

V

The granting of degrees by theological seminaries, as distinguished from university faculties of theology, is a relatively recent innovation in the history of higher education in the West. It represents the development of theological education designed primarily to prepare persons for the church's ministry. The introduction of this form of theological education resulted in the distinction between academic and professional theological degrees, and this distinction continues today throughout the world. The point that should be stressed is that until approximately the beginning of this century, theological degrees were quite insignificant, and in many instances, considered irrelevant, to educating clergy.

Until the middle of the 18th century, state churches existed throughout Eu-

rope. Theology was taught by state-supported universities as part of the general curriculum, and with the exception of Roman Catholic seminaries, no institutions existed uniquely for training ministers. The Council of Trent in 1563 made provision for the establishment of Roman Catholic theological seminaries, the first of which was not founded until the 17th century. None functioned as degree-granting institutions. Throughout the Protestant world during the latter part of the 18th century, the churches became convinced for a variety of reasons that they could not depend on colleges and universities for the training of their ministers. As the academy sought freedom to pursue the dictates of scientific knowledge and as the separation of church and state increasingly affected all forms of education throughout the world, the churches lacked confidence that state-supported colleges and universities could serve fully the educational needs of ministerial leadership. They responded by establishing their own theological institutions to provide the kind of education deemed essential to an adequately educated ministry.

As independent churches developed alongside established churches, preacher-seminaries were founded first by non conforming churches and then by state churches.⁷ In Germany and Scandinavia they were called preacher-seminaries. In England and Scotland, they were known as public colleges, and in the Church of England as diocesan seminaries. In Germany, preacher-colleges existed as early as 1677.⁸ All followed in some fashion the Tridentine seminaries, offering first a philosophical course followed by theological study of one or two years, for which no academic degrees were awarded.

In colonial America, colleges were founded after the British model essentially to «assure a literate ministry.» The study of theology was mingled with general education, and the traditional Bachelor of Arts degree was granted, followed by the master's degree where such was provided.⁹

Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, no professional theological degrees were granted in the United States. This did not change with the founding of graduate theological seminaries, which began in 1808 with the founding of Andover Theological Seminary. Graduates of seminaries, upon completion of their studies, often returned to their college or university for the Master of Arts degree. Despite the fact that seminaries were organized as graduate institutions, no provisions were made at first to award degrees. Instead, seminaries awarded certificates confirming the completion of theological studies. These certificates were significant in that they were often required by ministerial associations and ordaining councils. It was not until the latter third of the 19th century that provisions were made for seminaries to grant degrees in their own right. Harvard, for example, instituted the Bachelor of Divinity degree in 1869, which was recognized as a degree of the divinity school rather than the university. Since the

B.D. degree carried special requirements, those who completed only the regular course of study continued to receive certificates. It is interesting to note that during the first 10 years, only 39 B.D. degrees were awarded by Harvard. The majority of students continued to receive certificates only. This was largely true for all theological seminaries in the United States and reflected the prevalent absence of any significant role of academic degrees for the training of clergy.¹⁰

In Canada, theological schools followed a similar pattern. The traditional practice was to award only a diploma for the three-year post baccalaureate course in divinity. This was all that was required for ordination by mainline churches.» The Bachelor of Divinity degree became an optional post-graduate degree and required the equivalent of a fourth year of study and major thesis. This pattern began to change in mid-century. For example, in 1950 Victoria University (Toronto, United Church of Canada) altered requirements for the B.D. degree, making it possible to qualify «in course» after three years of study, a thesis, and at least one biblical language. Provisions were also made for those with a diploma to receive the B.D. degree upon completion of a thesis. In English-speaking Canada, this system prevailed.

In many sectors of the world, theological degrees are university degrees and conform to the academic traditions of the country. This is especially the case where theological schools are the theological faculties of universities. In other sectors where seminaries are autonomous and issue their own degrees, their credentials are either recognized as the appropriate credentials for education devoted to theological purposes, or they are independent of university degrees and often without recognition by central educational authorities. For example, in Brazil and most Latin American countries, the B.D. degree is not recognized by governmental authorities. The degrees offered by theological schools are under the rule of their church bodies, and their significance is generally limited to the values placed upon them by denominational constituencies. However, recently the Brazilian government instituted the means of recognizing the Master's and Doctor's degrees offered by theological schools which are annually evaluated by the Ministry of Education.¹²

It is important to note that in the Roman Catholic Church, degree-granting theological education takes place in three institutional settings.¹³

The first is an ecclesiastical university or faculty. In these instances, degrees are awarded on the authority of the Holy See and are governed by the Apostolic Constitution «*Sapientia Christiana*» (1979). The program of study, intended for both ordinands and lay persons, is divided into three cycles. The first, a three-year program preceded by two years of philosophy, leads to the Baccalaureate in Sacred Theology (S.T.B.), the second cycle of two years with specialization in theology, to the Licentiate in Sacred Theology (S.T.L.), and the third terminat-

ing in a doctoral dissertation to the Doctorate in Sacred Theology (S.T.D.).

A second institutional setting is the seminary devoted primarily to preparing men for the ordained priesthood. Seminaries are governed throughout the world by the «Basic Norms for Priestly Formation» (1983), by regional adaptations of individual Bishop's Conferences of the world, and by the Code of Canon Law. While most seminaries confer degrees, by nature they are not necessarily degree-granting institutions. Students in seminaries affiliated with an ecclesiastical faculty of theology can be awarded the S.T.B. by the affiliate faculty. In other cases, seminaries confer what is recognized as civil degrees in their own right, usually by virtue of their membership in such associations as The Association of Theological Schools in the U.S. and Canada.

Departments of Theology of Catholic universities constitute the third setting for theological education, and these confer civil, university degrees. These departments, together with the entire college or university, are governed by the Apostolic Constitution «Ex Corde Ecclesiae» (1990) and by the local ordinances of the regional Bishops' Conferences. In some countries, there are also Higher Institutes of Religious Studies, connected to faculties of theology, providing programs that lead to diplomas and other similar credentials.

VI

The awarding of academic degrees by theological institutions not associated with universities, once started in the late 19th century, was unregulated or monitored. Consequently, a plethora of different degrees was developed without commonly agreed upon standards or nomenclature. Efforts were made in various regions around the world to institute some uniformity of degrees related to theological education.

For example, in South East Asia, prior to the Second World War, theological education was conducted essentially by Bible schools that operated at various levels of higher education. As these institutions advanced, various forms of academic degrees developed. In 1957 the Association for Theological Education in South East Asia (ATESA) was established with a major purpose of accrediting theological degrees. Today, ATESA accredits the licentiate (diploma), Bachelor of Theology, Bachelor or Master of Divinity, the Master of Theology, and the Doctor of Theology.

In Brazil, the Association of Brazilian Theological Schools (ASTE) accredits the *Bacharel em Teologia* (B.Th.) and the *Mestre em Teologia* (M.Th.) at the request of member schools and according to the Association's standards. In addition, Protestant evangelical schools have established their own system of accreditation. Similar systems of accreditation by associations of theological institutions have been established throughout Africa, Asia, and other parts of the

world.

In 1932, The Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada established firm definitions and standards for theological degrees to which all accredited institutions were required to adhere. They included the following:

The *Bachelor of Divinity* degree was established as the first post-graduate degree for a theological course of study, normally of three years duration, and designated as a «professional degree» focusing on the ministry and its practice.

The *diploma* was to be awarded for three years of study that did not conform to the requirements for the B.D. degree.

The *certificate* represented one or more years of study that did not fulfill the requirements of either the diploma or B.D. degree.

The *Master of Theology* (M.Th.) was established as the second theological degree and required at least one year of study beyond the B.D.

The *Doctor of Theology* degree (Th.D.) was to be the highest degree awarded by institutions without university affiliations and was equivalent to the Ph.D.

The *Master of Arts* and *Doctor of Philosophy* degrees (M.A. and Ph.D.) were recognized as the highest academic degrees to be awarded by university-related theological schools.¹⁵

These definitions have remained normative for theological degrees in North America. However, several changes were made subsequently to the nomenclature and inventory of theological degrees.

During the 1960s, the M.Div. was accepted as an alternative to the B.D. In 1972, the M.Div. replaced the B.D. as the preferred first, professional, theological degree.

In 1970, the Doctor of Ministry degree was approved as the «highest professional degree» for which ordination is required.¹⁶

In 1986, the Doctor of Missiology (D.Miss.) degree was approved as «a professional degree designed to prepare persons for leadership roles in specialized cross-cultural ministries...as well as teaching.»

A number of degrees primarily related to specialized ministries were added such as the Master of Religious Education (M.R.E.), the Master and Doctor of Sacred Music (M.S.M. and S.M.D.), the Doctor of Education (Ed.D.), and a number of M.A. degrees in specialized areas such as pastoral counseling, youth ministries, etc., intended for persons not committed to ordained ministry. The recommended designation of the specialized M.A. degrees is «M.A. in (specialization).»

Alternative designations of degrees have been approved. Among the most prevalent alternatives are the Master of Sacred Theology (S.T.M.) as substitute for the M.Th., and the S.T.D. for the Ph.D. or Th.D.

One additional change has occurred especially in the United States regarding

the academic doctorate. As indicated above, in 1932 The Association of Theological Schools designated the Ph.D. as an appropriate degree for university-related theological institutions and the Th.D. for freestanding schools. In 1974 this distinction was removed, and subsequently theological schools that offered the academic doctorate in theology were free to adopt either the Ph.D. or Th.D. nomenclature. Subsequently, the Ph.D. designation has been preferred almost without exception by North American theological schools. The reason for this change, simply put, was to make the highest academic doctorate offered by theological schools competitive with those awarded by colleges and universities.

This change reflected in its own way a major shift that has generally occurred throughout the world in the significance of academic degrees for theological education. During the past century, the credentials issued by theological schools, whether they were certificates or degrees, were significant to the extent that they served important purposes and functions of the church. Throughout the present century, however, theological seminaries have increasingly fashioned their academic degrees according to the degree standards, nomenclature, and rationales held by colleges and universities. At the same time, they have sought to base theological degrees upon their own degree-granting authority and hence to make them independent of the rest of higher education. In short, theological schools have tended to import the logic of academic degrees from the rest of higher education while developing a system of degrees in their own right. In doing so, it can be said that the degrees related to theological education have taken on added academic, as distinguished from ecclesiastical, significance. The result of this development has been twofold. On one hand, theological institutions have attempted to import the logic of academic degrees from the rest of higher education in the attempt to increase their academic significance. On the other hand, by seeking to establish and maintain an independent system of academic degrees, theological schools have sought to preserve the role and significance of academic credentials for the church. The tension between these two motivations is the source of much of the current problematic nature of academic degrees.

VII

What case can be made for theological degrees today? There is reason to believe that many of the current practices and use of academic degrees by theological schools have developed without clear rationale. Any assessment of the current state of theological degrees must take into account the twofold significance they have, that is for the church on one hand and the academic community on the other. Academic degrees are the clearest symbols of the fact that as agents of both the church and the academy, theological schools seek to exist with integrity in both worlds.

The theory of academic degrees can be stated quite simply: *They are the structured means of certifying the fulfillment of educational ends by a duly constituted third party.*¹⁷ Based on this formulation, the case for academic degrees in theological education should take into account the following elements:

1. The *structure* of academic degrees. The use of academic degrees by theological schools is informed by long historical precedent and practice. The weight of these historical traditions bears upon both the church and academy, and to propose alternate systems of certifying academic accomplishment would incur the burden of proof. There seems to be no sound reason for either denigrating the use or significance of academic degrees in theological education or for displacing them with some other system.

There are, however, at least two conditions that should be met in the future development and utilization of theological degrees. First, the system of degrees should be coherent, tying together the different levels of educational accomplishment and proficiency that are significant to the church's ministry. Theological degrees should be sufficiently complex to calibrate the different levels and forms of education required for church leadership. They should also provide for sufficient flexibility to allow students to move from level to level without undue barriers or obstacles. In other words, no theological degree should be terminal in nature and prevent qualified students from having access to advanced degrees. Secondly, as a system, theological degrees should become global in nature and applicability. There is much to be gained by both worlds within which theological degrees function, the church and the academy, from a global system of theological degrees. As is argued later, there is no reason, in principle, to preclude the possibility of establishing a global system of theological degrees based upon broadly defined educational objectives which could be implemented without detriment to local systems, traditions, and practices.

2. *Certification.* This is the principle of academic credentials. They are intended to certify the academic accomplishments of the degree holder. Within the academic community, such certification is significant in that it carries certain rights and privileges that by tradition accrue to each degree. For example, the right to engage in higher studies is limited to those who possess degrees that are considered requisites for advanced study. In some professional areas, the right to practice is based upon educational requirements, the fulfillment of which the degrees certify. By means of degrees and the certification they represent, theological institutions provide significant services to constituents within the academic community and society at large.

Within the life and work of the church, certification by degrees is significant not for the rights, privileges, or social and professional prestige that may that may be claimed for them. Rather, they are means of certifying the fulfill-

ment of educational goals that are considered by the church as essential to the practice of ministry. Such evaluation is vital to the church, and especially to the ordaining councils that are guided by educational and intellectual criteria and expectations. There are profound theological justifications for these educational and intellectual expectations. Obviously, theological degrees will have significance for the church only to the extent that these intellectual and educational expectations or requirements are valued.

Duly constituted third-party assessment. Academic or educational achievement is not the only type of competency that is important to the church and its leadership. However, *it is the form of competency that theological institutions are best capable to assess and most qualified to certify.* Academic degrees are the formal means by which this jurisdiction is exercised, and as argued above, certifying this form of achievement by means of degrees is one of the basic services rendered by theological schools to the church and to society as a whole.

The authority by which theological schools issue degrees is vested in a number of sources. In most countries, theological schools are corporate entities and exercise their legal functions including degree-granting rights by means of state charters. Within centralized, state systems of higher education, the significance of theological degrees is dependent upon state certification. In countries with decentralized systems, theological schools function in their own right, and the significance of theological degrees is often based upon some form of institutional accreditation or recognition. Regardless of the overall educational system within which theological schools operate, academic credentials are significant only to the extent that the certification they offer is well founded and fully acknowledged by the major constituencies served by the degrees. In short, the certification contained in academic credentials is valued in direct proportion to the confidence that theological schools enjoy as certifying agents within both the church and the world of higher education.

This confidence is dependent upon a number of factors. Among the most significant are the strengths of the faculty and the adequacy of educational, physical, and financial resources. As institutions of higher education, these factors are important for theological schools and the degrees they issue. Increasingly, the value of degrees is enhanced by forms of accreditation or assessment by a community of institutional peers. But in very special ways, the value of theological degrees and the certification they represent are dependent also in no small measure upon the excellence and character that graduates demonstrate in their ministries. Although every educational institution is known by its graduates, this is especially the case for theological schools. The intimate relation between church and seminary, and the concrete manner in which this relation is expressed and served by graduates, are peculiar to theological schools and determine in pro-

found ways the significance of their degrees. All other graduate and professional schools are related to the institutions served by their graduates in quite different and far more general ways than is the case in theological education.

VIII

So far we have addressed only the formal nature of theological degrees. In summary, they are the established means by which theological schools certify the fulfillment of educational ends. As has been argued, this certification is significant and relevant to fundamental purposes served by theological schools. We now turn to the material significance of theological degrees by asking the question: What do theological degrees attest to? In other words, what are the educational ends the fulfillment of which are certified by theological degrees? What follows is a proposal that is intended to foster discussion among theological educators regarding the future course and development of theological degrees.

A system of theological degrees, if it is to serve the worldwide community of theological schools, should conform to the following criteria:

It should reflect the theological nature of theological education.¹⁸ This is not to suggest that questions concerning theological degrees are in themselves theological questions. They clearly are not. Logically, they possess secondary or even-tertiary signification. However, assessments of the significance of theological degrees must reflect in some ways that which makes theological education distinctive. Questions concerning that distinctiveness (or to restate the matter, what makes theological education *theological*) are theological in nature, and responses to these questions should provide rationales by which the significance of academic degrees is informed and assessed.

It must accommodate the pluralism of theological schools and their educational systems. To speak of pluralism is very much in vogue among theological educators. It has become so commonplace as to mask critical issues inherent in many uses of the word. For example, at times it is used to express a very non controversial observation that various forms of theological schools do in fact exist throughout the world.¹⁹ At other times, the concept «pluralism» shifts from a descriptive to a normative term and is used in ways that imply, without supporting argument, that all cases of differences are in fact equally valid. In this context, pluralism is used in order to focus on the concreteness of theological educational systems and the differences that characterize them. A global system of theological degrees must take into account the differences that not only exist but that may be inherent in the nature of theological schools and their educational enterprises.

It must provide an overarching structure that is consonant with the unity of theological education. How might this be formulated?

Criteria two suggests that a system of theological degrees should be compatible

in meaning and general character with indigenous degrees used by higher education at the local level. Criteria one, however, refers to the basis by which the distinctive character of theological degrees is to be determined. This third criteria assumes that all theological schools share a common reality. They all are or seek to be theological. The viability of a global system of theological degrees will ultimately depend upon the extent to which this unity is operative, either explicitly or implicitly, throughout the world.

David Kelsey has characterized the issues of unity and pluralism as the most critical to the current debate concerning the theological nature of theological education.²⁰ There is little question but that the manner in which these issues are resolved will shape the future of theological education in fundamental ways. As to the viability of a shared system of theological degrees, the issues concerning unity will also be determinative. From such resolutions will come the theoretical foundations upon which a system or potential systems of theological degrees can be based.

In keeping with this claim, this paper puts forth two proposals. The first is a proposal concerning the general principle by which the unity of theological education should be conceived. The second pertains to a system of theological degrees based upon the proposed principle of unity.

IX

As indicated above, projecting an inclusive system of theological degrees requires a conceptualization of the unity that is common to all theological schools. This is in itself a theological undertaking and is not the purpose of this paper. However, some notion of the nature of this unity, however rudimentary and tentative, is required in order to undertake a serious discussion of a global system of theological degrees or to establish a framework within which existing theological degrees can be assessed and interpreted on a universal scale.

Accordingly, we propose that the principle of unity that should guide considerations of a system of theological degrees should be stated as follows: *Focus on the purposes or ends of theological education*. In other words, the unity of theological education should be conceived ideologically.²¹

By definition, the proposal excludes other alternatives. It precludes efforts to conceive of the unity of theological education in terms of structures, systems, programs, content, or educational methods. Such an approach would enable theological schools to participate in wide-ranging discussion regardless of the theological, philosophical, or cultural differences that may exist within the community of schools. Whether the ends or purposes of theological education are conceived in relation to the dynamics of faith (e.g., faith seeking understanding or other forms of witness) or the community of faith (e.g., preparing church lead-

ership, Christian identity and praxis, etc.), such differences need not curtail serious consideration of an overarching system of theological degrees.

The second proposal sketches the rudiments of a degree structure for theological education. But before doing so, it would be well to summarize key points addressed above. Academic credentials are the formal means of acknowledging educational or academic achievements. As official instruments, they certify the fulfillment of educational ends and are valued in proportion to the confidence that is enjoyed by the certifying institution. A global system of theological degrees must reflect the theological nature of theological education, and the concreteness and pluralism of its implementation. Finally, it is argued that a global system of degrees is viable only to the extent that theological schools share some identifying unity underlying institutional differences, and that this unity should be conceived and interpreted teleologically.

In keeping with the foregoing, a proposed system of theological degrees should include the following characteristics:

- a. It should be inclusive of the fullest range of educational missions, each of which constitutes the fulfillment of a discrete educational goal appropriate to theological education.
- b. It should include a sufficient number of degree titles as required to fully recognize the different goals and purposes of theological education without redundancy or duplication.
- c. It should be systematic in character; that is, degrees should be structured in such ways as to flow from one to another providing maximum flexibility and freedom of transition.
- d. Each degree should mark the successful completion of a level of academic achievement without precluding following steps or stages. Each degree should be based upon its own requirements and goals and made available to all who successfully fulfill them.²²

A global system of theological degrees should include eight modes of academic achievement. Although each local educational system may engage only in one or some of the following degrees, it is proposed that this system be accepted as the means for a reciprocal understanding of theological degrees offered in areas throughout the world. The proposed designations and general specifications for each are as follows:

1. Preparatory Certification

Theological education may begin with programs devoted to the preparation of persons for study at the university or college level. Ordinarily, this form of theological education is recognized not by a degree but by such other forms of academic credentials as certificates or diplomas.

2. The First Degree

As an undergraduate degree, the baccalaureate should signify the completion of a general, liberal arts education as defined by the educational and cultural heritage of the certifying theological institution. As a theological degree, it should be directed to the critical understanding of the religious heritage of one's culture, including introduction to its religious writings, theology, and traditions, both in historical and contemporary contexts. Although it should not be determined by professional educational objectives, it should represent the completion of studies that constitute a sound basis for additional theological studies. Examples: Bachelor of Arts (representing three or four years of university, college, or Bible school study; the U.S., Canadian, and English systems), Diploma (two years of university study, French system), Statsexamen (two to four years of university study, German system), etc.

3. The Intermediate Degree

This degree signifies the completion of at least one year of full-time study beyond the undergraduate level resulting in the acquisition of the requisites for independent study and research directed to the doctorate or a critical theological understanding and interpretation of one's religious and cultural heritage. Examples: Master of Arts, License (French system), Magister Artium (German system), etc.²³

4. The First Professional Degree²⁴

The primary purpose of this degree is to prepare persons to begin the practice of ministry as defined by the religious communities that are served by the theological institution. The degree recognizes the completion of both academic and practical studies that are directed to at least four sets of educational objectives: (a) a thorough and critical understanding of the scriptures, theology, historical tradition, and ministry of the religious heritage and faith of the religious community; (b) an understanding of the social and cultural structures and realities within which religious bodies and institutions exist and carry out their missions; (c) the nurturing of basic arts of ministry; and (d) the growth and maturing of personal and spiritual formation. This degree should represent at least three years of full-time study beyond the baccalaureate. Examples: Master of Divinity or Bachelor of Divinity, License (French system), Diploma (German system), S.T.B. (Roman Catholic), etc.

In the history of theological education, the normative degree for ministry has required at least three years of graduate study. However, there is a growing trend of awarding as a first professional degree recognition of two-year studies directed to specialized ministries. Such degrees as the Master of Religious Education and

the Master of Sacred Music have the longest history. More recent innovations, especially in North America, have been degrees designated as Master of Arts in (Name of specialized ministry added, e.g. «Pastoral Counseling»). In other regions, this form of education may be recognized by certificates or diplomas.

5. The Intermediate Professional Degree

It is generally acknowledged that the first professional theological degree is intended to certify an initial level of educational achievement and development required to begin the practice of ministry. Many schools offer programs that focus on the fuller mastery of one of the theological disciplines or on a particular form or aspect of ministry. These programs are intended for holders of the Master of Divinity degree and usually require at least one year of study beyond the first professional degree. Examples: Master of Theology or Master of Sacred Theology (North America), S.T.L. (Roman Catholic), etc.

6. The Final Professional Degree

As the general educational levels of society have increased, theological schools especially in North America have developed educational programs for ministers beyond those provided by the first and intermediate professional degrees. These programs have been designed at the doctoral level and are intended to provide a «level of knowledge, theoretical clarity, and competence of practice commensurate with the highest earned degree for the profession and practice of ministry.»²⁵ As the final professional doctorate, this degree is intended to certify the acquisition of advanced knowledge and understanding of ministry in relation to the basic biblical, historical, systematic, and practical theological disciplines. In addition, the degree represents the additional development of competencies required for effective ministry informed by a comprehensive and critical theory of ministry, and a contribution to the understanding and practice of ministry as evidenced by a doctoral level project. Examples: Doctor of Ministry (North America). There are no equivalents in other national systems.²⁶

7. The Academic Doctorate

In some cases as in Germany, the doctorate is the first earned degree. In most other systems, it is the culmination of the degree structure and presupposes as requisites the various forms of academic accomplishment represented by all related degrees. In both cases, the system of degrees and academic credentials are so structured as to come to termination in the academic doctorate. As theological degrees, the Ph.D. and the Th.D. are intended to certify academic preparation required for teaching and research, and in this regard represent educational purposes that have been in effect since the middle ages.

In many parts of the world, the Ph.D. and Th.D. have become indistinguishable as theological degrees. However, there are substantial reasons for maintaining differences between the two. Theological education requires faculty prepared in the context of religious studies with its focus on what is identified as the academic or nonconfessional study of religion in all of its manifestations. In addition, it needs faculty who reflect the distinctive approaches and orientation embodied in theological degrees. Therefore, the distinction between the Th.D. and the Ph.D. should be maintained. The Th.D. should presuppose the first professional theological degree and be structured accordingly. Either doctorate should certify achievement required for teaching and research.

Examples: Doctor of Philosophy, Doctor of Theology, Doctor of Sacred Theology, Doctorate de Troisieme Cycle (French system), etc.

8. *Post-Doctoral Degree*

In North America, the Ph.D. and Th.D. are considered the highest earned academic degree. In Europe and elsewhere, a higher doctorate has been established. Almost without exception, these post doctorates are awarded on the basis of published scholarship, are intended to recognize mature scholarship, and usually are awarded after the onset of one's teaching or scholarly career. In France and Germany, the higher degree involves additional study and qualifies one for appointment to a professorship.

As theological education faces the future, there may be good reason to adopt a system of post-doctoral recognition based upon specialized study and published research. In the sciences, formal programs of post-doctoral study and research are well established, and in some fields of natural science, it is not an insignificant qualification for university faculty appointment. Although this is not generally the case in theology, post-doctoral recognition could provide very significant impetus and support for advancing theological scholarship. It could serve to acknowledge in very special ways those scholars who in extraordinary ways advance the knowledge and teachings of the church regarding its faith and mission. If so, the postdoctoral degree would need to reflect achievement that is clearly distinguishable, on one hand, from the Ph.D. and Th.D. and, on the other hand, the plethora of honorary degrees («honoris causa») that are currently awarded by many theological institutions for reasons other than academic, educational, or scholarly achievements. Examples: Doctorat D'etat or Agrege (French system), Habilitation (German system), Livre Docencia (Brazil). It should be noted that in England, Wales, and Scotland, the Doctor of Divinity is awarded as the highest theological degree. This nomenclature is not recommended in view of the fact that especially in the United States and other regions, the D.D. is an honorary and not an earned degree.

X

In conclusion, the following comments are offered. First of all, discussion regarding the structure of theological degrees should have as its purpose not the creation of a single, uniform, all embracing system to which all must conform but rather the emergence of a conceptual framework of equivalents in terms of which individual systems of theological degrees can be interpreted and assessed. Such a framework would be of considerable practical value to the world community of theological schools.

The second intention of a thorough review of degree structures would be to undertake a far-ranging consideration of the general standards that should define each of the levels of academic achievement by which theological education should be structured or ordered regardless of degree systems that may prevail in various regions of the world. This is by far the more substantive, if not formidable, task. Again it must be made clear that the intention of such a task would not be to establish or mandate a single, uniform, worldwide set of standards to which all regional or local institutions should conform. Instead, the purpose would be an invitation to undertake a mutual search for commonalities that both reflect and constitute the unity of purposes shared by all theological institutions. Such a discussion could be of immeasurable value to theological education as a global enterprise for it would focus attention on the most decisive questions confronting theological educators; namely, what is theological about theological education? What makes theological education different from closely related academic enterprises? How can the nature and distinctive purposes of theological education be translated into educational goals and standards that will serve as norms for the enterprise? From such explorations might come the benefits of conceptual clarification concerning the nature of theological education and mutual understanding, if not agreement, regarding a number of very important instrumental practices as theological degrees.

If such undertakings require justification, let it be argued that the future of theological education will be charted by movement from local or regional boundaries to global contexts. In this transition, it will be imperative that theological educators become more critically self conscious about their distinctive mission and purposes. Although degree structures possess only instrumental significance and value, as seen above, they reflect matters of primary importance to the entire enterprise. As such, they can be instruments for the kind of reflections and engagements that are essential to the ongoing agendas of theological educators.

WOCATI CONGRESS 96 offers a unique opportunity for theological educators to consider seriously and productively the potential values, issues, and defining characteristics of a global framework of theological degrees and cre-

dentials. Accordingly, there are at least two challenges that confront the CONGRESS in this regard:

To reach consensus regarding the ingredients of a general and defining system of theological degrees and credentials (see Section IX above).

To authorize WOCATI to plan and initiate studies and discussions directed to the identification of global standards by which each level or mission of theological education should be defined and evaluated, and to devise means of engaging member associations and organizations in these efforts. These two recommendations are put forward in the conviction that such actions by the CONGRESS would provide an agenda for WOCATI with long-range implications for advancing theological education as a coherent, global enterprise.

NOTES

1. For example, in 1961 the American Baptist Churches, USA specified that the educational standards for ordination are the possession of the Bachelor of Arts and the Master of Divinity degrees awarded by accredited institutions. Exceptions to these degree requirements were approved in 1973 to include experience, carefully defined, as an equivalent to formal educational preparation. The purpose for this change was to foster diversity and inclusiveness in the church's ministry.
2. See Clark Kerr, «Foreword,» in Stephen H. Spurr, *Academic Degree Structures: Innovative Approaches*, (McGraw Hill: New York, 1970), p. v.
3. Spurr, p. 1.
4. Ibid, p. 4.
5. Historical references are based primarily on Rashdall, Hastings, *The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages*, F.M. Powicke and A.B. Emden (eds), (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936), and Spurr, pp. 9ff.
6. Spurr, p. 10.
7. Abdel R. Wentz, *History of the Gettysburg Theological Seminary*, (Philadelphia: The United Lutheran Publication House, 1926), pp. 104ff.
8. See George W. Richards, *History of the Theological Seminary of the Reformed Church in the United States*, (Lancaster, PA, 1952), p. 16.
9. The charter of the first university in Massachusetts, Harvard, established in 1636, includes the following purpose: to insure the perpetuation of an educated ministry «when our present ministers shall lie in the dust.»
10. Union Theological Seminary, New York, established the B.D. degree in 1896. The General Theological Seminary (Episcopal) of New York, authorized the granting of the Bachelor of Sacred Theology in 1876. Gettysburg Theological Seminary (Lutheran) introduced the B.D. degree in 1894. Auburn Theological Seminary (Presbyterian) was authorized to grant the degree in 1904. An exception to this history is Bexley Hall (Episcopal), which conferred the B.D. degree for two years in the 1830s, but discontinued it thereafter until 1876. In the beginning, the B.D. degree was granted only upon the fulfillment of requirements such as a comprehensive examination and final the-

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- sis in addition to the regular course of study. Those only completing the regular course of study continued to receive a certificate of study.
11. Information provided by Dr. C. Douglas Jay, former principal of Emmanuel College of Victoria University, Toronto. My dependence on Dr. Jay's letter of October 28, 1993 reflects the almost total absence of documented study of theological degrees throughout the world.
 12. Information provided by Dr. Jaci Maraschin.
 13. Information provided by Msgr. Walter Endyvean.
 14. Information provided by Dr. Yeow Choo Lak.
 15. Minutes of the Eighth Biennial Meeting, Conference of Theological Seminaries and Colleges in the United States and Canada, June 7-9, 1932, pp. 14-15.
 16. For an account of the history and assessment of the D.Min. degree, see Jackson W. Carroll and Barbara G. Wheeler, «Doctor of Ministry Program: History, Summary of Findings and Recommendations,» *Theological Education*, Spring, 1987, pp. 7-52.
 17. This formulation of the theory of academic degrees is based on the suggestions of Spurr, pp. 1 ff.
 18. For the past decade, theological educators throughout the world but especially in North America have conducted what has been described as «the most extensive debate in print about theological schooling that has ever been published.» David H. Kelsey, *Between Athens and Berlin: The Theological Education Debate* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1993), p. 1. Kelsey offers the most comprehensive and incisive analysis of the major publications produced by this debate since Farley's important and influential work, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983). The most recent contribution is by Kelsey, *To Understand God Truly: What's Theological About a Theological School* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992).
 19. Kelsey, p. 116.
 20. For a brief summary of his argument, see *Between Athens and Berlin*, pp. 221-225.
 21. We are dependent upon David Kelsey for this formulation of the proposal. See Kelsey, p. 224.
 22. See Spurr, pp. 26-28.

THE 2nd WOCATI CONGRESS (Nairobi 1996)



**PARTNERSHIP IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION:
CONVERSATION AND COMMUNION**

CONGRESS 96 Keynote Address by Elsa Tamez

When we think about partnership, we think of reciprocity, friendship, and mutual cooperation. When we speak of conversation, we have in mind dialogue, informality, and friendship; and when we experience communion, we feel celebrative. We experience openness with one another. We believe in friendship, love, commitment, solidarity.

Partnership, conversation, and communion occur within the dimension of grace in flexible spaces and times. Profit and advantage are not a part of it. It is only lived and felt. In that fellowship there is humanization and flavor.

When we think about theological education, what comes to mind is all that has to do with the fixed time and space of knowledge: the institution, academic excellence, norms, objectives, curriculum, accreditation, methods, content, financing—almost always elaborated hierarchically. We give little thought to human existence even when the object of our study is God.

Theological education, as we perceive it today, happens more in the context of institutionality than of grace. We think more about advantage and profit than about conversation and communion. The more academic life adheres to institutionality, the more distant it becomes from persons as living and creating subjects. Taken to the extreme, no space is left for the informality of conversation, or the fellowship of communion without a profitable return. There is no humanization. There is no flavor, only knowledge.

Even though the words «flavor» (in Spanish, «sabor») and «knowledge» («saber») come from the same Latin *raot*, *sapere*, it seems that the dimension of knowledge is very distant from the dimension of flavor.

What I have been asked to talk about, «partnership in theological education: conversation and communion,» shows that this division is recognized as a problem, and that in WOCATI we are trying to take up the issue with the intention of rethinking theological education from new angles. There are probably theological institutions which, for some time, have tried to close the gap between celebrative and academic reciprocity. My own experience has been part of a constant struggle between the institutional needs and the human needs of the community and of persons. Grace forms part of the human needs. Sometimes balancing the requirements of the institution with those of human beings is not easy. Much depends on the horizon by which the institution is guided.

So, to speak of partnership in theological education without taking into account the reality of the globalization of the neoliberal market on the one hand, and the diverse cultural, social, and ecclesial contexts on the other, can lead us to make universal statements without a grasp of the particulars; or, rather, valid only for the West. In fact, the division between partnership and theological education is a legacy of western academics which is considered universal. We all know that the majority of our theological seminaries and universities are west-

ern-style, and that it is not easy to conceive of new models of theological education outside of this arena.

How do we focus and unite partnership—conversation and communion—with academics in the global context and the specific contexts? In other words, how can grace become a fundamental and essential part of context-specific theological education (something important to be taken into consideration) and not appear as an *addendum*!

1. Grace as the root of theological education

One possible response is that grace be considered as the root of theological education, and that the educational institution, regulated by subjects, be the effective vehicle by which grace illuminates everything—persons, communities, nature, and the cosmos. In such a context, the human being takes on importance as a trans-individual subject interrelated with the world and with others. Communities and the current context take on importance, each distinct from the other. Mutual recognition, interchange, and dialogue do not permit the imposition of some over others.¹ Thus, to speak of partnership in theological education implies that the emphasis of all educational policies is placed on the subjects, interrelated among themselves and with their environment. Jesus said that the Sabbath was made for the human being and not vice versa. This means that the institution and its norms must be at the service of the subjects.

2. The academy as a means to live and radiate grace

One problem of many theological institutions of higher education is that academics become an end in itself. Most of the time, when this occurs, there is no space for conversation and communion. I will give you an example using biblical sciences. I have chosen four verses from the gospel of Matthew, almost at random, and only with the intention of showing the importance of the interrelation between knowledge and flavor in theological education.² I am reading from Matthew 5:13;

You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot.

When we study this logion in class, we discover that there are two different traditions. This is deduced from the difference between the Synoptics. In Luke 14:34-35, salt that has «lost its taste is not fit for the soil or for the manure pile.» Though in Matthew the word «manure pile» does not appear, there is agreement with Luke. The word «soil» appears, the salt loses its taste, it becomes useless, it is thrown out. In the gospel of Mark, there is a greater difference. Though it begins like Luke, «salt is good,» it excludes several things and ends in a com-

pletely different way. «Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.» (Mark 9:50)

Because of these differences, one arrives at the conclusion that Matthew and Luke follow document Q. According to scholars, the similarity between Luke and Mark comes from an influence of an intermediate Marcan redactor in the last Lucan translation. Now, if Matthew begins with the phrase «You are the salt of the earth...» it is because it has been added by an intermediate Matthean redactor to include the logia about the light in 14a and 16. Matthew omits the primitive formulation of the logion in Q the word «manure pile,» and adds, as well, the final punishment: the salt is thrown out and is trampled by human beings. What the scholars cannot explain with precision is whether those two modifications of Matthew are from an intermediate Matthean redactor or from the last Matthean translation.

Now, I will read Matthew 5:14-16, which is along the same lines: «You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lamp stand; and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.»

In these three verses we find three different logia. The first one that talks about the light begins in verse 14a and continues in verse 16. Justin uses an analogous text, also IP.2.12. Since this logion is not in Luke, it is difficult to affirm whether it comes from document Q or from another collection of logia of an intermediate Matthean redactor. Verse 14b constitutes the logion about the city, which alludes to Jerusalem in messianic times in Isaiah 2:2-4. It is probably taken from the Septuagint version, most likely from the tradition of Thomas 32.

Verse 15 deals with the logion about the lamp. It comes from document Q. According to studies, it was included by the last Matthean redactor, previously taken from an intermediate Matthean redactor, but located in a different place. Here I end the literary analysis of the four texts.

Some of you will ask what all this technical analysis of biblical texts is doing in a conference about partnership in theological education. What I want to point out is the following. If, in academics, we are centered on and limit ourselves to the deconstruction of the text and the explanation of its form and history of redaction, the work can be arid and incomplete, although some might experience intellectual pleasure. In a closed academic curriculum, it is difficult to find space for the exchange of knowledge, conversation, and communion. The space is only for those who know, directed towards those who don't know. The flavor of knowledge appears when there is partnership, and when the flavor is more than just intellectual pleasure. Theological education that has grace as its root, radiates grace when academics become a means rather than an end. We need to go far-

ther than the scientific discussions. It is necessary to reproduce and multiply the possible meanings in order to impact the concrete life of the community and of persons in their historical moment.

This statement does not devalue academics. A tendency towards academic excellence is important. The most revitalized meanings of the texts emerge when the text is analyzed profoundly. Many of the things that are not observed on first glance are clarified when an analysis such as the above is done. For example, a curious person could ask why document Q writes that the salt is no good either for the soil or for the manure pile. It is easy to understand salt as an element that seasons and gives flavor to food. But what does it have to do with the soil? One possible answer is that document Q alludes to an old agricultural practice known in Egypt and Palestine in which salt was thrown onto waste so that it would better fertilize the earth. The fertile earth will produce fruits, which are the good works of those who are «salt.» The last Matthean redactor does not have this meaning in mind; perhaps because, at that time, the practice was no longer well known, or because he wanted to assign a culinary meaning to the salt that gives flavor to everything, as with the light, illuminating a whole room.

When we speak of theological education in the seminaries, we must go further than the academic level; since there exists before us a horizon for which we have opted by vocation: to serve the churches, the people of God, and finally to serve the Kingdom of God, in the midst of a society that tends to be more and more inhuman. Institutions of theological education, in order not to become hardened, must keep the surprise and indetermination of the Holy Spirit ever-present. In practice, this means giving space to conversation and communion within the academy. When we talk about a «good» textual study, we are referring to a «serious» study. Does that mean that a joyful and delightful study is superficial? Perhaps, instead of talking about academic seriousness, we should talk about the joy of academics and rescue it from that state of «tediousness.»

Let's return to the logion of Matthew. These four logia speak of wisdom, teaching, and the good works that the disciples must do in order to radiate, penetrate, give flavor and knowledge to all and everyone. If we stay within the literary analysis (however profound it may be), paradoxically, it will manifest the opposite of the meaning of the texts analyzed, which is sharing, celebrating, and putting into practice that which is learned.

In the first logion, Jesus says to his disciples that they are the salt of the earth. The salt was an image used for that which gives flavor, purifies, or preserves. The disciples are called to be «salt.» This is manifested by their works, their fertile message, their wisdom. With those things they give flavor to the soil, they help to mold life. Here in Matthew the soil is the world and its inhabitants.

The second logion (14a and 16) speaks of the disciples as the light of the world

that should illuminate everything and everyone. This logion is joined to the previous one by the works that must shine through the disciples, to the extent that the community celebrates, glorifying God.

The third logion repeats the obvious meaning that what is beautiful must show itself: «a city built on a hill cannot be hidden.» The fourth logion insists on the same meaning with the figure of the lamp. The lamp must be placed in an appropriate place so that it illuminates everything.

The four logia point to the same thing: participating, sharing, putting knowledge into practice, all for the celebration that comes from the glorification of God.

The opposite message is also present. The salt is of no use if it does not give flavor; the light is of no use if it is under a bushel basket and does not give light, not just for the disciples themselves, but for the communities served. Applied to theological education, the logia teach that institutions that are centered solely on knowledge in and of itself, that are indifferent to persons and communities, to specific contexts, that do not give importance to reciprocity, sharing, and celebration, that do not attempt to discover new pedagogical methods that incorporate partnership as an integral part of the teaching, are flat (tasteless) and, as such, are of no use for anything. They are a lamp placed under a bushel. They are a city built in a cave that no one knows. They do not produce good works, and, therefore, they do not assure celebration in the glorification of God.

3. Partnership in the face of the globalization of the neoliberal market

The invitation to consider partnership in theological education is not a simple proposal of a new modality in educational policies. It is a counter-current proposal in the contemporary reality of the globalization of the free market. It is said that the implementation of free market competition is generating an exacerbated individualism, lack of solidarity, consumerism, and fear. The experience of partnership does not fit with the current lifestyle that is imposed by force on the global society. Partnership, conversation, and communion are dimensions that belong to a different order than that proposed with free competition. The theological institution that sets its educational policies from the angle of partnership does not promote utilitarianism or meritocracy. Competitiveness among its members has no place. It does not fall into the consumerism of course contents, rather the reciprocity of mutual enrichment. Fear gains no foothold in an attitude of conversation; and individualism remains outside because communion and dialogue prevail.

The reality of unequal economic globalization that engenders anti-partnership attitudes is a challenge to institutions of theological education that wish to offer more human life alternatives, in accord with the spirit of the gospel.

4. *Toward new models of theological education*

In reality, the classical structure of many theological institutions, their curriculum, and educational model do not facilitate partnership relations. The curricula are generally closed, centralized, impersonal, atomized, and abstract. If a vision of partnership is not achieved in the residence model, much less will it be achieved by extension when the students, on their own, only relate to the didactic materials they receive.

A structural renovation is needed, not just for partnership, but because the current reality of dominant and one-dimensional globalization demands it. For the last five years, the Latin American Biblical Seminary, founded in 1923, has been implementing a decentralized model, combining residential studies with extension courses. The students come to San Jose, Costa Rica, for short periods and return to their countries to continue their studies by extension. The model allows the students to study communally in groups, whether in the classrooms or in study circles, and at the same time, not disconnect from their cultures and churches. The curriculum, besides being adapted to the decentralized model, is integral, contextualized, and is written in accordance with the particular interests of the students. The professors do not just give classes in San Jose. They travel to the other countries to give intensive courses where there are groups of students. The trips allow the professors to know the places from which the students come, their culture, and their churches. The covenants signed by the various educational centers that share the same curriculum and the same perspective facilitate the relationship of partnership in theological education.

A current example that illustrates the vision of partnership in education is the current campaign called «One Million Women Building Our Dream,» launched by the Seminario Biblico Latinamericano on March 8, 1995. The Campaign is gathering the names of one million women from all over the world, given by men and women, accompanied by a dollar per name, to construct the new home of the Biblical Seminary— which is in the process of becoming a university. The campaign is in many parts of the world. We already have names from 113 countries. The symbol is very significant. The new facility will be constructed «from below» (by grassroots efforts), and it will remind everyone that theology, Bible study, and ministry are done «from below.» The names of the women from all centuries will become an historic memorial so that women will never be forgotten in theological education. The campaign has become the dream of many people, women and men, weaving a new network of grassroots solidarity, in a society which, because of its neoliberal economic policies, generates insolidarity. WOCATI is invited to join this campaign in solidarity.

5. *The Institution oriented by the logic of grace*

I would like to end with a brief commentary on the tension between the institution and its norms, and what we have called the logic of grace.³

Leaders often complain of not being able to do anything because the institution does not allow it, or because it runs counter to tradition; and this occurs even when it is clear that what is desired is good, or even better than what the institution offers. We are talking here of the logic of the institution, which is the logic of law, contrary to the logic of faith or of grace about which Paul talks in Galatians and Romans. The logic of law enslaves and does not allow the conscience of the subjects to intervene to reorient it in favor of persons and the community. Conscience, heart, and profound reflection are not what orients its actions. Instead, its actions are oriented by what the law and tradition dictate, independent of opinions about them. It is thus that dehumanization occurs frequently in the operation of the institutions, both for those affected by the application of the law and for those who apply it. It is clear that it is not possible to function as a theological school without the institution and without norms. We need them. Nevertheless, there is a great difference if this institutional necessity is assumed from the perspective of grace. Those of us who are in the leadership of the theological institutions should claim the gift of freedom and not allow ourselves to be enslaved by the norms that we ourselves have created. When the leaders of institutions are oriented by the perspective of grace, they have in mind the gift of the new creation in all areas: the educational model, the curriculum, the norms. Humanization and the desire not to exclude also permeate the execution of the regulations. In this way, the institution puts itself at the service of persons and of the community, and not the reverse.

So it is that any institution of theological education that wants to be oriented from the angle of grace will have to consciously assume the tension between the logic of the institution with its norms and traditions, and the desire to advance an alternative education on behalf of the life of the persons and communities which it serves. Its educational model will have to be capable of assuming a high level of flexibility and exceptions to the norms, as well as the constant search for new possibilities and a readiness for constant changes. With this attitude, it is possible to speak of «partnership in theological education: conversation and communion,» without feelings of guilt for departing from tradition and recognized norms.

The rationality of grace is much more challenging and demanding than the rationality of institutionality. But even if it causes enormous headaches, doing what in good conscience must be done on behalf of those we serve gives one great satisfaction.

NOTES

1. Popular education has much to offer to higher theological education. Its emphasis centers not on institutionality but rather on the «original dimension of human existence.»
2. The literary analysis is taken exclusively from *Sinopsis de los Cuatro Evangelios*. Benoit, Boismard, Malillos, 1977.
3. I wrote part of this reflection in «The Logic of Grace in Theological Education (Galatians 3:23-29),» John S. Pobee (ed.), *Theology, Ministry and Renewal of God ? People*. Sixteen Bible Studies, Geneva, WCC, 1995.

**CONGRESS 96 RESPONSES
TO THE WORKING PAPERS**

1. THEOLOGICAL SCHOLARSHIP AND RESEARCH

The tension between the so-called «academic» and «practical» aspects of theological scholarship and research was a key issue for all groups discussing the paper.

A «mark of excellence» for theological education today, it was noted, is how theology relates to the life of the people. The shift to a more community-oriented approach was recognized as urgent and necessary. The responsibility of doing «crisis» or «issue-oriented» theology was seen from the point of view, of some areas, to be crucial. A relevant problem-centered theology could look at such issues as child labour, land mines, ocean and air pollution, for example, as issues that are affecting the whole inhabited earth and of concern to all people. Participants in the theological reflection, as well as items on the theology agenda would cover a much wider range than is generally the case.

Forming hermeneutical communities was identified as a proper way of theologizing. Educating Christian leaders without educating Christian communities was seen as an incomplete and distorted approach. Furthermore, the tendency in some places, to remove theology from the lived experience of the people resulted in many theological graduates and «scholars» returning to their homes and countries as «misfits.»

Positive «breakthroughs» were seen in some areas where newly formed lay people, educated for theological reflection from the grassroots contexts, are now engaging with the pastors, teachers, and «theologians.» This theological conversation is calling forth a fresh and authentic response to real life issues.

Also of encouraging interest was the reminder that in certain places the three-way «conversation and communion» between the local church community, the institution, and the students, reflected the quality of the theological education. This dialogue determined the nature of the scholarship and research. When the conversation occurred before and after the period of formal training, «theology for life» was more assured.

Many groups acknowledged the needs, and sometimes the demands and expectations, to conform to Western standards and approaches. This worked against doing contextual theology and hampered the growth of good theological scholarship and research in the Christian community.

Awareness of the importance of shared leadership raised implications for theological education. Sensitivity to this and other cultural matters meant modifications of curricula and methodologies. Recognition of shared leadership issues pointed to opportunities for new directions in doing theology.

Sharing of views and experiences related to modern technology emerged as another major area of importance. Use of teleconferences, working with the In-

ternet, and accessing tutors through e-mail, for example, were recognized as important new ways of improving the quality of information and communication.

But while positive aspects were noted, e.g., possibilities for strengthened communal dimensions in theology, concern was also expressed in relation to the potential of modern technology for widening the gap even further between the «haves» and the «have nots.»

The issue of globalization was discussed, with the group recognizing the potential for control and domination as well as opportunity for enrichment. Sharing vision and resources in a universal church with a global context being both ecumenical and cross-cultural was seen by many participants as a way of strengthening rather than weakening the whole Christian family.

The «starting point» for theology and the search for the «common points of reference» were other key areas of importance in the response. The group affirmed the paper's statement about the shift from doctrine to experience, recognizing *the* experience for the Christian family being the incarnation of the Son of God.

Incarnational theology—recognition of and response to the Word of God in the world—was understood as utterly basic and paramount for the theological enterprise. The Word, the person and message of Jesus, was seen as «starting point» and, along with this, an understanding that the common point of reference we search for is already present in our suffering humanity and in our world. The group highlighted the fact that our theological scholarship and research needs to shape its educational framework from this place of need, brokenness, struggle, and hope.

There were two issues (picked up during and after the plenary session) which were named as particularly important. The paper states that doing theology through nonrational ways is «admissible and desirable.» This is not enough. We would want to say that the intuitive artistic and emotive aspects are *absolutely critical* to the learning process and to any fully human response to theological scholarship and research. Along with theory and praxis, these ways give room for imagination and silence, for creativity, and especially they make space for the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, theology may even need more radical and profound changes than this. A completely new «logique» and way of doing theology may need to be addressed or may in fact emerge.

Finally the relationship between theological scholarship and ministerial formation was seen to be an issue of particular concern, not to be regarded as an additional item or a useful «extra» but as absolutely integral to the whole task and responsibility of theological scholarship and research. The ongoing spiritual formation of both students and staff was recognized as a priority. Without the commitment to personal and communal Christian transformation, the theological educator and «educated» are without roots and unable to give life to the

Christian family and to the world.

2. WOMEN IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

The 1992 W0CAT1 CONGRESS mandated the Executive Committee to address itself to the issue of injustices arising out of the constraints, prohibitions, failures, and denials of persons—particularly women—who seek the services of theological education or who feel called to be theological educators. The paper on Women in Theological Education was the response to that mandate. The process of writing the paper was itself an expression of partnership, the result of collaborative consultation, debate, and conversation among four women from around the world. It is an example of a different way of doing theology.

The main issue we found was under representation; this takes place in several ways:

- a. The actual exclusion of women from theological education, which has largely been the prerogative of men.
- b. Even where the churches formally accept women in theological education, there are many factors that continue to inhibit the participation of women.
- c. The problem of tokenism where women are admitted in theological institutions, but their presence is not felt, their voice is not listened to, their work is not affirmed or acknowledged.
- d. Through methods of doing theology which continue to be male-centered.
- e. When the language of theology does not speak to, or of, women's experiences, but reinforces negative images of women.
- f. When unorthodox and often disturbing theology produced by women, grounded in women's experiences, is dismissed as sub-standard and not acceptable.
- g. When the diversity and complexity of women's experiences results in diversity in women's theological voices, women are stereotyped as lacking focus and incapable of communicating, even among themselves.

We want to affirm that theological education is not done in a vacuum; it always takes place in concrete social, political, and historical contexts. Global is-

sues of social justice (or its lack), especially impact women and may prevent the effective participation of women in all settings of education. For women, therefore, the issue of social justice lies at the core of all theology.

We need to recognize women's achievements *and* determine next steps for theological education

3. ACADEMIC DECREES AND CREDENTIALS IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

It is widely accepted by the participants that credentials in theological education is a problematic area and solutions to problems may not be easy to find. Nevertheless, the participants were of the view that WOCATI affords the best forum to discuss openly and freely problems related to standards in credentials. That exchange of information may lead to greater understanding, and the discovery of ways for sharing vexing academic problems.

Participants were generally reluctant to adopt the proposed eight types of academic credentials that were suggested as part of global theological standards in credentials. The proposal, while helpful in some respects, is seen to be weighed too much in favor of the North American system of theological education. Yet the problems related to finding equivalency among several types of degrees and diplomas, as they are awarded in different parts of the world, is indeed a pressing

MESSAGE FROM THE 1996 2nd WOCATI CONGRESS

THE CONTEXT

We came to Nairobi, 50 delegates and guests from 17 associations and other related organizations.

We began by listening to our hosts speak of Africa. The continent where the human family was born and which cherishes a wisdom of wholeness. The elders joined to the unborn and people to the land and the animals. We heard about the struggle to maintain this vision in theological education:

- when the poor are sold for a pair of sandals.
- when violence and great faith are found together.
- when educators face painful tensions and must choose between their personal needs and the urgent call to attend a new birth.
- when clear vision is needed to look into the future.
- when the cord that binds the present to the past must be broken.
- when celebrations can be made, even in the midst of suffering, because the people are faithful and God will multiply them and make them very strong.
- when as yet unformed and vulnerable beginnings must be cherished and sustained because they may bring deliverance.

We heard from Latin America of the grace of God that tastes like salt. Like the blood of a birth, like the tears of travail, like the “sea smell” of a new born baby. A theological education that radiates grace. That is:

- born in the night and not in the fixed time and space of knowledge.
- has a soft form that fits the breast and that can be carried upon the back.
- that resembles its father and its mother having a human face, not the face of a machine.
- that comes from the people and will free the people.

We heard from these particular contexts and recognised that they revealed to each of us the contours of our own. In every place a painful labour is in process. Gentle hands are needed to steer the birth, and clear vision is needed to protect the helpless grace which God is multiplying amongst us.

THE CHALLENGES

Theological Scholarship and Research

We discussed the document prepared on this subject which drew our attention to the need for excellence in scholarship, the honouring of local knowledge, the need for socially engaged reflection upon the issues of contemporary concern, and a coherent global perspective.

In our response we faced painful issues. We recognised that in most contexts a gap exists between the life of theological institutions and the living faith of the people. WOCATI believes that in our future work we:

- must acknowledge the place of power and privilege in which theological education has operated and in which excellence has been defined.
- must recognise the life that God has granted to local and contextual theologies which show great beauty and profound wisdom.
- must intentionally direct our energies to include lay people and women in the life of theological institutions.
- must bear in mind the necessary link between theological education, spiritual formation, and the life of the churches.

The Congress acknowledges that difficult questions concerning the distribution of resources and the «ownership» of tradition are unresolved. These are of vital importance when promoting good scholarship and research. WOCATI must urgently consider:

- the possibilities for a far more effective sharing of resources through the use of new technology.
- the corresponding danger that new technology may widen the gap between those who are joined in networks of communication and those who are excluded.
- the dangers inherent in a post-modern «globalised» culture that indigenous theological traditions may be abused and plundered by Western academic theology.
- the tension between the need to develop self-sufficiency, South-South exchanges, and contextual scholarship and the just requirement to share resources (e.g., scholarship, publications and subject specialists) between the North and South.

When theological scholarship and research are viewed in the light of the richness of our spiritual heritage we affirm:

- the vital significance of artistic and creative expressions of theology.
- the importance of conversation between local perspectives in order to achieve a communication which becomes manifest in concrete action on issues of social justice.
- the presence of God's Word in the language of human suffering.

Women in Theological Education

We studied the paper on theological education which was produced by women in conversation from four corners of the world. It drew our attention to the lack of participation by women in theological education and the obstacles they encounter when they begin to claim their place within the theological education.

In our discussion we recognised that:

- women have given their energy, commitment, and financial support to the work of the church, including theological education, but have not been honored for their contribution or received their fair share in the distribution of educational resources.
- women's traditions have been forgotten, women's names have been unrecorded.
- women's concerns have not been the subject of theological reflection and have been omitted from the curriculum.

In order to counter women's exclusion from theological education an *intentional* process of change must be initiated. This will require attention to:

- the access of women to theological education *whether or not* they seek ordination as a result.
- the intentional distribution of resources to women for further study and research and the intentional recruitment of women faculty members.
- the intentional revision of the curriculum with the interests, concerns, and insights of women in mind.

WOCATI affirms that women have nourished and sustained the life of the Christian church throughout the centuries. It celebrates its faith that in future their names will not be lost and declares its commitment to discern appropriate ways to ensure their full partnership in theological education.

Academic Degrees and Credentials

We considered the prepared paper which set out the origins of academic credentials in the West and differentiated among eight levels of intellectual and professional competence.

The CONGRESS felt that it was not possible to address the use of academic credentials without naming issues of access and power. It was reluctant to adopt as normative the eight categories which had originated within the Western academic system. However it recognised that, whether WOCATI adopts these classifications or not, they will continue to be widely used to govern access to theological education. For this reason WOCATI must continue to engage in conversations concerning academic credentials in theological education:

- that information be shared widely as to the value attached to academic awards within their specific contexts.
- that the various debates concerning accreditation which are currently taking place along confessional lines be brought into dialogue with one another.
- that creative ways of facilitating access to theological education and assessing non-traditional theological work be actively pursued.

THE RESPONSE

In response to the challenges it has considered, WOCATI affirms that its mission is rooted the worship of God and its commitment to God's people. We embrace the challenge:

- to return to our own contexts with a fresh commitment to articulate local knowledge and to share fully in the life and inheritance of our peoples.
- to recognise the importance of the image of God in every human face; intentionally supporting the theological work of women and the scholarship of Africa, Latin America, and Asia.
- to discern and share what is of value in the development of traditions of accreditation.
- to look to the future, whose face we do not yet know, and discover ways in which new technology might be shared in the service of our institutions.
- to examine ways in which financial resources might be best employed to achieve the visions we have now made our own.

OFFICERS AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ELECTED AT THE WOCATI 1996 CONGRESS

OFFICERS:

President: Barbara Brown-Sigmund

The Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada (ATS), North America

Vice President: Zenaida Luinba

Programme for Theology and Cultures in Asia (PTCA), Asia

Secretary-Treasurer: Ian Williams

Australia/New Zealand Association of Theological Schools (ANZATS), Australia/New Zealand

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

Maty Gatui

Association of Theological Institutions in Eastern Africa (ATIEA), Africa

Weslej Kigasung

Melanesian Association of Theological Schools (MATS), Pacific

Leonor Rojas

Asociacion de Seminarios e Instituciones Teologicas (ASIT), Latin America

Petros Vassiliadis

Conference of Orthodox Theological Schools (COTS), Europe

Douglas Waruta

Conference of African Theological Institutions (CATI), Africa

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
ADDRESSES THE FUTURE OF WOCATI**



The Executive Committee of WOCATI met in Pittsburgh, PA (USA) January 5-8, 1997. The Committee considered five questions facing WOCATI:

1. What are the distinctive goals of WOCATI and how can they be met in the next four to five years? We agreed that WOCATI should pursue six major goals in the future: (a) stimulate scholarly work on the nature and future of theological education, (b) support women in theological education, (c) engage religious educators from other religious traditions about theological or religious education, (d) develop clearer understandings of degrees and credentials used in different parts of the world, and (e) encourage the formation of regional associations in parts of the world where they do not exist and work to support existing associations.

2. How will the financial resources to sustain WOCATI be obtained to enable the conference to continue its work? We need a combination of global support and local funding. Local funding is needed for travel grants to assist delegates when they attend a WOCATI CONGRESS. The Executive Committee will be contacting members and other agencies to explore options.

How can we get more members—from groups that are presently uninformed about the existence of WOCATI, from global organizations already concerned about theological education, from affiliate agencies that relate to theological education? We are developing a new pattern of communication to spread information about WOCATI more effectively.

What pattern of meetings should be used to promote the work of WOCATI in the next five years? We propose a consultation on «Change in Theological Education» for May 1999. We suggest that the next CONGRESS be postponed until 2001 to avoid conflicts with other meetings and to enable WOCATI to find the necessary funding.

What means should WOCATI use to communicate with members and share useful information about theological education? We will no longer publish *WOCATI NEWS*. It will be replaced by a diversity of communication tools that are currently being explored: a periodic fax news sheet, a series of printed occasional papers, and a World Wide Web page.

Details about these decisions and plans will be shared with member associations and interested schools in the months ahead—following a new WOCATI communications plan.

**WOCATI AND THE FUTURE AND VIABILITY
OF ECUMENICAL THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION**

By Petros Vassiliadis

There is no doubt that the classical approach to *theology* is being questioned from various quarters at the end of this turbulent and divisions-creating second millennium. If some do not openly admit that it is in a certain crisis, very few would deny that it has at least run its course. Ever since the beginning of medieval scholasticism, and even after the Enlightenment, theology was defined as a discipline which used the methods of the Aristotelian logic. Rational knowledge was, and in some case is still, considered as the only legitimate form of knowledge. *Theological education*, thus, gradually shifted away from its eucharistic/liturgical framework, i.e. away from its ecclesial, community, local context.¹

The rational understanding of God and humanity had in fact led to a *knowledge*-centered and *mission*-oriented theological education. Most Theological Institutions around the globe have been structured in such a way as to educate Church 'leaders', not the entire people of God; to equip priests, pastors or missionaries with the necessary means to preserve and propagate certain Christian truths or ethical norms, and in some cases even to defend old-fashioned institutions, not to build up local eucharistic communities. They lost, in other words, the *community*-centered and *liturgically/eschatologically*-oriented dimension of theological education. Gradually, therefore, we all unconsciously lost sight of the most significant parameter that really makes theology viable: The very often forgotten truth that *theology* is the real conscience of the living Church; that theology is first and foremost the voice of the - sometimes voiceless - Christian community and one of its most fundamental tasks; even further: that theology is neither a discipline for young people at the end of adolescence, nor a prerogative of the professionals, be it clergy or academics, but the task of the entire Christian community. Consequently, little - if any - attention has been given to the fact that theological education is a worldwide enterprise fundamental to the mission of the Church, not in its institutional character, but in its eschatological awareness of being a glimpse and a foretaste of the *Kingdom of God*, the prophetic manifestation of this ultimate reality that should always determine our approach to history.

I

This vision of the Kingdom was unquestionably reinforced in modern times through the ecumenical movement, which for a moment created an unprecedented enthusiasm among the deeply divided Christianity that the centuries-long divisions of the Church might find some sort of an agreed solution. Unfortunately the momentum which reached a climax in the 60s, especially through the historic event of Vatican II, did not have an equally optimistic follow-up. Ironically, the ecu-

menical optimism and enthusiasm towards the goal of the visible unity of the Church was interrupted at the very point an important achievement in the field of theological hermeneutics was reached with the affirmation at a world level, and wide application from the 70s onwards, of the *contextual* character of theology. This great achievement has created an unabridged psychological gap between the traditional Churches and the new and most vibrant younger Christian communities. The main reason for this unexpected, and at the same time unfortunate, development in the ecumenical movement was the complete negation of any stable point of reference, of all authentic criteria in the search for unity and the ultimate truth in the post-Uppsala period culminating at Canberra.²

It is very significant that the discussions in the Oslo consultation were conducted in the *context of contextuality and catholicity*, and the "ecumenical vision" was well rooted in the original planning in such a way as to direct our attention towards "how ministry and formation processes can further the unity of the Church (John 17:21) for the sake of the unity and renewal of humankind and indeed all creation".

There is no question that it is impossible to make a case for the *unity of the Church* while being indifferent to the *unity of humankind*. Today it is a common view in ecumenical circles that we can now definitely speak of «differing, but legitimate, interpretations of one and the same gospel» (Bristol). It has become an axiom that «every text has a context», a context that is not merely something external to the text (theological position, theological tradition etc.) that simply modifies it, but something that constitutes an integral part of it. None can any longer deny that all traditions are inseparably linked to a specific historical, social-cultural, political, and even economic and psychological context. And this means that the traditional data can no longer be used as a rationale for an abstract universal theology that carries absolute and unlimited authority. Finally, through contextuality, in contrast to classical approach to theology, we are no longer concerned whether and to what extent today's theological positions are in agreement with the *tradition*, but if these positions have any dynamic reference and relation at all to the given contemporary conditions.³

Nevertheless, little - if any at all - attention has been given to work toward reconciling the two currents of modern ecumenism in order to soften the existing antithesis between contextuality and catholicity. My modest contribution will focus only on this extremely important dimension of the ecumenical vision, encouraged by the mandate of the organizers to work towards a synthesis of the legitimacy of all contemporary local/contextual theologies, and the necessity - in fact an imperative, and not simply an option - of a core of the apostolic fai-

th. It is my firm conviction that ecumenical theological education to be able not only to survive, but also to give life and lead to renewal, must have a *common point of reference*. Otherwise, we run the danger to view any local context and experience as authentic expressions of our Christian faith.⁴ Allow me at this point to bring to our memory the accurate observation by the late Nikos Nissiotis, exactly ten years after his tragic death, that we must not exclude the possibility of a universally and fully authoritative theology, perhaps even on the basis of the transcendent anthropology of contextual theology,⁵ which suggests possibilities for making corrective adjustments to the contextual methodology.

In the 2nd Congress of WOCATI (World Conference of Associations of Theological Institutions), held in Nairobi Kenya (27 June-3 July 1996), it was rightly emphasized, that the most important and necessary perspectives in contemporary theological education are both catholicity⁶ and contextuality: *catholicity*, in the sense of the search for a coherent, ecumenical, global, and catholic awareness of the theological task, and *contextuality* as the unique expression of it in the various particular contexts. Coherence is important in that it expresses the authenticity and distinctiveness of different contextual theologies, as well as the need to bring these contextual theologies into inter-relationship with others.

Of course, the way in which this coherent, ecumenical, global, and catholic perspective is to be achieved, is not an easy task. But central in this respect is not only the concept of *dialogue*, but also of *unity*, i.e. the question of where does the locus of Christian faith reside. In other words, without denying the contextual nature of theology, and taking account of the indispensable nature of dialogue to the theological task ecumenical theological education, the question: "Wherein does the *unity* of Christian theology reside?" needs to be answered.

However, for theology to seek for a coherent, ecumenical, global perspective requires the recognition that Christian theology, no matter how many and varied be its expressions, must have a *common point of reference*, a unifying element within all forms of ecumenical theological education and ministerial formation. It is necessary to focus upon the issue of unity in both general terms and in the specific ecclesiological use of the term as the on-going search to restore the given unity of the Church. This includes consideration of the unifying and saving nature of the Christ event, continually re-enacted through his Body, the Church, in the life-giving and communion-restoring Holy Spirit. After all, theological education is a worldwide enterprise fundamental to the mission of the Church.

This given unity of the Church, which does not necessarily mean a strict unified structure, is given expression in an adherence to a *broad understanding of Christian tradition*. Such an understanding affirms not only the centrality of Christology, but also the constitutive nature of Pneumatology, i.e. the normative nature of a trinitarian understanding of Christian revelation. This trinitarian understanding affirms the ultimate goal of the divine economy, not only in terms of Christ becoming all in all both in an anthropological, i.e. soteriological, and in a cosmological way, but also in terms of the Holy Spirit constituting authentic communion and restoring the union of all.

The communion God seeks and initiates is not only with the Church in the conventional sense, but with the whole cosmos. Thus the unity of divine revelation, as represented in the broad understanding of Christian tradition, is for the entire created world, not only for believers. This understanding of unity is important to keep in mind as it challenges a potential distortion wherein unity is identified with the maintenance of denominational loyalty, which in turn can be an exercise of oppression, excluding suffering people from the community of the people of God.

This understanding of unity in ecumenical theological education informs and challenges all expressions of contextual theology. It does not locate the unity inherent within Christian theology with any ecclesiastical or doctrinal system, and recognizes the varied forms of human and social existence. In this way, it is congruent with the methodologies and goals of contextual theology. However, it also challenges these theologies in pointing out the indispensability of an adherence to a broad understanding and acceptance of Christian tradition as that which gives expression to the given unity of the Church.

II

In my view, the main reason of the inability of modern Christianity to overcome the existing “theological misunderstandings” is the issue of the criteria of truth. And this is due to the inability to reconcile contextuality with the text/word/proclamation syndrome of modern Christian theology. It is time, I think, to distance ourselves as much as possible from the dominant to modern scholarship syndrome of the priority of the texts over the experience, of *theology* over *ecclesiology*, of kerygma and mission over the Eucharist. There are many scholars who cling to the dogma, imposed by the post-Enlightenment and post-Reformation hegemony over all scholarly theological outlook (and not only in the field of biblical scholarship or of western and in particular Protestant theology), which can be summarized as follows: what constitutes the core of our Ch-

ristian faith, should be based exclusively on a certain *depositum fidei*, be it the Bible, the writings of the Fathers, the canons and certain decisions of the Councils, denominational declarations etc.; very rarely is there any serious reference to the *eucharistic communion event*, which after all has been responsible and produced this *depositum fidei*.

The ecclesiological problem, which is so important an issue in today's ecumenical discussions, is a matter not so much of church organization and structure, as it is a matter of eschatological orientation. The whole Christian tradition from Jesus' preaching the coming of the Kingdom of God through the Ignatian concept of the Church as a eucharistic community (with the Bishop as the image of Christ), and down to the later Christian tradition (which, by the way, understands the Eucharist as the mystery of the Church and not a mystery among others), reveals that it is the eschatological and not the hierarchical (*episcopal, conciliar, congregational* etc.) nature of the Church that it was stressed.

Should we not remind ourselves again that the Church does not draw her identity from what she *is*, or from what it was given to her as institution, but from what she *will be*, i.e. from the eschaton? Should we not reaffirm our understanding of the Church as portraying the Kingdom of God on earth, in fact as being a glimpse or foretaste of the Kingdom to come? After all the main concern of all great theologians of the apostolic, post-apostolic was to maintain clearly the vision of that Kingdom before the eyes of God's people. And the *episcopo-centric* (and by no means *episcopo-critic*) structure of the Church- the main stumbling block for the titanic effort towards the visible unity of the Church - was nothing more than an essential part of that vision. The bishop as presiding in love in the Eucharist is not a vicar or representative, or ambassador of Christ, but an image (*eikon*) of Christ. So with the rest of the ministries of the Church: in their authentic expression they are not parallel to, or given by, but identical with those of, Christ.⁷ That is also why Christian theology and life should always refer to the resurrection. The Church exists not because Christ died on the cross but because he is risen from the dead, thus becoming the *aparche* of all humanity.

The importance of Eucharist, and of the «eucharistic theology» (more precisely of the «eucharistic ecclesiology»), in the ecumenical debate has only recently been rediscovered and realized. The proper understanding of the Eucharist has been always a stumbling block in Christian theology and life; not only at the start of the Christian community, when the Church had to struggle against a multitude of mystery cults, but also much later, even within the ecumenical era. In vain distinguished theologians (mainly in the East) attempted to redefine the Christian sacramental theology on the basis of the trinitarian theology.

Seen from a modern theological perspective, this was a desperate attempt to reject certain tendencies which overemphasized the importance of Christology at the expense of the importance of the role of the Holy Spirit. The theological issues of *filioque* and the *epiclesis* have no doubt thoroughly discussed and a great progress has been achieved in recent years through initiatives commonly undertaken by the WCC and the Roman Catholic Church; but their real consequences to the meaning of the sacramental theology of the Church, and consequently to theological education, have yet to be fully and systematically examined. Theological education should no longer treat the Church either as a cultic religion or as a proclaiming/confessing institution.

The Eucharist has not been more successfully interpreted than with the use of the «trinitarian theology», i.e. not only as *the* Mystery of Church, but also as a projection of the inner dynamics (love, communion, equality, diaconia, sharing etc.) of the Holy Trinity into the world and cosmic realities. Ecumenical theological education, therefore, and ministerial formation should focus not so much on a doctrinal accommodation and of organization and structure (Faith and Order) of the Church(es), but on a diaconal attitude and on an eschatological orientation. In other words on a «*costly eucharistic vision*».

III

With such a costly eucharistic vision our future theological education can not only develop gender sensitivity; not only articulate a new paradigm to equip the whole people of God; not only allow an innovative, experimental, people-centered approach; it can also ensure that the processes of formation be relevant and renewing to individuals and communities of faith.

After all, our theological education can no longer be conducted *in abstracto*, as if its object, God (cf. theo-logia= logos/word about God), was a solitary ultimate being. It should always refer to a Triune God, the perfect expression of communion, a direct result of the eucharistic eschatological experience; an experience directed toward the vision of the Kingdom, and centered around the communion (*koinonia*), which includes justice, peace, abundance of life and respect to the created world.

What comes out of such an affirmation is self-evident: theological education should always refer to reconciliation, and to communion as an ultimate constitutive element of being. In other words it should have relevance to the relational dimension of life, and therefore be in a continuous and dynamic dialogue, not only in the form of theological conversation among Churches or Chri-

stian communities in order to promote the visible unity of the one body of Christ, but also with people of other faiths; after all theological reflection on God's self-revelation to humankind can no longer be done from a Christendom perspective.

NOTES

1. Cf. also my article "The Future of Theological Education in Europe," *Oikoumene and Theology: The 1993-95 Erasmus Lectures in Ecumenical Theology*, Thessaloniki 1996, pp. 11-24.
2. More in my "Orthodoxy and Ecumenism" above.
3. It is tragic irony that the 1971 Louvain Conference of the Faith and Order commission almost led to a break because of the presidential address of the late Fr. John Meyendorff, moderator then of the Faith and Order Commission, and one of the leading Orthodox ecumenists. And twenty years later, with the initiative of an Orthodox theological faculty, that of the University of Thessaloniki, an attempt was made to clarify the relationship between Orthodox theology and contextuality. More on this in my "Orthodoxie und kontextuelle Theologie," *ÖR* 42 (1993), pp. 452-460.
4. Cf. Kuncheria Pathil, *Models in Ecumenical Dialogue: A Study of the Methodological Development in the Commission on «Faith and Order» of the World Council of Churches*, Bangalore 1981, pp. 393ff; also Konrad Raiser, *Identität und Sozialität*, München 1971; and *Ecumenism in Transition*, Geneva 1991.
5. Nikos Nissiotis, «Ecclesial Theology in Context», in Choan-Seng Song (ed.), *Doing Theology Today*, Madras 1976, (minutes of the Bossey conferences, 101-124, p. 124. Cf. also the special issue of *Study Encounter*, Vol. VIII No. 3 [1972]).
6. Although the term used was "globalization", it was stressed that this very term can imply another form of domination which would endanger the autonomy of the various contextual theologies.
7. John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion. Studies in Personhood and the Church*, New York 1985, p. 163.

**THE 3rd WOCATI CONGRESS
(Chiangmai 2002)**

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

*by Zenaida Lumba, Acting President
(ATESEA)*

Greetings and Welcome

In Hawaii, as our friend Yeow Choo Lak would vouch, they say "Aloha" for welcome. In the Philippines, we say "Mabuhay!". But in Thailand the word is Yindee Tonrup. I wish I could greet you all in your respective mother tongue to express my heartiest welcome to the Chiangmai WOCATI assembly. The latest list I received says that there are 42 of us gathered in this exciting city of Chiangmai, ready to make historic decisions on the future of global theological networking.

It is believed that the birthing of the first child is the most painful experience of a mother. If the putting up of a theological congress of universal magnitude were a birthing process, the Chiangmai WOCATI should not be painful anymore since this is already the third of its kind. But holding it after a long interval of six years, made it like we are starting WOCATI all over again; like the first child is just born.

From the communications received from the esteemed delegates of this august body. I notice that 91% are new. Some even asked me "Please tell me what WOCATI is all about", while others wrote "We thought WOCATI does not exist anymore." Good question and observation. WOCATI is still around. But it may cease to exist. The answer is in our hands.

A Quick Flashback

Years ago. Dr. Samuel Amirtham, then the Director of the Programme of Theological Education (PTE) of the World Council of Churches, now known as Ecumenical Theological Education, saw the need for theological associations in the world to network closely. He, therefore, initiated meetings of executive directors of theological associations in Africa, America, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin and Central America. The meeting in Singapore in 1987 breathed life into the World Conference of Association of Theological Associations. It was, however, in Kaliurang, Indonesia where its first birthday was celebrated and the inaugural meeting was held.

A number of persons performed nurturing roles during WOCATI's infancy. Foremost of them is Dr. Leon Pacala, then Executive Director of the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada (ATS). He was appointed to raise funds for WOCATI, a task which he fulfilled magnificently. Dr. Yeow Choo Lak, then the Executive Director of the Association of Theological Education in Southeast Asia (ATESEA), as the secretary of (WOCATI) Executive Committee, did the paper work with the strong support of his counterparts from the rest of the world. It was generous grants from The Pew Char-

itable Trusts and Lilly Endowment Inc. that enabled WOCATI to carry on its operation.

The WOCATI Congress

The first WOCATI congress was held in 1992 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania while the second congress was held in 1996 in Nairobi, Kenya.

The third congress should have been held in 2000 but it had to be postponed for two reasons: There have been resignations from the Executive Committee. The first to resign was Dr.Kigasung Wesley due to his election as bishop of New Guinea. Dr.Ian Williams, our secretary-treasurer, followed since he left the academy to work in a parish where, he believed, he felt called to serve. Our president, Dr.Barbara Brown Zikmund, was the third to resign. This she did after leaving Hartford Seminary and accepting a new job in Kyoto, Japan. Just before this assembly, our five members from Africa, Douglas Waruta and Mary Getui stopped writing. From eight the Executive Committee members became three: Leonor Rojas, Petros Vassiliadis and myself As the vice-president of WOCATI, I suddenly found myself its reluctant president. On that same year I was elected president of an 8,000-student-university. The work in the university, while planning for this Congress, has been mentally, emotionally and physically demanding. The university, Wesleyan University-Philippines, which used to have one campus, now has three located in the northern part of the country.

The resignation problem was compounded by lack of financial resources. There has been a heavy competition for funds from foundations. Then, too, for some reason, many of the member associations do not remit membership dues. The Executive Committee could not meet or the little funds left would be eaten up by airfares and board and lodging expenses. ATS came to rescue WOCATI. Its staff put this organization on the internet at no cost on our part. It tried to raise funds for us but that seemed to have failed.

We Are Here To Decide

There is no need to overemphasize the problems that WOCATI faces. We need a strong leadership that is committed to make WOCATI go. But that is not all .We need resources that will support that leadership.

Dr.Barbara B. Zikmund once wrote that congresses like what we have now are very expensive and that it makes more sense to have small regional meetings. Is this the need of the hour? There is a TV program in the Philippines entitled "Fine, whatever." But that we cannot say of WOCATI. We need to decide. Whatever is not fine!

And the decision is whether to revive WOCATI, inject new life into its dying stage or just let it die naturally and be more merciful and apply euthanasia. The answer is in your hands.

A World of Gratitude and Appreciation

Let me end by saying that this assembly would have not been a reality without the committed and able support of particularly two friends, Chris Meinzer of the Association of Theological Schools in the U.S. and Canada (ATS) who worked from the United States and Salvador Martinez who patiently did the ground work from here in Chiangmai. I was in the Philippines, trying to reach out to all of you, very often wondering to the verge of frustration why answers to my letters would not come as early as I expected them to. There is, however, another person who has been working for WOCATI behind the scene. What you read on the web about WOCATI is her creative work. That person is Loretta Groff of ATS. Electronics supplied the speed we all needed to make this assembly happen. Thanks be to God. Thank you to all of you. May God continue to bless WOCATI.

THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION IN A POSTMODERN ERA

Msgr. Jeremiah J. McCarthy Ph.D.

Director of Accreditation/Institutional Evaluation

*The Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada
(ATS)*

The Petrine admonition to "give a reason for the hope that lies within you" is the biblical anchor for the interrogation and exploration of the data of revelation that constitutes "theological inquiry." This process of intellectual inquiry is the enduring task of communities of faith, aptly captured in the revered axiom of St. Anselm, "*fides quaerens intellectum*" (faith seeking understanding). The ordering of faithful, gospel life with life in the world always occurs in the context of specific settings of time and space. Responding to new challenges and demands is a dynamic process of engagement with diverse and oftentimes, "conflictual" construals of life and its ultimate meaning. Whether it is the gathering of the apostles in Jerusalem at the first ecclesial council (Acts 15), or the contentious Christological debates that characterized the councils of Nicea, Chalcedon, and Ephesus, or the missionary outreach of the Christian community that now reaches into every part of globe, these challenges have required the willingness to engage forthrightly and critically, patterns of thought that both converge with and diverge from the ongoing, lived experience of the Christian community.

As Cardinal Newman, the leading Anglican/Catholic theologian of the nineteenth century observed, "in heaven it is otherwise, but here below, to live is to change, and to live well, is to have changed often." For Newman, "change" did not imply wholesale departure from the substance of the Christian deposit of faith, but rather a willingness to plumb its depths, to perceive new lines of development that tap into the vibrant power of faith and action. Theological reflection, then, is a critical task, a task at once holding fast to the accrued wisdom of the church, but is also willing to risk the promise of an encounter with the "stranger" who may come in the guise of diverse races, cultures, and genders, and intellectual traditions. Such engagement, then, is nothing new, and the fact that we continue this process in our own time, with new questions, perhaps, that have arisen from the emergence of both "modern" and "postmodern" assessments should not alarm us. As with every encounter with the "other" there is both danger and opportunity. "Postmodernity," I suggest, presents both of these realities, much like the twinned masks of comedy and tragedy that symbolize the stage and theatrical drama.

My task in this paper is to suggest how theological schools might engage critically with the cultural and intellectual challenges that come under the rubric of "postmodernity." The very term "postmodern" is subject to intense debate about its meaning, and I do not intend to enter into an exhaustive discussion or critique of this literature. However, I do want to make clear my operating understanding of the term "postmodernity" in order to situate my remarks about its implications for us as theological educators for the task of accrediting schools of theology.

In one of her sonnets, the American poet, Edna St. Vincent Millay, writes:
(1)

"...Upon this gifted age, in its dark hour,
Falls from the sky a meteoric shower
Of facts... they lie unquestioned, uncombined.
Wisdom enough to leech us of our ill
Is daily spun; but there exists no loom
To weave it into fabric..."

This absence of "loom to weave it into fabric" highlights a characteristic of a postmodern ethos, namely the perception that there is no controlling meta-narrative or grand conceptual scheme to order the complexity of reality. In the apt phrase of the evangelical theologian, Stanley Grenz, the hallmark of postmodernity is "centerless pluralism," or, as the Irish poet William Butler Yeats has remarked in his powerful poem, "Slouching Towards Bethlehem," the perception that "the center does not hold." The twentieth century's witness to two global conflicts, genocides and other forms of mass murder, certainly gives one pause about the Enlightenment confidence in the power of reason to conquer, alone, the forces of darkness. To a large extent, postmodernity is a reaction to modernity, hence the emphasis on "post" modern. The "modern" world, for my purposes, and according to my interpretation of the literature, is code language for the Enlightenment project of the 18th century to accentuate the capacity of human intellectual capacity, "reason," to order and improve the world.

According to postmodern critics, the success of Enlightenment reason in science, industry, politics, economics and social relations has often privileged the pragmatic, utilitarian and technical uses of knowledge leading to forms of discourse that are powerful tools for preserving the particular interests of stakeholders in a given power structure. The unmasking of such "totalizing" interests by intellectual, economic and political elites in society has lead postmodern "masters of suspicion" to a strategy of resistance by affirming the irreducibility of the "other." The central commitment to the "face of the other" constitutes for the Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, who was deeply affected by the Holocaust of the Second World War, the fundamental moral imperative for ethical analysis.

For my purposes, the term "postmodernity," does not speak to a single but many expressions of intellectual, moral and spiritual concerns. Accordingly, I find quite useful the appraisal given to these concerns by the American philosopher of religion at Fuller Seminary in California, Nancey Murphy.(2) Relying on the resources of Anglo-American analytic philosophy, Murphy reviews three critical issues that have an impact on philosophy, and I will contend, also

have an impact on theological education.

The first issue surrounds the philosophy of language. Critical philosophical work has shifted the understanding of language from an "expressivist-referential" model to a different conception of language as "use" and as an action situated and driven by social conventions. The "expressivist-referential" model reflects a perspective that sees language as "picturing" or representing a state of affairs. The image of language as a "mirror" exactly portraying or corresponding to states of affairs in the world was actually quite restrictive in its range of application. In this conception, discourse that did not fit into a narrow "picture-theory" such as ethical analysis or religious understandings, was marginalized and dismissed as lacking meaning.

By drawing a sharp and impermeable distinction between "facts" and "values," logical positivists asserted that ethical reflections could not be objectively assessed and assigned them to the realm of private feeling or subjectivity. Thus characterized as "emotivist" preferences of the individual, ethical discourse was effectively removed from any publicly defensible warrants for justification of its truth claims. To the contrary, the work of Wittgenstein and his followers has unmasked this flawed understanding by highlighting the multiple purposes served by language schemes, and it has demonstrated the need for language users to cultivate the skills necessary for communication in a variety of contexts, including ethics and religious discourse. According to Murphy, this critical re-conceptualization about language opens up new possibilities for ethical and religious understandings as participants in the larger public conversation about life, its purpose, and ultimate meaning.

The second impact of contemporary Anglo-American postmodernity, deals with the philosophy of knowledge, epistemology. The reigning model of knowledge in the West, inherited from Rene Descartes, is a picture of knowledge as resting upon indisputable building blocks, or "foundations." According to Descartes, only these foundations can secure knowledge from the corrosive effects of skepticism and relativism. However, the critical weakness with "foundationalism" is that the purported foundations are not immune from the inherent historicity, context and particular settings from which they emerge. The alternative to foundationalism is not necessarily utter relativism or perpetual skepticism. Rather, knowledge is better approached not as series of impervious building blocks, but as a web or network of interactive strands of meaning that influence one another and provide self-correcting strategies that respect, on the one hand, well-established traditions, and, on the other hand, blend an openness to new insights and conceptualizations. In other words, the postmodern turn from the solitary epistemology of modernity and its Cartesian, mathematical certitude about reality, to the social epistemology of knowledge as a skillful "dance"

with many players does not entail a collapse into relativism, but rather a humble awareness that all of our knowing is a "partial" purchase on the complexity of reality.

Related to these two features of Anglo-American postmodernity, is Murphy's third observation that the philosophy of science has shifted in a similar vein. Because reality itself is complex, it must be interrogated not with a singular, empirical lens, but with multiple research paradigms that are better attuned to grasping the complexity of the scientific enterprise. Atomistic thinking, that is, the view that reality is composed of irreducible bits of matter, has collapsed as we have begun to understand the systemic impact of organizational structures when individual elements of matter are gathered into complex "wholes" such as organisms or organ systems. According to Murphy, philosophy of science has begun to see the integration of such multiple systems as evidence not only of "bottom up" knowledge, the traditional perspective of the individual experimental disciplines of chemistry, biology, physics and so on, but also the "top down" influence of larger conceptual matrices that interact with and alter the causal links among the individual elements of the system.

According to Murphy, different metaphors emerge from a critical engagement with postmodern thought. The common thread in these new metaphors is that they help overcome some of the "reductionism" in the Enlightenment project of modernity. Language is not a picture but an action rooted in social conventions and appropriate rules for knowing how to go on, akin to Wittgenstein's metaphor of language as a form of rule-governed activity like a game, e.g., chess or cricket; knowledge is not so much a construction site of building blocks or foundations, but a web or network of convictions, beliefs and concepts that are historically conditioned by traditions of intellectual inquiry; and reality is multi-faceted, characterized by "top-down" organization, as well as by "bottom-up" structures of organization. The interplay between individual organs in the human body and the functioning of the body as a whole exemplify these interrelated patterns of organization. Murphy's appraisal of these postmodern moves avoids the corrosive relativism to be found in certain strands of postmodernity, for example, the textual relativism of Derrida.

Derrida shares with his philosophical contemporaries a concern to resist the reduction of the "other" to the unifying abstractions of the modern philosophical tradition. "Alterity," Otherness, has primordial status, and texts can imprison and obfuscate as well as liberate and enlighten. "Logocentrism," or the tyranny of imposed meaning and tradition, is to be continually subverted by a process of "double-reading." Simon Critchley refers to this Derridian strategy as "clotural" reading, a word trading on the French term that implies not only an enclosed space like a convent or cloister, but also a boundary that suggests or intimates

a surplus of meaning that is hidden from view.⁽³⁾ Murphy astutely notes, in my view, that these tactics of Derrida only make sense provided that he presumes an understanding of the text that is not subject to his "free play" strategy of endless critique.

To summarize, postmodernity captures a bewildering array of responses and reactions to the modern project of the Enlightenment to ground knowledge or "reason" as a timeless, universal construct, immune from the corrosive forces of history, the contingent, the particular, or the individual human subject. This enduring dream of modernity, however, should not be minimized or dismissed out of hand, and it has realized many achievements such as a concern for universal human rights, a concern for justice and equality, that deserve commendation and praise. The postmodern turn with its resistance to "totalizing" universal schemes, its affirmation of "differ(a)n(ce)" and its commitment to the singular, particular, contextual nature of reality, can be seen as a complementary and necessary "correction" to the weaknesses of modernity. These weaknesses, as argued persuasively in my view by Nancey Murphy, are distorted, minimalistic notions of language, "foundationalism" in epistemology, and univocal understandings of scientific research.

What, then, are some implications of this admittedly selective assessment of postmodernity for the enterprise of theological education? According to Evangelical theologian, Stanley Grenz, a critical assessment of the limitations and assets of postmodernity poses some opportunities for re-shaping theological education, a perspective that is also shared by Catholic theologian, Thomas Guarino. Allow me to reprise some of these perspectives and then I will conclude with some implications of these reflections for those of us involved in the activity of accrediting theological education.

For Grenz, there are many "posts" in postmodern philosophical assessments that bear consideration by theologians, and that are promising for re-conceiving the theological task in response to the challenge of postmodernity.⁽⁴⁾ Grenz is quite clear that Christian theology must stand firm against the postmodern rejection, tout court, of any "universal" or unifying center to reality. In other words, wholesale rejection of "metanarratives" or "universals" is not possible if Christian witness is to maintain its identity and credibility. Nonetheless, Grenz finds sympathy for the postmodern critiques of Enlightenment epistemology, especially its rejection of Enlightenment optimism about the capacity of human reason to deliver timeless and objective truth. In postmodern critiques, reason is capable of error, a theme that is coherent with Reformation doctrines concerning the prevalence of sin in human judgments. Moreover, Grenz finds a warrant for Christian endorsement of the critique of Enlightenment objectivity in the Augustinian tradition with its emphasis upon personal convictions and

historical location as crucial components of our ability to know truth. This conviction equally provides a warrant for suspecting the Enlightenment assumption about the goodness of knowledge, given our experience of splitting the atom and the prospect of the abuse of genetic science in our own times.

Grenz argues that a "post-individualistic" gospel can emerge from the postmodern critique of absolute autonomy. In particular, the emphasis on communitarian forms of discourse and action actually enhances the Christian conviction about the importance of the Church and its Trinitarian structure as a communion of saints in fellowship with the Trinity. A second positive outcome from postmodernity is the emergence of a "post-rationalistic" gospel, that is a gospel that is not "anti-intellectual" but rather a gospel that is open to "mystery" and a humble awareness of the inadequacy of human propositions, no matter how well-crafted, to capture the fullness of God's life and action in the world. Propositions or doctrines, then, are "second-order" discourse that depend upon the revealed, lived experience of God's ways with us. Catholic theologian, Cardinal Avery Dulles S.J., echoes a similar thought in his book, *The Survival of Dogma*, in which he points out that dogmas are "entry-points" into the mysteries of faith and are not exhaustive descriptions of the fullness of their meaning.⁽⁵⁾ For Grenz, postmodern critique can be helpful in achieving a "post-dualistic" gospel, that is, one in which artificial dichotomies such as that between "body" and "soul" can be overcome with a deeper sense of holistic salvation that is inclusive and relational, that holds together not only the "intellectual-rational" features of our humanity, but also the "emotional-affective" aspects as well. Finally, Grenz favors a "post-noeticentric" gospel, committed to the pursuit of "wisdom" that integrates faith with intellectual insight rather than the Enlightenment ideal of reason alone as the means to achieving a just and equitable society.

From an Evangelical perspective, therefore, Grenz is critical of some aspects of the postmodern turn, but also finds within its critiques positive resources for re-casting and re-shaping the mission of the church to spread the gospel. Thomas Guarino, a Catholic theologian, has written insightfully in the same vein.⁽⁶⁾ According to Guarino, while Catholic theology has learned a great deal from postmodernity, he shares with Grenz a need to depart from some of its more radical claims. To cite but one example from Guarino's richly and finely honed essay, postmodern concerns about the irreducibility of the "Other" are indeed valuable reminders that theological language can never encapsulate or fully capture divine mystery. The long apophatic tradition of theological discourse that emphasizes the "via negativa" is reflected in the work of the Cappadocian Fathers, especially Gregory Nazianzen, and in Aquinas. For Guarino, theologians who have embraced postmodern critique, for example Jean Luc-Marion in *God Beyond Being*, have underestimated the depth to which the classical tradition

was aware of the limitations of language to speak of the Ultimate Other, God. Against the postmodern suspicion of any enduring textual meaning, Guarino maintains that theological language must have some degree of intelligibility to "refer" to God in order to preserve identity and continuity in the tradition. In other words, a modest appropriation of postmodern insights can be of great assistance in maintaining a critical sense of the theological task, but wholesale rejection of the tradition is not a necessary conclusion flowing from postmodern critiques of the limitations of language and epistemology.

Given these appraisals of postmodernity, what are some implications for those of us involved in the process of assessment of theological education and accreditation of theological schools? In thinking about this question, I reviewed the process of redevelopment of the standards of accreditation in the ATS, and detected several implications for theological education. A critical assessment and retrieval of some postmodern themes can provide some interesting support for the following objectives of theological education that are woven into the redeveloped standards adopted by the ATS at its Biennium in 1996: (1) The cultivation of critical thinking skills captured in the concept of the "habitus" of theological reflection; (2) Integral learning, that is, holistic education that integrates intellectual mastery of the tradition with pastoral competence, and personal, spiritual capacities of the candidate, and (3) A public, dialogical set of capacities to engage the pluralistic, diverse, global context of theological education and ministry.

When the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada determined that the existing accrediting standards which had remained virtually unchanged for more than thirty years required updating and development, it wisely embarked on an association wide project to re-imagine and "revision" the standards. The "Quality of Theological Education" project began with a series of intentional conversations to explore the expectations of the Churches and seminaries with respect to the fundamental purposes of theological education. This undertaking was greatly assisted by timely monographs by thoughtful theologians who had been grappling with precisely the kinds of questions that I have previously outlined. Among this research, the books by David Kelsey, *Between Athens and Berlin: The Theological Education Debate* and Edward Farley's, *Theologia, The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education*, are particularly distinguished for their insight into the contemporary postmodern landscape and for their diagnosis and prognosis about the challenges facing theological education.(7) Kelsey's book highlighted the historical setting of theological education in the West, particularly the "Berlin" model of theology as "Wissenschaft" or scientific knowledge. This shift of theology from its traditional anchor in the Church to the academy as represented by "Berlin" has become in-

creasingly problematic and Kelsey argues that formation for ministry continues to be an essential context for understanding and "doing" theology. Farley's volume addresses the fragmentation in theological scholarship, and argues for a return to the classical Athenian ideal of wisdom or "paideia" as an integrating component of particular theological disciplines.

From these conversations and this research, the standards were re-written completely. Indeed, there are some interesting "postmodern" concerns reflected in the standards. There is clearly a recognition of enduring, but adaptive, normative patterns that are essential and non-negotiable, for example, theological scholarship understood as embracing teaching and learning as well as individual, faculty research, commitment to quality improvement by ongoing and demonstrated practices of evaluation. Essential resources such as faculty, information technologies, financial capacity, appropriate governance mechanisms, continue to be normative and are reflected by the use of the word "shall" to indicate that compliance is required. On the other hand, there is flexibility in recognizing that the standards can accommodate a complex and diverse constituency of schools, including Orthodox schools, Evangelical traditions, and Roman Catholics in addition to the founding institutions of ATS, the mainline Protestant seminaries and university-related divinity schools.

The standard on governance, for example, is intentionally capacious in its expectations, to accommodate a wide variety of patterns in ATS schools, including those schools who have strong confessional commitments, such as the community of Southern Baptist seminaries and the Roman Catholic schools, whose "nesting" within the larger governance structures of their respective churches, does not, therefore, entail an inability to fulfill their mission and purpose, as well as to secure appropriate academic freedom for their faculty members.

Furthermore, the standards are imbued with an ethos of quality improvement of theological education, and use aspirational language, captured by the word "should" to invite this ongoing reflection and assessment. There is a "web" like use of key themes that permeate the standards. These themes are planning and evaluation, freedom of inquiry, diversity, and globalization. That is, these attributes are "woven" throughout each of the degree standards so that they permeate the ethos of the standard, rather than being confined to a separate standard. The emphasis on diversity in terms of race and ethnicity, as well as globalization (itself a term subject to multiple interpretations), is not a nod to passing fads in postmodern culture, but stem from a theological conviction that respect for the "other," for the "stranger" in our midst, is a value embedded in the gospel and not merely a product of postmodern philosophy. The standards are normative, and they also encompass a recognition that there are many valid ways

of meeting the criteria for fulfilling the requirements for accreditation. The heightened awareness of diversity is a recognition, flowing from the "Quality in Accreditation" Project that tilled the soil for the newly re-developed standards, that the "modernity" stemming from the Enlightenment, is also the product of a particular, social, political, economic and intellectual location. For that reason, the intrinsic character and irreducible value of non-European cultures and religious traditions cannot be subsumed or interpreted exclusively through an Enlightenment, Euro-centric filter. Each culture and religious tradition has its distinctive character and integrity and must be viewed in its own particularity. Certainly, critical conversation and interaction with other perspectives, including the contributions of Enlightenment philosophy, are part of the mix, but a positive appropriation of the postmodern resistance to "totalizing" or "reductionistic" schemes, is a contribution that has found its way into the standards.

Reflected in the standards is an appreciation of the complexity of preparing ministerial candidates for the service of the church. Theological education includes, certainly, a commitment to providing students with a critical and deep immersion into the patterns of theological thinking captured in the "classics" of the tradition. But, this intellectual mastery also requires the development and acquisition of formational capacities of personal maturity, character, and pastoral wisdom, to meet the demands of ministry. Assessing this complex panoply of skills and capacities is the challenge facing all of us in theological education today. For this reason, the reinvigorated conversation about theological reflection as a "habitus" or lifelong skill of integrating theology rigorously into one's affective and relational ministerial skills, seeks to overcome the "fragmentation" of modernity as identified by Edward Farley.

In my view, postmodern thinkers who insist on resisting "totalizing" intellectual strategies that assume "universal" consensus remind us of the importance of keeping the conversation going, rather than stopping the "flux" of thinking. Heidegger's emphasis that Dasein, "Being," manifests itself by way of disclosing in time and history a dialectic of both "presence" and "absence," as well as Derrida's maddening word-plays, that he calls "clotural" readings of texts that "de-construct" our "closed" understandings of textual meaning, show us the complexity of reality and the difficulty of reaching "absolute" certainty, or certainty of any kind at all.

While I accept the admonition to epistemological humility, I do not think that complexity precludes our capacity to identify commonality and similarities in perspectives, including cross-cultural learning, nor as a Catholic moral theologian, do I despair of the possibility of arriving at "universalizable" ethical standards. It occurs to me that the postmodern resistance to any universal set of principles, or even the possibility of a metanarrative, is, paradoxically, a universal

claim in its own right, dare I say, a postmodern metanarrative? I trust that I am not remiss in suggesting that being true to the postmodern spirit of critique indicates that this denial of universals or metanarratives deserves to be critiqued as well. The virtue of the tradition of "natural law" in Catholic moral theology has been its commitment to shared understandings of the moral life and the moral good that can be recognized by human beings "trans-culturally." The critique, of course, is that this desideratum has often been too optimistically conceived without recognizing the distortions that come from human limitations as well as human sinfulness. Like the Enlightenment ideal of reason, natural law philosophy has been subjected to the same postmodern critique, namely that in seeking a "birds-eye" view of reality, or as Thomas Nagel aptly states, "The View from Nowhere," both pure reason and natural law forget the particular locations from which they emerge, and the fact that every notion is, in my words, a "View from Somewhere."⁽⁸⁾ It is interesting that those who are suspicious of natural law, nonetheless find other ways in which to address the real capacity of human beings to speak across particular locations and to arrive at moral consensus. Good illustrations of this process can be seen in the development of "narrative theology" and the emphasis on character and virtue as categories that name qualities that contribute identity and continuity to the moral enterprise. Otherwise, there is no possibility for any form of mutual understanding to occur.

A good example of the kind of tensions involved in a critical appropriation of postmodern insights can be seen in the work of Stanley Fish, dean of the school of liberal arts and sciences at the University of Chicago, Illinois. His op-ed piece about the 9/11 tragedy that appeared in the New York Times, "Condemnation Without Absolutes," while deeply sympathetic to postmodern suspicions of "universal" ethical constructs, nonetheless finds that there can be condemnation of horrors such as the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the United States without necessarily becoming mired in the quest for false absolutes. It is hard to imagine a set of circumstances in which the 9/11 tragedy could not be condemned. Whatever merit Dr. Fish may find in being able to "walk in the shoes" of the terrorists in order to better understand their motives, I do not share his reluctance concerning the possibility of real and authentic consensus on moral matters even to the extent of agreement that there are principles, such as the killing of the innocent, that are capable of being judged to be "virtually exceptionless" in their scope and range of meaning. That it may be difficult to arrive at such norms I readily grant. However, the difficulty of the task does not mean that it is impossible, postmodern dogma to this effect notwithstanding.

I have come to the conclusion that postmodern thinkers have not brought an end to philosophy or theology for that matter. The image that comes to mind is

familiar to those of us who travel by air. At the airport, we are accustomed to rigorous screening of our luggage. Postmodern thinkers serve as critical reviewers of our intellectual "luggage," including our theological traditions. In that capacity, they serve a useful function of detecting possible distortions or difficulties in the conceptual apparatus of our traditions, but their particular screens or filters are themselves subject to critical assessment. To the extent that good, critical questions identify "problems" in the luggage, they are helpful. But, good screening doesn't eliminate the luggage, nor does it prevent the luggage from reaching its destination. Embedded within these critiques or screens is the drive for totality, completion and wholeness that is never an achieved, once for all artifact, but rather an ongoing process of discovery.

As I read this literature, postmodern thinkers, far from dismantling the legacy of the philosophical tradition, are, for the most part, engaged in the normal activity of philosophy as a therapeutic exercise of exposing weaknesses and distortions in our understanding. Wittgenstein's examination of conundrums in the philosophy of language, including mind/body interactions, is an exercise in this kind of therapeutic appraisal designed to deliver us from "bewitchments to our intelligence" stemming from previous philosophical formulations. Theological education can derive some desirable insights from this kind of searching examination without, I think, losing its own soul in the process.

Theological education that equips students to think critically, to embrace diversity from within a stance that values the irreducible particularity and genius of the Christian tradition, to form ministers holistically with integrated skills of intellect, heart, and pastoral competence, and to engage the public square with a distinctive voice, is the crucial challenge facing us as accreditors of theological schools. To the extent that engagement with postmodern currents galvanizes and energizes our capacity to meet the needs of the church as it faces dialogue with the great world religions and the enormous challenges of a planet that is becoming more and not less connected, globally and across cultures, then it continues to provide a useful tool for theological education. I have indicated a few ways in which the standards of the ATS reflect some of these trends. However, the distinctive identity and mission of theological schools and the task of theological education are not threatened by the challenge of critical voices that emerge in every age, including our perceived "postmodern" age. Christians are ever subject to the admonition "to give a reason for the hope that lies within you." I intend that my remarks provide some assistance in providing resources for meeting the postmodern challenge today. At the very least, we certainly can stand our ground with postmodernity as we meet, perhaps, on a common footing, namely in the commitment so dear to postmodern thinkers, that we "stay in the flux" and "keep the conversation going."

NOTES

1. Edna St. Vincent Millay, "Sonnet," in her collected poems, *Huntsman, What Quarry?* (New York: Harper Brothers, c. 1933): 92.
2. Nancey Murphy, *Anglo-American Postmodernity: Philosophical Perspectives on Science, Religion and Ethics*, (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1997).
3. Simon Critchley, *Ethics of Deconstruction, Derrida and Levinas*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999).
4. Stanley J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1996): 161-174.
5. Avery Dulles, *Survival of Dogma: Faith, Authority and Dogma in a changing world*, (New York: Crossroads, 1982).
6. Thomas Guarino, "Postmodernity and five fundamental theological issues," *Theological Studies* 57 (December, 1996, Issue 4): 654ff.
7. David H. Kelsey, *Between Athens and Berlin: The Theological Education Debate* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W.B. Eerdmans, 1993). Also by the same author, *To Understand God Truly: What's Theological about a Theological School*, (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992). Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983).
8. Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

**THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION IN A POSTMODERN ERA
A RESPONSE**

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Against the background of what is known in Western philosophical and theological Institutions as 'post-modernity', and in recognition of the challenges which it presents, Msgr. Jeremiah McCarthy in his Paper 'Theological Education in a Post-modern Era,' discusses its implications for theological educators who have the task of accrediting schools of theology, as well as of preparing ministers for fulfilling their mission in a post-modern world. Msgr. correctly points to the fact that such a discussion is not peculiar to our times, but has historical precedence in that the process of theological reflection has been a task of the Church, which from its inception has found it expedient to give a reason for the hope which it cherishes (cf1 Peter 3:5). The paper acknowledges that all genuine intellectual enquiry invites change, each new context posing its peculiar questions.

Our attention is drawn to the tension inherent in theological reflection viz (a) holding fast to the accrued wisdom of the Church (b) the willingness to risk an encounter with the 'stranger' race, culture, gender and intellectual tradition. However, one would wish that there had been in the paper an elaboration of these two points. For instance it would be interesting to know. (I) Whether the reference to 'Church' is to the Church universal, or to a particular Church in its cultural setting. (II) Similarly we may ask what is the nature of this "accrued wisdom" [1] Has there been fed into it the 'wisdom' deriving from Christianity's transcultural, trans-racial, trans-gender experience?

Modernity is defined in the Paper as being the product of the Enlightenment project of the eighteenth century. There is general agreement with postmodernists that the Enlightenment's claim, that the power of reason is able to overcome the forces of darkness, dissipated with the twentieth century configuration of almost total warfare, mass murder etc.

It is, I think, of some theological relevance that I pause to contemplate this reference to Enlightenment and Modernity. Coming as I do from that part of the world designated 'Third', it is legitimate for me to point out that for the majority of our people, both modernity and post-modernity have to all intents and purposes passed us by. It may be that an attempt to locate us will find us in a pre-Enlightenment world. There are of course varying interpretations of 'Enlightenment.' That under review derives from an early modern rendezvous with the classical Greek philosophical construct of the logos (reason) conceived of as permeating the universe, and accepted by Greeks and Graeco-philosophers as a kind of *raison d'être*. We know of course that there are other concepts of 'Enlightenment' for example the Buddhist's. Stress is here given to the human being's ability to achieve 'enlightenment' and thus to overcome the dysfunction inherent in human nature. We do so not by the exercise of reason so much as by following certain rules of conduct, which lead ultimately to the union of one's

atman (individual soul), with Brahman (world-soul). Or for that matter there is that Isaianic prophetic cry:

"Arise, Shine for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you.....and the Gentiles shall come to thy light." (Isaiah 60: 1-3).

And what of the Fourth Evangelist's exultation that a light had come into the world which darkness could not put out. (John 1:1-6).

The point is that in a 'post-modern' era, theologians in a theological institution must bring critical analysis to bear upon every aspect of the tradition handed down. Apparently, it is such critical analysis that has produced the post-modernist critique of modernity. They have exposed the flaws inherent in the Greek concept of 'wisdom' and 'enlightenment' and have thus shattered Enlightenment's confidence. However, Enlightenment's misjudgement was shattered long before the twentieth century's global conflicts, the splitting of the atom, and genetic engineering, and before the terrorism at the beginning of the twenty-first century took place. Indeed, the forces of darkness were very strong in the Ages that gave rise to Renaissance, Enlightenment, and Conquistadores-but the theological enterprise then could be used to justify, legalize, and implement the most intense force of darkness, which descended upon millions of Africans slaves in diasporan bondage.

Msgr. McCarthy applies to theological education Nancy Murphy's analysis of critical issues which impact philosophy eg. language, knowledge, science. We will have a brief look at language and knowledge.

Language--Wittgenstein's challenge that language users cultivate the communication skills necessary for a variety of contexts, and Murphy's assessment that such a reconceptualization would cater to the inclusion of ethical and religious understandings, is welcomed. Such religious understanding may lead to the demystification and de-sacralization of theological discourse, rendering it accessible to the pew. Such a reconceptualization would hopefully affirm theological freedom to interface with the linguistic expressions of our lived experience, as we begin to treat with theological seriousness indigenous thought-forms.

Knowledge--(epistemology) For too long, the Cartesian definition has been dominant in Western theories of knowledge, and the dependency syndrome that characterizes so much of our theological experience in much of the rest of the world has resulted in the risk of this interpretation of knowledge dominating our theological education. Reality is indeed complex, and the Cartesian mathematical approach is light-years away from the dominant Caribbean world-view. There is virtue in the observation made in the Paper that "all our knowing is a 'partial' purchase on the complexity of reality". Therefore, no 'knowledge' ought to be dismissed as being incongruous with theological reflection.

The limitations of Post-modernity as a guide to theological education-It is pointed out in the Paper, that modernity succeeded in realizing such social benefits as universal human rights, concern for justice, and equality - this in spite of post-modernity's critique of modernity's elevation of reason as a universal construct. One wonders however whether these benefits are the products of reason per se. Surely not logos (reason), but *sum pathos* (deep feeling) led women in the nineteen-eighties to camp at Greenham Common in Britain, to march on the streets of Argentina in protest against the disappearance of their children, and led a father with a lost son, in a parable told by Jesus, to keep looking out for him. Yet, Thomas Guarino (Catholic) and Stanley Grenz (Evangelical) are correct in pointing to the need for a critical assessment of the limitations as well as the assets of post-modernity, in our utilization of its findings for the furtherance of theological education. Grenz' proposition of a post-individualistic, post-dualistic and post-noetricentric Gospel, has much to commend it. The proclamation of such a Gospel would emphasize its communal character as opposed to absolute autonomy, would erase dichotomies such as that between body and soul, would not be anti-intellectual, would be sensitive to divine mystery, and would integrate faith with intellectual insight. At the same time it is admitted that universals cannot be dismissed entirely, if Christian witness is to maintain its identity and credibility. A 'unifying centre to reality' is recommended in opposition to what was termed the 'centreless pluralism of post-modernity'. This however raises the question as to what effect such a 'unifying centre' would have on the autonomy of theology in its local context.

Accreditation - Msgr. McCarthy, representing as he does the primary North American theological education accrediting agency, is concerned about the implications of post-modern thought for those responsible for the assessment of theological education and the accreditation of theological colleges. He refers us to the standards adopted at the ATS in 1996 viz the cultivation of critical thinking, a holistic education that integrates intellectual mastery of the tradition with pastoral competence, and the ability to engage dialogically 'the pluralistic, diverse, global context of theological education and ministry.'

Msgr. McCarthy identifies the essential and non negotiable normative patterns of theological education eg. theological scholarship embracing teaching and learning, individual faculty research, on-going practices of evaluation etc. He underscores such themes as freedom of inquiry, diversity, and globalization. He acknowledges that there are diverse and valid ways of 'meeting the criteria and fulfilling the requirements for accreditation,' and professes respect for 'the intrinsic character and irreducible value of non-European cultures and religious traditions.' He is aware that theological education is in the business of preparing ministerial candidates for the service of the Church of our time.

It would have been helpful had he given examples of the "universalizable ethical standards" which would be used as general accreditation tools, as well as indicated the extent to which he is prepared to allow for authentic diversity. At WOCATI 1996 consideration was given to the idea that we should acknowledge the diversity of the system we deal with instead of trying to create a synthesis. Dr. Burchell Taylor, Caribbean theologian, at a Faith and Order Symposium held in Kingston, Jamaica in 1991, reminded those gathered that the influence of theological imperialism has been as strong as other forms in our time. What then is the future of the authenticity and credibility of theological education in the Caribbean in a post-modern globalized world? Sister Robyn Reynolds, in her response to Dr. Petros Vassiliades' Paper on Theological Scholarship and Research at that same WOCATI Conference 1996, said that conforming to Western Standards and theological approaches stifles contextualization within this context. To what does Msgr. refer when he suggests that theological education equip students "to think critically, to embrace diversity from within a stance that values the irreducible particularity and genius of the Christian Tradition?" [emphasis mine]

In closing may I call attention to what I consider to be critical issues which challenge theological education in the Caribbean in a 'post-modern' era, and which I had hoped would have been given some mention by Msgr. McCarthy.

Pluralism. What objectives do we seek as Christian theologians to realize in our Inter-Faith dialogue? Christianity has not got a good historical track record for dealing with the violence inherent in the human psyche. How shall our theological education train the Servants of the Lord for the clash of religious cultures in, a post-modern era? How can globalism support and enhance theological education in the particularity of its context.

Classical Theology is not sacrosanct. It really should not be considered in a post-modern era, the yardstick by which other theologies are measured. Our critical lens need to be focused on Creeds, doctrines, decrees and the ideologies of our pet theological icons, in a post-modern era.

Tradition. In 1988, leaders of the Evangelical Church in Latin America met at Medellin in Columbia to reflect on theology from an evangelical and biblical perspective. Amongst the things said was this: "in order to achieve the contextualization that does justice to the biblical texts and at the same time answer adequately the questions raised by Liberation Theologians, two factors are indispensable - serious exegetical study of the Text itself and a thorough knowledge of our socio-cultural context." [2] This concern arises from the conviction of these theologians that the biblical text should take precedence over tradition. It is of some interest that Liberation Theology was not mentioned in this Paper. Surely it has a place in theological education in a post-modern era.

The Curriculum. A thorough transformation is required in a post-modern era. The content of every subject studied should come under scrutiny. The Bible department must not be allowed to become obsolete or marginalized. Biblical languages should be a requirement for theological education in a post-modern era. Church History needs to be re-visited and made to include events that have not been given recognition, or proper evaluation.

Anthropology. The question of identity in terms of race, colour, sex, class, is a burning issue in some Caribbean areas. Who am I in my essential being? Who do others say that I am? Has Western Theology yet dealt with this human predicament in its particularity? Has Hegel's thesis yet been rebutted? [3]

Many years ago a gentleman whom I designated my philosopher said to me: "Civilization is at the crossroads and Christianity must lead it in the right direction." It would appear that in our post-modern era, Christianity itself is at the crossroads. May our discussions and deliberations lead to a reformation in our theological education that will enable it to lead the Christianity of our post-modern era in the right direction.

NOTES

1. Cf. reference to the 'departure from the substance of the Christian deposit of faith' p. 1
2. Looking at the Theology of Liberation Together. Ed. Revd. Burchell Taylor (Kingston. Jamaica 1991)
3. Georg W. F. Hegel: The Philosophy of History (Dover Publications Inc., New York 1956).

**MISSION AND SOCIAL DIMENSION
OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION**

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INTRODUCTION

It is quite a challenge to attempt to get into the subject as proposed in this title. In my situation, coming from one of the corners of the world, a presentation on this wide issue certainly involves many obvious limitations. Therefore one of the standpoints of this contribution has to connect with our own experience and understanding, in and from Latin America, which may run the risk of not being accurate in its approach.

A personal word: it is interesting how oneself can be a sort of combination of social dimensions of Christian theological education. I was raised in a Christian home in a context of extreme poverty, in southern Chile. My grandparents and parents came from the coal mining zone in the town of Lota, near the city of Concepcion, a place that is regarded as the having the poorest of the poverty in our country. What was exploitation and worker abuse for decades in the last century in that town, my non-Christian grandfather used to transform for us into great storytelling about life, with much innocence and little resentment. When, after 50 years of a working life, my grandfather finally applied for retirement, he, right there, at the Company office was told that he had never had records of monthly retirement payments at all, despite the fact that he was actually charged for it in his monthly wages his entire working life. So, without legal defense, too poor to defy the Company, he finally was denied his right to retirement. He died twenty years later without justice. In this hard context of human injustice the preaching of the Gospel extended quickly in this geographical area. Among the newly converted people were my 20 year old parents who later became church and community leaders. Standing from Christian faith, they served their people their whole life, and taught their children, myself in the middle of five, the love of God and the hope of the Kingdom. It happens that Maria, my mother, was the second graduate of the Women's Theological Institute in 1945. No doubt that theological, church and family education played a huge role in transforming our family life and hope. We, as their five children, received university and Christian education which formed us in a combination of church piety and social service. Life continues on and now our own children are growing in this environment of Christian faith and social commitment.

In order to clarify words, allow me to refer to the concept of 'social dimensions' as areas involved in all fields and disciplines where human realities and needs are expressed. This concept goes beyond the traditional connotation of Third World poverty as stigmatized. Poverty is one of those polysemic words that include many meanings and touch different areas such as economic, educational, social, emotional, spiritual and so on, that an explanation of its use is needed. Certainly there is poverty in the so-called Third World, as well as in what is called First World. There is neediness in the life of an upper class family from

an industrialized country where abuse and individualism destroy quality of life everyday. There is also deprivation for a teenage generation of a country where educational options are few. There is also desperate poverty in an extreme where we find the infamous shame of starvation in so many places in this present world.

Hopeless human needs in the world touch deeply lives of those whose sensibility matters more than indifference. Social injustice, war, extreme poverty, infirmities, corruption, unemployment, malnutrition, drug and alcohol abuse, drug dealers, violation of human right and dignity of the people, prostitution, pollution and ecological disaster, illiteracy, denial of education, women abuse, AIDS, to name only some needs.

Human needs are not the only concern of social involvement. There are also fields of knowledge, culture and human relationship that are part of this challenge too. I mean that social impact also has to do with the whole influence of our faith in philosophy, anthropology, politics or art, as well as communications, aesthetics, or sociological research. One example of this form of impact is the translation of the Bible into languages that exist without a grammar, where the mere translation has helped to keep the language stronger and more alive.

Many of us serving in Theological Education ask whether our theology, mission, curriculum, methodology, programs and mentoring are well connected with the needs of the real world. Do our institutions fulfill their mission still in a social strike,[1] or focus generational training into an integral concept of our Christian mission? Are our graduate students prepared enough to face these never ending challenges in our social contexts?

I. THE SOCIAL DIMENSION OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH'S MISSION

Theological education is placed in the mission of the Christian church, and church meaning the whole body of believers in Christ. Then, one of the key issues to touch, first of all, is what the mission of the Christian church is in the present world. Once we have cleared our bases on mission, we can afterward approach social dimensions of theological education more adequately.

It is interesting to contrast the heavy volumes of theology of the early decades of the past Century in which mission of the Church was not an issue at all. One example is the reformed 'Systematic theology' authored by L. Berkhof, first published in 1938, which does not refer to the mission of the Church in any way, and only mentions in one short paragraph, out of a one thousand page book, that preaching is the form of 'training the Church to be the mother of all believers'. One can see the contrast if comparing this to the massive amount of books that have been written in the last two decades about the mission of the Church.

Beginning in the early 20th Century, reformed theologian J. Gresham Machen, deceased in 1937, wrote in 1912: 'Christianity has to saturate not only all nations, but also all human thinking. It cannot feel indifference before any subject of human importance. The Kingdom of God has to be promoted, nor only to bring every human being for Christ, but also to win the human being as a whole.'[2] In this writing Dr. Machen criticizes theological faculties because they have become mere centers of religious emotions, instead of places where students are truly educated to develop the deep conviction of the mature ones, not the thoughtless faith of childhood, in a world that urges the Christian church to present the complete and true Gospel of Jesus Christ. He affirms that the Church is dying for lack of thoughtfulness, and not for excess of it; it is fading because she, the Church, is not impacting all aspects of social reality with the power of God, and also because it is not training its leaders to produce true transformation in society. There is a great need to find great leaders to fulfill the mission of the Church to impact our world. Machen says: 'The hope of finding such men and women is the only real hope in the life of any theological institution.'[3]

Spanish writer Dr. José Grau wrote in 1972 a one-sentence definition of what mission is. He said: 'Mission is to deliver the whole Gospel, to the whole human person, through the whole Church, to whole world.'

This view of the Christian mission, focusing in all areas of culture, soon became strong in Church statements, denominational orientations, conferences and congresses of the past Century. One of those was the Lausanne Congress for World Evangelization.

Dr. Samuel Escobar, a Peruvian missiologist went up to the platform of Lausanne Congress in 1974 with these his first words:

'Let us try to imagine that the whole world population is concentrated in a town of one hundred inhabitants. In this town 67 people out of the 100 are poor. The other 33 enjoy different degrees of well being. From this population, only seven are North American. The other 93 see how the North Americans spend 50% of all money, eat one seventh of all food and use one half of all bathrooms. These seven have ten times medical attention than the rest. According the time passes, these seven get richer, and the 93 poorer. [4]

This author states that Christians have had two traditional attitudes when confronted by social challenges in society; one is to support uncritically the establishment of western nations and the second is a spiritualized indifference. On the contrary, the true mission of the Christian church is 'to serve the needy people not as a matter of preference, nor something we do because we want. The church has to serve the world because service is a sign of the new life in the Gospel of Christ.' HYPERLINK "<http://www.wocati.org/fonseca.html>" \l "anchor655253" 5

Escobar introduces three situations in the world as a way to identify challenges for the Christian church in being faithful to God's call. The first situation is related to societies where Christians are a small minority, in which faithfulness means to live the whole Gospel with integrity to signalize the difference with the common life style of the people. A second situation is presented in societies where Christianity has a long tradition of social influence, where it appears that the church has been much influenced by worldly living, instead of the goal of the Gospel that is the church transforming society. The challenge for Christians living in this sort of context seems very much associated with going back to their Christian roots in order to be faithful disciples of Christ. A third situation would be those contexts where anti-Christianism is a dominant power, where an ideology or religion is official. We can see this milieu in totalitarian, violent or fundamentalist regimes in the world today. In these places Christians have to suffer persecution to continue the communication of the Good News and to be creative in ways to survive in community. The call of God for Christians living in these so different conditions is always the same: to keep faithful to Him, and to do the mission.

The whole Lausanne Congress was shaped by this concept. The Lausanne Covenant and many other conferences resulting from this congress gave worldwide affirmation that mission and evangelization are not separated, and that certainly Christian mission includes social transformation.[6]

In 1979 Puerto Rican missiologist Dr. Orlando Costas, who died late in 1987, wrote 'The integrity of Mission' [7]. In this book Costas addressed what is mission and its implications. He states that mission is the proclamation of the Kingdom of God, in obedient discipleship, that mobilizes the believers with sacrificial commitment towards an integral growth that helps to liberate people in order to live Christianity in celebration until consummation of times arrive. For growing with integrity in Church life he defines three dimensions: width (statistical), depth (maturity), and height (impact). Our Christian ministries need to put strong accent in this tri-dimensional growth. So, the mission of the Church should stress an expansion in numbers, as well as in profundity of Christian life, and also in the size of the influence its presence brings to the community where the ministry is fulfilled.

Dr. René Padilla, an Ecuadorian-Argentinean theologian, wrote in 1986 in his famous 'Mission integral' that 'Christian mission is to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of all, and through whose work human beings are liberated both from guilt and from the power of sin, and are thus integrated to the purpose of God of placing all things under Christ's authority.'[8] HYPERLINK "<http://www.wocati.org/fonseca.html>" \l "anchor676774" This author stresses that mission and evangelization go hand to hand, involving the

whole call to repentance. This message of repentance is key to point to social dimensions of the Christian faith. He says that repentance is much more than merely a private and individual issue, it concerns the total reorientation of life in the world, in the midst of humankind, including personal, communitarian and even structural changes as a result of true repentance. Evangelization and mission cannot be the supplying of purely spiritual benefits obtained for us through Jesus with results of social quietism. The true Christian mission take repentance seriously because it takes the sin in the world seriously. Not to take women and men out of the world, but exactly the contrary, to place them in the world with a living message of hope and transformation. When Padilla is asked about the huge social challenges in our world and what the Christian church can do, he answers that 'the church as the community of disciples is not called to solve all social upheaval, but to be faithful to God with what she has. The Church has to be a reconciliation community breaking all barriers that fragment the world; has to be a fellowship of personal authenticity in which all people can be healed and accepted; and also has to be a society of giving and service. Our greatest need is to live a more biblical Gospel and to build a more biblical church' [9]

Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana, or Latin American Theological Fraternity, FTL, organized in 1969, 1979, 1992 and 2000 the four Latin American congresses on Evangelization, called CLADE. They have been remarkably insightful and educational for professor, pastors and leaders, women and men, in the generational formation of people committed to the Kingdom of God in mission and service to the world with an integral base. The Protestant and Evangelical world in Latin America have no doubt been shaped by the strong influence of FTL over these three last decades. So, in a way, one cannot say that Lausanne or other movements influenced FTL, rather than the opposite, in its theology of mission.

In Roman Catholicism, the impact of liberation theology as a strong movement of return to biblical foundations, based on communitarian way of expressing the Gospel (base-communities) and service together with prophetic *kerugma* at the evil of the times, cannot be forgotten. Many have seen this movement as a natural result of Vatican II, however it has been under heavy criticism on the side of the more traditional hierarchy. Besides the preferential option for the poor, the Roman Catholic Church has shown changes in liturgy, pastoral action, and development that comprise nowadays very much the more missional side of this Church.

II. SOCIAL CHALLENGES FOR THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Theological education cannot be seen just as an institution, but as a process that takes place in many different avenues, not only in Faculties or seminaries.

As someone has put it: theological education begins at home, it deepens in church, it is articulated in an institution and it is proved in community. Then, our first concern should be how could we interconnect these places where we educate in order to fulfill our whole formational task.

It is not my intention to list social fields and needs where T.E. should play a significant role. Actually, in all fields and needs this role should be well performed. Perhaps a sound contribution would be the presentation of few principles to keep in mind when we see the challenges of the social agenda for T.E. To briefly explain these principles, let me say that T.E. should be mission centered, evangelical and ecumenical, and resistant and proactive.

1. Mission centered

If T.E. is understood as a holistic process, where the integral mission of the Church is crucial, then it should include family, church, institution and community, as levels in which this process is accomplished. T.E. must never be apart from these levels. An institutionalized instruction that does not matter for the family or church background of the students, will only teach courses without forming people. Dr. René Padilla wrote that 'we could avoid much trouble if the seminarie could focus its task taking into account that T.E. exists because of the Church and as her servant. T.E. is no more than a tool to fulfill the goals of the Church. When this is not clear, T.E. misses its purpose, and it constitutes itself just as a training for mere ecclesial officers.'[10] It is interesting to note that in our context those theological institutions that with the years have become centers of education apart from their original churches or denominations, have soon disappeared.

If the mission of the Church is basic foundation for T.E. so social fields of knowledge and human needs are certainly part of it. As in Jesus' life, our challenges are right here, around us, in our communities. We ought to face social challenges in two ways: influence and service. We must influence all fields of social knowledge with Christian cosmovision. This is one social dimension of T.E. We also have to serve in every area of social distress in the present world. This is another dimension of T.E.

If T.E. is built in the tract of mission, the whole theological institution serves in missions, and students, personnel and faculty are involved in it. A professor can teach in the classroom what is then neglected in life, as well as any other member of a theological institution. Therefore, the best way to teach involvement in social aspects of culture and society, to do humanitarian service or to make a contribution to influence any social field, is to get involved together with the students. Certainly, students do not judge only lectures at the classroom, but also family, church and communitarian commitment of faculty.

2. Evangelical and ecumenical

In this world of pluralism and secularism, our T.E. process should be strongly oriented towards being radically evangelical and firmly ecumenical. By evangelical we mean faithful to the Evangel, the Gospel of Christ. Present pluralism is a test to challenge our openness to diversity in our evermore heterogeneous world. Though for many pluralism is interpreted to mean the blocking of all forms of proclamation, we should stress faithfulness in preaching the Gospel with respect for others and dignity for oneself.

By ecumenical we mean that our ministry has in perspective the whole catholic Church,[11] with all her gifts and potential in the world. Ecumenical ministry is seen here in the better sense of inclusiveness of all true believers in Christ. A process of T.E. that rejects other traditions, serves behind closed doors and in isolation from other Christians is condemned to be unsuccessful. This certainly means we must be cooperative in ministry, in the spirit of oneness and unity in Christ. So many programs in our institutions as well as in church can express this spirit of cooperation.

3. Resistant and proactive

T.E. also has to take seriously the challenges of the present globalized world. Many Christians are accepting globalization enthusiastically without any sort of critical spirit. Francois Houtart s.j. has written that Christianity has to commit its future into the building of new resistances against globalization, or worldlization of social capitalist relationships. He maintains that it is necessary to create a culture of resistance among all sectors of society with consciousness of the huge injustices globalization establishes in our societies.[12] Sharing the same concerns, Dr. Rene Padilla warns about the dangers of being naive to the consequences of the internationalization of the western culture, as a massive adoption of values of a way of life characterized by individualism, hedonism, materialism and consumerism. These dangers are in turning our living faith into free market rules, making a new gospel (with small letter) as a consumer product and the Christian faith as a private religious experience. [13]

Proactiveness should also be part how we see the social dimensions of T.E. The understanding of being proactive goes through dynamic initiatives that answer realities and needs surrounding the process. Normally our institutions are known as guardians of tradition. However, in this changing and always dynamic world we should also be ready to openness to new focuses, renewing of institutional elements of T.E. and moreover all sort of creativity in order to be faithful to our role as theological educators. Being proactive necessarily demands an attitude of readiness to transformation since everything in T.E. is in permanent movement. Both resistance and proactiveness will show the true health in doing our T.E. ministry.

CONCLUSION

As Dietrich Bonhoeffer said there are two ways that Christians elude social responsibility: one is to evade the world, changing the Gospel into a content of spiritualism and religious life strange to the realities of the world. The other way is to secularize our ministry, 'with a disposition to cultivate the rights of God on the earth, but at the same time fleeing from a sound relationship with Him'.

Theological education is a process that is being accomplished in the context of the whole mission of the Christian church, which unavoidably includes social realities and human needs.

An experience to finish these words: a government of a Latin American country asked a team of professionals including some theological education professors to join a consultant commission to shape the national law against all types of discrimination. There were two Evangelical seminaries involved, one of them argued that it was much too busy with internal activities and quit the membership in the commission. The other remained faithful until the end of that process, including a leading participation of one professor in the final national program to limit discrimination. One institution gained credibility and respect, the other is still busy with domestic calendars.

NOTES

1. C. Lalive D'Apinay, *El Refugio de las Masas*, 1968, an study of the Pentecostal behavior that brought this idea of 'social strike' as rejection of social involvement of the Christian church.
2. J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and culture*, Madrid: FELIRE, 1980. Translated by Francis Schaeffer
3. *Ibid*, page 119.
4. Samuel Escobar, *Evangelization and human search for justice*, Lausanne Conference for World Evangelization, July 1974. Escobar is quoting Schipper and Smedes, *Who in the world*, Eerdmans, 1972. Printed in Spanish as '*Evangelio y realidad social*', Lima, Per : Editorial Presencia, page 79.
5. *Ibid*, page 88.
6. 'We affirm that God is both the Creator and the Judge of all men. We therefore should share his concern for justice and reconciliation throughout human society and for the liberation of men from every kind of oppression. Because mankind is made in the image of God, every person, regardless of race, religion, color, culture, class, sex or age, has an intrinsic dignity because of which he should be respected and served, not exploited. Here too we express penitence both for our neglect and for having sometimes regarded evangelism and social concern as mutually exclusive. Although reconciliation with man is not reconciliation with God, nor is social action evangelism, nor is political liberation salvation, nevertheless we affirm that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty. For both are necessary ex-

pressions of our doctrines of God and man, our love for our neighbor and our obedience to Jesus Christ. The message of salvation implies also a message of judgment upon every form of alienation, oppression and discrimination, and we should not be afraid to denounce evil and injustice wherever they exist. When people receive Christ they are born again into his kingdom and must seek not only to exhibit but also to spread its righteousness in the midst of an unrighteous world. The salvation we claim should be transforming us in the totality of our personal and social responsibilities. Faith without works is dead.' Lausanne Covenant

7. Costas, Orlando, *The integrity of mission*, Miami: CELEP, 1979, 160 pages.
8. Padilla, René, *Misión integral*, Grand Rapids: Eerdsman, 1986, page 10.
9. Padilla, *Ibid.* page 44.
10. René Padilla, *Discipulado y misión*, Buenos Aires: Ediciones Kairos, 1997, pag.113. Translation is mine.
11. Dr Justo Gonzalez has written the recent book 'La historia tambien tiene su historia', or 'History has also its story', published by our Theological association ASIT, in which he goes back to the true concept of 'catholic' meaning the inclusiveness of all parts. From the Greek 'kata olos' 'according to all'. He states that 'catholic' may be used in two meanings: one is universal, that is one because it extends to all parts with the same, thus catholic points to uniformity; second, is universal because includes all views of the different parts, so catholic in this sense focus in inclusion and acceptance of diversity. So, for catholic we better mean this second connotation.
12. Francois Houtart, *Globalization of the resistance, towards a globalized civil society*, paper presented at the World Alternative Forum, University of Louvain, Belgium, March 2001. See also: *Market and religion*, ADEI: San José, Costa Rica, 2001, 192 pages.
13. Rene Padilla, *Discipulado y misión*, page 220.

**CHRISTIANITY AND OTHER FAITHS:
EMERGING THEOLOGICAL AND MISSIOLOGICAL
DISCUSSIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF ASIAN PLURALITY**

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Asia's Reality of Plurality

The world in which we live today is pluralistic in every aspect. Asia stands out as a distinct and unique manifestation of pluralism. If we look at the Asian spectrum, Asia is a colourful mosaic of Religions, Cultures, Languages, Ethnicities, Ideologies, Philosophies, Races, Tribes etc., Hence, Plurality is one of Asia's richest resources. It is the very nature of reality. One has to realize that plurality is something given and that he or she must find creative ways to deal with it and live within that context. However, this plurality very often leads to rivalries and enmities. They turn out to be competitive with one another thus destroying the true design of human relations. Therefore, plurality tends to be a challenging one.

According to Raimundo Pannikar, Pluralism is today a human existential problem, which raises acute questions about how we are going to live our lives in the midst of so many options. Pluralism is no longer just the old school book question about the One-and-the-Many; it has become the concrete day-to-day dilemma occasioned by the encounter of mutually incompatible worldviews and philosophies. Today we face pluralism as the very practical question of planetary co-existence.[1]

Pannikar makes it very clear that we have to deal with the reality of pluralism. The problem with pluralism arises when one particular component/aspect of plurality tries to dominate society by denying the legitimacy of others as irrelevant.

Mission Trends in Asia

In a book published by the World Council of Churches, *Not Without My Neighbor: Issues in Interfaith Dialogue*, [2] its author Dr Wesley Ariarajah offers a profound introduction to the key issues that arise when the churches enter into conversation with the People of Other Faiths.

The Church, it is said, does not justify the existence of mission. Rather, the mission of God (*missio Dei*) justifies the existence of the church, which is called to participate in the movement of God's turning toward God's People. As such, the mission of the church takes a fresh leap forward. Any God-Talk that claims to be authentically Asian must pay attention to the complexities of the Asian situation where we are called to live, proclaim and celebrate our faith. Theologizing can never be done in a vacuum. It has to be always done in relation to the actual life-situation. Therefore, the mission of the church, while it is basically *missio Dei*, it has to be necessarily Mission in Context.

An important fact of the Asian Continent is that it is a place where the Christians are a minority and the majority belongs to either diverse faiths or secular ideologies. Any mission activity cannot be insensitive to the tremendous con-

tribution the Other Faiths have made and are still making to the shaping of Asian culture. We have come to a point where we cannot theologize apart from making relevant connections with the Religions among which we are placed. While it is encouraging that a number of churches are beginning to take note of this important fact, many still continue to focus purely on numerical growth of the church thus ignoring the harmony of Asian society.

As Pannikar says the problem of pluralism is the problem of the other. Quite often we are made to think that the 'Other' can intimidate or threaten us. The very presence of the 'Other' calls us for self-understanding of who we are or what we are! The question is whether, the churches are not perhaps, able to overcome their fear of the 'Other's strangeness.' The churches are called to develop a genuine sensitivity, an understanding and a liking for 'diversity,' rather than complaining about them. It is quite pertinence to quote what the French philosopher Simone Weil has said in her Diaries, "The opposite must be also true." [3] What Simone Weil tried to say was that how a flat, one-dimensional way of thinking could miss the reality of life and hence, the truth! We have to learn to appreciate 'The otherness of the other.' Mission is possible only when we are able to delight in the distinctiveness of the other.

Historically speaking, the mission activities of Christians, especially of the early missionaries to many parts of Asia were comprised of 'over against' attitudes. The basic problem has to do with the way the 'imperative to proclaim the Gospel' has been understood in the context of colonialism, where there had been a distortion of power relations. Several assumptions made about Other Faiths and Cultures have affected the way the imperative was interpreted. For example, the assumptions such as, that the other faith traditions are devoid of revelatory impulses; that they were in error; that they need to be replaced by the Christian tradition; that there is no continuity between them and the Gospel message etc., But, when we try to develop paradigms 'in relation to the other,' we also begin to learn something quite different and new. Openness and mutual learning are solicited. What Wilfred Cantwell Smith said is noteworthy:

We have something to learn from them. By knowing other cultures, we can come to know our culture better, and can make it better we recognize that the we/they business is today outgrown; we are all in this together, and can learn from each other. "We" now means "us human beings" in our diversity and yet in our overriding humanity, even community. We are all heirs now of many cultures, and we face the future together: our common future, multi-cultural. [4]

However, it has to be admitted that conflicts do occur at a point when the 'Other' appears to be so different and mutually exclusive. The reason is that differences are seen as threatening realities. In a pluralistic world, one has to be enlightened about the position other than his or her own. This ambiguity will be

overcome when one understands difference as 'otherness.'

What is envisaged is that of a 'Spatial Perspective,' where space permits or allows different standpoints to be one comprehensive whole in which each and everyone has its and his/her place. Here, one complements the other in the spirit of koinonia. This is the real spirit of 'Dialogue.' It is an attempt to help/understand/accept 'the other' in its/his/her 'otherness.' This process (dialogue) will make people 'at home' with 'plurality' and help develop an appreciation for 'diversity.' In other words, dialogue is basically, building community of conversation of heart and mind. In this light what Raimundo Pannikar had said is worth observing.

Pluralism means existential acceptance of the other as the other i.e., without being able to understand or co-opt him. Pluralism is humble, only knows that I or we may not possess the whole truth and does not pass judgement as to whether the other may also be right or, as it may turn out, wrong.[5]

Dialogue - Difficulties and Possibilities

Dr Ariarajah deals with "Five Movements" through which the dialogue concern has gone in the recent past, especially in the Ecumenical Circles. These may be summed up as the concept of dialogue itself, the search for 'community' with neighbours of other faiths, adequate foundations for that new relationship, the pastoral issues that need attention in this context and the impact of the rising secular, technological and global culture on all the religions and religious life. He says that these five phases/dimensions are, in fact, inter-related, the first of them being the concept of dialogue itself.[6]

Pluralism calls us to a ministry of 'connectedness.' Hence, it is important to deal with the issues that connect us with one another. Dialogue, I believe, does this great contribution of connecting people with one another in a caring and sharing fellowship. However, right from the beginning, people have expressed "fears" in getting involved in dialogue. They feared that dialogue with people of Other Faiths might lead to a betrayal of Christian mission. Three fundamental reasons have been given as to why dialogue or dialogical relationships with People of Other Faiths is not valid or advisable. Dr Ariarajah calls these as "the three classical fears of the missionary movement." They are, the fear of compromising the uniqueness of Christ; the fear of losing the 'urgency of world mission'; and the fear of acknowledging the 'salvific significance in the religious life of our neighbors'.[7]

When analyzing the hesitation and reluctance of those who have negative views of dialogue, Stanley J. Samartha identifies two obvious reasons. One is the fear of syncretism and the other is the assumption that that any recognition of the presence of God or Christ or the Spirit in the lives of other faiths leads to the danger of relativism.[8] While Hendrik Kraemer called syncretism as "ille-

gitimate mingling of different religious elements",[9] Samarth described it as "an uncritical mixture of elements from different religions without a center or integrating principle." [10] It is quite telling that the proponents of this view put forward certain basic affirmations they are supposed to make always, of which at least three can be easily identified viz., the mandate given in the 'Great Commission' as recorded in Matthew 28; the belief that Christ is the 'only way' to salvation and the jubilant confidence that 'every knee would bow and every tongue confess' that Jesus Christ is Lord.

If one goes into the analysis of Kraemer's reaction to dialogue not only through his writing but also what he vehemently argued at the International Missionary Council (IMC) at Tambaram, India in 1938, it may be evident that he was, in fact, reacting to what had already been said in the previous International Missionary Council at Jerusalem in 1928. The latter Council attempted to focus on the spiritual values of other religious traditions. It had called for a joint struggle of Christians and other religions against secularism. Kraemer argued that 'the point of contact' could have to do only with the relationship between the Christian and other person, but not with other religions. Kraemer made a distinction between the monistic, naturalistic religions of self-realization and the prophetic religions of revelation. For him syncretism belongs to the first category. He firmly believed that prophetic religion of biblical realism does not show syncretistic and relativist trend. Therefore, he wrote: "The prophetic religion of biblical realism could not be mingled with naturalist and monistic religion." [11]

Kraemer was of the strong opinion that Christian religion is based primarily on revelation. He believed that God has revealed the Way and the Life and the Truth in Jesus Christ and wills that this should be known through the entire world. He said: "What is truth in religion is more urgent and more obscure than ever. This question is particularly urgent for Christianity, because it claims as its source and basis a divine revelation which at the same time is claimed to be the standard or reference for all truth and all religion" [12]

If we are ever to know what true and divinely willed religion is, we can do this only through God's revelation in Jesus Christ and through nothing else. [13]

We have to frankly admit that the exclusivist claims come chiefly from the Protestant circle. Even the prominent theologians like Karl Barth, Paul Tillich and Emil Brunner were not exceptional. Emil Brunner's comment about other religions is,

Jesus Christ is both the Fulfillment of all religions and the Judgement of all religions. As the Filler, He is the Truth, which these religions seek in vain. There is no phenomenon in the history of religion that does not point towards Him. He is also the Judgement of all religions. Viewed in this light, all religious systems appear untrue, unbelieving and indeed godless. [14]

Paul Tillich found it possible to neglect other religions. Karl Barth held the view that the revelation of God in Jesus Christ that is attested in Holy Scripture is the only guiding principle to which every theological concern is subject. It is quite interesting to note the witty but profound comment made by Bishop Sabapathy Kulandran, Bishop of the Jaffna Diocese of the Church of India in Sri Lanka who himself was a participant at the World Mission Conference in Tambaram along with people like Kraemer in reaction to Karl Barth's dismissal of non-Christian religions.

D.T. Niles recalled that in his first meeting with Karl Barth in 1935, Barth said: 'Other religions are just unbelief.' Niles asked: 'How many Hindus, Dr Barth, have you met?' Barth answered: 'No one.' Niles said: 'How then do you know that Hinduism is unbelief?' Barth replied: 'A priori.' Niles concluded: 'I simply shook my head and smiled.' [15]

These show the exclusivistic claims in the Protestant Tradition. The International Congress on World Evangelization that gathered the evangelicals in the year 1974 made a statement on "The Uniqueness and Universality of Christ" in the following words. It may be of interest to see how often the word 'only' appears.

We affirm that there is only one Savior and only one Gospel, although there is a wide diversity of evangelistic approaches. We recognize that all men have some knowledge of God through his general revelation in nature. But we deny that this can save, for men suppress the truth by their unrighteousness. We also reject as derogatory to Christ and the Gospel every kind of syncretism and dialogue that implies that Christ speaks equally through all religions and ideologies. Jesus Christ, being himself the only God-man, who gave himself as the only ransom for sinners, is the only mediator between God and man. There is no other name by which we must be saved. All men are perishing because of sin, but God loves all men, not wishing that any should perish but that all should repent. Yet, those who reject Christ repudiate the joy of salvation and condemn themselves to eternal separation from God. To proclaim Jesus as 'the Savior of the World' is not to affirm that all men are either automatically or ultimately saved, still less to affirm that all religions offer salvation in Christ. Rather it is to proclaim God's love for a world of sinners and to invite all men to respond to him as Savior and Lord in the whole-hearted personal commitment of repentance and faith. Jesus Christ has been exalted above every other name; we long for the day when every knee shall bow to him and every tongue shall confess him Lord. (Gal. 1.6-9; Rom. 1.18-32; 1 Tim. 2.5,6; Acts 4.12; John 3.16-19; II Pet. 3.19; II Thess. 1.7-9; John 4.42; Matt. 11.28; Eph. 1.20,21; Phil. 2.9-11). [16]

Kraemer, in his later work, [17] tried to set aright what he thought to as a deficiency in his earlier book 'The Christian Message.' He could acknowledge his

negligence in not recognizing the awareness of God in non-Christian religions. However, to what extent it made any impact, is another question to ponder. Later, in the same book, Kraemer when trying to distinguish between syncretism and absorption, clearly expressed the exclusivist trend. He said that Christianity had absorbed many extraneous elements. However, it is by nature exclusive and immune to syncretistic spirit. Taking up elements which are contrary to the authentic soul of the absorbing religion has to be avoided. The remedy for such, as Kraemer sees, is none other than deeper delving into the Bible, which he calls 'a matter of faith in biblical realism'.[18]

Regarding the issue of dialogue, he says that one cannot enter into dialogue except with the conviction of the exclusivist claims of the biblical message. Therefore, he says, "This exclusiveness has nothing to do with religious arrogance, intolerance or dogmatic assertions."[19]

This view definitely holds the opinion that the true religion is Christ-centered and theology should be Christo-centric. All other religions are human strivings for the simple reason that they do not receive the unique revelation of God in Christ Jesus. It is the revelation of Jesus Christ, which is the only criterion to judge all religions. The common factor in the exclusivist approach is its appeal to Scripture for an unquestioned authority. There are quite a number of exclusive verses in the Bible which present Christ as unique and the only way to salvation. Some of them are sayings of Jesus himself. For example:

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God.[20]

Thomas said to him, 'Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?' Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.[21] When Peter and John were brought before the High Priest following the healing of a man born lame, Peter witnessed to Christ in the following words: There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved.[22]

On the nature of salvation Jesus is said to have brought, Paul says, "This is right and is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God; there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human, who gave himself a ransom for all- this was attested at the right time.[23]

Reading the Bible with New Eyes

These are lucid and unequivocal statements from the Bible to support the exclusivist position. These have to be examined carefully. We should not fall into

the temptation of developing our theology or missiology on the basis of selective verses from the Bible. How do we then understand these sayings? Here comes the issue of 'Reading the Bible With New Eyes', a program organized by the Programme Area on "Faith, Mission and Unity" of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA-FMU). It is important to see a 'different witness to Jesus' and this will give a totally different picture than what is given when all these exclusive sayings are put together! We have to understand these sayings from the standpoint of 'language of faith.' Jesus, who touched and transformed the lives of others also became and remained the Christ of Faith. They have to be understood in the context of the faith commitment of the early Christian community. It is important to know that there is 'Christ of faith' to whom a very clear witness is given in the New Testament. These sayings derive their meaning in the context of faith. Therefore, they cannot have any meaning outside the community of faith.

The confessions given in exclusive overtone should not be made definitive. They have to be understood in the language of faith and love. They are not to be used to discredit other beliefs. The harmonious relationship and communion envisaged by God in God's creative acts are marred when we turn this language of faith and love into absolute truths. Here comes the question of "Truth and Truth Claims". The truth and our truth claims are not identical. What we are discussing are truth claims. But, truth in the absolute sense is beyond anyone's grasp. We have to recognize the different levels in which such language is used and/or the different standpoints from which these claims are made in order to have a proper understanding of these exclusive statements about Christ.

One more point to be taken note of before we delve into the next stage. The sola scriptura or 'scripture alone' principle of the Reformation does not in any way mean that the Bible can be read in isolation from what has happened and what is happening in the world. 'Sola' does not refer to 'isolation' but to a 'strong engagement.' This engagement reminds us of God's engagement with the world and humanity. God relates to the people in love and there can be no other way since love is the essence of God. God's love is unconditional. This is what the Bible speaks to us. It affirms God's loving relationship with humanbeings. We have to understand that the Bible does not authenticate itself. It is God speaking through the Bible that authenticates it!

The church also took an exclusive stance mainly on the basis of some of the exclusive biblical sayings mentioned above. The thought of non-Christian being an outsider was even institutionalized. Right from the time of the Church Fathers, this thought began to take shape. The axiom *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*, outside the church, no salvation, was formulated by Origen and Cyprian used it freely. This axiom began to play a decisive role in the Roman Catholic

Church. Pope Boniface of the fourteenth century emphatically pronounced that outside the one Catholic Church there is neither salvation nor remission of sins and he pontificated by saying, "Furthermore, we declare, say, define and proclaim to every creature that they, by necessity for salvation, are entirely subject to the Roman Pontiff." [24] Those who were considered to be outside of the church were issued a warning by the Council of Florence in 1442 with these words: "Those not living within the Catholic Church, not only pagans but also Jews and heretics and schismatics, cannot become participants in eternal life, but will depart into everlasting fire unless before the end of life the same have been added to the flock." [25]

The question that has to be dealt with is whether God is revealing Godself only in the Christ-Event. Those who take up the exclusivist verses from the Bible stick to this view so that Religious Pluralism appears to them as threatening reality to be rejected. Religious pluralism has to be considered as a reality to come to terms with. Even if they accept the universal salvific act of God in other faiths, they always add a qualifier to it to make the difference obvious. They find it difficult to get involved in a dialogical relationship with people of other faiths that God's purpose for the world and humanity could be realized. The attitude of making definitive blanket judgement about other faiths has to be shunned. How can one do that even without knowing or studying the other faiths? When a person says that people of other faiths are outside the salvific act of God, what kind of statement it could be? Such a person does not realize that such statement is not only a depiction of his/her attitude against the other person, but also and necessarily a statement about his/her God! The question is whether we are in mission because God has not revealed Godself to our neighbour or in spite and indeed because of it. The grace of God is available in all religions. God's grace and God's love are not exclusive claims of any one religion. It is tantamount to say that what is revealed in other faiths is not salvific and of no significance. It may be pertinent to quote what Kazoh Kitamori, the Japanese theologian said, "Jesus Christ is in pain in order to include those who are excluded." [26]

David Bosch, in his *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, [27] talks about the shift from the 'mission of the church' to the 'mission of God' as a significant leap forward in the understanding of mission. The concept of *missio Dei*, though came into the parlance of the Ecumenical Movement in Willingen in 1952, actually emerged as a mission paradigm at the first meeting of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) held in Mexico City in 1963. This paradigm shift helped many to put many things in perspective. Now, it began to be understood clearly that primary motive of mission is the love of God towards all of God's creation. Therefore, church is understood as an instrument in the hand of God to participate and fulfill God's own

purpose for the world and humanity.

When analyzing the axis of the mission and message of Jesus, one will find that it was the Reign of God [Basileia tou Theou], as Jesus called. According to Dermot Lane, "Indeed, everything that Jesus says and does is inspired from beginning to end by his personal commitment to the coming Reign of God into the world. The controlling horizon of the mission and ministry of Jesus is the Kingdom of God. The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus derive their meaning from the Announcement of the Kingdom of God".[28]

Jon Sobrino, in his 'Spirituality of Liberation: Toward A Political Holiness,' puts this fact in a lucid way when he says that Jesus did not simply preach 'God.' 'God' is not simply and absolutely Jesus' ultimate pole of reference.[29] HYPERLINK "<http://www.wocati.org/thiagara.html>" \l "anchor166702" What he said was that whenever Jesus referred to God, he was not speaking about a reality that, by itself, could be known or used as a criterion for judgement. There was something else that 'mediated' the absoluteness of God and so was identified with the divine absoluteness. This was not the church or the Kingdom of heaven. The reality of the Divine is not found primarily or ultimately either in heaven or in the church.[30] In his later writing, Jon Sobrino emphasizes this more forcefully;

The ultimate for Jesus is the Kingdom of God, that is, God not in relation to Godself but in relation to this Earth, to this history. For Jesus, as for any authentic Jewish prophet, God is a God-of, a God-for, a God-in, never a God-in-himself.[31]

Hence, the final reality for Jesus was not simply 'God' but 'the Reign of God.' The Abba whom Jesus proclaimed cannot be known or worshipped apart from the Reign of God [Basileia tou Theou]. It is important to be borne in mind that Jesus never attempted to give a definition of the Reign of God. Rather he spoke of it as 'this-worldly reality.' It is a reality that would change human society. If the church at one time defined the uniqueness of Christianity in the proclamation *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*, today it is called to find it in the proclamation *extra mundum nulla salus*, that is, 'outside the world no salvation.' Hence what Juan Luis Segundo said is noteworthy: "Jesus' listeners understood one thing perfectly: while the force behind the Kingdom was for him the force of God, the reality of the Kingdom was something to be achieved on earth, so that society as a whole would reflect the will of God".[32]

Our task is to be co-partners with God in God's 'turning' (shub) in grace towards humanity. Ariarajah puts it succinctly when he says, "We need to move to a genuinely inclusive understanding of mission that places the loving, caring, judging and compassionate presence and mission of God in the heart of all human affairs, despite all its ambiguities." [33] God desired to have a dialogi-

cal relationship with humanity in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, whose life was always God-centered, God-dependent and God-ward. We are able to do this by way of dialogue, which is an activity related to the building of the 'Reign of God'. When dialogue ends, the forces of evil and darkness take hold of us. It is imperative to make a commitment to peace with justice by way of a common struggle towards a reconciled human community.

We will realize that the century that passed by was shaken and challenged by two important currents or movements viz., the liberation theology and the Christian response to the People of Other Living Faiths. This made us aware that the "suffering Other" and the "religious Other" belong together. In that process we were made to realize that we should move beyond the emphases on "Christocentrism" and "Theocentrism" to "Soteriocentrism." The soteriocentric understanding of the Reign of God makes us come to grips with 'the character of God,' 'the ministry of Jesus,' and 'the mission of the church' being understood from the perspective of the blossoming new reality where the poor are vindicated and the marginalized, the wounded and the excluded are accepted and included.

NOTES

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**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN:
"You can do to them whatever you wish"**

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The issue that I will address in this presentation is only one way in which we have been violated as human persons by the forces from within and without. Before I continue on I will also like to highlight that our social location, (home) and our beings as God's created "beings" have been tremendously violated through the usage of our homeland as the testing ground for nuclear weapon, as the dumping site for nuclear wastes and the immediate obvious effects of global warming and sea level rising.

INTRODUCTION

What is an issue that is not only an issue for women but also urgently needs to be addressed in theological education in the Pacific island nations/Oceania[1] and in this gathering today? This was the question that I wrestled with when I was given the task to write on "Women's Issues in the Pacific" for this Conference.[2] I did not need to go far. The answer was right there all around me as not a day goes by that I do not hear, read and see of cases of violence in the media.

The issue that is of urgency to address, especially in theological education, is 'violence' in all forms.[3] It is one of the deadliest hu/man-made sicknesses and the cause of many afflictions in the world today, especially for women and children. Volumes of literature have been written and documented internationally on this social ill.[4] [HYPERLINK "http://www.wocati.org/tofaeono.html"](http://www.wocati.org/tofaeono.html) \l "anchor946451" Attempts have been made globally to eradicate this problem.[5] Yet the problem continues to spread like an un-curable epidemic. It seems that it gets perfected as each year goes by.[6] [HYPERLINK "http://www.wocati.org/tofaeono.html"](http://www.wocati.org/tofaeono.html) \l "anchor958530" The human race continuously comes up with new means and forms of violence to conquer and control others.[7]

The first section of this presentation looks at the social reality of the island communities in Oceania and the complicated web of sources that contribute to the problem of domestic violence against women. The second section will analyze the problem by drawing on the experiences of victims and their families and raising questions on how these experiences should be recognized. The third section will question the role which theological education plays in the problem. The final section will pinpoint clues for transformation that are helpful in the search to overcome domestic violence against women.

1. The Living Social Reality: Violence

I believe each and every one of us present here today was and has been a victim of some form of violence once or more times in our lives. There is also no doubt that we were and perhaps still are perpetrators of violence in various forms to the powerless and the marginalised in our midst.

The topic of violence is very broad and complicated in itself. We have just experienced what it is like to be put on the spot in front of a circle of academics and well known theologians. I am sure you said to yourself silently, or to your neighbor, "How dare she ask us such a question? Who does she think she is?" You probably even questioned how the organisers could allow such a person to do such a thing. What was your inner reaction when you were asked to look at yourself and identify if you were a victim as well as a perpetrator of violence to anyone at all? Who among us here would like to reveal a dark side of our lives especially in an academic setting as this. If you felt that it was unnecessary to put you in an extremely embarrassing and humiliating experience, can you imagine what it is like to hide the shame of being in an abusive relationship from the very people you know and live with for most of your life? Can you understand why many choose to keep the abuse in secrecy for a long time or forever? Do you also see the need for us to break our silence and do something about the violence within and around ourselves?

It is sickening to read, for instance, in the Fijian newspapers every day[8] of cases of violent brutality[9] and insanity[10] in the form of child molestation,[11] incest,[12] rape, etc.,[13] especially within the family and against children[14] and women. The two most common and serious forms of such violence are sexual[15] and domestic[16] violence.

This paper, owing to the expectation of the organisers to write on a women's issue, and to the limited time and space, unfortunately will not address the seriousness of the problem of violence also against children.[17] Nor will it discuss the forms and the roots of violence. Rather, it will only focus on discussing domestic violence against women as an issue from Oceania. However, it should be highlighted that the violence against children is just as much as the women if not much greater. Therefore, cases of abuse against children will also be cited to share the seriousness of the problem.

The issue itself is and can be very controversial when different perspectives are laid bare for discussion. This presentation seeks to get a point across and to disclose a painful but truthful fact that violence, especially domestic violence, is a problem affecting the lives of many women in the Pacific; and that the Pacific churches and theological institutions in Oceania need to break their silence and their passive behavior on the issue and do something about it.

1.1 Experiences of Violence

Case One

Two young girls who were raped and assaulted by their father submitted letters of reconciliation in court. Proceedings at the Lautoka court were closed to

the public after the 47-year-old man told the court that his daughters and wife had forgiven him and produced the letters. He said he was very stressed and was in financial difficulty when he committed the offences. The alleged offences began almost six years ago when his elder daughter was 15 years old. He admitted raping his elder daughter and trying to rape and indecently assaulting the younger one, who was 12 years old. The matter came to light when the older daughter told a neighbor of the alleged incidents.[18]

Case Two

A 34 year-old soldier charged with assault appeared before the Chief Magistrate for assaulting his wife. The complainant approached the accused to discuss family problems. During the discussion an argument developed between the couple whereby the accused allegedly started punching the complainant. The complainant suffered injuries as a result and reported the matter to police.[19]

Case Three

A clergy couple, who strongly believed and most of the time practiced partnership in their marriage relationship, worked at a theological institution which in a way still adopts a hierarchical structure. He became somehow a victim of this hierarchy and dirty politics. This affected their relationship at home as their frustration was often let out on each other. One day their disappointment with the system contributed to a verbal argument which led to her saying a comment that really upset him. It made him so furious that he turned around and slapped her. She in return slapped him back, thus ending in a fist fight that gave both a share of bodily ache. She reported the incident to the Principal who met with them. After a session of sharing, the couple was told to go home, reconcile and pray about their problem. As the couple left, the Principal shared this confidential incident with his spouse, the project manager of the College and his vice-Principal, who in return spread it as a gossip to his colleagues and the students from his ethics group. The spouse of the principal as well as the project manager also shared the information with their colleagues. The news of the gossip got back to the couple who then regretted going to the College leaders for pastoral support, as it became a source of destruction rather than an agent of healing.[20]

Case One is only one example cited of the few reported cases of sexual abuse within and without the family. Many more cases remain unreported and are kept safe in the community and family closets. Most of those reported are incest cases where the perpetrators are either a brother, father, uncle, cousin, or grandfather. The victims of incest are as young as 3 months and as old as eighty-plus years. It is at such an alarmingly disgusting growth rate that one questions if the world

has grown insane and is controlled by evil forces.

It is no doubt that there are many more cases of incest safely kept in secrecy to safeguard the name and the integrity of the family and the perpetrators, who are mostly family members or close friends and relatives. What about the integrity and the "being" of the children who have been ripped apart at the core of their existence? They are either forced to reconcile with the perpetrator, or the families seek means of reconciling with each other without taking the children's feelings into consideration at all.

Case Two speaks of an experience that many Pacific Islands women have in common. But only a few have the courage to report such an assault to the police or to seek support from a care-giving agency. Most of the women have at one time if not more times in their lives experienced an assault resulting within a relationship, marital or de facto.[21 [HYPERLINK "http://www.wocati.org/to-faeono.html"](http://www.wocati.org/to-faeono.html) \l "anchor1013289" Couples, especially the men, resort[22] to physical violence to end conflicts in relationships. In doing so, the family problems are neither resolved nor dissolved. It only gets suppressed whereby one partner must bail out of a disagreement. It is often the woman who is silenced in most disputes through the use of domestic violence.

Case Three explains the inability and the un-preparedness of leaders in theological institutions to play their pastoral roles when presented with real-life situations. In this case the leaders were very successful in turning one family dilemma into a topic for gossip. This is exactly the greatest fear of many women who are victims of domestic abuse in theological institutions: that their family problems will become a juicy gossip for the institutional community. Hence, the silence. Worst of all, hardly anyone offers to help or raise domestic violence as a problem that must be addressed and dealt with in theological institutions.[23]

It is no longer a secret that many ordained (male) clergy around the world and in Oceania are themselves perpetrators of sexual and domestic abuse. Often when cases of domestic and sexual violence[24] by clergy are reported, the churches either transfer the clergy perpetrators to other parishes or countries as a discipline, or the incidents are covered up by the church. Very few are made to face the consequences of their acts.

Domestic violence must no longer be treated as something that goes away once the dispute is over. It is a vicious cycle that continues on sucking up victims and perpetrators as it moves from one generation to another. Perpetrators falsely believe that once the tears are dried and the bruises disappear the problem is also over. The victims are expected to be good forgiving Christians. Jesus' sufferings are often brought into play, with the argument that the women's sufferings are not even close to the suffering Jesus went through. Therefore, if Jesus could forgive those who crucified him, then the women must do likewise. This

theological reasoning is extremely problematic when it is used to justify the endurance of continuous violence against women.

2. Violence against Women [25]

"You can do to them, my virgin daughter, and his concubine, whatever you wish ... Such a thing has never been seen or done "[26] This passage from Judges is one of the forgotten passages and perhaps the least referred-to books of the Bible in sermons, bible studies and exegetical work in most theological schools, with the exception of feminist studies and theology. Yet it is one that clearly sanctions the abuse and torture of women at its ugliest. What an absurd text to theologise on even if it is to stress that it was done in the days when there was no king. On the other hand, it is a reminder of the terror of which mostly men are capable. It is not true that such a thing has never been seen or never happens. This horror has been done to the daughters and the spouses - whatever men wish. The ongoing domestic violence against women is a proof of this terror.

There is now more than ever a growing consciousness that violence against women is a serious unjustifiable social ill affecting society at all levels in the Pacific. Numerous factors contribute to the increase of violence against women in the Pacific. As time and space does not allow for an elaboration on these numerous factors, and as this is a gathering for the World Conference of Association of Theological Institutes, this work then argues that theological education has indirectly contributed to the enhancement of this serious dilemma through the mis-interpretation of many biblical passages.

3. The Role of Theological Education and the Church

It has been a concern for many citizens in the island Pacific, especially the women, that the Pacific churches and theological institutions have not been prophetic at all in social issues, such as violence, that are affecting the lives of their members. Even if the church has in some small ways spoken out,[27] it has not been loud enough to be heard. Yet domestic violence poses a life-threatening reality in the lives of most women and children, not only worldwide but right in our midst in the Pacific.[28] The few victims who do have the courage to step forward fortunately can at times find refuge and solace in and from the care-giving services offered by the government,[29] civil societies[30] and private sectors in the Pacific. The Pacific churches, on the other hand, are yet to be heard on this issue. That is a challenge for the churches and all of us here involved as educators in theological institutions. Where is our prophetic voice for and with the victims of violent abuses? What is the role of theological education in addressing this social issue?

Violence, in this case domestic violence against women, is an issue that the

writer believes has been ignored by the churches and has been treated as a non-issue for too long in theological schools in the Pacific. It is time that this is addressed as an issue of concern in the church, especially in theological education. It is in the theological classrooms that the future church leaders and their spouses are supposedly being trained to deal with such cases in their ministries. Theological educators have a central role in raising the awareness of the theological students on how social issues are a 'checks and balances' reality check regarding the validity and the applicability of the theology taught in the classrooms.

In the island Pacific context, religion is the life-giving stream in most communities and the most influential of all is the Christian religion. The ordained ministers who are considered as the earthly messengers of the Christian God are treated with such awe and veneration. They remain still, despite the many changes in society, the most influential persons in the life of the congregation and most communities. The better equipped the ordained clergy are in their theological training to work with persons affected by life crises, the more aware and informed the parishioners will become of their role in the problem and in preventing serious consequences. The application of forgiveness and unconditional Christian love in violent cases only encourages more violence, thus avoiding dealing with the destructive violent behaviors. Forgiveness must go hand in hand with justice.

3.1 The Located-ness of Theological Education in the Problem

The greatest hindrance to the call to combat violence, in this case against women, lies in the inability of theological educators to locate the situated-ness of the problem in theological education. Theological students are either not equipped with the 'know-how' techniques to use in crisis situations, or the age old method of telling the spouses to be tolerant and forgiving is applied.

There is a general mentality among theological educators and theological associations that theological issues must be separated from social issues. It is stressed in many meetings of theological educators that I have attended in Oceania that social issues have no direct connection to theological education. Yet, a theological educator does not need to turn his or her head as the causes of many social issues are right there where he or she is. The problem of violence is deeply rooted in theological interpretations and church teachings. The theological institutions many times concentrate so single-mindedly on perfecting the intellect of the theological students and breeding outstanding academics that they overlook the missing link between the theoretical learning and the practicality of its outworking. Their students become transporters of the theoretical seeds planted in the theological classroom to the various parishes in which they will

be placed. The fruitfulness of the theological nursery is tested when the planters are dispersed to work in the soil and with other gardeners. Often these students struggle to deal with the reality when they are placed in the field.

Those who have been perpetrators of violence against their spouses and children while in theological institutes and were never dealt with will continue to do so wherever they will be. They will also preach a theology that maintains the submission of women as their God-given role. Those who were in institutions where domestic violence cases were never addressed as a problem will also carry that mentality that it is a family matter, and therefore it should be kept within the family.

It cannot be denied that the cultural and Christian teaching that the husband is the head of the family has a lot to do with the perpetration of domestic violence. Women are taught that they must respect men at all times, the men "out of" whose bone she came. It is her sole role to bear and raise children for the continuance of the lineage and to keep the household in order. This is the influence of (the literal) interpretation of the second creation story in Genesis. It is such a central understanding that this paper claims to be a contributing factor to the problem of domestic violence against women.

The mis-interpretation of the second creation story in Genesis is a prime example of how the Bible is often misused. The interpretation alluded to by many Pacific Islanders, for instance to Genesis 2: 23 ("you are bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh out of man this one is taken"), is often distorted to justify violence.

Instead of upholding the created-ness of woman for the sake of partnership and companionship, the emphasis is on ownership and possession.[31] Such distortion often upholds the standards of submissiveness set by the church, based on Biblical misinterpretation, thus leading to domestic violence and the perpetuation of violence.

3.2 The Located-ness of the Pacific Churches in the Problem

The island Pacific societies and communities are just as much in this problem as anywhere in the world. We have already made the case that domestic violence has destroyed the well-being of many women in the Pacific. One secular counselor shared that most of the cases she dealt with were almost always violence related. She shared that the majority of these clientele state that their ministers and their spouses would be the last persons they would consult on their problem. This had to do not only with cultural expectations but also to do with the teachings of the churches on their roles as women in upholding peace within the family.

The Pacific Islanders' churches are thus yet to identify their social location

in this problem and their need to rethink the ways in which their Biblical interpretation and theology have contributed to the problem.

The core of the problem, speaking as a Pacific Islands Christian, has to do with the passivity of the church on this issue. Some aspects of the Church's theology and practices ignite the burning flame of abuse against women. One of the saddest discoveries I have had is the inability of theological students to openly admit and identify domestic violence as a problem. Yet some of them have resorted to violence themselves as a solution to domestic conflicts.

The churches' continuous usage of the traditional marriage rites has been another source of bondage for women in abusive relationships. The rites re-inforce an understanding that the man is given through marriage the divine authority to rule over the woman. This divine authority must never be challenged. Therefore many women endure being abused for life because their church teaches that marriage vows made before God are sacred and must be kept "till death do us part," and that regardless of the hardship "those whom God has joined together let no one put asunder." (Matt. 19:6)

3.3 Voices of the Theologically Trained on Violence against Women

In preparation for this presentation and for a thorough research on the issue addressed above, a questionnaire with nine questions was drafted[32] and distributed to three different groups. One group consisted of international doctoral candidates who were doing a summer course at the San Francisco Theological School in 2002. The other group included theological students at the Pacific Theological College, the only regional ecumenical theological institution in the Pacific island nations,[33] in Suva, Fiji. Students from fourteen different denominations representing eleven ethnic groups are currently enrolled there. In order to get a wider framework within which to work, a group of theological students from one particular ethnic group was also included.

The majority of the persons in the three groups are ordained clergy. This may be reflected in the way they responded to the questions. As a pilot core group it was hoped that 10 responses would come from each group, with a balanced number of five women and five men. The purpose is to find out if and how the theology they are taught in the classroom influences the way they look at the theme addressed in this paper, and whether their social location also determines the way they respond to the questions.

Since the questions address the core of the churches' theology, and especially related to the marriage sacrament, time is definitely needed to sit down and reflect carefully on the questions. The respondents were not given enough time to work on this. This explains why the expected number (30 altogether) was not reached. As a result, only 6 responded from the first group and five from the sec-

ond one. This paper will only discuss these two groups and concentrate on the responses given to two questions.

The six respondents from the first group all answered, in response to one question, that there is a connection between the traditional view of wives as being derived from and subservient to their husband and the sanctioning of violence against women.[34] One commented that if men must always be obeyed without question there will always be questions of 'why'. Another wrote that women have often been told to stress 'obedience to' and have been encouraged to accept their secondary, submissive, even inferior role. She continued that she had had women ask her how they can disobey their husband when they promised to obey them. This understanding is often reflected in sermons also.

The responses from the second group were interesting as they were not only all men but none responded yes or no to the above-mentioned question. Rather, they gave long explanations indicating that women should obey men. One pointed out that women are owned by their husbands in his context, but the men were taught not to "give their hands because the women are weak." Another spelled out that the traditional idea that women were created out of man is the root of all domestic violence against women.

In analysing the two groups it was apparent that both were very cautious in the way they answered the questions, making sure that their churches were not put on the spot. It was also clear that the theology that they are taught and their cultural understanding shaped the way they responded. The second group tended to talk more as a community member defending the communal values and the communal system. The other group reflected more the values of the individual and their own personal experiences. The women respondents were more up-front in pointing out that violence is a universal problem faced by women, and that the teaching and the theology of the church has had a lot to do with it. Men also agreed but more as a generational and cultural problem.

The fact that all of these respondents are theologically trained explains the theologising done in the way they responded.

4. Clues for Transformation

Associations of Theological Schools are in an influential position to introduce structured devices to implement changes that will shape and form the curriculum of the theological schools to take this up as one of its important programs. What is seriously needed in all theological schools in the Pacific is the development of a curriculum that looks into the teaching and the theology of their churches in relation to the issue of violence. It must be explored how the marriage liturgy in most church traditions upholds the superiority of the male partner in the vows for life partnership before God. A good example is the Pauline

teaching in Ephesians 5: 21-33 : The statement " for the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church" has been literally interpreted as a support for suppressing women. This was cited by almost all the respondents as the text used almost always in wedding ceremonies, emphasising the places of the couples in their marriage. A section of the curriculum must look at the book of Genesis, especially both creation stories, and how it promotes violence and the subjugation of women.

4.1 Concrete Proposals: One Way Forward

Weavers, a program of the South Pacific Association of Theological Schools advocating for women in theological education, has chosen to focus on Domestic Violence against Women as its core program for the next three years. It is holding a forum for the public and its member schools based in Fiji inviting various experts to talk on "Violence against Women: and the Struggle Against it." This will be followed by a leadership training event for the Clergy Spouses studying with their husbands at the Pacific Theological College, on Conflict Management. The last event for the coming year is a seminar for the 25 SPATS member schools on the same issue. The purpose is to train the trainers to start their own program against violence in their local schools.

4.2 No More Violence in Paradise: A Plea from the Pacific Women

Strengthened and encouraged by each other and the unconditional love of God we reached out to each other and shared our painful experiences and stories of the violences against women throughout our Pacific Islands.

We heard of lack of support by Governments, churches and the society as a whole for women in violent situations either at home or at work or in society.

We wept for the thousands of women who, because of cultural and religious pressures have suffered violence silently and alone.

We heard that for thousands of women and girls, home is no longer a safe place, but a place of fear, pain and terror. For example, in Papua New Guinea 67% of violence reported in the rural areas and 54% in the urban areas are in the home.

We are confronted with the knowledge that our cultures have been used as justification for violence against women.

We acknowledge that the kind of theology taught by the church not only perpetuates violence against women but often condones violence.

We listened to the stories of the betrayal of women and children's trust by the clergy through acts of sexual harassment and abuse.

We mourn the thousands of women and girls who are raped.

We discover the painful reality that we are often victims of these destruc-

tive acts of violence.

We affirm that we are survivors of the violence and committed to struggle until justice is done.

We listened, we heard, we struggled, we wept and we prayed. (Apia Declaration, March 12-15, 1996. SAMOA: No More Violence in Paradise)

Conclusion

I would like to conclude by stressing that any issue to do with God's creation is an issue for theological discussion in and for the churches and theological institutions. Therefore these issues must be at the core of theological education.

This work concludes with a request to the communities in the Pacific / Oceania and to all of you gathered here to, FIRST, assist in identifying our social location in this problem and in rethinking the ways in which Biblical interpretations and theology have contributed to the problem. SECOND, it calls us to remember the untold stories of women who have been victims of domestic violence; and THIRD, it pleads for a contribution to the call of worldwide activists to overcome violence against women. And most important of all, for us as educators to make a rhythm for justice in theological education with the beat of our hearts, performed by the actions of our hands and rooted in God through the gifts of the spirit; our intellect.

NOTES

1. Oceania is used interchangeably to refer to the Pacific Island nations. The indigenous population of the Pacific Island nations continues to value their strong connectedness to the land (*fanua*) and the Sea (*Moana*) as was relayed through their oral tradition by their ancestors. It is also more fitting to refer to this region as Oceania than Pacific as it consists more of ocean and continues to hold the ocean and the land as their sacred heritage.
2. As I am expected to discuss a women's issue from the Pacific, this work deliberately avoids addressing the theme as a purely academic issue. This presentation focuses primarily on citing incidents confronting the lives of the islanders as presented in the local newspapers and not so much on other sources as is expected for a gathering of academics such as this one. The writer is familiar with the viewpoints expressed by various scholar on the issue. She has chosen to dwell only on presenting violence against women as a serious problem that the churches and theological institutes in Oceania must address now.
3. Social issues such as violence are almost never addresses nor included in the curriculum of theological institutes, at least in the Pacific context. There is a mentality that they are issues for social services and civil societies and not for theological education/class-

rooms.

4. See for instance the writings of Marie M. Fortune such as *Violence in the Family: A Workshop Curriculum for Clergy and Other Helpers*; *Keeping the Faith: Questions and Answers for Abused Women*; *Love Does no Harm: Sexual Ethics for the Rest of Us*; *Is Nothing Sacred? When Sex Invades the Pastoral Relationship*.
5. For example, in an attempt to combat violence worldwide, the World Council of Churches in conjunction with the United Nations launched in February of 2001, in Berlin the Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV). Many other care-giving services around the world have been actively involved in finding means to eradicate this problem.
6. "Police statistics reveal reported sexual offences rose by 20 per cent this year compared to last year with incest having the highest figure in the category. As at June last year, 218 cases of sexual offences were reported compared to 262 for the same period this year." Imran Ami "Father under probe for sex crimes," *The Fiji Times*, Friday November 15, 2002, p. 3.
7. The current ongoing crisis in the northern hemisphere is a primary example: The United States of America uses violence to counter violence. Terrorist acts are used to get a message across. These are done at the expense of the innocent and the vulnerables who are predominantly women and children and all in the name of power.
8. The writer is currently working in the islands of Fiji . Therefore she mainly concentrate on the incidents reported in the Fiji media. The actual incidents presented in this paper are taken from the three Fijian newspapers: *The Fiji Times*, *Sun* and the *The Daily Post*. It is by no means indicating that this is the only island nation with an increase in such criminal acts. It is only representative on the evilness of violence affecting all nations and sweeping through the whole universe.
9. B. is alleged to have raped a 24-year old American tourist while she was taking a walk. The victim was repeatedly raped at gunpoint during the night and was only able to escape after B. fell asleep in the early morning. *The Daily Post*, Thursday, September 12, 2002.p. 7.
10. A villager was sentenced to 10 years ... for sexually abusing eight children ... between the ages of four and nine ... The 64-year-old said he had reconciled with church elders and parents of the victims and was forgiven. *The Fiji Times*, Friday. June 28, 2002. P.3.
11. Avinesh Gopal in her article "Child molester goes to prison" reported that "A man was jailed for two years for indecently assaulting his 10-year old neighbor. The accused had gone to the victim's house and told her to send her younger sister to a neighbor's house. When the victim's sister left, the accused then undressed the victim and touched her private parts. He also undressed himself, rubbed his private parts against the victim's thighs and left the house. *The Fiji Times*, Wednesday, April 24, 2002, pp.8.
12. Sanday Gounder a journalist for the *Sun* newspaper in Fiji wrote that "A Lautoka father who has allegedly sexually assaulted his two daughters yesterday pleaded guilty on rape and two counts of indecent assault before the Lautoka Magistrates Court." *Sun*, Tuesday November 12, 2002. Page 2.
13. A 37 year old man was yesterday sentenced to four years imprisonment for abduct-

- ing a girl under the age of 18 years with intent to have carnal knowledge and indecently assaulting her. (He) confronted her by closing her mouth with his hand and dragged her to a nearby vacant house. At the house he forced her to remove her clothes, laid her down and touched her private parts. He took off his trousers and tried to have intercourse with her. Charlotte Peters "Sexual offender cops 4-year term" Sun, Tuesday, November 12, 2002.
14. A (63 year-old) man who indecently assaulted nine children (between the ages of four to eleven) was remanded in custody for his own safety after admitting the offences. The Fiji Times, Wednesday, June 12, 2002, p. 3.
 15. Sakiasi Nawaikama " Sex cases on the increase." The Fiji Times, Monday, April 22, 2002, p.5. The reporter wrote that ' There is an increase in crimes of this nature (sexual assaults), says Women Crisis Center Coordinator Shameema Ali. She said the recent case of a man who raped his younger sister showed the serious level incest cases have reached These cases have been there but they are beginning to come out because it's being talked about. There is an increase in these sort of acts against women."
 16. "An argument broke out between the two (husband and wife) and minutes later the husband started assaulting her and during the process she picked up a cane knife and swung it at him."
 17. A father raped his partially crippled daughter for a period of almost three weeks until she could not hide it anymore and broke the sick news to her mother who then reported the matter to the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre. She (the victim) is partially crippled from the waist down. This is probably the sickest and biggest sexual offence ever committed in Fiji. Raymond Singh. "Father rapes crippled daughter" in The Daily Post. Wednesday, October 2, 2002, p.1.
 18. Seema Sharma, "Daughter give letters of reconciliation," in The Fiji Times, Wednesday, November 20, 2002 p. 5
 19. The Daily Post, Friday march 22, 2002
 20. The source wishes to remain anonymous.
 21. Often both partners contribute to the misunderstandings in the marriage or a relationship. Both are victims of other forms of violence such as emotional, psychological, verbal etc. The issue here is not to discuss who and what caused the problem. The point is to stress that men are more prone to resort to physical violence to deal with family difficulties. As a consequence the women are almost always the victims of violent abuses. And this is the problem that this paper attempts to highlight.
 22. This is not to say that women are not perpetrators of violence also in other forms. There are also men who are victims of violent women. But they are a small (1 :100) minority in comparison to the many women (8 :10).
 23. One of the longest series of books to be written on violence would be on the experiences of domestic violence of the clergy spouses.
 24. In the last couple of months, cases of priests in the Roman Catholic church in the United States molesting children and other abuses have been the headline in the world news and the media in the Pacific. It is not only in the Roman Catholic church, many ordained clergies in the Pacific are guilty of having extra marital affairs and taking sexual advantages of young women . The only difference is that it is still on the top

of the secret lists of the churches.

25. This paper is the project section of a dissertation the writer is currently working on titled "Bone of my bones out of man this one is taken: A Theological Problem."
26. Judges 19: 24, 30. (NIV)
27. The now dissolved Pacific women's desk of the Pacific Council of Churches (PCC) co-facilitated with the women's desk of the World Council of Churches a seminar on violence against women for selected Pacific women in 1989. As the participants were chosen from among and limited to the spouses of the church leaders and women leaders themselves, this seminar was not known to the other 99% of women and men. And since it was an initiative that came from and by the women, it was never taken up seriously by the Pacific churches. As a result, it was never followed up as an issue of great importance for the church nor was it mandated to be an important program of the PCC.
28. Many church leaders and theological educators (who are predominantly men) in the Pacific churches will strongly disagree with this statement. While it can not be denied that men (very few, if any at all in the Pacific) also suffer domestic violence, statistics reveal that the majority of domestic related violence are against women and children. The writer believes that the Pacific folk, especially the churches, are slowly in the process of coming out of denying that there is such a major problem. It may take several more years before the church is confident to announce that violence is a problem in the / and for the church. This work therefore focuses only on identifying violence as a serious problem especially for women and children. It also poses the problem of violence, as a challenge for the South Pacific Association of Theological Schools (SPATS) to look at, especially the role theological education plays in this problem as well as other social issues
29. The "Violence against Women" workshop training for men begins at the Naviti Resort on Sunday. In an earlier meeting members of the taskforce on eliminating violence against women discussed strategies to involve men from all levels of of society. Permanent secretary for Justice Alipate Qetaki said the aim of the project which includes the training of male trainers on November 18, is the formulation of a bill on violence against women. Seinimil Lewa "Men discuss the problems of Women," in *The Fiji Times*, Friday, November 15, 2002, pp. 5.
30. Civil societies in the Pacific have been very active in addressing social issue that are detrimental to the lives of the Pacific people. Many have been the prophetic voice that is expected of the church.
31. The majority of the Pacific men and women that I asked responded that the woman was solely created as the helper to the man. And that the Bible clearly states that the husband is the head of the family therefore, she is to obey and do as he wishes.
32. The questionnaire form is appended as Appendix 1
33. PTC is owned by 17 member churches from 11 Pacific Island nations. It is an inter-denominational institute with an international faculty and an ecumenical atmosphere.
34. The six (three women and three men) are member of five different denominations. And their age varies from early 50s to early 70s.

APPENDIX

Bone of my Bones and Flesh of my Flesh... out of man this one is taken.

QUESTIONNAIRE FORM

1. In your church's standard wedding ceremony, are husbands and wives viewed exactly the same, or are there any differences - eg., does the wife promise to 'obey' the husband but not vice-versa; does the liturgy refer to 'man and wife' rather than 'husband and wife'?

2. How have these customs influenced what has been considered to be the acceptable relationship between husbands and wives?

3. What has been your church's traditional teaching in general regarding the relative status and duties of husbands and wives/men and women?

4. What scriptural and theological arguments have been used to back up this teaching?

6. What is your understanding of Adam's statement in Genesis 2:23 - "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh: this one shall be called Woman, for out of Man this one is taken"?

7. How has your church interpreted the above passage traditionally, in terms of the common portrayal of women as being derived from and therefore inferior to men?

8. Do you see any connections between the traditional view of wives as being derived from and subservient to their husbands and the sanctioning of violence against women? Explain:

9. What overall changes are needed in your church's teaching and practice regarding the status of women?

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AN OVERVIEW OF THE 3RD CONGRESS OF WOCATI

Kathleen Williams
ANZATS

WOCATI exists because of the realisation that theological education, while it must always be local if it is to be relevant to the people it is meant to serve, can no longer avoid also being global. This is so, at least in part, because it «is carried out in a world which is increasingly being made aware of its interdependence and religious pluralism.» (Preamble to the statement of WOCATI Purposes.) Accordingly, this global network is meant to serve, support, and enhance theological education through the commitment of its member associations to closer cooperation at local, regional, national, and international levels. The General Assembly, held at four-yearly intervals, provides a particular opportunity for member associations to give practical expression to their commitment to international cooperation.

OPENING WORSHIP

The Opening Worship was pure gift, beginning with the gift of flowers and a carry bag made by the students for each participant, at the inspiration of Sientje Merentek. The worship focussed the participants on the One in whose name they were gathered, doing so in a way that honoured the many cultures and languages represented, and using the beauty and grace of Thai dance and music to offer praise in body, mind and spirit. It was the students of McGilvary Faculty of Theology of Payap University who made this possible, lead and supported - and enthused! - by Salvador (Buddy) Martinez, faculty member and coordinator of the local organising committee for the Assembly.

OPEN FORUM I

The business of the Assembly got off to a stimulating start with the presentation of the first paper, «Theological Education in the Post Modern Era», by Msgr. Jeremiah McCarthy from ATS (and Pittsburgh, PA, U.S.A.), and a thought-provoking Response from Dr. Hyacinth I. Boothe from CATS (and Jamaica). In the discussion it was recognised that both the contributions made and the problems raised by the post-modern era have implications for theological education. Thus, issues of power have surfaced—how are they to be integrated? Post-colonialism cannot be separated from the issue of identity: non-western peoples have tended to internalise the west's understanding of their identity—how are non-western people to deal with this? The real story has not always been told - how can theology validly revisit history?

Given the rationalism and the fragmentation so often seen as associated with modernity and the post-modern era, three ways of making vital connections through theological education were put forward:

Keep thinking, certainly, but remember that there is much more to the human person than the ability to think. Recognising and welcoming feelings, and relating the doing of theology to the local cultural experiences and practices can allow for a dynamic, integrated approach to doing theology.

Keep asking questions, so the conversation can continue.

Practice hospitality, the open-heartedness that welcomes the stranger—the new person, the new idea, the new possibility—and in so doing help ourselves to understand and welcome differences, and train young theologians accordingly. Hospitality is seen as a uniquely potent way of making connections in a fragmented world.

OPEN FORUM II

The discussion on the second paper, «*Christianity and Other Faiths*», presented by Dr. Daniel Thiagarajah (Hong Kong), and responded by Prof. Vladimir Federov (WCC and St. Petersburg, Russia), was passionate, perhaps indicative of the extent to which the issues raised by the topic are of such crucial importance in the contemporary world.

There were many suggestions made of ways in which theological education might honour the religious pluralism that pertains, welcome the differences, and at the same time speak for Christianity with conviction and commitment.

Suggestions included the following:

- A preliminary realisation was that one's capacity to recognise and to honour the many differences within the Christian communion will significantly affect relations with other faiths. It is suggested that Christian and other faiths can help clarify each other. The challenge then is to develop a theological curriculum that will take this mutual clarification and connection into account.
- Language matters, so we could speak of 'neighbouring', rather than 'other' religions.
- Relationship is integral to dialogue between religions. Accordingly, theology needs to develop a stronger pneumatological, and thus trinitarian, approach to the question of religious pluralism.
- The overarching topic in relation to inter-faith dialogue is missiology, and central to missiological debates is the question «What is salvation?» This raises the question of the need to distinguish clearly between evangelisation and missiology.
- The only future is ecumenical. Pluralism must therefore be provided in the theological curriculum; students will benefit from this.
- There is no room for triumphalism. Again it is suggested that the way to avoid this in approaching inter-faith is to develop a holistic trinitarian theology.

And a question remains: how to bridge the gap between the university and the local parish/pastor? How make theology relevant to the life of the local church?

OPEN FORUM III

In the Open Forum which followed the third paper, «*Mission and Social Dimensions of Theological Education*», presented by Prof. Josue Fonseca (ASIT and Chile), and responded by Dr. Edison Kalengyo (ATIEA and Uganda), some issues already raised emerged again. The following suggestions were made for theological education:

There is a need to clarify what 'mission' is, and it may help to clarify what it is by saying clearly what it is not. Accordingly,

We need to be careful not to equate 'mission' with 'church', or to confine it to the church. The relation between the two? 'Mission' is God's; the 'church' is the instrument, not the goal; only the Kingdom of God is the goal!

'Mission' does not 'belong to' any particular tradition. Church-centred thinking makes us competitors; Christ-centred thinking makes us partners. Hence, 'mission' is ecumenical.

Proselytism is not mission.

There is a need to critique what could be termed a 'monastic', 'content-filled' model of theological education, because of the danger that the experience of the local churches be lost. The inherited western model of theology does not allow the third-world theologian to address social issues. The challenge is to find better models for theologically educating ministers in a socially authentic way. (It was noted that the church is often well behind the state in addressing social issues!)

The theological curriculum must meet the challenge of making links between spirituality and liberation.

What is 'sinful'? Theology has the task of relating an understanding of what is sinful in the world to the role of the church in 'reconciliation'. Again, the challenge is for relevance in curriculum.

OPEN FORUM IV

The final paper of the Assembly by Prof. Joan Tofaeono (from SPATS and Fiji) addressed a particularly harrowing and sensitive topic, «*Violence Against Women*». The response was made by Dr. Lee Swee Hong (from the East Asia School of Theology, Singapore).

Small group discussion preceded the Open Forum. The attention of the Assembly had been drawn to the way in which the Bible has so often been invoked

in support of the violent treatment of women. Hence, members were asked to consider relevant biblical passages for and against violence, to think about how they have been interpreted/ taught, and to consider possible ways forward. Following are some of the suggestions made for theological education:

Confessional differences must be recognised.

Given that patriarchal interpretation of the Bible has sanctioned violence against women, there is need to allow a richer understanding of the Canon to inform our interpretation. This calls for commitment to a sound and critical reading of Scripture. There are some texts that must be critiqued.

Theological education has the challenge, which must be met, of considering together the theological legacies of such concepts as suffering, forgiveness, justice.

If the Bible is the frame of reference that informs, e.g., our theological doctrines, there is need to understand what the Bible really says, to understand its dynamics, and to unveil the violence that is to be overcome.

On the understanding that all are capable of it, bring domestic violence to the attention of our students as a theological issue.

Preventive measures are most desirable, and so the inclusion in theological colleges of courses in areas such as counselling, and conflict resolution is recommended.

CULTURAL EXPOSURE

After so much hard work, a day of exposure to the something of the riches of Thai culture was most welcome. And what a day of riches it was! It began with a visit to the elephants, feeding them bananas, watching them take a bath, and then riding them through the forest. For people who usually work at a fast rate, it was a stilling, reflective experience to be carried at such a slow and measured pace for well over an hour. In great contrast to the elephants was the delicate beauty of the orchid farm. Then at the Wat Phra That Doi Suthep the Assembly listened to Dr. John Butt's fascinating and detailed presentation of the life of the Buddha, as illustrated in the paintings that surround the inner courtyard of the monastery. From there the switch was to the jade factory where the beautiful setting of the jewels proved irresistible to many—lots of baht left there!

Finally, a typically northern Thai dinner was enjoyed, followed by the delights of being entertained by the traditional Thai dancing. It was then a case of 'returning home tired but happy'.

BUSINESS

On the final day the Assembly considered possible ways of moving WOCATI forward and furthering the implementation of its aims which are as relevant now as they were in the late eighties, when WOCATI was established. Thanks were expressed

- to the much depleted executive committee who with big and generous hearts had taken on the organisation of the Chiang Mai Assembly—Zenaida Lumba (President); Leonor Rojas (Treasurer); and Petros Vassiliadis.
- to the local committee, graciously and unstintingly headed by Buddy Martinez, who had given the executive much appreciated support;
- to many others who had contributed significantly, including Loretta Groff for organising the WOCATI website, and to Chris Meinzer, the chief financial officer of ATS, whose generously made available his considerable administrative and financial skills.

The task of promoting and developing WOCATI for the next four years is now in the hands of the new Executive Committee, duly elected according to the WOCATI constitution (the nomination committee being Yeow Choo Lak, chair, Josué Fonseca, and Hyacinth Boothe) and consisting of:

Petros Vassiliadis (President), from COTS and Eastern Europe, Kang Nam Soon (Vice President), from PTCA and Asia, Bill Hopkinson (Secretary/Treasurer), from ACATE and Western Europe, Tevita Banivanua, from SPATS and the Pacific, Hyacinth Boothe, from CATS and the Caribbean, Edison Kalengyo, from ATIEA and Africa, Leonor Rojas, from ASIT and Latin America, and Kathleen Williams from ANZATS and Australia-New Zealand.

**MINUTES OF THE BUSINESS SESSION
OF THE 2002 WOCATI ASSEMBLY
(12th December 2002)**

On the final day the Assembly moved to its business session. The session was chaired by Zenaida Lumba (President), assisted by Leonor Rojas (Treasurer), whereas Petros Vassiliadis was asked to take minutes.

First, the President invited Chris Meinzer, the chief financial officer of ATS, to present the treasurer's report. In the ensuing discussion it was suggested (C. Mostert, ANZATS) that in future assemblies it would be more appropriate and helpful for the delegates to have access: (a) to all the minutes of the previous Executive Committee meeting, and (b) more detailed financial sheets. At the end the treasurer's report was unanimously received with appreciation. Thanks were expressed: (a) to the much depleted executive committee who with big and generous hearts had taken on the organisation of the Chiang Mai Assembly (Zenaida Lumba, President, Leonor Rojas, Treasurer, and Petros Vassiliadis); (b) to the local committee, graciously and unstintingly headed by Buddy Martinez, who had given the executive much appreciated support; (c) to many others who had contributed significantly, including Loretta Groff for organising the WOCATI website, and to Chris Meinzer, the chief financial officer of ATS, who generously made available his considerable administrative and financial skills.

Then, the floor was opened to suggest possible ways of moving WOCATI forward and furthering the implementation of its aims which are as relevant now as they were in the late eighties, when WOCATI was established. The following comments were submitted:

Hopkinson (ACATE): WOCATI needs a new mechanism for the future. Yes to a global network, but our associations need something more exciting. Unless a new ground-breaking activity takes place, I doubt whether WOCATI can bring back ACATE.

Fosenca (ASIT): Yes to the continuation of WOCATI in its present form. However, more information for the individual associations is needed, and a productive interaction between them is essential. Consider the possibility of applying the model of tithing to WOCATI, i.e. 1% of the income of ATS and all the rest associations.

Banivanua (SPATS): Yes to the continuation of WOCATI, but we should also consider other events in addition to a Congress every 4 and sometimes 6 years.

Nam Soon (PTCA): WOCATI must be developed into a new entity with a new philosophy, beyond an umbrella of the existing associations.

Boothe (CATS): I am in favor of the continuation of WOCATI, but we need to improve it, to make it more effective, perhaps with the participation of students in addition to executive committee meetings.

Vassiliadis (COCTS): WOCATI is valuable not simply as a network of associations, or as a super-association, but as an ecumenical, worldwide mechanism to introduce both theological and educational ideas, and to help through

regular interaction all theological institutions. To this end, WOCATI can perhaps undertake the websites of those associations that do not have one.

McCarthy (ATS): Cautioned the assembly about WOCATI's capability. We must be pragmatic on what we can do together.

Lo (ATESEA): He underlined the high level of the papers and the discussion, as well as the spirit of friendship developed in the Congress. He added, however, that such conferences should focus more on «education», i.e. on the models of teaching.

Zakaria (PERSETIA): Suggested more sharing of experiences, programs etc.

Larcher (guest from Europe): Expressed his gratefulness for the invitation, promised the formation of an all-European academic association joining WOCATI, and suggested a more universal outlook of WOCATI, and more representational (Catholic etc.).

Mostert (ANZATS) Moved for the continuation of WOCATI. Vassiliadis seconded the motion.

THE MOTION WAS ACCEPTED UNANIMOUSLY

Hopkinson, then, suggested a new structure, arguing that WOCATI's future lies on ground-breaking consultations, independently sponsored. WOCATI will survive from what it will offer! He offered himself to the web support.

Taking into account the above unanimous support a nomination committee was set up consisting of Yeow Choo Lak (chairman, former President of WOCATI), Josué Fonseca, and Hyacinth Boothe. During the process of the election some problems with the too complicated constitution and the By-Laws were noted, and a suggestion was made to make them simpler.

At the end, a slate with the new executive committee was proposed to the assembly, which was voted unanimously. The new Executive Committee, duly elected according to the WOCATI Constitution and the By-Laws, with the task of promoting and developing WOCATI for the next four years is the following:

Petros Vassiliadis (President), from COTS and Eastern Europe,
 Kang Nam Soon (Vice President), from PTCA and Asia,
 Bill Hopkinson (Secretary/Treasurer), from ACATE and Western Europe,
 Tevita Banivanua, from SPATS and the Pacific,
 Hyacinth Boothe, from CATS and the Caribbean,
 Edison Kalengyo, from ATIEA and Africa,
 Leonor Rojas, from ASIT and Latin America, and
 Kathleen Williams from ANZATS and Australia-New Zealand.

PETROS VASSILIADIS'
PRESIDENCY

**MINUTES OF THE FIRST MEETING
OF 2002 WOCATI EXECUTIVE
(12th December 2002)**

Present: Tevita Banivanua, Hyacinth Boothe, Bill Hopkinson (Secretary), Edison Kalengyo, Kan Nam Soon (Vice President), Leonor Rojas, Petros Vasiliadis (President). Chris Meinzer attended part of the meeting.

Apologies: Kathleen Williams.

Prayer: Edison Kalengyo was asked by the President to start the meeting with prayer.

Urgent matters/decisions:

Addresses and emails of the newly elected Executive Committee were checked (appended).

A decision was made to ask Daniel Aleshire, Director of ATS, to continue as consultant to the Executive Committee. Also to send letters of gratitude to Buddy Martinez, Dr. John Butt, and the ATS for its assistance in various forms.

The committee defined its task for the next four years broadly as to find a way forward for WOCATI, that is, promotion, redevelopment etc. It considered and endorsed section 8.3 of the constitution as the role of the executive committee.

Other priorities mentioned were:

- how to get member organisations online, and linked from www.wocati.org
- obtaining regular reports from and interchange with member organisations
- keeping wocati records up to date
- efficient collection of wocati fees

The committee decided to schedule its work in the following way:

a. December 2002 - May 2003: Email discussion and preparation of papers to expedite major meeting in June.

b. June 2003 (last week) 48 hour meeting over 3 days. (Consultation with travel agent about which venue on the basis of which is the cheapest from the locations of the exec committee). Preference for accommodation is at a residential facility of a member organisation, represented in the committee. This meeting will be the decisive meeting of the four years setting up the work for the remaining time, making decisions about next congress, and so on.

c. July 2003 onwards. The executive committee has a task to do, and gets on with it.

Regularisation of minutes and publicity.

a. Kathleen William is producing a report of the Congress. This will be the journalistic account of the conference which can be available to member organisations, and which will be on www.wocati.org. ATS are taking steps to provide pictures which will be available on the website.

b. Petros Vassiliadis (in consultation with the out-going President, Dr. Zenny Lumba) is responsible for the minutes of the Business Meeting at the Congress.

c. Secretary is responsible for the minutes and records of the Executive Committee. The minutes of the executive committee will not normally be made available to member organisations or published on the web, because of the possibility of reserved business. However, the Secretary will produce a yearly report which can be published on the website and which will summarise the work of the executive committee.

Evaluation of Congress

Thanks were expressed to Chris Meinzer and Loretta Groff for their work, especially to Buddy Martinez and the local committee. It was recognised that with the depletion of the executive committee they had taken an especially large role in making the congress happen, and the executive committee owed them a debt of gratitude. Some of the comments made were: Travel arrangements were good; Too much theology with little connection to education; Issues were appropriate, but not always sufficiently connected or followed through; Issues didn't lead to conclusions; Not focused enough on theological education; Not enough time devoted to discussion; Need better briefing for presenters; Need members to engage with issues more; Lacked a process which allows us to get to a list of conclusions for theological education; Felt too passive.

The meeting in June to review whether an assistant secretary/treasurer is needed in the light of experience.

APPENDIX (Executive Committee addresses and emails):

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pv@theo.auth.gr

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Bill Hopkinson, 3 Goldings Court, Ashford, Kent TN24 9JR UK whhopkinson@f2s.com

Tevita Banivanua, 30 Gardiner Road, P.O. Box 2426 Govt Bldgs, Suva, FIJI
spatsfi@connect.com.fj

Hyacinth Booth, United Theological College, P.O. Box 136, 5 Golding Ave., Kingston, JAMAICA unitheol@cwjamaica.com

Edison Kalengyo, Uganda Christian University, P.O. Box 4, Mukono UGANDA emkalengyo@yahoo.co.uk

Leonor Rojas, De la Victoria 2974, Asuncion (B San Pablo) PARAGUAY le-

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Daniel Aleshire, 10 Summit Park Drive, Pittsburgh, PA 15275

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MINUTES OF THE 2003 WOCATI EXECUTIVE
(8-10 December 2003, Newman College, Melbourne, Australia)

At the gracious invitation of ANZATS the Executive Committee met at Newman College, Melbourne, Australia, over three days (8-10 December 2003), according to the annotated agenda (WOCATI-EC 03 Doc. 2) and the time table (WOCATI-EC 03 Doc. 3).

Present were all Executive Committee Members, except Leonor Rohas and Daniel Aleshire (apologies).

The Executive Committee members were guests of ANZATS for dinner, with other invited guests representing theological colleges and departments of universities not currently members of ANZATS.

The Executive Committee also visited the member colleges of two of the four Associated Teaching Institutions of Melbourne College of Divinity, discussing with them a possible theme for the next WOCATI conference, and also experiencing the depth of ecumenical cooperation that exists within and across the diverse theological colleges that constitute MCD.

At the beginning a number of papers prepared by the President and the Secretary/Treasurer were distributed (WOCATI-EC 03 Doc. 1). During the meeting a paper on Consensus Decision Making was tabled by Petros Vassiliadis (WOCATI-EC 03 Doc. 11). It was adopted unanimously as the method by which the WOCATI Executive Committee would make decisions. Partly reflecting this, the discussions of the executive tended to be iterative, raising issues in one session, and making decisions in another. For the sake of clarity these minutes group discussion and decisions in subjects rather than historical order.

1. The Future of WOCATI

There is no WOCATI without its member organisations. The Executive Committee realized that in the light of Congress 2002 in Chiang Mai, in this four year term WOCATI needs to be relevant to its constituent members, and to show that it is relevant.

It was observed that few members, except the executive know much about WOCATI. At one time a Newsletter helped to inform. That is labour intensive and costly. A journal helps to share and develop quality.

The Executive Committee propose to use the web as a prime means of communication. Specific proposals are in the section on the web and communication.

WOCATI is seen not just as providing a network for communication, but guiding, for example, in breaking out into doing theology. It was suggested that WOCATI should not be neutral but linked to 'causes' for the development of theological education, driven by theology and the gospel, bridging conservative and progressive. During the first two sessions short presentations by Kang Nam Soon

(appended) and Hyacinth Boothe (appended) were made, provoking interesting discussion.

2. Financial Future

Petros Vassiliadis shared information about possible funding of WOCATI initiatives by Evangelisches Missionwerk in Deutschland (EMW). Dr. Lothar Engel has indicated that support of ecumenical networking in the field of theological education is part of EMW's mandate. Initiative which could be considered are the meetings of WOCATI.

Petros Vassiliadis put forward the idea of a mid-term symposium which might be funded by EMW, mainly because its theme is within EMW's primary concerns:

Proposed date March 2005 with EMW (and others?) as sponsors

Theme: «The Mission of the Church and the role of Theological Education in it»; to be refined in the light of further discussions; possibly relating to reconciliation and healing.

Petros Vassiliadis to write up a proposal for EMW.

It **was resolved** that a Financial Development Committee (FDC) be set up, in order to explore and make application to other agencies to secure the financial future of WOCATI:

ETE to be approached regarding finance for WOCATI

ATS to be asked to continue their support of \$5000 a year

Subscriptions from member organisations to be more active sought in the light of WOCATI developing service for member organisations.

Other bodies/foundations need progress reports on ways in which their funding has been used.

CWM may be interested in funding work linking mission and theological education

A universal theme emerged in the executive committee of an issue for the next four years: «Bringing together Theological Education and the Church». This may challenge the academy to focus on the mission needs of the Church.

The FDC consists of Edison Kalengyo, Tevita Banivanua, Petros Vassiliadis (chair)

Explore with ATS how the Executive Committee expenses can be most readily reimbursed, especially low value local expenses. Value in having an organisation with long term stability and organisation to hold funds, but an active treasurer can probably work with such an organisation.

Actions

1. Petros Vassiliadis to communicate with Dan Aleshire immediately.
2. Bill Hopkinson to consult with Dan Aleshire, Chris Meinzer, in Pittsburgh if necessary, before the end of February 2004 to determine appropriate working arrangements.
3. Clarify relationship of ATS and WOCATI. Report required by next Executive Committee.

3. WOCATI Congress 2006/7

Suggested locations: Vancouver, Greece (or Europe in general), Caribbean, Africa. Caribbean was identified as the preferred location.

Finance: There are insufficient reserves for WOCATI to pay for all delegates as in 2002. Either requires a sponsor, or that delegates pay a proportion of the cost.

Theme: To be decided in 2004 when the constituency has been consulted. A general theme which has commended itself in Melbourne is «Relationship between the Church's Mission and Theological Education»

Constituency: Exclusively delegates from member organisations, or open? Decision not taken.

Process: Participants should be involved with the congress, and engage in a process leading up to the Congress. Constituency to be consulted about the shape and purpose of the Congress at the proposed mid-term congress. The Congress should have an outcome which has been approved by the constituency.

Date: Target date end of 2006

It **was resolved** that a Congress Planning Committee (CPC) be set up, consisting of Petros Vassiliadis, chair, Hyacinth Boothe, Bill Hopkinson.

4. Constitutional Revision

1. Legality of WOCATI as an entity to be explored. The Committee made a formal resolution that it wished to register as a legal entity and appends its constitution as its aims to this resolution.

2. New arrangements for elections. Look for more transparency, and the ability of the Congress to nominate.

3. Preamble to constitution does not contain the word «Christian». A change may be appropriate after a wide consultation with all WOCATI member Associations.

4. It may be appropriate to rescind B4.1.3.

5. B4.1.4 proved difficult to execute during the previous executive when there were many resignations. It may be appropriate to revise.

It **was resolved** that a Constitutional Change Committee (CCC) be set up, consisting of Tevita Banivanua, chair, Kathleen Williams, Leonor Rojas) to bring to 2004 Executive Committee recommendations which will be referred to member Associations during 2004/5.

5. Communication and Website

1. Wish to take over the collection of subscriptions as part of a communication stream between WOCATI executive and member associations.

2. Explore with ATS how the Executive Committee can take responsibility or share responsibility for developing the www.wocati.org website, as this is seen as central in providing services for member organisations which in turn helps to justify the membership fee of WOCATI.

3. The Executive Committee resolved to set up a Web and Communication Committee (WCC, consisting of Bill Hopkinson, chair, Nam Soon Kang, Kathleen Williams) given a remit

4. It was also resolved that a sum not more than £1500 per year be allocated to WCC for not longer than the term of the Executive, and subject to review at each Executive Committee, to make changes in the light of 2 and 3 above, and bring a report to the next Executive Committee.,

5. Link websites, be more proactive in providing website area for members without a website, and reporting from the regions

6. It was resolved that the Business Committee minutes from Congress 2002 to be put on web (WOCATI-EC 03 Doc 5).

7. It was resolved that the Executive Committee minutes from post-Congress 2002 to be put on web (WOCATI-EC 03 Doc.4).

8. It was resolved that the Executive Committee minutes from Melbourne 2003 to be put on the web (WOCATI-EC 03 Doc. 10)

9. In principle the minutes of the Executive Committee shall be published, unless there is reserved business.

10. The WCC to produce a new brochure in English which would be available on the web as a pdf document, and be available in limited quantities in paper.

11. We identified that we do not know what member organisations require of WOCATI, and an initial aspect of communication will be consulting about what member organisations need from WOCATI.

12. We recognise that 'high level dialogue' is desirable communication wh-

ich will lead to raising the quality of the work of member organisations

13. We recognise that there is not always a medium for hearing African voices in theological education

14. We recognise that there are calls for a body for world-wide accreditation. The initial view of the executive was that WOCATI could encourage dialogue, but did not take a view on the desirability of a body for world-wide accreditation.

15. Some communication issues: a. Flow of information from one part of the world to another, such as sharing new methods of teaching. b. Reflection about leaving western modes behind. c. Modes of theological education. d. Deepening and sharing the vision of theological education, envisioning theology as national/regional/local. e. Sharing information about curriculum development, breakdown of disciplines. f. Extending and renewing ideas of theological education, such as, the doing of justice.

6. Committees

Financial Development Committee (FDC): Edison Kalengyo, Tevita Banivanua, Petros Vassiliadis (chair)

Web and Communication Committee (WCC): Nam Soon Kang, Kathleen Williams, Bill Hopkinson (chair)

Congress Planning Committee (CPC): Hyancinth Boothe, Bill Hopkinson, Petros Vassiliadis (chair)

Constitutional Change Committee (CCC): Leonor Rojas, Kathleen Williams, Tevita Banivanua (chair)

7. Next Executive Meetings

1. It was decided that the 2004 Executive Committee be met in Fiji. Proposed dates, within 20 to 25th July 2004. EMW may be invited as a second consultant if we have funds from them, or sponsorship for the proposed mid-term congress.

2. 2005 in Germany or Africa, if Caribbean is not chosen for the 2006 Congress.

3. 2006 decision to be made.

CONSENSUS DECISION-MAKING IN WOCATI

When the ecumenical organizations were founded the majority of their members were located in Europe and North America, or influenced, like WOCATI, by the Western style governance. The procedures for decision-making were, not unnaturally, based on the procedures customarily used in secular bodies, such as parliaments, in those continents. The problem with this decision-making procedure is its adversarial nature. Proposals are debated «for and against». In some cultures this adversarial approach, which can even be confrontational, is something to be avoided. It is arguable whether WOCATI, serving the mission of the Church through theological education, i.e. the Body of Christ, and seeking the mind of Christ as the early Christians (cf. «it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us...» Acts 15:28 and seeking to «understand what the will of the Lord is» Eph.5:17), should continue using secular procedures.

Procedures that allow more room for consultation, exploration, questioning and prayerful reflection, can more better promote the purposes of the WOCATI, whereas the traditional methods are often rigid, not always «effective through love» (Galatians 5:6). This is not to say that the WOCATI should attempt to do without rules: on the contrary, rules that are fair, readily understood and workable are essential. The question is the style, content and application of such rules.

In I Corinthians 12:12-27 St Paul speaks of parts of the body needing each other. A fully functioning body integrates the abilities and contributions of all the members. So it should be in WOCATI. A set of procedures which makes the best possible use of the abilities, the history, the experience, the commitment and the spiritual tradition of its members.

If changes are made, they should be formulated after wide consultation. And once introduced, they may still be modified in the light of further experience. The Orthodox principle of *oikonomia* would suggest that the ecumenical bodies can accommodate change and development as the issues and circumstances change. To respect the *oikonomia* is to be open to various expressions of faith and life while remaining true to the «faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints» (Jude 3). The experience of all traditions represented in WOCATI is valuable and should be utilised, as and where practical, in the common life, the functioning the programmes and the committees of WOCATI.

The consensus method is a means of arriving at decisions without voting. It is more conciliar than parliamentary, and more inclusive than adversarial. Some churches (e.g. the Uniting Church in Australia, the Religious Society of Friends, the Orthodox etc.) use similar procedures. Of course, the experience of these churches and their particular model cannot be simply transferred to WOCATI: adaptations should take place.

To start with, the consensus is not the same as unanimity. For example, a minority may agree to let a resolution to go forward, if the majority (but not the

minority) is convinced, if and only when the minority accepts that the it represents the general «mind of the meeting». This becomes possible when a minority feels that its concerns have been heard, understood and respected.

It is possible, too, to include, within the WOCATI rules and even , a provision that some matters will be decided by majority vote, either a simple majority or a greater number. In other words, consensus would be the normal procedure but not the invariable procedure. At the beginning of a session, the moderator would indicate clearly the procedures that operate in that session. The rules would determine those items of business which will be determined by vote.

The consensus procedure works as follows: a proposal, not always in complete or final form, is put forward, following which open discussion rather than «debate» begins. The discussion may include questions. Members of the committee(s) may speak more than once. It is up to the moderator to ensure that all who wish to speak can do so and that no individual or small group dominates the discussion to the exclusion of others. It is important that all relevant views are brought forward at this exploratory stage. As discussion continues, anyone may propose a change to the proposal without having to move an amendment. The moderator should test the response of the meeting to any such idea or modification by calling for an expression of opinion (sometimes called a «straw vote»). As the proposal continues to be discussed, the moderator needs to sense when the meeting is close to agreement. She or he may need to allow extra time for various views to be expressed, but at an appropriate time the moderator should ask the meeting: «Are we agreed on this matter?» Or (similarly): «How many of you could accept this proposal in its current form?» This frequent testing of the mind of the meeting is central to the development of a consensus.

A consensus is reached, then, when any one of the following occurs: (a) all are in agreement (unanimity); (b) most are in agreement and those who disagree are content that the discussion has been both full and fair and that the proposal expresses the general «mind of the meeting;» the minority therefore gives consent; (c) the meeting acknowledges that there are various opinions, and it is agreed that these be recorded in the body of the proposal (not just in the Minutes); (d) it is agreed that the matter be postponed; (e) it is agreed that no decision can be reached.

Therefore, consensus procedures allow any person, to have her or his objections to any proposal addressed and satisfied prior to the adoption of the proposal. This implies that any one can stop proposal from passing, or resolutions to be recorded, until they are satisfied that their concerns have been fully addressed. In rare situations, if the consensus procedures have been tried and have not succeeded, a mechanism will be needed to remove the blockage. The By-Laws should specify how this emergency provision operates, ensuring that the emer-

gency provision does not weaken the consensus procedures themselves. In all cases in which consensus proves elusive, it is incumbent on those with concerns to work closely with those who initiated any item of business so as to find creative ways of moving forward.

It is advisable, in an extended meeting, to specify the type of procedure for each particular session, e.g. a «voting» session; a «consensus» discussion; an «information» session. Such clear delineation may help members of all WOCATI bodies, but if the procedure has to change during a session, this should be done with care and with full explanation. If a complex or contentious issue is to be dealt with, prior notice is important. Prior to the actual discussion, i.e. at an earlier session, it can be helpful to give a «preview» of the issue so as to help members in their discussion at a later time.

The above principles may need to be included into our Constitution and By-Laws. The keeping of minutes is an important task. The meeting needs to understand what it is agreeing to, so the text of all decisions should be read and adopted, at least in the following meeting. Major contributions to any discussion should also be recorded and this should include a summary of differing viewpoints.

The principles described above are an attempt to implement the accepted ecumenical aim of enabling all representatives to be heard within a committed fellowship which accepts differences of theology, culture and ecclesial tradition. Minorities may express their mind on any issue, and should, in consensus procedures, be allowed more than one attempt, if needed, to explain the basis of their views.

All churches and Associations of Theological Institutions believe in the centrality of Holy Scripture in their life and doctrine. A significant image of the church in the New Testament is the image of the Body of Christ, diverse and yet one. In the life of WOCATI, with its fundamental aim of promoting the unity of all Christians, and with the assumption that «theological education is a worldwide enterprise fundamental to the mission of the church» (Preamble of the Constitution), there must be respect for diversity and difference. The By Laws and procedures which govern the working of the WOCATI should enshrine this respect. While theologies may differ considerably, the life of WOCATI should as far as possible be a mirror of the essential nature of the Church. The consensus procedures offer an opportunity for WOCATI to put into practice a model of unity, a respect for diversity and the making of decisions in a way that is careful, flexible, frank and unifying.

**NOTES OF THE 2004 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
OF WOCATI,
(20th to 24th July 2004 in Suva, Fiji)**

Opening worship led by Tevita Banivanua, and gave a background to the South Pacific and SPATS

Issues from the regions:

Are WOCATI and WCC connected?

Is there live and direct contact with WOCATI?

Can conferences be advertised through WOCATI?

Can WOCATI be culturally relevant

Can WOCATI support the worldwide acceptance of accreditation?

Waiting to see what WOCATI can deliver

Need a leaflet about WOCATI

Finance

Recommend setting up a drafting committee for approaches to possible sponsors. A letter of approach is required

EMW will approach the treasurer for financial plan.

Rev Roderick Hewitt, Council for World Mission to be approached, HQ in London

Daniel Ayleshire standing by to advise with approaches to US funding agencies.

Petros to write to Lothar

Conference Planning

University of Thessaloniki is willing to host an event for 20 people as a seminar mini/consultation in 2005. This proposal follows the pattern for a previous congress

The proposal is that this seminar/symposium develops the working papers for the next congress. In this way it will shape to the congress and its process. Ongoing projects will be defined by the symposium. Sponsors and significant people can make a defining contribution will be invited to the seminar which prepares the working documents for 2006/7. A meeting of the executive committee will be linked to the seminar. The dates discussed range from June to September 2005. The planning group for this symposium is Hyacinth Boothe, Petros Vassiliadis and Bill Hopkinson working by email.

It was proposed to limit the cost of the seminar to around \$20,000

The final congress is proposed for Jamaica, or possibly Manilla. Hyacinth Boothe and Tevita Banivanua to explore the comparative costs for 48 people all inclusive with conference facilities for 5/6 days at the end of 2006 or beginning of 2007. The planning group is Hyacinth Boothe, Petros Vassiliadis and Bill Hopkinson.

It is proposed to have an executive committee meeting in April 2006 for congress planning.

Constitution

WOCATI needs to incorporate itself in some way so that it is a defined body which can receive funds from sponsors. It is proposed to ask advice from EMW about the most appropriate place and manner for achieving this.

It was hoped that until necessity required it, ATS would continue to hold WOCATI funds.

Website and Communications

The website is currently being redeveloped, though there have been some delays.

The new website will have some interactive features, such as, a membership forum, interest groups, membership details.

It was recognised that WOCATI has a substantial task in reconnecting with its associations.

A WOCATI leaflet is required. This will be made available on the website for downloading and printing, and will also be printed and made available to associations without internet facilities. The leaflet would have a short history of WOCATI, and its new vision and direction. Some elements of the new vision were floated in the ideas session

Ideas Session

WOCATI is no longer a paid congress

We are accountable to our associations, are we also accountable to a wider group?

Theological Education inspiring and enhancing mission to the Church

Those in traditional theological education supporting each other

Conversation has gone on to mission as part of the dialogue

Theologians cooperating to be at the service of the Church, not to take it over, nor to be taken over by it.

Theological Education should direct its efforts in three ways, challenging and inspiring 1. to Church structures; 2. to society at large; 3. to the Academy

Theologians have a responsibility to clarify what mission is.

The notion of the mission of the Church can be interpreted in many ways; theological education is more than the Church

Mission of the Church is not limited to the Church, it goes to many other areas.

The prophetic voice of God's Mission to the world.

WOCATI is a network – should we limit ourselves to network functions?
Should we promote relations between member organizations

WOCATI is the only global organization that represents the future of theological education worldwide. We can critique theological education worldwide

Challenge inflexible confessional understanding of the Church. No longer simply priestly formation.

Try to fortify existing beliefs

WOCATI can be constantly challenging in receiving new ideas

Need to revise vision constantly

The major traditions from which we have come are often remote from the people, need to include people as well as leaders

Theological institutions round the world feel that something is going wrong, but struggle to see how to adapt their curriculum

Support each other in embracing a changed world situation

Inclusivity of our institution is important

Emphasise how unique we are, different to other institutions

Emphasise our contextuality, more mission-orientated

In previous times in WOCATI contextuality was on a high, and also reaffirmed respect for excellence in Theological Education. Now need to move from protecting confessional identity to a quest for a gospel orientated education.

Reaffirm commitment to excellence, neither irrelevant nor superstitious

Our constitution is wider than ETE. ETE wants to draw closer to WOCATI, and WCC wants us to cooperate. We have to work closely with them

We can focus on theology in a changing world

Not slipping towards superstition

What is the future of the Church given violence and pluralism?

Should we dispense with lay and priest?

Change has to embrace Pentecostal and Orthodox

We may not agree with each other

What change do we want to achieve in the next 5 years?

What is still missing is to find a way to communicate this so that we can have feedback and make WOCATI role an ongoing process and not just an event every four years.

We are limited in what we can achieve, what is realistic?

WOCATI role to provide a space for interaction in the future of theological education

We could helpfully provide a curriculum database (See <http://www.aar-web.org/> as an example)

WOCATI as a meeting place for global theology

What do our member organisations teach? Many institutions will be challenged by others

Support Spirituality in the curriculum

Space for exchanging with each other; how can institutions interact with each other?

Website may spawn meetings

The congress must be interactive; all participants must have something to do, give space to each individual to present their vision and question

**NOTES OF THE 2005 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
OF WOCATI
(Kingston, Jamaica, West Indies, July 2-7 2005)**

1. Preamble: The Committee met under the auspices of The Caribbean Association of Theological Schools (CATS) the host being The United Theological College of the West Indies, situated in Kingston, Jamaica, West Indies (UTCWI). The venue was the Jamaica Pegasus Hotel, Kingston. We express our appreciation to the local Steering Committee responsible for planning the “extra curricula” events associated with the meeting of the Executive: The Rev’d Dr. Lewin Williams (President of UTCWI), The Rev’d Trevor Edwards (Vice President of UTCWI), Mrs Fay Rodgers-Jenkinson (Dean of UTCWI), The Rev’d Garth Minott, The Rev’d Dr. Leslie Anderson, Dr. Theresa Lowe-Ching (President of St. Michaels’s Theological College). Rev’d Dr. Hyacinth I. Boothe, member of the Executive was the Co-ordinator.

2. Purpose of the meeting: This was in order to continue the process of preparation for the 2006-2007 WOCATI Conference.

Members attending were:

Dr. Petros Vasiliadis:	President (Thessaloniki)
Dr. Namsoon Kang:	Vice President (South Korea)
Dr. W.H. Hopkinson:	Secretary-Treasurer (United Kingdom)
Rev’d Tevila Banivanua:	(Fiji)
Rev’d Dr. Eidosn Kalkengyo:	(Uganda)
Rev’d Dr. Hyacith I. Boothe:	(Jamaica)

NB Leonor Rojas (South America) was unable to attend because of ill health.

3. Welcome to Jamaica - Rev’d Dr. Rodrick Hewitt, Moderator of CWM and of The United Church of Jamaica and the Cayman Islands, called on the Committee on Sunday July 3, and extended his welcome on behalf of the Church in Jamaica.

4. The Symposium - Its theme was “Theological Education and the Mission of the Church. It was held at UTCWI and was very well attended by a representative gathering of clergy, including some heads of Denominations, members of various churches and members of graduate school. A lively discussion followed the presentations, and it was made clear that there was of relevance to the local context.

Panelists were Rev’d Dr. Lewin Williams and Dr. Petros Vassiliadis, supported by shorter papers by Rev’d Dr. Namsoon Kang and Rev’d Dr. Hyacinth I. Boothe. Following are the papers presented:

Short Presentation: Hyacinth Ione Boothe

Some of us involved as we are in the dissemination of theological education

across the world, are beginning to sense that Christian Theology, Theological Education and

Christian Missions, if not Christianity itself, are in crisis at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Christians of every Denomination, confronted as we are by the emerging World civilization, are being challenged to re-examine and re-assess our evangelical programme and our missionary strategy.

In a paper which I presented at the WOCATI Executive Meeting in Melbourne, Australia in 2003, concerning the re-orientation of WOCATI'S activities, I suggested that these times demand that there be theological enquiry into where the world is at and where Christianity needs to be at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

This is a time when we are experiencing a resurgence of world religions of a fundamentalist nature and with an ethnicizing orientation. In the meantime Christianity appears increasingly in the form a Westernized sectarian phenomenon lacking missionary impetus a rootless and non-focused entity spanning the cultures of a divided, confused and violent world. In the interest of the healing, wholeness, restoration, reconciliation to which the Gospel of Jesus Christ bears witness, Adolph Harnack's question. "What is Christianity?" needs serious reflection.

As we consider theological education and the mission of the church let me quote from the afore-mentioned paper:

"Not only must WOCATI react to the contemporary phenomena of post-modernity and globalisation for example, but it must be pro-active and daring in its assessments of the current situation and its recommendations to member associations.

It should be willing to call to their attention issues that regional theological institutions in their insularity may not discern, and at the same time receive from them their version of and recommendations for a mission-oriented theological education. Regional theological

institutions need seriously to address themselves, not just to the indigenisation of the Gospel, Church, and Theology within Cultures, but to discover anew for themselves, out of their own historico-religio-philosophical traditions, their unique perception of the theology implicit in the Gospel, relevant to their own local situation, while at the same time being available and possibly applicable to the World Church. For Theology is to fulfil its unique role in the history of the Christianity of the twenty-first century, it will need to approach its *textus receptus* with objectivity, sensitivity, maturity and faithfulness, having the courage to jettison whatever cultural accretions can be detected as being inimical to the freedom of the Gospel's genius for being adaptable to a variety of situations.

Twenty-first century theology must be liberated. It must be divested of total

dependence on inherited patterns of interpretation and be encouraged to interpret the Gospel of Jesus within the contemporary context. To this end, all dogma, ritual, deeds and creeds need to receive independent responsible critical analysis under the guidance of the "Holy Spirit".

A knowledge and understanding of the world Mission-field is crucial, in preparation for a missionary thrust into the world of the twenty-first century

5. Luncheon at Mona Visitor's Lodge

A representative gathering from the United Theological College of the West Indies. The Jamaica Council of Churches, The Caribbean Council of Churches, The Board of Directors of the United Theological College of the West Indies, and the Chairman and Secretary of the Caribbean Association of Theological Schools, Rev'd Dr. Noel Titus and Dr. Everard Johnson respectively, were invited by the Executive Committee to lunch in the Blue Conference Room.

Dr. Titus and Dr. Johnson were unable to attend, not only because of the distance involved, but also because of previously planned engagements. Following is a welcome Letter from Dr. Titus, read by the UTCWI Dean, Mrs. Fay Rodger's Jenkinson, who also presided over the luncheon.

WELCOME TO WOCATI

In 1985, Codrington college played the host to the first ever Afro-Anglican Conference. The Opening service was a glorious affair on the grounds of the college, with representatives from every part of the globe. Those who would have constituted the sanctuary party were seated on a terrace overlooking the lawn, amid a variety of plants in the garden. Towering palms formed a backdrop for the congregation. As I sat there and watched, the thought came to me that there were-poor people set in all the riches of nature. It was a cause for thanksgiving.

Having served on the first WOCATI Executive from 1989-1992, I consider it a great honour to welcome the present Executive to a region, which might boast of possessing all the variety of breath-taking scenery, and an equally rich variety in its vegetation. They also contain a colourful history, which researchers have not yet exhausted. The people, coming so many different backgrounds. For a mix that adds even more variety to the riches of nature.

Theological, there is much from which to draw in our efforts to commend the faith we hold. As we seek to contextualise, we recognise that we work in partnership with others not only of cooperation but of mutual respect.

As the Council of WOCATI deliberates on Mission during this week, I know

that you will do so in the spirit of mutual respect and that WOCATI will be stronger for it.

On behalf of Colleagues in the Caribbean in the Caribbean Association of Theological (CATS), I welcome all of you to this region and assure you of our support and prayers for a stronger, more fruitful career in the task of Theological Education worldwide. May God bless all of you.

Rev Dr. Noel Titus CHARIMAN - CATS

6. Courtsey Call on the Governor General July 4, 2003, 3:00 pm

Members of the Executive and invited guests called on the Governor General, Sir Howard Cooke at his residence King's House, an old colonial mansion situated on several acres of lawn with flowering trees, and having as its background the towering Blue Mountains (highest point 7,316 ft). After a conducted tour of the building, we were officially and cordially welcomed by the Governor General in a room on the upper floor. We were invited to sit and have an informal conference with the Governor General who is a Christian, and Lay Preacher of The United Church of Jamaica and Grand Cayman Islands.

7. Prospective tour – July 6

This was regrettably 'blown away' by hurricane Dennis members of the Executive who had never experienced this tropical disaster, were understandably apprehensive. Not only did Dennis destroy our expectation of an excursion to the North Coast, but it also succeeded in delaying the departure of members of the Executive, who unlike Bill Hopkinson and Kathleen Williams who departed on July 6, were booked to leave on July 7.

We record our sympathy with Bill Hopkinson who arrived safely in London, only to the thrust into the chaos of the London Bombings.

Thankfully in the end all were able to leave Jamaica safely.

(Submitted by Hyacinth Ione Boothe).

WOCATI 2006 E.C. MEETING
(Thessaloniki, Jan 13-18, 2006)

The 2006 EC met prior (13.1.2006), during (17.1.2006) and after (19.1.2006) the international symposium, decided by the previous EC to be held in Thessaloniki (13-18, January 2006) on the theme: "*The mission of the Church and the Role of Theological Education in it*", and upon the invitation of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and the Greek Orthodox Diocese of Neapolis, in Thessaloniki. (attachment 1).

Present: Petros Vassiliadis, Hyacinth Boothe, Tevita Banivanua, Kathleen Williams(13, 17, 19), Namsoon Kang (13, 17), Edison Kalengyo (17,19), Daniel Aleshire (17,19),.

Apologies: Bill Hopkinson

Issues discussed and decided upon

Symposium Program

Tasks for EC members were clarified.

Expenses

EC members were requested to inform Petros of outstanding expenses to be met by WOCATI. Petros informed the Executive that with the Church and the University covering part of the expenses the grant provided by EMW will not only suffice for the entire package of the executive committee meeting and the c. 30-participants strong symposium, but an estimate 3-4.000 US \$ will be transferred to the treasury of WOCATI for the publication of all or some WOCATI's meetings.

Website

It was noted that an effectively functioning website is essential to the work of WOCATI. The website is to be managed in future by IT personnel from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. Nikos Dimitriadis is to be asked to facilitate this.

To attend: Petros

Required information from ATS to be forwarded to Nikos.

To attend: Daniel

WOCATI Budget

A statement of total income and expenditure by WOCATI since its inception was forwarded by Chris Meinzer, treasurer for ATS. (Attachment 2). It was noted that for fifteen years WOCATI has been sustained by a combination of ATS annual dues (\$5,000/year) and four substantial donations (from Lilly, Luce,

Pew, and a transfer from Singapore of Asian funds), received by ATS on behalf of WOCATI, and the accrued interest. In 2005, EMW (Evangelische Missionswerk) donated approximately 23,900 euros towards the cost of staging the International Symposium in Thessaloniki.

Currently, WOCATI has a credit balance (together with what is left from the EMW grant) of approximately US\$20,000. These are insufficient funds to support another Assembly.

It was decided that, in light of the fact that funds have now been received by bodies external to the U.S., a further approach be made to former U.S. contributors and to others (e.g. Lilly, Puce, and Carpenter foundations), to request funds to enable WOCATI to conduct one further Assembly according to its traditional format, perhaps with a view to bringing this phase of its operation to a meaningful conclusion, and planning for a contemporary way of functioning in light of developments in cooperative theological education.

To support these requests, WOCATI needs to specify its distinctiveness, by clarifying and highlighting such factors as

Its difference in orientation from say, ETE, CWM, WCC. (Note: these bodies enter into academic theology only for and on behalf of the churches. WOCATI's mandate is broader. Note also: the EC needs to clarify the appropriate relationship of ETE and WOCATI.)

Its possibility as a place where theologians from the new evangelical/symposia, the Roman Catholic, and the historic mainline churches can be brought into contact with each other and also with other theological bodies – schools, institutions, loose associations – which are theologically active, but not part of WOCATI. (Note: this highlights the need for the Assembly and the EC to find ways of talking with organizations not yet in WOCATI).

Its capacity to foster excellence in theological education internationally, by acting as a channel, e.g. linking associations (such as SPATS) that may be seeking accreditation towards recognition of its degrees towards higher degrees internationally, with a recognized accrediting body (such as ATS).

Its capacity to conduct regional forums, respecting local interests and concerns, broadening awareness through wide participation, and ascertaining ways in which local theological schools may both benefit from and contribute to the international perspective WOCATI has to offer on developments in theological education.

Required amount: approximately US\$80,000-100,000.

To attend: Daniel to contact Lilly, Luce, Carpenter to ascertain interest in receiving a letter of request (with development trips, if necessary).

Petros to contact EMW and others (with development trips, if necessary).

Namsoon to make informal contact with known associates at the WCC meet-

ing in Porto Allegre, Brazil.

The EC also wishes to place on record the gratitude of WOCATI for the gracious donation of EMW and the ongoing significant contribution of ATS.

Symposium follow-up.

(a) Working papers for the Assembly.

On the assumption that the Assembly will take place in June, 2007, the following people have been asked to prepare final drafts of papers for the Assembly before the EC committee meets in December:

Paper 1: Kathleen Williams (drafter), Petros Vassiliadis, Tevita Banivanua.

Paper 2: Daniel Aleshire (drafter), Hyacinth Booth, Gerhard Larcher.

Paper 3: Faith Rohrbough (drafter), Edison Kalengyo, Namsoon Kang.

To attend: Petros to write to the above, clarifying tasks and roles.

(b) Thanks to our hosts in Thessaloniki. In addition to a formal WOCATI letter of thanks, sent by Petros in Greek, EC members will write on their personal or academic capacity to our various hosts, both in the Orthodox churches and in the university to thank them for their extraordinary generosity and graciousness.

To attend: Petros will supply the necessary addresses and information.

© Report of the Symposium to be forwarded to EMW, as well as to all WOCATI member associations, and other ecumenical bodies.

To attend: Petros.

Dates for the Assembly

Last two weeks of June, 2007. Approximately 19-28. Venue yet to be confirmed.

Constitutional amendments.

The following amendments are proposed to the Assembly by the EC

(i) Constitution:

7. MEETINGS OF THE CONFERENCE.

7.3 Delete: "and exercise jointly one vote on its behalf."

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, OTHER COMMITTEES AND STAFF.

8.1.1 to read "The Conference shall elect an 8-member Executive Committee." Delete "composed of etc..."

8.1.2 to read "Half of the Executive Committee shall normally be women. The eight members of the Executive Committee shall normally come from seven different areas, and shall normally include two members from Asia and/or Africa."

Add 8.1.3 "The Executive Committee shall elect from its members a Presi-

dent, a Vice-president and a Secretary/treasurer, at least one of whom shall be a woman.”

(ii) By-Laws:

B3.1 Representation at Meetings.

B3.1.1 Delete “in which case they will contribute to the single vote of their association.”

B4.1 Election of Executive Committee

B4.1.1 Insert “normally” after shall, to read: “According to the Constitution, the members of the Executive Committee shall **normally** come from seven different regions. The areas etc...”

B4.1.3 Delete. Replace with “If a member of the Executive Committee fails to attend two consecutive meetings, that person’s membership lapses.”

B4.2 Voting Procedures for Elections.

B4.2.1 “At least two months prior to an Assembly, the Executive Committee will invite member Associations to nominate their delegates to the Assembly. All nominated delegates will be eligible for nomination for membership of the Executive Committee”.

[B3.1.1,2; B4.3.1,2]

B4.2.2 – as for B4.2.1

B4.2.3 – as for B4.2.2

The EC noted and acknowledges that it is yet to clarify a way of conducting voting for the EC by the Assembly that will enable it to proceed smoothly, given fact that the Constitution requires both gender balance and representation from seven areas. Members are to consult and consider this problem before the next meeting. (The Constitution committee requests that suggestions be sent to it before the next EC meeting.)

Next meeting of the EC.

If funds for an Assembly in June 2007 can be secured, the next meeting of the EC will take place at the Assembly venue – yet to be finalized – in December, 2006, 13th-18th, including travel.

9. Correspondence.

No written correspondence received, but CATI (Conference of African Theological Institutions) has made contact by email, indicating a desire to be in communication with WOCATI

Secretary for this meeting: Kathleen Williams (standing in for the EC secretary, Bill Hopkinson.)

**WOCATI 2006 E.C. MEETING
(FORT WORTH, DECEMBER 13-18, 2006)**

Present: Petros Vassiliadis, Namsoon Kang, Hyacinth Boothe, Tevita Banivanua, Edison Kalengyo, Leonor Rojas, Daniel Aleshire.

Apologies: Bill Hopkinson, Kathleen Williams.

1. GRATITUDE

WOCATI is grateful to Dr. D. Newell Williams, President, Brite Divinity School, Dr. Nancy Ramsay, Executive Vice President and Dean of Brite Divinity School, Fort Worth, Texas for accepting to host the WOCATI E.C. meeting. We are grateful for their hospitality and the cooperation of their staff. On Sunday 17th December, 2006, we attended service at the University Christian Church – a congregation of the Disciples of Christ. We were later hosted to lunch at the church premises by Tim Carson (Senior Minister). We are grateful for his warm welcome and hospitality. Wocati is also grateful to its Vice President, Dr. Namsoon Kang for organizing and coordinating all events so well.

2. INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM

An International symposium on the theme: Theological Education Today: Challenges and Promises took place on 14th December 2006 – 3.30 pm – 6.30 pm. This was a theological dialogue with the faculty and Brite constituency. It was a fruitful conversation on the theme.

3. REPORTS FROM REGIONS / ASSOCIATIONS

Verbal reports were received from the various regions.

Only Petros had a written report on progress in the Eastern and Western Europe region.

Leonor apologized for being absent at previous EC meeting due to illness and lack of information about the meetings. She would continue with her contacts with the three Associations in her region: ASIT, ASTE and ALIET.

Hyacinth on behalf of CATS, reported the demise of Rev. Dr Lewin Williams, President of UTCWI. She further reported that CATS met twice in a teleconference. A new President has been elected for CATS: Dr Anna Perkins, also a new secretary. It was agreed that Petros sends a message of condolence to the Vice President of UTCWI on behalf of WOCATI.

Tevita reported about the two Pacific Associations (MATS and SPATS). SPATS had had their biennial council this year and had registered three new members.

Edison reported that ATIEA was due to hold its Association Staff and stu-

dents' Institute in April next year but had no information about other African Associations. He would contact CATI.

Namsoon reported about the Asian region. She clarified that PTCA was a theological movement and not an Association of theological institutions. Due to the recent restructuring of PTCA, she was no longer Dean of PTCA and therefore could not continue to be its representative. PTCA now operates through various committees making it hard to make official contacts with it – people do not know whom to contact when getting in touch with PTCA.

4. WOCATI FINANCES

Due to the subsidy and support of the Greek Orthodox Diocese of Neapolis, in Thessaloniki, there was a balance of US \$ 4,000 from the grant given to WOCATI by EMW. Since the Greek Orthodox Diocese of Neapolis has undertaken to publish all the proceedings of WOCATI since its inception (20 years ago), it was agreed that the balance of US \$ 4,000 be given to the Diocese of Neapolis as WOCATI's contribution to this noble project.

Daniel presented the financial statement for WOCATI from July 1991 – December 2006. During this period, WOCATI has had a budget of over US \$ 450,000 including the grant from EMW. It was calculated that after this year's WOCATI EC MEETING expenses in FORT WORTH, TEXAS, WOCATI would have approximately US \$ 3,000 in the account. Daniel further reported that efforts to encourage foundations like Lilly, Luce, and Pew that have funded WOCATI in the past to continue funding its activities had been unfruitful. ATS however, would in the meantime continue with its annual contributions to WOCATI.

It was resolved that member associations be reminded to pay up any outstanding dues to WOCATI. However, even with continued payment of dues from member associations, there would still be insufficient funds to run WOCATI in its traditional way. There were no immediate funding alternatives for WOCATI. There was a discussion concerning the possible restructuring of WOCATI in order to attract funding. One way suggested was for WOCATI to focus on specific projects.

5. WOCATI CONGRESS

It was the considered view of the members that the financial situation of WOCATI notwithstanding, it was still advisable to hold a Congress at which member associations of WOCATI would make the final decision about the future of WOCATI. It was, therefore, resolved that the planning of such Congress

continues as follows:

The Congress be postponed until May / June 2008 to allow for adequate planning.

The venue of the Congress in 2008 be Greece.

The offer of the Greek Orthodox Diocese of Neapolis of full accommodation and board for up to 40 delegates to the Congress be graciously acknowledged and positively considered.

The member associations be notified of this and also be reminded to pay up any outstanding dues to WOCATI. In addition, they are to be requested to meet travel expenses of their representatives to the congress in 2008. WOCATI would only meet food and accommodation expenses and nothing else. Member associations are to be informed in advance about the present state of WOCATI and expectations about restructuring WOCATI for future survival.

Petros to communicate this information in a circular to all member associations, also requesting them to give their views in light of the prevailing WOCATI financial position. Dues are to be paid directly to ATS. ATS will prepare statements of unpaid dues for member associations. Members of the WOCATI EC are also to make contacts with all member associations in their respective regions and send information of any such contacts to Petros by end of January 2007.

Petros, in submitting the Thessaloniki Symposium to ETE and EMW, to express the need for further funding and also invite them to the 2008 Congress at their own expenses.

Also to be invited at their own expenses are 3-4 institutions from the local area and any associations from Europe seeking membership to WOCATI (TRES, EFOTS, AISR, GRAZ PROCESS etc.).

Theme of the 2008 WOCATI Congress:

Theological Education: A Radical Reappraisal.

Issues that can be handled under the above theme:

Theology and Church. A theological reflection on the nature of the Church. Also to be included here is a new relationship between churches and their theological institutions.

Shifting Centers of gravity in world Christianity.

Educating religious leaders for Christian ministry in a religiously and combative plural world.

Emerging contextual theology.

Gender issues in theological education

Theological education vis-à-vis the contemporary academic community in view of the rapid and dramatic scientific developments.

Need and means of cooperation and mutual accountability across denomi-

national boundaries.

Final program for the Congress is to include sessions for reports from associations in addition to the presentations.

Hyacinth is to summarize the work and proceedings of WOCATI since its inception as will be presented in the book to be published by the Greek Orthodox Diocese of Neapolis, and used as the working document of the conference..

6. TIME LINE

Minutes out by Monday 19th December 2006.

By end of January 2007 we should have contacted member Associations in our own regions. EC will also contact local / regional council of churches for contacts of member associations. Also Hyacinth will draft a letter to the member associations, which Petros will finalize and circulate to the member associations of WOCATI.

By end of February 2007 Petros will send the letter to all member associations by both e-mail and postal mail, explaining the current state of WOCATI.

By end of March 2007 Call for papers to all invitees in a letter (sent by e-mail and officially displaced on WOCATI's new Website) with the theme and issues to be discussed at the May / June 2008 WOCATI Congress.

Further discussions of the EC will continue electronically and the EC will meet one day before the 2008 Congress i.e. members of the EC will report a day before the Congress begins.

Secretary for this meeting: Edison Kalengyo (standing in for the EC secretary, Bill Hopkinson), to whom a great appreciation is expressed.

THESSALONIKI 2006 SYMPOSIUM

**“The Mission of the Church and the Role
of Theological Education in it»**

Prof. Petros Vassiliadis,
President of WOCATI, COTS and Thessaloniki
Presidential Address

The World Conference of Associations of Theological Institutions, of which I have the honor to be its president, welcomes you to the International Symposium organized in the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki on the subject: "The Mission of the Church and the Role of Theological Education in it". This world organization constitutes the coordinative body of 22 independent regional/continental Associations of Theological Institutions. Its role and mission is to function as a network, which initiates theological (and pedagogic) studies and reflections on the future of theological education, which is administered around the globe in all quarters of the world on behalf of its member associations and institutions that in one way or another offer theological education, both those functioning within the wider academic community (*universitas*), and those that offer in a seminarian form theological education and ministerial formation within the framework of the various churches and Christian confessions, educating their leaders and the wider laity, i.e. the totality of the Churches' local eucharistic communities.

The three components of this conference: "church", "mission", "theological education", although seem closely connected, in fact they have always coexisted in a situation of tension, always creating problems, especially in regard to their relationship. Who among us e.g. can forget that our modern mission campaigns have been undertaken for a long time in *absentia* of their churches? Or who ignores that many institutional churches have ignored, or even marginalized or silenced the critical and prophetic word of theology? Finally, it remains an epoch-making remark the categorical statement of the international mission conference in 1938 in Tambaram of India that "the worst element in the entire enterprise of Christian mission is the theological education".

The theological education, at least within the framework of the ecumenical dialogue, has been the churches' concern for more than thirty years, as it is evident in the programs of WCC, this privileged global institution that serves the unity of the "one, holy, catholic and apostolic church". The importance of theological education was pronounced immediately from the beginning of its formation in the course of its search of the visible unity of the Church. It was immediately, however, realized that the various theological educational institutions, both those of an academic and university level, as well as the various confessional ecclesiastical seminaries, aiming at the implementation of the dominical command "that they may all be one" (Jn 17,21), have in fact contributed to a consolidation and armoring of acquired confessional traditions of

the different churches, in many occasions to defending the institutional - and not the charismatic - expression of the Church.

The World Conference of Associations of Theological Institutions, known by the acronym and abbreviation WOCATI, was set up 20 years ago from the existing and functioning those days regional associations of the widespread around the globe theological institutions, being aware that theological education constitutes today a worldwide an essential element of the mission of the church. WOCATI believes that the mission of the individual institutions can be more effectively achieved through international cooperation and in the framework of a wider co-ordination. After all, during the last 20 years of its life the importance, the character, but also the general orientation of the theological education has begun at a world level to be discussed more widely and more openly, both within the academic community, and by the local churches and Christian confessions.

At a clearly academic level the publication of scholarly systematic and pedagogic studies, as well as of a number of collective volumes, which deal in an inter-disciplinary manner with the problem of theological (but also with the wider religious) education on a new basis, is quite indicative. It is not accidental the fact that the last 20 years intense reflection was developed in renowned academic centers (from Harvard, Yale, Atlanta, Duke etc. of the USA, to the traditional academic centres of Europe: Bologna, Oxford, Heidelberg, Graz etc.) about the future of theological education. And we refer to academic institutions with secular orientation, namely by academic centers inspired by the norms and ideals of modernism, in which the discipline of theology was acceptable inside the academic setting only as a strictly historical academic science that searches for the truth, as this is fixed with clear scientific criteria. But even in countries with a secular status quo, such as for example France, the necessity – but also the role and the character – of religious education in the public education began to be seriously re-examined. What was almost unthinkable twenty or thirty years ago the theological word to be invited in the public dialogue, nowadays constitutes a natural phenomenon.

WOCATI from its foundation declared that the aim of theological education, as this is offered by all the kinds of theological educational institutions, should be three-dimensional: It continues, of course, (a) serving the mission of the Church, as its prophetic conscience, but also as its ideological arm; it discusses, however, (b) at the same time with all the cognitive objects inside the academic community, aiming at the genuine comprehension and the defense in an argumentative way of the integrity of the human person and the human values, watching critical the unprecedented evolution and growth of the secular sciences; finally, (c) it serves the wider society and the world community at large, con-

stituting a lever of reconciliation, peace, justice, transfiguration of the society, and safeguarding the integrity of the creation.

Up to these days the theological education (and the theological schools, faculties, and seminaries within the Universities and the confessional seminaries) was forced to follow two paths: either to remain clear scientific institutions, promoting in other words science for the sake of science, and as a result to change their status and become academic units of a Religious-Studies type, or to provide a theological education of a clearly confessional character. This has happened in almost all the various Christian confessions, with their famous seminaries, and is being attempted also here in Greece.

Today from the University of Harvard Prof. Thiemann, Dean for many years of Faculty of Divinity has made a very serious confession: theology must become again a central part in theological education! This is very pioneering statement, because it emanates from a clearly secular educational institution. The same concern has been also expressed by representatives of the European Theological Schools in a recent congress in Graz. The main conclusion to which this 2002 Graz Congress was led was that the older demand of establishing scientific theological institutions pursuing "objective" religious (or history-of-religions) studies proved inadequate and obsolete, and therefore has to be abandoned today. The requirements (and invitations) from other academic disciplines (Medicine, Physics, Ethics etc) to academic theologians require new answers and the developments on our part of new specializations. The bottom line in this new situation is a demand to the return of the genuine theology. The challenges posed to us by the academic community are enormous. Dear colleagues, tell us a theological word, neither what your church says, nor what your tradition says. Give us a word of wisdom by which our academic/scientific system can come out of its various impasses (bioethics, cultural, social, existential problems of the science in general etc.).

In addition to these academic concerns, theological education is called to respond to the enormous problems of spiritual and material survival that the world the Christian communities and the world at large face today, the increasing religious fanaticism that knocks their door, the increasing marginalization of the more vulnerable parts of the society, the hunger and thirst for real social justice, emancipation, liberation and many others. To all these contemporary concerns theological education must also respond to the domination of multiculturalism, and mainly of religious pluralism, and above all the enforcement of the cultural and economical globalization. The churches today are called to revise the classic perception for their mission, requiring from all kinds of theological institutions new ways of theological ministry.

For all these reasons the Executive Committee of WOCATI decided to con-

vene this international symposium with the aim to prepare three working documents for further reflection in the forthcoming IV WOCATI Congress. These documents will be circulated for further treatment to its member associations, and through them also their respective theological institutions, as well as to the various missionary, educational, but also religious organizations. The aim of this effort is to reinforce a radical reconsideration of the role of theological education in the mission of the church. All these are meant to remind all parties concerned of the prophetic role of theological education in the church, in society and in the academy. The contemporary challenges to the church need to be studied carefully, along with the quest for her visible unity, together with the reconciliation and unity of the whole creation.

In this symposium of WOCATI, which will be conducted in English and from tomorrow will be hosted in the buildings of the Theological School, representatives of associations from all the six continents (but according to our constitutional partition from all ten regions in which the globe is divided: E. Europe, W. Europe, M. East, North America, Caribbean, L. America, Africa, Asia, Australia/Oceania, and Pacific) have been invited. Also representatives of the world missionary agencies (EMW, CWM) that showed interest in the concrete thematic of this symposium were invited, as well as representatives of the special department on theological education (ETE) and the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) of the WCC, and representatives of all institutions that deal with theological education (academic faculties, ecclesiastical academies, the Pedagogic Institute of the Ministry of Education, and the Academy of Volos for Theological Studies). It will be a mistake, however, not to mention that it will be an honor to ask the active presence in the discussions of all the members of the local Theological Faculty. Their wisdom, their opinions, and reflections in all the stages (in plenary and in working groups) will be most welcomed.

This international conference, as you imagine, could not have been realized only with the poor finances of our Organization, unless we have had the moral and material support and brave subsidies provided by the world missionary agency EMW, the local church, to which I belong, the Holy Diocese of Neapolis and Stavroupolis, and particularly its bishop, Mgr. Barnabas, and the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, and particularly its Rector, Prof. John Antonopoulos, to the members of its faculty the president of the WOCATI has the honor to belong. To all above, but also to all of you who honor with your presence this event, on behalf of all my colleagues in the E.C., that constitutes also the organing committee, I express my warm thanks.

**CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS OF THEOLOGICAL
EDUCATION AND ITS MISSION TO THE CHURCH**

Faith E. Rohrbough, ATS

Good Evening. I bring you greetings from Daniel Aleshire, Executive Director of the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada as well as the 251 schools that make up that organization. I feel privileged to have been selected to represent the association until Dan Aleshire is able to arrive tomorrow. I am grateful to Professor Petros Vassiliadis for having invited me to present this lecture.

I would like to begin my lecture by speaking of ***Challenges for the Church and Theological Education***. In the second part I will turn to the ***Prospects*** of our being able to meet these challenges and how, if possible, we might turn them into opportunities. Finally this will lead me to the question of ***the Role of Theological Education in Relation to the Church***.

I shall, of course, be speaking from the point of view of someone from the Northern hemisphere. I trust that in our discussion following my presentation we will have the opportunity to share how the Northern and specifically the North American experience is similar or vastly different from that in other areas of WOCATI.

I. Challenges

Most seminary leaders can speak eloquently of all the challenges that they are facing today, from finances to academic freedom, from lack of candidates or poorly prepared candidates to outmoded facilities and teaching methods. At one time or another, we all have had to deal with such challenges. The mark of good leadership is to be able to see such challenges as opportunities to strengthen our institutions as well as our relations with the churches.

In North America today we face a culture that is both increasingly secular (Canada) and increasingly religious (United States), but a religious experience that has changed dramatically over the last half century. The strength and influence of Mainline Protestant churches in North America has been waning since the 1960's when the church appeared to be failing to provide leadership during the time of unrest brought on by the Vietnam War and the battles over race. For one reason or another, a whole generation of young people exited the church in vast numbers. Mainline Protestant as well as Roman Catholic Churches have discovered that tradition no longer carries weight with the younger generation who want a church that speaks to them in their own idiom, using language, liturgy and music that is familiar to their modern ears. The rise in numbers in the Evangelical Protestant Churches as well as the increase in new, often non-de-

nominal, churches are witness to the fact that the religious landscape in North America is changing.

The Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada has seen dramatic changes in its membership as well over the past half century. ATS began in 1918 as an association of Mainline Protestant Schools, mostly from the northeastern part of the United States and eastern Canada, who came together to share ideas and gain support from their peers. It was some 20 years later that they began the whole accrediting program that became central to the organization. But Mainline Protestant influence remained paramount with the standards of accreditation drawn very much from the Mainline understanding of what made up a 'good' seminary.

In 1970, however, during the period of growth in ecumenism following the Second Vatican Council, Roman Catholic seminaries in increasingly large numbers applied for membership in ATS. A decade later, during the '80's as the Evangelical Protestant seminaries grew larger and more influential they too began to express interest in joining the Association. Today, of the 251 schools that make up ATS, approximately 100 are Mainline Protestant, 60 are Roman Catholic or Orthodox and 80 are Evangelical Protestant.

This has had a profound affect on the Association and how it functions. In the early 1990's the membership of ATS debated new accrediting standards that were adopted in 1996. These standards no longer reflected only the Mainline Protestant roots of the organization but grew out of the wider theological spectrum of its present membership. As the religious landscape in North America has changed, so ATS has had to change as well.

1. The Accelerating Rate of Change

This brief history of ATS brings me to the first of the challenges that I think are influencing the church and theological education in North America: the rapidity of change in our modern culture. Usually neither churches nor educational institutions are very quick to change or respond to change around them. They are much more likely to turn to the tradition for the answers to new issues.

A. But change has accelerated in our modern era. What is new today is out-of-date tomorrow. In a world increasingly controlled by electronic communication, computers need to be replaced every three years or they can no longer communicate with one another or access information from older models. The rapid change in the electronic world is symbolic for the growing gap between young people and

older members of our society. Many churches in the Northern hemisphere are made up of older members who find it increasingly difficult to communicate to and draw in young people.

B. It can now be said that North Americans live in a 'consumer culture.' They expect to be able to 'buy' anything they want. Increasingly people look at religion as a commodity. They 'shop around' until they find a religious group with whom they feel comfortable. How do seminaries train pastors to remain true to their denominational roots and yet know how to make the case for the Gospel in an increasingly skeptical marketplace?

C. Ease of transportation has changed the nature of community. Community for most people is no longer defined geographically—but by networks: the network of family, or of friends. Perhaps it is a network made up of those with whom we work or spend our leisure time. People no longer think of the closest church as their home church. The result is that many parishes find they must have a myriad of programs in order to attract members to keep them from driving by to another church that offers more.

2. Globalization in the Modern World

The second challenge that I wish to lift up would be the issue of globalization that over the last two decades has totally transformed our world.

A. In the 1990's ATS launched the decade of the Globalization of Theological Education. As David Schuller, then Associate Director of ATS, remarked:

A new consciousness of the worldwide church and the interdependence of humanity had begun to raise questions about some of the assumptions on which theological education in the Western world was built. Cross-cultural awareness made those in the West conscious that their culture and religious view of the world were no longer normative. Theological schools in North America were faced with the challenge of educating students who would have a new global awareness of the church and of the world. The challenge of carrying out Christ's mandate within a global Christian community, confronting the realities of religious and cultural pluralism, demanded answers. (*Theological Education*, 1993, Supplement 1, p. 3)

Expecting seminaries to enable theological students to acquire a global awareness of the church and of the world is increasingly the norm in accrediting reviews by ATS today.

B. The year before this decade of emphasis on the Globalization of Theological Education began, a political event in Europe held the seeds of a change in the worldwide economic landscape that was to have formidable influence on the lives of all of us. In 1989, the world witnessed the fall of the Berlin wall. That event, greeted with great joy and thanksgiving by so many people, ushered in a totally new political reality. 1989 signaled the beginning of the collapse of the Soviet block and its political power. From the Western point of view this has appeared to be the triumph of capitalism and the demise of state socialism.

But in winning the contest between capitalism and state socialism, the West “effectively snuffed out the vision of any real economic alternative to the new form of global capitalism.” The old East/West axis was gone. But one would be naïve to believe that this ushered in a new age. The axis shifted to North/South, but the South is not sufficiently economically powerful to be either a strong partner or a strong adversary for the power of the North. Instead the North still sees the South as natural resources to be exploited and cheap labor to be called upon as needed. (see Robert Schreiter, *Theological Education, op.cit.*, p. 69).

Post 1989 the power of the global market reigns relatively unfettered, widening the chasm between the ‘haves’ and the ‘have nots’—greater numbers of people are forced into greater and greater poverty with no safety net to catch them as they fall. Instead of some kind of theological millennium we have the breakdown of local networks and cultures. Economically this forces people off the land and into the cities, i.e., increasing urbanization. Politically this forces people out of their homelands, some 40,000,000 refugees worldwide today. There is a new colonialism of a global culture (which seems to have an American look of Pepsi, Coke, jeans, athletic shoes and Hollywood movies). This new economic colonialism exploits the poor as much as the political colonialism of the Nineteenth Century with no sense of responsibility to care for or better the lives of the people they are using.

What does this new global reality mean for the ministry of the Church? How do North American seminaries prepare men and women to preach to as well as pastor a people who are being forced unwillingly out of the splendid isolation in which they have lived most of their lives? Hard as it may be for the rest of the world to believe, many in North America have lost their jobs due to the new globalization of the world economy. How do seminaries train future pastors to care for these persons? How does one prepare a curriculum to help candidates translate this new global awareness into a concern for the other, for those whose lives are utterly different from their own? How are students helped to deal with

issues they have steadfastly refused to face: poverty, oppression, lack of intellectual or physical freedom, to name just a few?

Just as many of the countries in the Northern hemisphere were shedding their colonialist past (although many repercussions still remain even in the colonizing countries—witness recent events in France), a new colonialism of multi-national corporations has stepped in to control the lives of people everywhere, not just in the South. The church has so far not appeared to take the lead in reacting to this new global phenomenon. How should seminaries be speaking to their parent denominations as well as to their students?

3. Contextualization

The third challenge that is an issue for North American theological education these days is the question of contextualization. This has always been an important step in assisting the Gospel to speak to each individual culture. Nevertheless, contextualization is doubly important today with the onslaught of global culture. The pressure to 'modernize' and become part of this new Twenty-first Century global culture threatens indigenous cultures all over the world.

The same problem is to be found in North America as well. A large number of the First Nation's or Native American languages are all but lost. Over the past decade the churches in Canada have been reeling from the effects of their involvement in the Nineteenth Century with the federal government in a systematic program to stamp out indigenous language and culture. In the name of bringing indigenous peoples into the mainstream of Canadian life, children were forced to leave their homes and enter church residential schools where they were not permitted to speak their own language or learn anything of their own culture. The scandal of this cultural genocide and the churches' role in it has only come into public knowledge in the last two decades. Recent attempts to salvage some of these lost cultures have been very limited.

Canada may be one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the world today. With a population of only 30 million people in what is the world's second largest country geographically, Canada is eager, within certain limits, to welcome immigrants. The country presently has a goal of increasing its population by 1% a year through immigration. Toronto, the largest city in Canada, is considered the most diverse city in the world.

How do seminaries in Canada today prepare future pastors to be able to contextualize the Gospel message in ways that speak to these thousands of new im-

migrants in our country? What needs to be part of a curriculum to help students understand how they themselves have contextualized the Gospel in their own culture? How do we help them sort out their tendency to assume their own cultural baggage is part of the Gospel as did many Nineteenth Century missionaries?

Contextualization has always been a challenge through the two millennia of Christianity. This issue has been exacerbated by the rise of global culture today.

4. Finances

The fourth challenge that I would suggest is crucial for North American theological education today is the problem of funding. This may seem an anomaly for two of the wealthiest nations in the world; nevertheless, it is true. Just at the time when more resources are available for education today, the rise in cost to utilize these resources far outstrips the growth in income for most educational institutions. Much of the rest of the world looks enviously at the enormous budgets of many North American seminaries.

One US seminary with 62 faculty and an enrollment of 2000 students has a budget of approximately US\$28 million. There are, of course, many much smaller seminaries, such as the one of which I was president for eight years. LTS had 5 faculty and an enrollment of 50 students. Nevertheless, the seminary's budget was over C\$750,000 (US\$600,000).

But the cost of running any educational institution in Canada or the United States today is very great. The price of tuition at most schools goes up much faster than the rate of inflation.

Funding sources also are not growing as fast as the costs at the institution. With shrinking membership and therefore less support from constituents, many denominations can no longer support their seminaries to the extent they did in the past. In fact, some churches do not provide any financial support for their seminaries, expecting costs to be covered by student tuitions or donated funds. Most seminary presidents in North America today find themselves spending more and more of their time trying to raise money to keep their school running. Some Boards of Governors consider the ability to raise money more important in a potential president than that person's experience teaching or building curricula.

As more and more of the financial support that keeps seminaries going comes from sources other than the church this has the potential of changing the relationship of the schools to the church.

Every theological seminary leader could list a dozen more challenges he or she is facing at this time. These four, however, seem to dominate the theological education landscape in North America these days.

II. Prospects

Is it possible to see such challenges as ways to strengthen our institutions today? What are the prospects for North American seminaries to be able to do this?

1. Managing Change

Through the years, churches and their institutions, including theological seminaries, have come to recognize that they must adopt sound business practices in order to survive. We must be accountable for how we handle money, care for property, ensure that we are delivering the product that we are promising, i.e., a sound theological education to our students. Many North American seminaries are discovering as well that they can learn about change from the business world that must be able to keep up with changing needs, wants and expectations. We, like the businesses around us, must learn how to 'manage change.'

Two decades ago theological schools expected to be able to put in place a long-range plan for their institutions that could be set for at least ten years and perhaps longer. Schools soon came to realize that such a plan would not be useful for more than about three years. Today, most schools have what they call a 'rolling strategic plan' that must be reworked and updated every year to ensure that it continues to meet the stated goals of the institution. Thus schools must be much more flexible, more fluid than ever before.

At the same time, schools must teach students to recognize that change is with us, even in the local congregation. One does not advocate change for change's sake. Nevertheless, pastors must be adaptable. Some need to encourage their congregations to new ways of doing things, others need to restrain their congregations from moving too far too fast.

In Grove City, Ohio, the United Methodist Church has been able to maintain its membership over the past forty years while numbers in the parent denomination were declining. They achieve this by reaching out in new ways to new groups of people. The congregation has twice the number of services that it had forty years ago to reach the same number of people. Some of the services use a liturgy that is exactly the same as decades ago. Others, however, use

new liturgies, new forms of music, new settings, to reach a generation that feels uncomfortable with the old liturgy. The church staff is working twice as hard to maintain the church's expanded program.

One pastor of a very large church, or so-called 'Mega-church,' in a suburb of Minneapolis MN preaches the same sermon in five different worship services on Sunday morning. Two of those services are quite traditional and for them he wears liturgical vestments. The other three are very contemporary services. For them he dresses very informally, wearing a sweater with an open-necked shirt. The sermon is the same each time, but the different garb fits with the kind of service, with the way certain people feel more comfortable worshipping.

The parishes that our graduates face these days offer a very wide spectrum. Some congregations are adamant that they do not want any changes whatsoever in their church. They consider their church to be the one stable element in the chaotically changing world in which they live. They fight any attempt to change. On the other hand, some students do not want to go into old-style parishes where they must face such opposition. They want to start their own congregation rather than try to change an existing one.

North American seminaries are learning to train students to be open to change. Some large congregations argue that graduates of our theological colleges are good scholars, but they do not understand how to make the Gospel live in our modern world. Such congregations prefer to train their own ministry. This has forced theological schools to wrestle with the question of how to adapt their curricula to teach the faith in ways that will help graduates meet these new expectations.

2. Acquiring a Global Awareness

Although North American tourists make their way around the world (providing fuel for an enormous tourist industry that is very important to many countries), only a small percentage of our population has ever been outside their own country. Many North American seminary students are very insular in their outlook; some at the Lutheran Theological Seminary Saskatoon have never been outside of Saskatchewan and its adjacent provinces. After 15 years of working with globalization, ATS pushes theological schools to expand the vision and experience of such students.

A. There are two aspects of globalization that seminaries must address. First and foremost they need to broaden their students' global awareness. But statistics

alone are not enough. It is easy to point out that the weight of Christianity is moving from the Northern hemisphere to the Southern and that in another decade or two the most Christian continent in the world will be Africa. But such information alone means little. Students need to experience the work of the church in a setting different from their own. Increasingly seminaries are enabling students to spend shorter or longer periods of time in a country in a different area of the world. Such experiences teach them not only about the world in which others live, they also give perspective on the student's own setting.

When students from the Seminary in Saskatoon went to India, one of the important learnings for them was to see how the Christian Church not only survived but also thrived in a culture that was overwhelmingly non-Christian. Such may be the Canadian culture in the not too distant future.

B. The second aspect of such global education is to prepare students to deal with the lives of many of their parishioners here in Canada. Here again there are two facets of this aspect:

1. First, the global economy does impact the lives of many Canadians.

A pulpwood mill closed in the Saskatchewan city north of Saskatoon, putting large numbers of Canadians out of work. The company chose to close the mill as they could do business cheaper elsewhere in the world.

Small farmers in Saskatchewan are being forced out of business by huge agricultural mega-businesses and thus off their farms that have been home to their families by generations.

Seminaries must prepare students to meet the needs of parishioners whose lives have been dislocated by the global market.

2. Second, as mentioned before, the numbers of immigrants from all over the world coming to North America, particularly Canada, is increasing steadily. As the North American populations become older this will expand. Students preparing for ministry today must be able to do evangelism among people whose background is totally different from their own. They must be open to learning from others to broaden their own horizons.

Mounting such global programs for students can be costly. This has forced many, particularly small schools, to be innovative to achieve these goals. Some schools, for example, have learned to seek out partners, perhaps other seminaries or development agencies, such as Lutheran World Relief, that often have educational funds.

3. Contextualization

The issue of context has been an important factor in theological education for over a century. It is in the last quarter of the Nineteenth Century that the

question of context was raised in relation to the biblical witness. If we did not understand the context in which the Bible was written we could not fully understand the message. Nevertheless, churches have been slower to recognize context in the sharing of the Gospel. We are now aware of how often Nineteenth Century missionaries from Europe or North America believed that their cultural context was universal and necessary for the true proclamation of the Gospel.

The Lutheran Church in North America adamantly refused to deal with context for the first 200 years of its existence. Until the middle of the Twentieth Century, Lutherans held onto their ethnic past. They have often been described as the last great North American immigrant church. By insisting on holding onto language (usually either German or Norwegian, or perhaps Slovak) and keeping all the customs from the world out of which their forbears immigrated generations before, Lutherans made little or not attempt to reach out to others.

Almost every seminary in North America today recognizes that it must make students contextually aware. If churches in North America are going to survive they must be open to welcoming among their parishioners people who come from all over the world. The blending of sociological study with theological study is becoming more and more commonplace.

4. Financial viability

An increasing number of North American seminaries find themselves in financial difficulties if not financial crisis. ATS recognizes the seriousness of the problem and financial issues becomes one of the most important questions to be dealt with in the accrediting process. To run a deficit for three years triggers an automatic notation or notice of weakness in the institution. This action is done to help seminaries learn as early as possible if their financial situation is deteriorating.

Recognition of the problem is the first step in moving the institution to financial stability. Sometimes the issues are internal to the institution, having turned financial matters over to someone who does not have the experience or training to deal with complex fiscal issues.

More often, however, the problem is external: sources of funding for theological education are drying up. For many years the largest part of a denomination's budget was the training of future leadership, i.e., support for theological education. Today, most denominations have begun to reduce that generous support. They have less money and too many other needs. The result is that sem-

inaries must charge more money to their students or they must search for funds elsewhere. In Canada, many provinces give financial support to seminaries as they do to all graduate educational institutions. In the United States, however, such financial support is not possible due to the separation of church and state written into the United States constitution.

Raising money is an art in itself, not one that is taught at a seminary or that comes easily to most pastors and seminary teachers. Almost all North American seminaries now have a professional fundraiser or development officer on their staff. Seminary curricula do, however, have courses in stewardship, teaching future pastors to help their parishioners think of the talents and gifts they have enjoyed from God's bounty and what of that bounty they should consider sharing with the church doing God's work.

Financial problems at some seminaries are so severe that there is no choice but to merge with another school or simply cease operations. But such steps are usually a last resort. More often schools diversify with a whole variety of new programs, designed to bring more students onto campuses and thus increase income from tuition.

Not every challenge becomes an opportunity to expand and improve each individual school. But many of these challenges have resulted in stronger, more creative seminary programs.

General Comments

Over the past two decades ATS has come to realize that for the good health of theological education in North America the Association must become involved in providing more than just accrediting services. One of the major roles of ATS today is providing leadership support to seminaries. ATS has enabled the forming of organizations of academic deans, development directors (fund raisers), business managers, as well as seminary presidents. By coming together on a regular basis seminary leaders can learn from one another and be strengthened by the peer support. Thus ATS enables a system of mentorship for those leaders who can be helped by this. In one sense, ATS is coming back to its roots, formed as it was in 1918 as a peer group of seminaries to provide conversation and support to one another.

III. Theological Education and the Church

I would like to turn to the third portion of this lecture: theological education and the church. Let me begin with discussing the way the four aspects of the-

ological education at which we have been looking, change, globalization, contextualization and finances, find their way into the churches and their relationship with the theological schools. Then let me close with some general comments about this relationship.

1. Plus ca change, plus reste la meme chose

That French phrase, 'The more things change, the more they remain the same,' better known than its author, the French writer Alphonse Karr, speaks well to the question of change and the church. The church is an institution that is not known for the ease with which it changes. Much more likely to turn to tradition than the latest opinion on any matter, throughout history the church is well known for some stunning moments when its refusal to consider change has left it in the rear guard of the development of ideas and actions.

In a world in which change is happening at a dizzying pace the church sometimes seems at a loss as to how to deal with the myriad of new issues that confront it everyday. The theological schools offer a place to which the churches can turn for both theological scholarship that can explicate the past as well as a knowledge of the present the can translate ancient truths into modern dress.

The faculty of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Rock Island IL the theological school of the Augustana Lutheran Synod, was expected to be present at every synod convention. They could be asked at any time to render a theological opinion on whatever discussion was being held. The faculty had to convene, discuss the issue, and report back within an hour's time. As one faculty member commented, this expectation taught the faculty to be able to discuss carefully and clearly with one another and know how to reach consensus on issues. Their ability to do this was an incredible gift to the church as it sought to deal with crucial issues of the day.

In some North American denominations, however, the church has looked on its theological schools with more suspicion than favour. Nevertheless, theological schools can be important resources to the church facing a world of extraordinary change. Seminaries must understand the modern world if they are truly to be able to train leadership for the church. The day of a priest or pastor who lives in his study with no contact with the faithful except at the Eucharist on Sunday morning is long gone. Most priests and pastors get to know their parishioners well and are supportive of them in the lives they lead in today's world. The seminaries must train these future priests and pastors to bring the Good News of the Gospel in these changing times. Thus, seminaries can assist the church to face the changing world around them.

2. Globalization and the Church

Almost all of the North American churches belong to some international federation or other: the World Council of Churches, the Anglican Communion, the Evangelical Alliance, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, the Roman Catholic Church, to name just a few. Most churches are proud to be part of a global expression of Christianity. As we intone at the beginning of Evening Vespers:

Jesus Christ is the Light of the World!
The Light no Darkness can overcome.

Many North American congregations, however, continue to have a Nineteenth Century missionary view of the church: Christianity in the rest of the world should be looking to North America or Europe for leadership and scholarship. Few would imagine that there would be much that they could learn from churches in the Southern Hemisphere. When I returned from four months of teaching in Madagascar few members of my congregation in Saskatoon could believe that the Malagasy Lutheran Church had 2 ½ million members, in a country with a population of 16 million. Although the Malagasy Church is financially poor it cannot build churches fast enough for the expanding numbers of people who are drawn to the Gospel. How much the Lutheran Church in Canada could learn from this Malagasy Lutheran Church about evangelism, for example?

Through their programs of globalization the North American seminaries are extraordinarily well situated to be able to interpret the importance of the Southern churches to the churches in the North. By training pastors and priests who have a greater sense of the global church, the North American seminaries are assisting the church of tomorrow not only to be more aware but also to be able to learn more from our sisters and brothers in the South.

By training men and women who have a better sense of the economic pressures of the global market and their effect on the world, seminaries are also providing the churches with the people knowledgeable to speak out on such issues. The environmental issues, the economic issues, the political issues, not to speak of the human issues, raised by the global market are questions on which the church's voice must be heard. Seminaries are providing the resources to the churches to speak up on issues on which they may have been silent before.

3. The importance of Context

Most of the churches that are growing in North America today are the churches that have been willing to recognize that the context is changing into which

the Gospel must be spoken. One should, in fact, speak of 'contexts.' We have begun to understand how hard it is to build a community with many different traditions within it. To have any hope that such a community will survive it is essential that the community itself understand and be supportive of the different contexts out of which people come.

In Nineteenth Century North America, one had thought to do away with context. One spoke of America as being a great 'melting pot' in which all people were thrown together to achieve a new context for everyone. It is clear that that did not work. Instead, everyone was supposed to come out looking, thinking and sounding like North Europeans. The image was then changed to that of a patchwork quilt in which we were all stitched together into a whole, each retaining our own traditions. But with no understanding of one another's traditions the quilt has turned out to be very fragile, pieces pulling away from one another

The churches in North America need to be much more open to people who come out of a variety of different contexts in order to spread the Gospel to the ends of the North American continent. Seminaries have been working for a century with the understanding of the importance of context. They are uniquely situated to assist the various denominations in this undertaking that is essential for the future of the Christian Church.

4. Financial Concerns

Financial support of churches in North America is the responsibility of parishioners whose contributions are voluntary. In the early years of American and Canadian religious history this caused serious problems for the churches. Most European immigrants in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries came from established churches where pastors and the cost of the church were borne by the government. Early immigrants in North America did not like having to pay the pastor's salary and this was a constant source of friction in congregations.

It was in the Nineteenth century, the great era of missions, that there grew an understanding of the importance of providing money for the Lord's work. People began to give generously for all facets of the church's undertaking. By the mid Twentieth Century most churches had a great deal of financial support, a large portion of which went to the support of seminaries. Many theological schools had no need to charge tuition from its students; all was paid for by the sponsoring denomination.

The last quarter of the Twentieth Century saw a change, particularly for Main-

line Protestant seminaries. Money was not as plentiful, although by this time many large seminaries had built huge endowments that were thought to ensure the future. With the financial downturn of the late 1980's and early 1990's it was clear that endowments were helpful but would not be able alone to support theological education. Yet denominations could no longer provide enough funding to cover costs.

Theological education was not the only financial responsibility that denominations had to reduce. The same problems developed for mission programs and for social service programs as well as other educational programs. All of these financial concerns continue now in this new millennium with a clear understanding that this pattern is now the norm for the indefinite future.

Seminaries have learned to work very closely with local congregations to provide support for programs and students. The national church is beginning to learn to do the same. The national church is also learning to raise money in other ways than just weekly contributions of members. Some churches have even employed development staff or fundraisers to assist with this. In this area the theological schools have a great deal more experience than the national church and have often assisted in this process or have worked together with national churches in the raising of money for programs.

General Comments

Let me close this lecture with some general comments about the relationship of Theological Education to the Church. Daniel Aleshire, the Executive Director of ATS, reports that the three most important facets of the Association's work in these early years of the Twenty-first Century are: Accrediting of Seminaries, Issues of Race and Ethnicity and a new project just undertaken on the Relationship of Theological Schools to the Churches.

This new project recognizes that this relationship has been changing over the past decades. Every seminary was originally founded by a denomination for the very specific purpose of training ordained pastors to serve the denomination. Today, the majority of seminaries continue to be owned by or be in a close relationship with their founding church. Some, however, have become independent or have needed to merge with other seminaries in order to survive.

However, most churches are no longer able to provide the financial support that they did previously. Many of the schools now have fewer than 50% of their students who are members of their denomination. This situation has come about

for a variety of reasons. Some schools are interested in being more ecumenical; others simply seek all the students they can attract in order to bring more tuition income to help keep the school running. Sometimes students prefer to attend a seminary that is not of their denomination because it is closer to their home and they do not wish to relocate geographically.

All of this means that the ties between church and school are often looser than previously with the result that some schools are struggling to be able to continue. At the same time some denominations are seeking other ways to provide some of the leadership training that they need.

Although the Roman Catholic Church established seminaries very early in Quebec, most Protestant churches in North America trained their clergy by mentoring and private academic study until well into the Nineteenth Century. It is interesting to note that some of the large, independent churches today are turning to mentoring and individualized training for much of their staff.

In short, this is an uncertain time for many theological seminaries in North America. This is not to say that the system of schools as a whole is facing extinction. But it is a time of extraordinary change. The issue is certainly more crucial for the schools than for the churches. Michael Battle, president of Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta GA has commented that Theological Seminaries need the Church but the Church does not necessarily need Seminaries.

The extensive seminary system that exists in North America does far more than just train clergy for individual denominations. It is in seminaries that the majority of academic study and research in theology takes place. It is often seminary faculty who become the theologians for the church, not only providing the church with theological support but also at times calling the church to account for positions or actions that it takes.

The question of the future of seminaries is not just a question for schools individually to answer or even for schools joined together in peer relationships such as ATS. The future of seminaries and of all theological study is of vital importance to the church itself. Ways must be found to further the dialogue between schools and churches.

THE PROPHETIC ROLE OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Prof. Hyacinth I. Boothe, CATS

1. An Overview

I begin by pointing to the fact that I have been asked to address the topic, "The Prophetic", (and not the liturgical, priestly, or even the diaconal), Role of Theological Education. I bear in mind however, that in the understanding of the biblical prophets, no discipline is external to their prophetic consciousness of the comprehensive dictate of the Word of the Lord

I have set my reflections within the context of reminiscence. During the early years of my Christian pilgrimage, an elderly gentleman whom I have since designated my philosopher friend, said to me, "Civilization is at the cross-roads, and Christianity must lead it in the right direction." This statement, which through the years I have on a variety of occasions incorporated in my reflections, has had a profound effect upon my assessment concerning Christianity's role in the world – in other words, on my understanding of the mission of the Church. In my opinion, the objective of Christian theological education ought ultimately to be that of ensuring that Christianity fulfils the task of leading the civilizations of the world and of history in the right direction, because through it there is proclaimed throughout the world the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ with its implications and directives. This surely is the mission of the Church and the prophetic role of theological education must ultimately be the equipment of the Church for this task.

Nothing of course is as simple as it sounds. What for example is our understanding of 'Christ' and of 'Christianity'? DuBose, writing at the beginning of the twentieth century, pointed to the concern which existed then, for knowing the truth of Christ and Christianity, and to the conflicting views as to their meaning.¹ He was referring to conceptions which then existed within Western Civilization and culture, and which continue to provoke discussion and debate. It is within this context that John Hick represents those who in his time, identified the important theological question as being that of discovering whether or no Christianity was compatible with "the basic scientific assumption of the autonomy of Nature" which calls into question the "mythical concepts" such as the miraculous intervention God in history, the Virgin Birth, the divinity of Jesus Christ, the concept of atonement through His death, his resurrection and ascension, concepts of heaven and hell etc."² He questions whether these "mythical concepts" are of the permanent essence of Christianity, or are not rather the product of its historical interaction with a pre-scientific culture. Should this be the case, he suggests the possibility of the "mythical concepts" being left behind, while Christianity advances into the new cultural world of modern science.³ Given this scenario which questions the basis of Christian Faith, what en-

lightenment, what prophetic insight does theological education have to offer to such a dilemma of 'faith seeking understanding?'

Within our own time, Christianity has moved with the times, from a modern to what has been termed a post-modern era. This term may be controversial but there seems to be consensus regarding the contemporary context within which Christianity now exists – an era of disillusionment with all forms of authoritarianism, religious or otherwise; flexibility in attitudes towards various ideologies; open-endedness; and what Msgr. Mc McCarthy in his paper "Theological Education In A Post-modern Era", referred to as "centreless pluralism."⁴ Not only is Christianity across cultures operating within the context of post-modernity, but it is at the same time encountering the realization of Marshall McLuhan's insightful comment concerning the world becoming a global village. William Hockings prophecy of a coming World Civilization seems to be on the horizon. However, in spite of these emergent factors, at this specific moment, most cultures are struggling to preserve the integrity and authenticity of their peculiar world-views, philosophical or theological, sacred or secular. It has therefore become possibly the most important challenge, that world Christianity seeks to discover anew, from its present *sitz-im-leben* within a diversity of world-views, the meaning of Christ and the essence of Christianity. Ultimately it is the prophetic role of Christian theological education to facilitate this process.

Within a theological institution, the Curriculum embraces a variety of subjects, each with its own agenda for engendering ministerial formation. It is possible for Systematic Theology for example to be mainly concerned about explicating its *textus receptus*, communicating as Truth, theological speculations which have come to be accepted as immutable and irreversible tenets which determine what it means to be a Christian. Prophetic theology on the other hand must question in each generation and in each situation the fundamental assumptions, practices and principles enunciated within the context of historical theologies, and preserved as doctrinal standards. As Patrick Henry observes:

"The authority of North Atlantic theology is nor longer uncritically accepted by church members in Latin America, Africa and Asia, and there are already strong voices in these areas insisting that the way the New Testament has been interpreted by European and North American scholars is more thoroughly culture-bound than the scholars with their ideal of objectivity have on the whole been willing to admit."⁵

The mistake of the theologians of the Early Christian centuries and of many generations after, was that in applying to the Gospel the classical philosophical discipline of scientific enquiry, they supposed that their speculations could end in unalterable dogmatic statements concerning the God and 'Father' of Je-

sus Christ, of Jesus himself, and of the Holy Spirit. They then proceeded to cry anathema to those who questioned them. They did not prophetically distinguish between the Gospel and the media by which it is accommodated to a variety of cultures.

Clement of Alexandria correctly attributed such light-rays as shone within his own philosophical and literary tradition, to the general revelation which the Father of Jesus Christ had blessed his predecessors. But not only Homer, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle or Zeno, but also Confucius, Zoroaster, Siddhartha Gautama, African and Arawak ancestors, and indeed every indigenous tribe and nation, have jewels of wisdom and righteousness with which the world can be enlightened, and which can facilitate the explication and transmission of the Gospel, as the Church seeks to fulfill its mandate from age to age. The prophetic role of theological education is to enable the Church to discern these jewels, and not to “cast out the baby with the bath-water.”

The prophetic role of theological education cannot be that of maintenance of a Tradition, but rather that of equipping the servants of the Lord in every age and place to engage in critical thinking, judgment, and reflection on the political, socio-cultural, and ecclesiastical institutions that affect the lives of human beings. Theologians do need to take cognizance of the prevailing world-view of whatever culture, and to seek to interpret and communicate the Gospel in and through it. However they need always to be mindful of the finitude of human postulates, whether these be in the form of a logos principle vs. the Messiah – concept, or an evolutionary theory vs. the ‘intelligent design’ interpretation of creation. These are transient and will also pass away, but the Gospel of God, as Israel herself learned during her rather turbulent cultural and religious history, has a dynamism of its own and cannot be imprisoned in any ‘wine-skin’, whether of Egypt, Babylon, Persia, Jerusalem, Rome, Athens, or The United Theological College of the West Indies. It is the prophetic role of theological to produce ministers/priests/pastors, who are not only sensitive to their own local and particular concerns, but who are in tune with this dynamic Gospel, and who empowered by the Spirit of the Lord, can authentically say to the world and its cultures, “Thus saith the Lord.”

2. The Prophetic Role of Theological Education and the Curriculum

We are in our own time, witnessing an increasing expansion of the theological curriculum. Theological education does not take place in a vacuum, and its

prophetic role must be to respond sensitively to the issues that affect the lives of persons, by way of the articulation of a theology that is meaningful and relevant. At the same time, for theological education to fulfill this prophetic role, those who deliver the education viz, members of faculty, must themselves be 'prophets'. They must be role models theologically, morally, and spiritually. As Thomas Gillespie observes: "...theology is a spiritual discipline and spirituality is a theological discipline."⁶ The title of Gillespie's article, "The Good Theological School", was occasioned by the question asked at the ATS Quality and Accreditation Project, "What is the good theological school?" The answer given by ATS was, "...it is a seminary...characterized by a concern not only with what it taught...but how this instruction shapes the lives of students."⁷ The prophetic role of theological education to begin with lies in the hands of members of faculty who are responsible for producing and delivering the Curriculum.

The biblical prophets were women and men of God in tune with Yahweh, and those who belonged to the schools of the prophets sought to inherit the prophetic mantle. I believe that it was Roderick Hewitt who somewhere said that we do not transform the churches until we transform theological education. In view of the limitation of space and time, I will be selective in the choice of subjects taught in the curriculum on which to focus, convinced as I am that they are basic to theological education at this time.

a) The Prophetic role of theological education and the Bible

The Bible continues to be the Text-book of Christianity. It may be that the time has come for us to evaluate its significance for Christian faith today, as well as enquire into its relationship with the sacred Texts of other religions. Be that as it may, at the present kairos, the fundamental issue is how to understand Scripture within the context of contemporary times. Such questions as, "Is the Bible to be taken literally as the Word of God?" and again, "Is it equally authoritative in all its parts?" are still around. For the purposes of this presentation we will not focus on these particular issues, but rather highlight other related concerns.

The emergence of biblical criticism in the nineteenth century has flung the pages of the Bible open for critical analysis and reflection. It has been acknowledged that translations can be flawed, exegesis subjective, and hermeneutics preferential. Feminist and womanist theologians in particular, question the Bible's seeming patriarchal and androcentric bias. At the beginning of the nineteen eighties, a Conference sponsored by the World Council of Churches met in Amsterdam to reflect on the topic, "The Authority of the Scriptures in the Light

of the New Experiences of Women.” Already in the 19th century Elizabeth Cady Stanton had argued that the Bible, which had given to Western civilization its values and world-view, not only had contributed to the suppression of women in society, but also had shaped the low esteem of women.⁸ The prophetic role of theological education must include the equipment of student-theologians with the ability to engage in an informed, analytical approach to various translations of the biblical text, as well as with the ability to engage it in its original languages. Exegetical research must be undertaken which liberates the Text and which unfolds new hermeneutical options. New questions need to be asked. Why, for instance, does the Greek word *diakonos* in the English translation across various versions, receive a different translation when applied to men and women? Why are the word *prostates* when applied to Phoebe (Rom.16:1-2), not given the optional meaning in classical Greek, of ‘president of the ecclesia, ‘chief leader’ etc.? The prophetic role of theological education is not mystify the Church, but to explicate the Bible in the light of new information and perceptions. The Word of God observable in the biblical text is not static but dynamic. It is liberating. It can, if we have eyes to see and ears to hear, speak in ever new ways to changing situations. The prophetic role of theological education is to equip persons to engage in a fresh and dynamic encounter with the biblical text, bringing Christianity into conformity with a prophetic vision such as is found in Joel 2:28f, where the prophet as Yahweh’s spokesperson anticipates the time when God’s Spirit would bring to pass God’s original intention of equality, and God’s sons and daughters would prophesy, God’s male and female servants being equally inspired by the Spirit of the Lord. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

b) The prophetic role of theological education and historical research

The calamitous journey of Christianity in history must be given prophetic scrutiny in theological education, in order to give visibility to the marginalized, to expose and name acts of terror, and to re-interpret data in the interests of truth and justice. Harmonious co-existence in the world Church, unity in Christianity, require a truth and reconciliation programme.

How is it, for instance, that the Protestant Reformation could have succeeded in ignoring the brutal and descriptive adventures of Christians in search for gold in the Americas? Christopher Columbus and his successor conquistadores faithfully reported to their sovereigns their methods of expansion, which they integrated with their interpretation of Christian Mission. How could Oliver Cromwell have given approval for 1000 Irish girls and 1000 Irish boys, all under 14 years of age, to be sent to Jamaica to help to develop the newly conquered

'Spanish' island?'⁹ Has Jamaica subsequently reaped the repercussions of that most inhumane act? And so we could ask of the nature of the planting of Christianity in Africa, Asia, and parts of Europe.

c) The prophetic role of theological education and the contextualization of Christian Theology.

In recent times, the prophetic voices of theologians from various branches of the Church have been giving expression to their interpretation of Christianity in various forms of Liberation Theology, viz. Latin America Asian, African, Caribbean, and Black theologies. This is an expression of the contextualization of theology, i.e. theology that is determined by one's peculiar context from the vantage point of the poor, those discriminated against, etc. Theological education across cultures could gain prophetic insight from the struggles of a Desmond Tutu, an Alan Boesak, and a Trevor Huddleston, who braved persecution in order to expose the evils of Apartheid in South Africa. Prophetic role is to cry against the Church within was articulated theological justification for Apartheid.

Spanning the First and Third Worlds, women's voices are increasingly being heard, seeking to make sense of their individual and collective reality vis-à-vis societies that would condemn them to an unending experience of inequity, injustice and oppression. Mention has already been made of the emergence of Feminist and Womanist theologies, as women out of their peculiar historical, cultural and religious contexts, articulate their own brand of contextual theology. Let it be remembered that it is within the context of classical theology that there was articulated and reinforced the concept of the ontological inferiority of the female of the species. WOCATI has been vocal in its insistence on the liberation of women in Church and Society. It has called for the implementation in theological institutions of the teaching of Women's Studies. There remains the knotty question of the ordination of women. Over the past thirty years an increasing number of Protestant denominations have taken the bold step of ordaining women to their Ministries and Priesthood. However, not all Christian Churches are thus persuaded. Pope John Paul II, of blessed memory, had a vision of a renewed Church, but this renewed Church does not hold out for women their ordination to the Priesthood. If it be the case that women by virtue of their gender are not fit handle holy things, then they are not fit to enter the Kingdom, because the atoning work of Jesus Christ does not cover their case. They are still unclean. Or is it the case that the Kingdom of God discrimination against sections of the human race continues in perpetuity eternally? Are women by nature condemned to be second-class citizens in the Kingdom of God?

It is the prophetic role of theological education to embrace and intensify the programme of liberation for the enslaved and oppressed, to acknowledge God's preferential option for the poor and marginalized, and to give theological justification for an acceptance of the equality of humanity across race, class, nation, and gender, on the basis of God's love for all the children of God, all having been made in the image of God?

d) The prophetic role of Theological Education and a Multi-Faith Society

One of the courses taught at the United Theological College of the West Indies is "Introduction to the Study of Religion." One of the requirements of this course is that the class visit the worship places of other Religions and Christian sects practiced in Jamaica, in order to have a first hand experience of their rituals and doctrines. One of the results of these encounters is that we now have a Muslim Imam seeking to enter our graduate programme in order to do research in Comparative Religion. What is prophetic role of theological education vis-à-vis students from other Religious Faiths? How does one communicate the essentials of Christian doctrine to non-Christians? What is the mission of the Church in the present kairós to the Religions of the World?

We often emphasize the prophetic denunciation of idolatry and the worship of other Gods. What we sometimes tend to forget is that the Religion of Israel ultimately included in its theology a concept such as wisdom (Hebrew *Lokma*, Greek *Sophia*, cf. Proverbs 8-9)- a concept that had its origin within the context of Middle Eastern Babylonian and Egyptian religions. The author of the Fourth Gospel in the New Testament, following the Hellenistic Jew Philo, dared to re-interpret the status of Jesus using the philosophical construct of the logos. These radical innovations were incorporated into the Jewish and Christian Scriptures. What is the prophetic role of Theological Education in its encounter with a pluralistic society that encompasses such concepts as "The Five Pillars of Islam," the Eight-fold path of Buddhism, Re-incarnation and Braham, the messianic interpretation of Africa Ancestors, the belief in the spirit-world in the Pocomanian Sect in Jamaica, etc? The prophetic role of Theological Education in its encounter with the Religions of our times may be to recognize that Christianity needs to be re-envisioned, re-conceptualized in each new age and situation as we seek to distinguish between its essence and its cultural accretions. When Christianity is brought into contact with other Faiths, the question should be asked, "What does Christianity do, more than others? What is its *sine qua non* vis-à-vis the Religions of the world? Encountering other Religions in a multi-faith society ought to drive Christianity back to basics, and it is the prophetic

role of Christian theological education to discern the challenge, as it seeks to develop a hermeneutic of the Gospel in keeping with its character in New Testament times. We would do well to reflect on some words of John V. Taylor where he writes,

Either we must think of the Christian Mission in terms of bringing the Muslim, the Hindu, the Animist into Christendom, or we must go with Christ as he stands in the midst of Islam, of Hinduism, of the primal world-view, and watch with him fearfully and wonderingly as he becomes....Muslim or Hindu or Animist as once he became a Jew. Once, led by the Spirit, the Church made its choice in this matter at the Council of Jerusalem and dared to win the Gentiles by becoming Gentile. Paul and those who followed him...claimed that world in its strength and reformulated the Gospel in terms of its wisdom. So Christ in his Church, answered the call of the Greeks, he came where they were and became what they were. From within their own culture he challenged their strength and judged their wisdom. He turned their world upside down just as he turned Judaism upside down. So would be challenge and judge revolutionize the African world-view, but he must do it from the inside. There are those who feel that the spiritual sickness of the West which reveals itself in the divorce of the sacred from the secular, of the cerebral from the instinctive and in the loneliness and homelessness of individualism may be healed through the recovery of a wisdom which Africa has not yet thrown away. The world Church awaits something new out of Africa.¹⁰

3. The Prophetic role of Theological Education and the Question of Violence

It would be irresponsible for theological education at such a time as this turn a blind eye to the expression of violence not only historical but in its present global manifestation across cultures, races, nations and religions. In my attempt to share with you my reflections concerning the prophetic role of theological education in relation to violence, I shall use my own island of Jamaica as a 'test case.' Actually what I want I shall do is to refer to some closing thoughts that occur in the conclusion to my PhD thesis:

Jamaican Christianity inescapably bears the wounds and guilt deriving from Western Christianity's engagement in revolutionary and international war, and its collusion with the violence slavery. It carries the burden of the attempted revolutionary overthrow of the yoke of bondage – the 'Baptist War,' and the 1865 violent strike for justice. However, Jamaican theologians must not dodge the theological issue of war and peace. They must not subscribe unthinkingly to the notion of the inevitability of war, nor uncritically embrace Western Christianity's 'Just War' theory. Rather they must examine it in the light of the Gospel of Je-

sus Christ. The Church's military engagement since Constantine needs authentic theological assessment in the light of the Gospel. It is clear that the gospel warns against violent responses and promotes peace, not as the absence of war so much as the implementation of the things that make for peace. Jamaica has had the historic experience of having been unilaterally disarmed of conventional weapons of warfare. It may be that this is historical vulnerability and powerlessness, provide the rationale for a Christian theology of non-violence that fulfills both the prophetic hope of the Old Testament and the Gospel message of the New. Jamaican theological education must, therefore, include in its curriculum opportunities for careful examination and assessment of the biblical texts relating to violence, of the church's historical involvement in internecine warfare, and of the teaching of Jesus. Its prophetic role is to educate and guide not only ministers/priests/pastors but the whole People of God to be faithful practitioners of the Gospel of Peace and Love.¹¹

Theology and the Church must not be afraid of making hard decisions. They must not be afraid of suffering for righteousness sake. It is time that the servants of the Lord wage peace and not war. This is not an impossible ethic, nor need the implementation of a programme of peace await eschatological fulfillment.

Let me end this Presentation with words with which I began. "Civilization is at the cross roads and Christianity must lead it in the right direction." It is the role of theological education to equip Christianity to lead world civilization in the right direction.

NOTES

1. William Porcher DuBose, *The Gospel in the Gospels* (New York, 1996).
2. John Hick, *The Second Christianity* (S.C.M., 1983).
3. *Ibid.*, pp9, 105.
4. Msgr. Jeremiah McCarty, "Theological Education in a Post-modern Era." Paper given at the WOCATI Congress at Chiang Mai, Thailand, 2002.
5. Patrick Henry, *New Directions in New Testament Study* (London, 1979), pp 19-20.
6. Thomas W. Gillespie, Art. "The Good Theological School," *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin*, Vol. XVI, No. 1, 1995, p.46.
7. *Ibid.*, p.39
8. Cf. Clark and Richardson, eds. *Women and Religion*.
9. *Calendar of State Papers*, cf. Hyacinth Ione Boothe, Unpublished PhD Thesis, *Gospel and Culture*, 1998.
10. John V. Taylor, *The Primal Vision*, cf. Boothe, *op. cit.* p.113.
11. cf. Boothe, *op. cit.* p.334. For a historical review of the use of violence by Christians and for its rejection as a Christian option cf. Jacques Ellul, *Violence* (E T Oxford, 1978 ed.)

**MISSION AND UNITY OF THE CHURCH AND THE ROLE
OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION IN IT: AN INTRODUCTION**

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Firstly I would like to express my gratitude to the organisers for the invitation. I am very honoured to take part in such an important event. I was very privileged to be involved in the ecumenical movement. After seven years from Harare (where the 8th WCC General Assembly took place), my first exposure to a major ecumenical event, I am convinced, in spite of many difficulties, that there is no alternative to dialog, to the process of knowing and understanding each other, on the complex and challenging way to unity.

I shall begin this introduction to the theme by quoting Dr. Nyambura J.Njoroge, programme executive for Ecumenical Theological Education at the World Council of Churches, who in her article entitled: "An ecumenical commitment. Transforming Theological Education in Mission"¹ noted that in 1938, at the Tambaram (Madras, South India) conference of the International Missionary Council (IMC), the participants confessed that, "*The weakest element in the entire enterprise of Christian Missions is theological education*"² However, it took twenty more years for the IMC to correct this major oversight in the missionary enterprise, and did so by launching the Theological Education Fund (TEF) in early 1958.³

The World Council of Churches in its present form and its earlier manifestations, has contributed in transforming theological education. Three significant expressions of theological education activities are:

Theological Education Fund (TEF) 1958-1977;

Programme of Theological Education (PTE), 1978-1991;

Ecumenical Theological Education (ETE), 1992- present.

In July 1977 the WCC central committee decided to make the TEF an integral part of its Geneva programmes by creating the Programme of Theological Education (PTE) to carry on and broaden the concerns of strengthening the renewal of theological education in all six continents. The TEF in London was closed and the PTE staff took their place in Geneva in 1981. Underlying this decision was the conviction that, "Theological education is vital for the life and mission of the church." In order to make the programme widely known and to invite more partners to participate in the "liberation of theological education from any bonds that hinder the fulfilment of its original calling", the PTE introduced in January 1978 the newsletter/journal *Ministerial Formation*. Through the TEF/PTE the ecumenical movement has challenged churches and theological institutions to take seriously the need for the whole people of God to be deeply grounded in their Christian faith and to participate fully in ministry and mission.

Some considerations on conceptions and misconceptions of the mission of the Church

We all are aware that we need "fresh wineskins for new wine". The former WCC general secretary Rev.Dr. Konrad Raiser launched the discussion on the

reconfiguration of the ecumenical movement. The actual general secretary Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia followed up the process using the expression “ecumenism in the 21st century”⁴. It would be wrong to burden new generations with the consequences of centuries of heresies and schisms. Today, after so many wars, conflicts and disasters, we have to reach the authentic meaning of mission and unity of the Church.⁵

Dr. Namsoon Kang, vice-president of the World Conference of Theological Institutions (*WOCATI*) noted that the term “mission” became a popular word used for almost everything from military objective to the frenzy of the mission statements that corporations use to promote their profit-making purposes. Many churches have developed “mission statements” as a basic part of their own planning. There are “pop” images of mission: it is a foreign enterprise; it is a programmatic opinion for a church; it is money sent to a denominational headquarters; and on and on.⁶ “According to widespread public opinion Christian mission has no role to play in a religiously plural society and is incompatible with religious pluralism. The term mission is, in this sense, equated with religious propaganda, with proselytism, with an assault on the perception of truth, with intolerance towards people of other faiths, atheists or agnostics. Based on such prejudice, the theory and practice of mission are forced to operate in a permanent apologetic posture”⁷.

The calling to mission is a radical calling into the world as it is, not out of the world. If we look at Acts (ch. 3, 4 and 5) we discover at least three misconceptions about mission. “The first misconception is that our engagement in God’s mission has to do with spiritual as opposed to material things. For the apostles as with Jesus, there was no divide between the spiritual and the physical; there was only the work of God to witness to the *shalom* of the kingdom of God. We see this fact in these chapters through the importance of bodily healing... The second misconception is that our engagement in God’s mission should not bring us into conflict with the authorities. We have been seduced into thinking that Romans 13 is the only word in the Bible about Christians and secular authority, but it certainly doesn’t seem to have been the attitude of these apostles. These chapters point out that the apostles were regularly arrested, imprisoned and hauled before the Sanhedrin on account of their engagement in God’s mission... The third misconception is that in so far as our engagement in God’s mission does involve helping people, it is about charity⁸. Peter was clear that the apostles did not have “silver or gold” but they did have the power of God. This power was a power for “standing up” rather than begging. This is a very important issue because we often hide behind our ability to give money when there is a problem rather than being involved in the compassion that God requires, which is a compassion that demands something from us. Here lies the failure of the split we

have created between the physical and the material. Peter does not use material means to heal but healing is very material. In its engagement with God's mission in the world, the church has this power of Christ to share."⁹

The Church has now recovered the biblical insight that the mission is God's rather than the Church's. This was not done without great theological and missiological conflict. We have moved from an ecclesiocentric to a theocentric generated mission.¹⁰ David Bosch says that :

"During the past half a century or so, there has been a subtle but nevertheless decisive shift towards understanding mission as God's mission. During preceding centuries mission was understood in a variety of ways. Sometimes it was interpreted primarily in soteriological terms: as saving individuals from eternal damnation. Or it was understood in cultural terms: as introducing people from the East and South to the blessing and privileges of Christian West. Often it was perceived in ecclesiastical categories: as expansion of the church (or of specific denomination). Sometimes it was defined salvation-historically: as the process by which the world – evolutionary or by means of a cataclysmic event – would be transformed into the kingdom of God.»¹¹

Dealing with the origin and content of the concept *missio Dei*, professor Tormod Engelsen wrote that the term *missio Dei* has a long history that goes back to Augustin and relates to the doctrine of the Trinity.¹² The theocentric perspective was not new in the 20th century. It can be found in Martin Luther's thinking about mission. For him, "mission is always pre-eminently the work of the triune God – *missio Dei* – and its goal and outcome is the coming of the kingdom of God. Luther sees the church, along with God's word and every baptized believer, as crucial divine instruments for mission. Yet nowhere does the reformer make the church the starting point or the final goal of mission, as the 19th – century missiology tended to do".¹³

Although one of the main reasons for the fame of the Willingen conference (1952) is the introduction of the concept of *missio Dei* it can not be found in the documents of the conference itself as professor Tormod Engelsen noticed¹⁴, and he adds that it seems that it was Karl Hartenstein who, in his report from Willingen, coined the phrase when he spoke of mission as participation in the sending of the Son, in the *missio Dei*, with an inclusive aim of establishing the lordship of Christ over the whole redeemed creation.¹⁵ The emphasis in Willingen on a trinitarian basis of mission is even more important than the somewhat ambiguous phrase *missio Dei*. It is this trinitarian basis of mission that should form the foundation of any understanding of *missio Dei*.¹⁶ This idea is also shared by an Indian theologian : "Christian mission should be understood as Christian participation in the mission of God. *Missio Dei* puts God at the centre and as the source and author of mission, it suggests that mission should be under-

stood as being derived from the very nature of the triune God, that is, God the Father sends the Son, and God the Father and the Son send the Spirit, and the triune God sends the church into the world".¹⁷ Wilhelm Richebacher also points out that the expression *missio Dei* was not used during the Willinger conference, but in the report: "The sending of the Son to reconcile the universe through the power of the Spirit is the foundation and purpose of mission. The *missio ecclesiae* comes from the *missio Dei* alone. Thus, mission is placed within the broadest imaginable framework of salvation history and God's plan for salvation"¹⁸, and he continues by saying that we have to speak about the *missio Dei Triunus*, because "the mission of the triune God is an invitation to life in all its fullness in the redeeming presence of the risen one".¹⁹

In the relatively recent document on mission adopted as a study document by the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism we read :

"The mission of God (*missio Dei*) has no limits or barriers; it has been addressed to and has been at work within the entire human race and the whole of creation throughout history. ... the Logos (Word), God's co-eternal and consubstantial Son, was and is present with the Father and the Holy Spirit in all God's acts... A trinitarian approach to the *missio Dei* is therefore important. On the one hand, this promotes a more inclusive understanding of God's presence and work in the whole world and among people, implying that signs of God's presence can and should be identified, affirmed and worked with even in the most unexpected places. On the other hand, by clearly affirming that the Father and the Spirit are always and in all circumstances present and at work together with the Word, the temptation to separate the presence of God or the Spirit from the Son of God, Jesus Christ, will be avoided".²⁰ There is no place for christomonism or for pneumatomonism.

However the concept of *missio Dei* is not free from difficulties. In Willingen and in the period following, two major and somewhat competing approaches to *missio Dei* emerged. The first one, a dominant view at the Willingen meeting, understood mission as God's evangelizing action through the church. The second, which raised serious opposition to the dominant Willingen view conceived *missio Dei* as God's activity in the secular world over and above the church, saying, "The world provides the agenda"²¹ The *missio Dei* concept, which is often presumed to be exclusively a missiology "from above", is also conceived to be a missiology "from below", God's work is discernible in secular history.²²

The document on mission quoted above offers us an inspired holistic description of mission:

"Mission" carries a holistic understanding: the proclamation and sharing of the good news of the gospel by word (*kerygma*), deed (*diakonia*), prayer and worship (*leiturgia*) and the everyday witness of the Christian life (*martyria*); teach-

ing as building up and strengthening people in their relationship with God and each other; and healing as wholeness and reconciliation into *koinonia*- communion with God, communion with people, and communion with creation as a whole.

However as David Bosch pointed out:

“We may never arrogate it to ourselves to delineate mission too sharply and too self-confidently. Ultimately, mission remains undefinable; it should never be incarcerated in the narrow confines of our own predilections. The most we can hope is to formulate some approximations of what mission is all about”.²³

Theological foundations for mission

The late Romanian theologian, professor Ion Bria identified eight theological foundations for mission.²⁴ I think it is important to present them briefly by quoting and adding some elements .

The importance of Trinitarian Theology

Christ's sending of the apostles is rooted in the fact that Christ himself is sent by the Father in the Holy Spirit (John 20,21-33). Trinitarian theology points to the fact that God is in God's own self a life of communion and that God's involvement in history aims at drawing humanity and creation in general into this communion. The salvation of the world should be seen as a “programme” of the Holy Trinity for the whole of creation. True life is life in the Holy Trinity, in Christ by the Spirit coming from and oriented towards the Father. We talk about *katabasis* : from the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit and about *anabasis* : having the intimacy with the Holy Spirit, through the Son we are adopted by the Father.

Centrality of Christ

As human beings we are *eikon eikonos*, the image of the image of the Father. Christ is our *centre* in a double sense : as divine Logos, source and model of our reason, and as initiating partner of our dialogue with Him. The Son of God has assumed the fullness of our humanity into himself . He became the Person of the humanity he assumed, but also of our own humanity. He is our superior person (subject) our intimate partner of dialog. In this process, He affirms, He heals and restores humanity by placing it in himself, and therefore in the Holy Trinity, the great mystery of the perfect divine-human unity that becomes the source-spring of the new life of the world.

The Incarnation

The Logos was present in the world from the beginning through the *logoi* of creation. He, through the Holy Spirit, inspired the ancient wisdom of mankind.

He is also the word of the prophets. *The Logos* became fully human, while remaining fully divine. He became *sarxs*, in latin *caro* , flesh, not simply *soma* (John, 1,14). He took our human qualities so we may benefit from his divine attributes. He became *sarkoforos*, so that we are enabled to become *pneumatophoroi*. He took our form in order to make us worthy to take his form (Philip. 2).

In spite of the humanization of the Logos, we are still free to refuse communion with God. Hence also the presence of sin and evil which are opposed to the regenerative work of the Logos. Evil is at the root of the divisions and the passions that have separated us. But the incarnate Logos, who effectively unites us, establishes in the Holy Spirit the communion in the Church that is the body of Christ. The Church realizes the unifying message of the divine Logos, for the Logos is its centre and therefore the unifying basis for all humanity.

The Cross

Christ is sent into the world not only as teacher, example, etc., but also as a bearer of the divine life, not as a separate individual. His mission aims to draw the world into the way of existence that is to be found in the Holy Trinity. Christ's mission is essentially the self-giving of the Holy Trinity so that the world may become a participant in the divine life. Christ's mission takes place in a "fallen" world and is met by the resistance of the "powers and principalities" of evil and sin. This has made the cross the inevitable passage of Christ's mission. Mission, therefore, takes place in the context of struggle and implies a conversion, a paschal and baptismal passage of the world into a "new creation". This is not a fight that manifests itself simply in the souls of individuals; it permeates all social life through injustice, oppression, etc., and even the whole of natural existence through sickness and death.

The Resurrection

While the reality of the cross represents the inevitable context of mission as a clash between the trinitarian way of existence and the "powers and principalities" of sin, the resurrection of Christ , said professor Ion Bria, throws light on mission in two fundamental ways. In the first place it points to the fact that the outcome of mission is beyond any doubt the defeat of the powers of sin in both its social and natural implications (the overcoming of death). Christ's ascension and constant intercession at the right hand of God sustain this assurance. The resurrection also points to the fact that the outcome of mission is not controlled by historical forces but is eschatological in nature. It would be misleading to contrast a "theology of glory" and a "theology of the Cross", the cross is where Christ was glorified.

The Work of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit was present in creation from the beginning, brooding upon it, giving life to it, bringing form and perfection to all things. The whole saving activity of Christ is inseparable from the work of the Holy Spirit. He confers us the form, the beauty of Christ. He is the Spirit of community, the Spirit who perfects and completes all the sacramental mysteries of the Church, the Spirit of the new creation.

Synergia

Synergia means that God has chosen to work through us. God calls us to surrender ourselves to Christ in order that God may unite us to God's self and work through us, enhancing our freedom and in no way abolishing our personal subjectivity.

The Call to Repentance and to Obedience to the Will of God

Throughout history Christians have failed to be faithful and often obstructed the work of God in the world, especially in mission. We are called to repentance, which is a second baptism, to real *metanoia*, the changing of the way we think, we live. Our aim, as Saint Paul says, is to have "the mind-*nous* of Christ" (I Cor.2,16)

The unity of the Church and the unity of churches²⁵

All the Christians are aware that the division between us is a scandal and an impediment to the united witness of the Church. We confess the faith in the oneness of the Church. There can be no churches (in the plural) except as manifestations of the one true Church. The unity of the Church does not mean creating a worldwide organization, often called structural unity. The one Church cannot be created by putting all the local churches and individual denominations into one worldwide structure.

The unity of the Church is the unity in Christ, by the Holy Spirit, with the Holy Trinity. The Church is Christ's body, and there is only one body, as there is one Christ and one Spirit. The Church then is that great mystery in which Christ unites to himself all those whom God has chosen, by the Holy Spirit. This includes all those from Adam and Eve till our day, and we the Christians living today form but a segment of that whole reality that spans the ages and unites heaven and earth.²⁶

One of the *notae ecclesiae* is *katholike*; *kath'olon* means according to the whole, the Church is in accordance with the fullness of apostolic teaching and its organic development throughout the centuries. Orthodox ecclesiology tends to distinguish between local and universal dimensions of catholicity. Accord-

ing to the former, a local church, gathered in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the church which celebrates the eucharist and is headed by a bishop, is the "catholic church", Christ's body in all its fullness. "Wherever Christ Jesus is, there is the catholic Church", according to St. Ignatius of Antioch's well-known definition. The Church is catholic due to Christ and not to its members. It is very important that the local dimension of catholicity informs a conception of the local Christian community not as a part of the body but as the body itself. This understanding is most vividly expressed in the *Proskomede* of the Divine Liturgy, when the priest prepares the gifts, cutting portions of bread commemorating Christ himself, his mother, all the saints, all the living and all the departed. The local dimension of catholicity naturally implies the possibility of cultural, liturgical and theological diversity in the one Church of Christ.²⁷

Vladimir Lossky wrote: "The Church is the centre of the Universe, the sphere in which its destinies are determined. All are called to enter into the Church, for if man is a microcosm, the Church is a *macro-anthropos*, as St. Maximus says. It increases and is compounded in history, bringing the elect into its bosom and uniting them to God".²⁸

The Romanian theologian Dumitru Staniloae (1903-1993) who was imprisoned for many years, and suffered greatly in harsh conditions, understood the way towards the unity of the Church as an "open sobornicity (conciliarity)". This expression was proposed in the early 1970s when the churches, which were involved in the ecumenical movement, and especially in the bilateral theological dialog, were centred on their own models of unity proposed for the defence of their confessional identity. This defensive "contraction" led to confessionalism, proselytism, anti-ecumenism. Although he is very severe with the dogmatic integrity of the Orthodox Church in the ecumenical dialog, he has never denied or disparaged the positive confessional traditions, the apostolic institutions and structures which exist outside the Orthodox communion. He encouraged wholeheartedly not only the ecumenical prayer for unity but also the Orthodox priests' and believers' ecumenical education.

In the Slavic translation of the *Creed* the word *sobornuii* was used instead of *katholike* due to the opposition to the universal, geographical meaning given to the original Greek word in the West. The word *sobornuii* suggests the conciliar way of preserving the doctrine of the Church at the episcopal level and the general communal way in which the same doctrine has been experienced. The entire Church is a standing council, a communion, a convergence and a permanent collaboration of all its members.²⁹

Father Stăniloae's "open sobornicity" would mean: knowledge, understanding, experiencing, witnessing, valuing, realising the faith of Apostles in its integrity, to which all people are called - all of the same human nature but of dif-

ferent personal, family, national and traditional backgrounds - , gathered in a web of dialogue amongst themselves and with God, within a fellowship – *koinonia* of increasing importance according to their desire to live “conforming to the whole – *kat’holon*” in all respects.

In Acts 2,42 we read that those who followed Christ : “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching – *te didahe ton apostolon*, and fellowship – *koinonia*, to the breaking of bread – *te klasei tou artou* and the prayers – *tais proseuhais*”. We have here the biblical foundations of the universal Church. The order is very important. This was used also in *Charta ecumenica*, the recent European document on churches’ collaboration. The unity of the Church in the New Testament is a symphony of local churches with specific local elements, however they are in fellowship of faith, sacraments and love. It is difficult to envisage a real unity of the Church without unity in faith, followed by authentic *koinonia* and sharing of holy communion - *communio in sacris*. In present times we must pray together for the unity and have together the liturgy after the liturgy³⁰ which means service to the world in spite of differences. While praying and serving together it is very possible to discover our oneness in Christ.

“In the context of a growing common Christian intercession, witness, service and theological convergence, and in the face of a revival of ancient denominationalism, Christians must remember that the eucharist is the cornerstone of their life together as members of one universal church. One test of ecumenical life is to renew the effort to overcome the obstacles to full concelebrated eucharist. This is an essential condition for the credibility of our ecumenical movement; while it is not there, the whole building of ecumenical witness is unsure”.³¹

“Theology, rightly understood, has no reason to exist other than critically to accompany the *missio Dei*”.³²

When we say theological education we are tempted to think exclusively of the “production” of “professional” theologians. But “one of the critical needs of our time and every era is to encourage, enable, equip and empower the people of God to participate meaningfully in the life and mission of the Church. One of the tragic ironies is that the very institutions, structures and resources that were created to facilitate people’s participation have so often failed to do so or even become obstacles.... We are called to mould and adapt our institutions and structures to be channels and not obstacles for God’s Spirit”.³³

It is not easy to keep the balance between the general priesthood (cf. 2 Pt.1,4) together with its specific responsibilities and the ordained priesthood (cf.2 Pt.1,5 sq.) or “profesional theologians”. We have to avoid clericalism , in order to avoid anticlericalism. In this respect the local church has an indispensable role:

“The teaching congregation defines the conscious commitment to fashion a

climate of learning which gives concrete expression to the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. In this climate, every member, regardless of educational standing, role or status, is deemed a learner. Every member is therefore a candidate for empowerment and is affirmed as a giver as well as a receiver".³⁴

The theological education must serve *missio Dei Triunius* and His willingness "to unite all things" in Christ – *anakephalaaiosasthai ta panta en to Christo*, things in heaven and things on earth" (Eph.1,10). Unfortunately the two subjects of great importance: mission and unity have not become the underlying principles of the educational process itself. None of the four models identified by Andrew Williams is explicitly missiological in intent or focused on unity:

The "life wisdom" or "habitus" model, seen especially in the monastic movement.

The "scientific" model, where theology is perceived as a "science", i.e., a discipline of systematic enquiry and exposition.

The "university" model (the most common today), where theology becomes the work of theological faculties, with chairs in different specialized branches.

The "professional" model specifically concerned with the "inner ecclesial" needs of the Christian community.³⁵

We even have problems in finding the place of missiology in the *curricula*. Should it be included in the practical, historical or systematical theology? Missiology is still confused in some places, with the so called "sectology", while ecumenical studies are not part of the doctrine, which still has to be orientated towards other confessions.

We need ecumenical formation because mission and evangelism should be promoted in unity today³⁶. During a special consultation on "ecumenism in the 21st century" a group reflected, on the definition, dimension and methods of ecumenical formation, realising that there is no agreed ecumenical description of what ecumenical formation is. However, all agreed that ecumenical formation is about the renewal of a person. It is a change of heart that makes us share in Christ's desire for the Church to be one. They also noted that not only persons but also structures should be formed ecumenically.³⁷

It is very important to be aware of all the changes and challenges present in our world, the new global village; to be aware of the need to renew the understandings of education theories, to reach an authentic culture of dialog in teaching - as expressed in the New Testament, where Christ engaged in dialog with different people and the salvation started from their own great problems; to be aware that it is wrong to separate theology from spirituality, the witness in the world from *martyria*, from martyrdom; to be aware of the holistic character of

theological education and ministerial formation:

“...which is grounded in worship, and combines and inter-relates spirituality, academic excellence, mission and evangelism, justice and peace, pastoral sensitivity and competence and the formation of character. For it brings together education of:

the ear to hear God’s word and cry of God’s people;

the heart to heed and respond to the suffering;

the tongue to speak to both the weary and the arrogant;

the hands to work with the lowly;

the mind to reflect on the good news of the gospel;

the will to respond to God’s call;

the spirit to wait on God in prayer, to struggle and wrestle with God, to be silent in penitence and humility and to intercede for the church and the world;

the body to be the temple of the Holy Spirit”.³⁸

Commentary

Starting from the question: “What is the appropriate model for theological education that can effectively prepare persons whose primary task is to “*form*” people in the congregations for their participation in God’s mission both locally and globally?” asked by Andrew Williams in the editorial of IRM issue under the heading: “Transforming Theological Education in Mission”³⁹, we may ask another question: Who is forming whom? We tend to think that we are somehow able to give a certain form to the Church in order to reach the unity of all. If we speak about God’s mission we can also speak about God as giver of unity, He gives us His form, the form of the Church.⁴⁰

NOTES

1. International Review of Mission (IRM), 94 (373, April 2005), 248-263
2. International Missionary Council, The World Mission of the Church, Tambaram, London, March 1939, p.85
3. The decision to launch the TEF took place in Accra, Ghana at the IMC assembly held in December 1967. Several mission boards in the USA sponsored the fund, and the TEF office was based in Bromley, Kent, England from 1958 to 1977. To the credit of the leaders of the day, the fund was launched after a survey of ministry in Madagascar and different regions of continental Africa from 1950 to 1956, which provided a glimpse of what was happening in ministry and mission in the so-called “younger churches”; see Dr. Nyambura J.Njoroge, op.cit., p.251
4. Ecumenism in the 21st Century, Report of the Consultation convened by the World Council of Churches, Geneva, 2005

5. One can feel very encouraged when reads the statements on mission formulated in the past 20 years and the convergence texts like Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry or The Nature and Mission of the Church, even it will be a long way to full agreement. It is very important that we learned to speak together and to hear one another.
6. "The Centrality of Gender Justice in Prophetic Christianity and the Mission of the Church Rediscovered" in IRM 94 (373, April 2005), p. 280
7. Christine Lienemann, "Impact of Religious Plurality on my Life, my Work and Thinking", CURRENT DIALOGUE, World Council of Churches, 34 (2/1999) 16, quoted in : Namsoon Kang, op.cit., pp.280-281
8. We must not forget that charity comes from caritas (in Greek language agape) which means compassionate love (ICor. 13)
9. Steve de Gruchy, "Mission in Act 1-11: An Experiment in Bible Study," in IRM 94 (373, April 2005), p.231
10. Namson Kang, op.cit. p.281
11. Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis Press, 1991, p.389
12. "Missio Dei: The Understanding and Misunderstanding of a Theological Concept in European Churches and Missiology," in IRM 92 (367, October 2003), p. 482
13. James A.Scherer (ed.), Gospel, Church, & Kingdom: Comparative Studies in World Mission Theology, Minneapolis, Augsburg Publishing House, 1987, p.55.
14. Op.cit., p.482
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FIRST GROUP REPORT
MISSION AND THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH:
IMPLICATIONS FOR THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

a. Mission: some current understandings

Mission is the fruit of faithful (Christian) living. As with any human activity it involves organization/institutions, with institution understood simply as 'recognised and agreed upon ways of doing things.'

Because human living involves change in understanding, mission is dynamic, not static.

It is contextual, taking place in dialogue with the local culture and concerns.

As we have only one God, and that God is Trinity, mission is and must be Trinitarian. We share in the *missio Dei*: in God's gracious plan mission for us is a sharing in the communitarian life of God, a continuation of the mission of the Word and the mission of the Spirit. Mission therefore involves a 'minding' of the world: coming to understand and know creation (insertion in the mission of the Word), coming to love and care for what we know (insertion in the mission of the Spirit).

b. Unity: some thoughts

The notion of unity is much trickier, perhaps because of the tendency of potential conversation partners to function more as stakeholders and so to focus immediately on doctrine, more particularly on the *differences* in our statements of what we hold to be true. Starting here tends to lead to clashes: opposition, defensiveness: 'I'm right, you're wrong'. With such a starting point listening is unlikely to occur, people unlikely to speak freely, and so conversation is almost impossible.

Insights from recent scholarship in Mystical Theology (mystagogy) suggest a potentially more fruitful starting place, namely the sharing of religious experience. When people share what touches them most deeply such sharing reveals God's irruption into human life in concrete situations. The result can be a realisation that while God's relationship with each one is uniquely individual, common traces of the Spirit are identifiable. We can begin to recognise that our experience is personal, but not solitary, that God's transformative action is taking place not only in our lives and circumstances, but in lives and circumstances radically different from ours. Such a realisation opens our heart to hear the differences and to learn why they matter to the persons we have begun to value through their sharing of God's transformative action in their lives. *Cor ad cor loquitor* (Pascal): our minds are open to those whose heart has spoken to us.

This meeting of minds and hearts is received, it is a gift. We cannot make it happen; the most we can do is try to create conditions that might be conducive to it happening. We can listen, we can speak, and perhaps the time we are most

likely to hear is in the context of brokenness, failure, in the breakdown of our formation or of our keeping of the law by which we have been brought up. Admission of failure is quite unthreatening, particularly when both the hearing and the speaking are compassionate.

c. Ecumenical movement and theological education

The ecumenical movement and theological education have always been closely related but not always in positive ways! It is in their theological institutions that so much of the confessional identity of the different churches is enshrined, entrusted as they are with the maintenance and handing on from generation to generation of the respective confessional thought and ethos. At times, for all the emphasis in principle upon the need to give students and especially ordinands an awareness of the universal church, in practice too many pastors, educators and church leaders have emerged from their theological formation with no real understanding of other confessions or the human issues which all churches and Christians having to face together in the *oekumene*, the one inhabited world which God made and loves.

There have been many brave efforts over the years to combat the inherently isolationist tendencies of much theological education, in the form of courses on ecumenics, the sharing of courses and faculties by different confessions, the exchanges of students and teaching staff and even, in some cases, the establishment of truly ecumenical faculties. However, there has been a growing consciousness that something more is needed.

The ecumenical movement has created an unprecedented enthusiasm among the deeply divided Christianity that the centuries-long divisions of the Church with the ensuing polemic in theological education might find some sort of an agreed solution. Unfortunately the momentum which reached a climax in the 60s, especially through the historic event of Vatican II, did not have an equally optimistic follow-up. The ecumenical optimism and enthusiasm towards the goal of the visible unity of the Church, which would lead to an education of reconciliation, was interrupted at the very point an important achievement in the field of theological hermeneutics was reached with the affirmation at a world level, and wide application from the 70s onwards, of the *contextual* character of theology. This great achievement has created an unbridged psychological gap between the traditional Churches and the new and most vibrant younger Christian communities. The main reason for this unexpected, and at the same time unfortunate, development in the ecumenical movement was the complete negation of any stable point of reference, of all authentic criteria in the search for unity and the ultimate truth in the post-Uppsala.

It is very significant that the discussions within WOCATI were always conducted within the context of *contextuality and catholicity*, and the “ecumenical vision” was well rooted in the its original vision in such a way as to direct the theological institutions’ attention towards “how ministry and formation processes can further the unity of the Church (John 17:21) for the sake of the unity and renewal of humankind and indeed all creation.

There is no question that it is impossible to make a case for the *unity of the Church* while being indifferent to the *unity of humankind*. It is always affirmed that Theological education can definitely rely on differing, but legitimate, interpretations of one and the same gospel.. It has become an axiom that «every text has a context», a context that is not merely something external to the text (theological position, theological tradition etc.) that simply modifies it, but something that constitutes an integral part of it. Very few now deny that all traditions are inseparably linked to a specific historical, social-cultural, political, and even economic and psychological context. And this means that the traditional data can no longer be used as a basis for an abstract universal theology that carries absolute and unlimited authority. Through contextuality, in contrast to classical approach to theological education, we are no longer concerned whether and to what extent today’s theological positions are in agreement with the *tradition*, but if these positions have any dynamic reference and relation at all to the given contemporary conditions.

Nevertheless, little - if any at all - attention has been so far given to work toward reconciling the two currents in contemporary theological in order to soften the existing antithesis between *contextuality* and *catholicity*. It was a firm conviction of WOCATI that ecumenical theological education to be able not only to survive, but also to give life and lead to renewal, must have a *common point of reference*. Otherwise, it runs the danger to view any local context and experience as authentic expressions of our Christian faith, which in the long term would also undermine the authentic interfaith dialogue.

In its 2nd Congress in Nairobi Kenya, WOCATI rightly emphasized, that the most important and necessary perspectives in contemporary theological education are both catholicity and contextuality: *catholicity*, in the sense of the search for a coherent, ecumenical, global, and catholic awareness of the theological task, and *contextuality* as the unique expression of it in the various particular contexts. Coherence is important in that it expresses the authenticity and distinctiveness of different contextual theologies, as well as the need to bring these contextual theologies into inter-relationship with others.

Of course, the way in which this coherent, ecumenical, global, and catholic perspective is to be achieved, is not an easy task. But central in this respect is not only the concept of *dialogue*, but also of *unity*, i.e. the question of where does the locus of Christian faith reside. In other words, without denying the contextual nature of theology, and taking account of the indispensable nature of dialogue to the theological task ecumenical theological education the inescapable question “wherein does the *unity of Christian theology* reside” needs to be answered.

However, for theology to seek for a coherent, ecumenical global perspective requires the recognition that christian theology, no matter how many and varied be its expressions, must have a *common point of reference*, a unifying element within all forms of ecumenical theological education and ministerial formation. It is necessary to focus upon the issue of unity in both general terms and in the specific ecclesiological use of the term as the on-going search to restore the given unity of the Church. This includes consideration of the unifying and saving nature of the Christ event, continually re-enacted through his Body, the Church, in the life-giving and communion-restoring Holy Spirit. After all, theological education is a worldwide enterprise fundamental to the mission of the Church.

This given unity of the Church, which does not necessarily mean a strict unified structure, is given expression in an adherence to a *broad understanding of christian tradition*. Such an understanding affirms not only the centrality of Christology, but also the constitutive nature of Pneumatology, i.e. the normative nature of a Trinitarian understanding of Christian revelation. This Trinitarian understanding affirms the ultimate goal of the divine economy, not only in terms of Christ becoming all in all both in an anthropological, i.e. soteriological, and in a cosmological way, but also in terms of the Holy Spirit constituting authentic communion and restoring the union of all.

The communion God seeks and initiates is not only with the Church in the conventional sense, but with the whole cosmos. Thus the unity of divine revelation, as represented in the broad understanding of christian tradition, is for the entire created world, not only for believers. This understanding of unity is important to keep in mind as it challenges a potential distortion wherein unity is identified with the maintenance of denominational loyalty, which in turn can be an exercise of oppression, excluding suffering people from the community of the people of God.

This understanding of unity in ecumenical theological education informs and challenges all expressions of contextual theology. It does not locate the unity inherent within Christian theology with any ecclesiastical or doctrinal system, and recognizes the varied forms of human and social existence. In this way, it is congruent with the methodologies and goals of contextual theology. However, it also challenges these theologies in pointing out the indispensability of an adherence to a broad understanding and acceptance of Christian tradition as that which gives expression to the given unity of the Church.

d. Implications for Theological Education with regard to mission and unity

Some initial suggestions that might facilitate the mission and unity of the church in accord with the above ‘insights’

The designing of curriculum in which both structure and content facilitate the development of relationship. As students of theology grow in their understanding of what they hold to be true, what they live by (doctrine), a relational context will facilitate critical thinking – of oneself, of one’s tradition, of the other – that is not only critical but also compassionate.

Widening the notion of ‘text’. If word is understood as any expression of meaning and value it can be broadened to include: the Word whom we receive and love as the Word which expresses the Infinite Act of Understanding Love that is God; the Word of the Scriptures; and extended to include any expression of meaning and value: works of art, music, dance – the traditional ways in which what we (and our ancestors) hold to be true has been passed on through the generations.

In addition to the necessity to promote (a) “Unity in a wider sense”, (b) “Unity among Theological Associations”, and through Associations between Theological Institutions, and (3) “Unity of the whole of humanity” and “Unity of the entire created world”, WOCATI encourages its member Associations and Theological Institutions to initiate an honest, compassionate and scholarly accurate theological dialogue for the Unity of the Church, which will run in parallel to, and complementary with, the existing multilateral (Faith and Order, WCC) and bilateral dialogues of the churches.

**WHAT DOES THE COUNCIL FOR WORLD MISSION
EXPECT FROM THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION?**

Roderick R. Hewitt, CMW

Introduction

I have been asked to share my perspectives on what mission organisations expect from theological education. I considered this to be an unwise move if I attempted to speak for other mission organisations. I serve as Moderator for the Council for World Mission (CWM) and even so we do not have a corporate document on what we expect from theological education. What is very clear is that we view theological institutions as strategic partners in the ongoing mission of the church

I would like to share some information about what CWM is in order to understand our emphasis on theological education. The Council for World Mission expect is a contemporary missional expression of the work of the former London Missionary Society and the Commonwealth Missionary Society that since 1795 has been engaged in ecumenical and evangelical mission understanding and action. In 1975 at a consultation in Singapore a fundamental review of the Council took place that eschewed the very restricted and flawed understanding of the missionary task facing the church. It was predicated by an underlying Euro-American supremacist ideology that viewed the missionary task of the church as something that could only be creditable done by the Western Church to the rest of the World (Africa, Asia, Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean). This flawed ideology devalued the contributions of those deemed by the dominant power systems of this world to be “less than” because they were considered to be economically, politically and militarily weak. It meant that such persons were never regarded as equals and so their contributions were not given a place of integrity around the table of those who were the decision makers. They remained on the margins as recipients while those who made the decisions functioned as donors. At this 1975 Singapore meeting the CWM fundamentally altered its identity, vocation and witness in three core areas.

Theological reaffirmation of mission as ‘the task of the whole people of God’

Its evangelical identity places Jesus Christ as central to its identity, vocation and witness. It is Jesus who sets the agenda for mission through his life death and resurrection; and he empowers the church through the Holy Spirit to demonstrate in words and deeds his healing love for the whole world that is in need.

CWM engagement with the world church led to a further broadening of its vision that recognised the variety of God’s gifts made available through diverse peoples and contexts. CWM expressed its understanding of the nature and purpose of Christian mission to therefore include:

- Conversion: - (Forgiveness, new life and eternal hope)
- Reconciliation: - (Peace and community)

- Liberation: - (Justice and humanisation)
- Sacrificial caring: - (Healing and wholeness)
- Preaching and Teaching: - (Baptism and church growth)

By affirming the missional integrity of churches in every land it catapulted CWM to face up to the implications of this paradigm and to therefore re-examine its missionary method and structure. The historic role of Europe in the missionary enterprise had to be ideologically redressed to state that: “No particular church has a private supply of truth, or wisdom or missionary skills. So within the circle of churches, which we serve, we seek to encourage mutuality. This is a recognition that to share in international mission every church is both a receiver of help and giver of its talents”.

By recognising the presence and role of the younger churches as equal participants around the table CWM also had to move one to deal with the most difficult aspect of the challenge of being partners: the mutual sharing of power and money. The affirmation that resources should be “held in common and used for the churches’ priorities in mission”, structural changes had to be made to give expression to this kind of Pentecostal economics for mission.

The structural organisation that evolved from the Singapore Plan saw twenty-eight churches of diverse traditions and cultures coming together and covenanting as a community to share as mutual partners in Christ’s mission. The structure that was put in place involved the combined role of Council representatives, Executive Committee members and Staff working together with member churches to translated corporate policies into concrete mission action in each local context. It is worth noting that CWM per se does not have a distinct mission theology of its own as separate from that of the churches. CWM participates in the mission of the church, which is called to be a partner in Christ’s mission. CWM is therefore always learning and changing as church become more obedient to the gospel and take missional risk to bear witness to the gospel.

The under girding broad aims of CWM are expressed in three specific policies:

a. Each member church of CWM must be actively involved in mission partnership with others. Through an education in mission learning process churches are empowered to take action in equipping the whole people of God for mission engagement.

Every Church must be receiver of help and giver of its talents: Through the sharing of its human, faith and material resources.

That CWM will demonstrate its belonging within the world church by sharing part of its income and personnel ecumenically.

Since 1975 the identity of CWM has grown. Its statement on mission in 1984 emphasised the biblical basis for its understanding of mission by focussing on Acts 1:8 “You shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and the end of the earth”. The text is used instead of the Matthew 28:18-20 Great Commission text that was the foundation of the modern missionary enterprise to highlight that mission of the church is at the core the work of the Spirit. Mission for CWM is much more than a command but more so a promise! John 20:21-22 emphasised that just as the Father sent the Son so the Son sent out his disciples after breathing on them the empowering Spirit of God. God is the great missionary God. His sending of Jesus according to John 17:21 declares that mission must be done in unity because one without the other constitutes a countersign of the gospel and God’s work of reconciliation in gathering all human in his one family. The purpose behind this sending is for the work of reconciliation: “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself and he has given us the ministry of reconciliation” (2Cor 5:18-19).

The Contemporary Framework

The contemporary scene has placed the churches’ mission within a context of awesome threats to life. Technological advancement, globalisation and its post-modern relativistic moral values that divinise the individual, economic progress functions without due regard or respect for ecological issues and fundamentalism in religion seeking to respond to growing

With a global context full of gods competing for the control of the world we embrace a mission theology that affirms the sovereignty of God who exposes and makes impotent rouges powers. The church is called to be God’s partner in mission to fulfil the mandate of Jesus describe in John 10:10 “I am come that you may have life and have it to the full” The churches’ mission today calls for risking sacrificial action in overcoming the threats to life: HIV-AIDS, neo-liberal capitalism that calls for open markets that is structured and operated to make the poor poorer. This deceptive market offers a false economic freedom and false state that there is no alternative to the global economic system. The missionary task of the church in being a partner in God’s mission requires an uncompromising commitment in being a sign of hope (Romans 8:18). The church today must remain committed to a holistic understanding and practice of mission that take into account the priorities of:

- Proclamation of the reign of God and witness in the ministry and mission of Jesus
- Nurturing the people of God through an intentional education in mission equipping process

- Loving and sacrificial service that demonstrate the compassion of Christ
- To strive for justice and peace building in communities
- Caring for the environment

All of these must be rooted in doing mission in Christ way. Christ is the only authentic model for the church mission.

Implications for Theological Education

It is within this context that the CWM's perspective on theological education must be viewed. Transformation in theological education has been central to the CWM missional journey from its re-birth in 1977 into an international partnership in mission. With mission being the *raison d'être* of each church's identity, vocation and witness, education in mission became a priority thrust of the Council's work. With the Churches committing themselves to mutually challenge and equip each other in mission they began asking serious questions about how to become a missional church in context and how to equip the whole church for engagement in mission. It was the desire to equip the whole people of God that led the CWM family to raise serious questions about the model and quality of theological education being used to prepare ministerial and laity leadership within the church. CWM recognised that theological colleges and faculties can make a positive or negative contribution to missionary formation of the church; therefore they too are in need of transformation.

Theological Education for Mission

The role of theological institutions is to help the church prepare its members to be well equipped and active participants in its ministry. There is an intimate relationship between the mission of the church and its ministry, especially those who are trained theologically through extensive and expensive university residential model. How well does this model maximise the enabling of people for effective participation in God's mission? CWM recognises that any changes in theological education will ultimately necessitate a reassessment of purpose of ministry. Questions must be asked about the structure and practice of ministerial formation. Is the role model that we have of the "minister" relevant to the missional calling of the church today?

The ongoing crisis in ministerial leadership facing many churches in the North and South suggest that radical rethinking of theological education strategy being used to serve the churches. Many persons who are prepared to serve in local congregations by theological institutions have found themselves to be misfits suffering from a form of alienation within a culture that is foreign to their experiences. CWM sees theological institutions as partners in the ongoing quest

of exploring what is the nature of the theological education that can effectively prepare persons whose primary duty and calling is to “form” persons in local congregations for engagement in the *missio Dei*?

TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE BEGINNINGS...

SETTING UP A WORLD NETWORK	5
WOCATI PREAMBLE	9
WOCATI PURPOSES	10

The 1st WOCATI CONGRESS (Pittsburgh 1992)

REPORT OF THE FIRST WORLD CONGRESS	
<i>Ian S. Williams Australia</i>	13
CONTEXTUALIZATION FROM A WORLD PERSPECTIVE	
<i>Robert J. Schreiter</i>	17
WOMEN IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION	
<i>Maryanne Confoy</i>	27

CHOO LAK'S PRESIDENCY

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT	
<i>Yeow Choo Lak</i>	33
LIBRARIES: BRIDGING THE LOCAL AND THE GLOBAL	
<i>John A. Bollier</i>	35
THE 1994 PARIS WORKSHOP: 3 working papers	45
A. THEOLOGICAL SCHOLARSHIP AND RESEARCH	46
B. WOMEN IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION	58
C. ACADEMIC DEGREES AND CREDENTIALS IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION	66

THE 2nd WOCATI CONGRESS (Nairobi 1996)

PARTNERSHIP IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION: CONVERSATION AND COMMUNION	
<i>Elsa Tamez</i>	89

CONGRESS 96 RESPONSES TO THE WORKING PAPERS	101
MESSAGE FROM THE 1996 2nd WOCATI CONGRESS	105
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ADDRESSES THE FUTURE OF WOCATI	111
WOCATI AND THE FUTURE AND VIABILITY OF ECUMENICAL THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION	
<i>Petros Vassiliadis</i>	113

THE 3rd WOCATI CONGRESS (Chianguai 2002)

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS	
<i>Zenaida Lumba</i>	123
THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION IN A POSTMODERN ERA	
<i>Msgr. Jeremiah J. McCarthy Ph.D.</i>	127
THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION IN A POSTMODERN ERA. A RESPONSE	
<i>Rev. Dr. Hyacinth Ione Boothe</i>	141
MISSION AND SOCIAL DIMENSION OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION	
<i>Prof. Josué Fonseca</i>	147
CHRISTIANITY AND OTHER FAITHS: EMERGING THEOLOGICAL AND MISSIOLOGICAL DISCUSSIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF ASIAN PLURALITY	
<i>The Rev. Dr. Daniel S. Thiagarajah</i>	157
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: "You can do to them whatever you wish"	
<i>Joan Alleluia Filemoni-Tofaeono</i>	169
AN OVERVIEW OF THE 3RD CONGRESS OF WOCATI	
<i>Kathleen Williams</i>	187
MINUTES OF THE BUSINESS SESSION OF THE 2002 WOCATI ASSEMBLY (12th December 2002)	193

PETROS VASSILIADIS PRESIDENCY

MINUTES OF THE FIRST MEETING OF 2002 WOCATI EXECUTIVE (12th December 2002)	199
MINUTES OF THE 2003 WOCATI EXECUTIVE (8-10 December 2003, Newman College, Melbourne, Australia)	203
CONSENSUS DECISION-MAKING IN WOCATI	209
NOTES OF THE 2004 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING OF WOCATI, (20th to 24th July 2004 in Suva, Fiji)	213
NOTES OF THE 2005 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING OF WOCATI (Kingston, Jamaica, West Indies, July 2-7 2005)	219
WOCATI 2006 E.C. MEETING (Thessaloniki, Jan. 13-18, 2006)	225

THESSALONIKI 2006 SYMPOSIUM

THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH AND THE ROLE OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION IN IT	237
PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS	
<i>Prof. Petros Vassiliadis</i>	239
CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION AND ITS MISSION TO THE CHURCH	
<i>Faith E. Rohrbough</i>	243
THE PROPHETIC ROLE OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION	
<i>Prof. Hyacinth I. Boothe</i>	261
MISSION AND UNITY OF THE CHURCH AND THE ROLE OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION IN IT. AN INTRODUCTION	
<i>Prof. Rev. Nicolae Moşoiu</i>	271
FIRST GROUP REPORT: MISSION AND THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH: IMPLICATIONS FOR THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION	285
WHAT DOES THE COUNCIL FOR WORLD MISSION EXPECT FROM THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION?	
<i>Roderick R. Hewitt</i>	291