

**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](http://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](http://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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**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](http://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): Hyacinth 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

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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 Alegre, 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, 13<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>, 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

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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-

nominational, 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.<sup>1</sup> 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.”<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> Given this scenario which questions the basis of Christian Faith, what en-

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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."<sup>4</sup> 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-in-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."<sup>5</sup>

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

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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."<sup>6</sup> 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."<sup>7</sup> 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.<sup>8</sup> 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

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'Spanish' island?<sup>9</sup> 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 Brahmā, 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.<sup>10</sup>

### **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.<sup>11</sup>

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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CWME and Sibiu*

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 8<sup>th</sup> 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"<sup>1</sup> 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*"<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup>

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

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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”<sup>4</sup>. 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.<sup>5</sup>

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.<sup>6</sup> “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”<sup>7</sup>.

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 charity<sup>8</sup>. 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."<sup>9</sup>

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.<sup>10</sup> 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.»<sup>11</sup>

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.<sup>12</sup> The theocentric perspective was not new in the 20<sup>th</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> – century missiology tended to do".<sup>13</sup>

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 noticed<sup>14</sup>, 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.<sup>15</sup> 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*.<sup>16</sup> 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".<sup>17</sup> 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"<sup>18</sup>, and he continues by saying that we have to speak about the *missio Dei Triunius*, because "the mission of the triune God is an invitation to life in all its fullness in the redeeming presence of the risen one".<sup>19</sup>

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".<sup>20</sup> 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"<sup>21</sup> 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.<sup>22</sup>

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”<sup>23</sup>

### **Theological foundations for mission**

The late Romanian theologian, professor Ion Bria identified eight theological foundations for mission.<sup>24</sup> 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 churches<sup>25</sup>**

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.<sup>26</sup>

One of the *notae ecclesiae* is *katholike*; *kath'holon* 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.<sup>27</sup>

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”.<sup>28</sup>

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 *sobornuiiu* 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 *sobornuiiu* 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.<sup>29</sup>

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 didache 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 liturgy<sup>30</sup> 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”<sup>31</sup>

**“Theology, rightly understood, has no reason to exist other than critically to accompany the *missio Dei*”<sup>32</sup>**

**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”<sup>33</sup>**

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 “professional 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".<sup>34</sup>

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.<sup>35</sup>

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 today<sup>36</sup>. During a special consultation on "ecumenism in the 21<sup>st</sup> 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.<sup>37</sup>

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”.<sup>38</sup>

### 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”<sup>39</sup>, 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.<sup>40</sup>

### 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. Namsoon 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
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Lalsangkima Pachuau, "Missiology in a Pluralistic World. The Place of Mission study in Theological Education," in IRM 89 (355, October 2000) p.543
18. "Missio Dei: The Basis of Mission Theology or a Wrong Path?" in IRM 92 (367, October 2003), pp.589, 590
19. Ibid. p.596
20. "Mission and Evangelism in Unity Today," in "You are the Light of the World" Statements on Mission by the World Council of Churches 1980-2005, WCC Publications, Geneva 2005, p. 65
21. The Church for Others and the Church for the World: A Quest for Structures for Missionary Congregations, Geneva, WCC, 1968, p.20, quoted in L.Pachuau, op.cit., p.544.
22. L.Pachuau, op.cit., p.544.
23. Op.cit., p.9
24. Go forth in peace. Orthodox Perspectives on Mission, WCC Mission Series No.7, pp.3-9.
25. Ion Bria, op.cit., p.69.
26. Ibid.
27. Archbishop Ioann, Ecclesiological and Canonical Foundations of Orthodox Mission, in IRM 90 (358, July 2001), p.275
28. The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church, Crestwood, NY, St.Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1976, p.178.
29. Preot Prof.Dr. Dumitru Staniloae, Teologia Dogmatic Ortodoxă, vol. 2, Editura In-



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- stitutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 1997, p.186.
30. Ion Bria, *Liturgy after the Liturgy. Mission and Witness from an Orthodox Perspective*, WCC publications, Geneva, 1996.
31. *Ibid.*, p.40
32. David Bosch, *op.cit.*, p.494
33. Samuel and John S.Pobee (eds.), *Theology by the People: reflections on Doing Theology in Community*, Geneva, WCC Publications, 1986, p.91
34. M. Evans, *Teaching Congregations: Theological Paradigm for Ministerial Formation*, ITLD, 2003, p.19
35. IRM 94 (373, April 2005), Editorial, p.201
36. See the document "Mission and Evangelism in Unity Today," *op.cit.*
37. *Ecumenism in the 21st century*, *op.cit.*, p.28
38. John S. Pobee (ed.), *Towards Viable Theological Education: Ecumenical Imperative, Catalyst of Renewal*, Geneva, WCC Publications, 1997, p.1
39. Vol. 94 ( 373, April 2005), p.200
40. [Editorial] Prof. Mosoiu went on and presented few ideas of Father Staniloae's mystical vision on ecclesiology.

**FIRST GROUP REPORT**  
**MISSION AND THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH:**  
**IMPLICATIONS FOR THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION**

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***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 loquitur* (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

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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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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*?

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