

World Council of Churches
Education and Ecumenical Formation

October 2000



*Group discussion during the Orthodox Theological Education Consultation,
2-9 February, 2000, Athens, Greece.*

This quarterly journal aims to encourage sharing and cooperation among all who are working for the renewal of the churches through programmes of ministerial formation. All correspondence regarding MINISTERIAL FORMATION should be sent to the address below. Submission of relevant articles, reports and news is welcomed. Items in this journal do not necessarily reflect the views of the WCC and its programme on Education and Ecumenical Formation (formerly Programme on Theological Education).



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LETTER FROM THE STAFF

Dear friend and colleague,

With this issue of October 2000, No 91, we bring you the last four papers presented at the “Consultation on Orthodox Theological Education and Ecumenical Themes” held in Athens, Greece in February this year. We are also pleased to include two papers from former colleagues in the WCC and theological educators. K. M. George, a former staff at the Ecumenical Institute Bossey, shares with us his thoughts about Christian unity in Asia in the 21st Century and concludes with a meditation on bamboo as a metaphor for Christian unity. Gloria and Ross Kinsler on the other hand give us food for thought on biblical Jubilee as Jesus’ message for 21st Century. These papers make up the first part of this issue.

Part two will focus on articles and reports that try to capture the key issues discussed in several theological conferences and seminars that have taken place in the Caribbean/Latin America, Africa and Asia in the course of this year, especially in July and August. In all these conferences, Ecumenical Theological Education (ETE) Programme was involved in one way or other.

The whole October issue gives us a taste of the many activities that are taking place in the ETE networks, the vibrancy and creativity that is generated when theological students, educators and administrators rise to the occasion and face the challenges with courage, determination and vision while embracing the opportunities with humility, joy and passion.

In the last article, we share with you important information regarding the kind of projects WCC supports through ETE office. Please take time to read this information so that we can improve our lines of communication.

We are grateful to all those who take time to give us feedback on what you read in MF and what you are doing. Let us stay in touch.

As we approach the end of the year 2000, may our caring God bring Jubilee tidings to all those who suffer and struggle for justice and life.

Nyambura Njoroge

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PART I

ECUMENISM IN THE ARMENIAN CATHOLICOSATE OF CILICIA

Shahan Sarkissian

I consider this consultation between different Orthodox Churches, Theological Universities and Seminaries as a real sign of hope for our ecumenical pilgrimage. The hope of

- opening this new century with this kind of brotherly encounter, which allows us to better know each other's concerns and work, in order to program our future ecumenical collaboration; and
- having the opportunity to rethink our common Christian history and heritage in the light of new knowledge to be acquired during this meeting, for the sake of preparing a new generation of Church servants and ecumenical workers.

At the start of this short intervention let me try to make a rapid survey of the realities we are experiencing in my Church and Catholicosate. This of course is not an exhaustive study, just a few points:

A/ The Armenian Orthodox Church has always been and still is essentially an ecumenical Church, believing in theological dialogue. We firmly believe that the Church, as the mystical body of our Lord, is one and as such can never be divided by human efforts. We acknowledge that historical and other circumstances have divided the institutional Church and visible unity has been lost. We believe that all our efforts should be directed towards restoring this visible unity, without endangering our common Apostolic Faith and Tradition as well as our cultural specificity.

B/ The Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia, which I represent, lives in a diasporic situation due to unfortunate circumstances well known to you all. Its dioceses are spread practically all over the world. Let us remember that our headquarters are situated in the Middle East. This confronts us with an inescapable reality, which is the following: we naturally live in an ecumenical context, together with brothers and sisters from many other Christian denominations, as well as from other faith traditions. This fact has impacted our ecumenical approach and engagement and we cannot overlook it. We are engaged in the ecumenical movement practising what we already experience in our every day life, and this on various levels ranging from bi- or multi-lateral theological encounters to existential, social life.

C/ As a consequence to the importance it gives to ecumenical issues and in order to better organise its involvement in the ecumenical movement, the Catholicosate has a special Office for Ecumenical Relations. Its members are not only involved in representing our Catholicosate in various ecumenical events and meetings; it also organises on a regular basis special seminars and study programmes for ecumenical formation and education addressed to both beginners and people already involved in ecumenical activities from all our Dioceses.

D/ Furthermore the Catholicosate of Cilicia is a firm believer in the crucial importance of education and awareness building.

1. One of the important Departments within the Catholicosate of Cilicia is that of Christian Education under the directorship of an Archbishop. It has as its main task the preparation, in consultation with diocesan institutions, of various study programmes specific to each diocesan context. In this respect an important input in publishing is to be noted, as well as the organisation of seminars for the laity.

2. The educational system in all our Dioceses is headed by the diocesan Bishop; hence the Educational Board of the Catholicosate headed by His Holiness in person oversees all the programmes. Consequently the ecumenical approach is felt in the curricula of the schools, especially in what concerns history and religion courses.
3. In order to further stress the place of religious education and formation among the people, and especially the young, at the very beginning of its history in exile, our Catholicosate has founded an important network of Sunday schools, through which is stressed not only our own tradition but also that of other Christian denominations. We are talking here of an almost seventy-five-year old Christian education diakonia to the people.
4. Understandably this educational system has to take into consideration the university students to whose needs the Church has to cater. A special Association of Armenian Church University Students was founded. It is very active not only through its own study programmes but also and mainly through the collaboration that has been developing with other Christian student associations, namely Syndesmos and others.
5. All these activities as well as the imperative of serving the people of God through the institutions of our Church need adequately prepared human resources, which brings us to talk about the Theological Seminary of the Catholicosate of Cilicia and its approach to ecumenism.
 - The curriculum of the Seminary covers many subjects, mainly and as a matter of fact, Religion, Church and Armenian Church History, Patristics, Canon Law, Systematic and Pastoral Theologies, Christian Ethics, etc. I wish to underline that these courses are given, if I may say so, in an *ecumenical* framework as they consider the specific subject within the whole Christian family and various Christian traditions, while highlighting the specificity of the Armenian Church.
 - An important addition to the curriculum was made five years ago when the study of Ecumenism was introduced. It covers not only the history of the ecumenical movement, the specific and historic involvement of our Church and our Catholicosate in this movement, but also an introductory study of the various Christian theological, ethical, pastoral and ecumenical thoughts and approaches. A specific course covers the study of the history, evolution, impact, difficulties and challenges of the World Council of Churches and the Middle East Council of Churches. The various bi-lateral dialogues in which our Catholicosate is involved are also taken into consideration, as well as the study of the most important documents put forward by various ecumenical bodies (i.e. some documents of Faith and Order of the WCC, the papers of the Dialogue between Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches, etc.).
 - As for the teachers and lecturers, both ordained and lay, most of them are actively involved in the ecumenical movement at various levels.
 - The Seminary is a founding and active member of ATIME (the Association of Theological Institutions in the Middle East), which groups the Seminaries of all major denominations in our region. This gives our students the opportunity to practice and experience what they have been taught as theory. Through sharing with other seminarians concerns and hopes, they deepen their first-hand knowledge of other Christian Church traditions.

All this leads me to focus on a few thoughts, which I think sustain our efforts in accomplishing what we consider to be our task for the purpose of a real ecumenical understanding, based on solid education and formation.

– I consider education to be collaboration in humility. Hence the ecumenical educator must have faith and love, next to the indispensable knowledge, in order to succeed in fulfilling his task.

– In ecumenical encounters like this one, preconceived ideas and prejudices may become dangerous obstacles in our search for a viable ecumenism. Isolation is another potential obstacle on our ecumenical journey.

– In ecumenism, although we have to deal mainly with intangible issues and thoughts, there is an urgent need for a pragmatic and practical approach in our search for common programmes and methodologies, if we want to address the various needs of our students. Let us not forget that we are living in a globalised society, which makes our students receptive to new ideas and concerns. Shall we be afraid of addressing issues that can be considered as controversial even with our seminarians and young audiences within our Christian associations? Where are they going to get their guidelines, if not through the educational systems put up by our various Churches?

– Our approach must take into account the givens of modern scientific pedagogy in order to keep pace with the world we are living in. But the big challenge remains: how to achieve this without losing our Christian, our Orthodox specificity?

Finally I believe that the best ecumenical education is achieved through the living example of inspired people who devote their life and energy for the sake of the visible unity of the Church, in obedience to our Lord's commandment: *Let them be one*. I feel humbly privileged to belong to a Church and a Catholicosate whose Head is one of the foremost ecumenists, who strongly encourages the involvement of all the members of his Church, clergy and laity, men and women, old and young, in the ecumenical journey.

Ecumenical concerns and issues must be addressed in a spirit of Christian love, with an optimistic attitude based on our Faith in the guidance of our Risen Lord and the Holy Spirit and in a spirit of deep Christian humility.

***THE CHALLENGES OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION
IN THE MIDDLE EAST***

Mary Mikhael

Greetings to you all on the break of a new millenium of our Lord. I believe this consultation is timely. As the world gets smaller, and distances get shorter, challenges of the Christian church in general get stronger than ever before.

I have been involved in the life of the church for about half a century, and in the ecumenical movement for the last twenty years of my life. Unfortunately I cannot say that the work on the ecumenical stage is easier now than it was when I started. In fact there are persons who would say the ecumenical movement has “bankrupted” or others who would say, now we have evidence that the ecumenical movement failed to survive. Personally I do not believe that it bankrupted, nor it has failed to survive. It still enjoys its original wealth and its life can never decrease for one single reason, that is, because it is what God wanted for his church and it is what Jesus prayed for on his way to the cross.

As we may all know in many of its earlier publications the WCC spoke of the ecumenical movement as being, the church in search of the will of God in its life and work. That is, the way through which the church gets itself engaged in the study and action for the enhancement of justice, peace, and integrity of creation. To the way through which the church proclaims the eternal and constant purpose of God for humankind. To the way through which the church participates in and becomes part of the mission of God in the world.

If the ecumenical movement is the church in search of the will of God in its life and work, the church then can never but be ecumenical in its nature and in its inner being, and thus, its life will be marked by continuous encounter with severe challenges.

I come from an old theological institution in the Middle East, the Near East School of Theology, which is in fact the oldest that we know of in our area. It is an institution that has carried in its conscience the anxiety of the church in the Middle East for a living witness. While the ecumenical movement flourished in Europe, scholars from our seminary were first to initiate it in the Middle East. About two years ago we held a consultation with the Evangelical Seminary in Egypt and similar institutions in Lebanon. Our aim was to address the theme of “The Challenges of Theological Education in the Middle East”. In the opening session our systematic theology professor, Dr. George Sabra, has identified five challenges to theological education in the Middle East. These are as follows:

1. The first challenge has to do with the nature of the Middle Eastern societies. The Middle Eastern societies are societies that are traditional and live under an umbrella of some overall power or authority (be it in the church or families in the society) that constantly seeks to arm itself against modernity and changes which are viewed as threats against the historical, cultural and even religious values. The traditions of the fathers offer stability and strength in the face of any form of change, be it political, social, cultural, or any other. Tradition is the source of life and, it is transcendent and sacred.

In its conception and structure, our Seminary is the product of Western modernity. Methodology and content of our theological thought is one that utilizes, and dialogues with, the logic of modernity. Other seminaries are grounded in tradition, yet we are challenged to dialogue and cooperate and we need to succeed.

2. The second challenge emerges from the fact that Christians live as a minority among a much larger Muslim majority. Being a minority one grows up with a special feeling, related to freedom of expression of what one believes and values, one's sense of equality in citizenship, freedom, rights and duties, all are under a magnifying glass. Moreover, Muslims have an official theory about Jesus and Christianity, while Christians do not have an official and binding dogma concerning Muhammad and Islam.

Christian theological education cannot ignore the Islamic beliefs about God, revelation, the book, sin and human being, etc... Christians have to provide an objective knowledge of Islam and its basic principles, while it must maintain its command to teach and preach always, everywhere, and to everyone. Thus, we need God's guidance and wisdom to maintain a balance of life and witness.

3. The third challenge is connected to the Arab-Israeli struggle. This brings to the surface the issues of justice and peace, the place of the Old Testament and the designation of the chosen people of God. This is not a minimal challenge especially for our youth.
4. Challenge of ecumenism, respect of openness to and acceptance of plurality within the one essence, probably the one that must take the most attention of theological education in every church.
5. The issue of identity specially for the Protestant churches in particular. This is of course related to number 4, as we are always invited to come back home.
6. Moreover, and over and above the points of Dr. Sabra, the challenge which I consider the greatest at the break of the third millenium and in light of the first five challenges, is related to the place and ministry of women in the church. The church is invited to practice justice and righteousness and enhance life to all men and women equally.

If the church searches for the will of God for its life and its work along its history it must find that, justice and righteousness have not been accomplished in regard to the participation of women in the process of decision making, in the total ministry of the church.

I invite the church to reread its Bible. Most particularly to reread the story of Martha and Mary in the Gospel of Luke. The story emphasized the fact that Jesus praised Mary for making the good choice, it seems that the church along its history made room for women only to be like Martha.

**ECUMENICAL THEMES
IN ORTHODOX THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION IN ROMANIA**

Ion Bria

This brief comment is based on my recent experience (1995-1999) as professor-associate for dogmatic and ecumenical theology at the faculty of theology, University of Sibiu, Romania. I had proposed a course on “The Presentation of the Orthodoxy in the New Ecumenical Scene”, with special insistence on the new ecumenical ministry of the Orthodox church (irrespective of its status - national, minority, majority) and on the need for a new generation of “*pasteurs*”. Sibiu is a proper context for such a debate. On the one hand, the faculty is fully integrated into the public university structure (which does not mean that the faculty and the church are separated as parallel bodies), being aware of the challenges of modernity; on the other hand, Sibiu is the center of (German) Lutheran church in Romania which has a faculty of theology open and receptive to the insights of orthodox doctrine and spirituality. This is why the faculty is very much concerned by a sound ecumenical formation during students training (out of 400, 150 are women) as well as fresh opportunities for re-formation from time to time of the priests. As all orthodox schools, this faculty is living in an age where old doctrines and traditions are questioned (epistemological challenge) and where the responsibility for society and humankind seems to have a new intensity (ecumenical challenge). I will mention three ecumenical concerns, which need new theological evaluation:

1. Ecumenism is a challenge to (established) theology, the sharpest point of theology, which compels the church to develop new directions of its global discourse. Such overloading discourse, formulated recently in various documents and papers concerning the participation of the Orthodox churches in the Ecumenical Movement, does not hold all the answers related to the “Ecumenical vision”. It touches major dimensions of Orthodox Tradition but does not do justice to its own history (or historicity) too often unequal, deficient and exclusive. The Orthodoxy is a history of faith of a people, a permanent encounter between existential experience and the affirmation that the risen Christ is the Lord. Equally, the place of other churches in the ecumenical movement has not been developed sufficiently in theological terms. The wide generality of Orthodox Tradition (the postulate of the Undivided Church, the crispation on the age of Schism, 1054), has left little room for the tradition of particular churches, for the specificity of every confession or confessional families. Their incompatibility (opposite ecclesiologies, divergent ethos, ethics and understanding of the Gospel itself) has been taken for granted without serious theological research and insights. History shows, however, that the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Tradition of Apostolic Faith may come through them (many protestants lived in situations where the whole concept of authority has been diminished and the emphasis has been shifted from institution to personal faith), and they are not total strangers.

What is then a theme that “deserves more attention from the Orthodox theologians and faculties”? It is perhaps the nature of ecumenism in the orthodox communion facing the dilemma of an ecumenical consensus, the difficulty to define a common vision for the whole church today. The burden to articulate this vision in theological terms of the Early undivided Church, is too heavy. Not one of the WCC member churches dares to underestimate the unique witness of the Orthodox Church, but particular traditions claim to possess criteria for universality and do not want to be treated as marginalized.

However, there is need to re-shape the scene of a new catholicity (“according to the whole”), which recognize that all cultures, traditions and languages have the potential to receive and express the universality of the Gospel. “There will necessarily and preferably be a plurality of forms and experiences used to convey, proclaim and celebrate the same reality of Christ” (*Orthodoxy and Cultures. An Inter-*

Orthodox Consultation, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 17-19 January 1996, edited by Ioan Sauca, WCC publications, Geneva, p. 183).

Beyond this, the Orthodoxy had a traditional conciliar ministry which seems to be in agreement with the present expectations of the ecumenical community. She has to recover its profound role of bridge among the Churches, knowing the crisis of ecumenical consensus, by finding a language, which heals and unites, a language of coming home. One way forward in this crisis lies in the ecumenical hermeneutics challenging false postulates and stereotypes, highlighting the common doctrines and traditions of particular confessions. Orthodoxy is not an alibi to leave the ecumenical dialogue, when many churches want to know how they should continue to remain rooted in the Apostolic Faith and to shape a new sense of universality without losing their identity.

2. Theological reflection, Bible reading and meditation, the practice of prayers and non-liturgical worship are taking place in a great diversity of places, centers and situations. The proliferation of missionary associations, diaconial foundations, charismatic and monastic communities is a visible expression of lay vitality. Theologians and theological schools should be thankful for the stimulus and challenge of such groups, sometimes critical and self-confident. They raise questions for the church, as the church may want to raise questions with them, when they operate outside her immediate authority. That will not always be easy or acceptable. Some of them may become so absorbed in their own inward life, in the protection of the traditions of a particular church, in attachment to an ethos of ethnic origin, to neglect the commitment to the wider church and to the world. Theological schools must be ready to offer their correction on the basis of truth and love, and to refer these groups both to the total community and to other styles and traditions. Theologians may have a key role in resolving that tension, by approaching the mission and tradition of the Orthodoxy on an ecumenical basis. Not all of these groups are deceived into believing that ecumenism is heretical, out dated, a canonical impossibility. Faithfulness to the Tradition must not blind our openness and responsibilities to the universal Church. Our ecumenical integrity commits us to learning and receiving from one another.

Theological awareness of women is increasing. In many parishes, public schools and universities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society networks, there are women as well as men who are fully trained theologians. The validity and significance of their training needs to be more fully accepted, acknowledged and used. Theologians and Theological faculties should be able and ready to release areas of teaching responsibilities into the hands of the women, to trust them to fulfil them, as they are trusted. Are not the women the new “*passeurs*” of Orthodoxy in the present century?

3. According to our ecclesial tradition, the local parish is the primary place for worship, mission, theological reflection, bible reading and witness. It is the ideal place for education towards ecumenism, unity and reconciliation, for local synodality. The priests based this conclusion on their ecclesiology, which affirms that the local church itself is a symbol and a manifestation of the universal church. But the local eucharistic assembly is not automatically a prophetic and healing community. Living in a new situation, priests, the faithful and youth consider that the Church should take the initiative to give flesh and blood to the spirituality of communion.

Many groups are involved in intercession and common worship, in creating new symbols, rites (for mixed marriages) and adequate space for heterogeneous population. In fact, the communities at the local level are engaged in defending social and political issues: civil rights, ecology, peace, action against violence, integration, xenophobia, sexism, anti-Semitism, religious intolerance. Some crossing confessional and cultural boundaries are concerned for those people with disabilities, abandoned children, migrant

workers (as people move from the villages to the cities), refugees, marginalized, poor and people living with HIV/AIDS. At this level, there is a development and greater use of lay pastoral care and leadership and greater acceptance of ecumenical solutions, including re-institution of new forms and styles of ministry, witness, apostolate and presence. Having reached a deep level of common Christian witness they are daring to share the eucharistic communion, even before any doctrinal consensus has been formally recognized. What is the theological value of the new contemporary experience of Jesus Christ, putting the Lord of creation, “the beginning and the end” (Rev 21, 6), into the center of today’s society?

To conclude let me quote from the Report of a WCC consultation of the same topic held 10 years ago:

The churches are divided in their response to unity because little was done in the area of ecumenical receptivity and education. Part of the answer to the question of unity has to do, therefore, not so much with the content of theological convergence, but with the obstacles that lie in the way of concern common to all. There is a lack of ecumenical enthusiasm because the theological issues are not connected with the need and hunger of every part of Christ’s church. (*People Hunger to be near to God*, editor Ion Bria, WCC Publications, Geneva 1990, p. 41).

**TEACHING ORTHODOX THEOLOGY
IN PARTICULAR EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT**

Fr. Nicholas Bayego

It is fulfilling to start my presentation with a key note that the Orthodox martyria, witness, in Africa is surely becoming Africanized though at a slow pace. *Africanization* is a common terminology for *indigenization* by the Protestant Church; adaptation or *accommodation* by the Roman Catholics Church¹; and *incarnation*² by the Orthodox Catholic Church. For a better understanding of the Orthodox *Martyria*, in Sub Saharan Africa, I find it imperative to give first an overview of the context where the ‘*missio dei*’, God’s mission, is being planted and nurtured.

As Apostle Paul continuously claim of his conversion to Christianity and embarkment on the gentile mission endeavors without any prior consultation with the official Church in Jerusalem, i.e. the rubber stamp of the twelve apostles and the elders, so do we in African testify about our Orthodox martyria. Our testimony is that the Holy Spirit blows wherever it will and as for this reason the same Spirit apocalyptically revealed the Orthodox Church treasure amidst her historical ruins to our African forefathers in the early 1920s through mere reading. Those men of great conviction formed themselves into a Church (under the name – African Orthodox Church) in 1929 and started on ‘unsure liturgical community’ of seekers. In 1946, an official recognition from the Patriarchate of Alexandria was given and it was not until 1960 when a first Greek Metropolitan was appointed and came to Eastern Africa with a few Greek missionaries to plant the true seeds of Orthodoxy. Twenty-two years later, in 1982, Archbishop Anastasios Yiannoulatos (then an Acting Archbishop of East Africa, now of Albania) did open a first modern Seminary in Kenya to cater to the ministerial formational needs of the African people. Prior to that period, the would be clergies were trained mainly in Greece and the USA. In 1995, the late Metropolitan Theodore Nankyama of Uganda also opened one which was followed a year later in Tanzania by Metropolitan Jonah Lwanga of Uganda, then Bishop of Bukoba, Tanzania.

While the pre-independence days were days for planting Christian witnesses, they were tinted with planting ethnic, clans and family divisions, and some of the end results were religious wars (Protestants with the Catholics, and Christians with Moslem). The 1960s marked the liberation of most of the African countries from the colonial regimes only to be followed by civil wars and strife, loss of life, property, besides displacing and uprooting of many people. The outcome has been devastating in terms of vicious circle of poverty, disease, and ignorance. In such a constantly unstable and ever-changing environment is where we are called upon to give our Orthodox witness to the poor, captives, and divided people, in the spirit of humility, love, and understanding.

African cultural values

The first missionaries to Africa, unlike Paul and the early Church who perceived some prophetic elements or the *σπέρματικὸν ἔλεος*, ‘divine sparks’, in the ‘pagan world’, they condemned out-right the African heritage as evil, primitive and inferior, and the western Christianity and civilization as superior. It was by then considered a blessing for the Africans to assimilate or adopt to that superior culture. However, after independence, a resuscitation and rediscovery of the African traditional religion(s) and other heritage ensued and the result has been insurgence of religious syncretism and even worse, emergence of atheistic tendency. The Orthodox Church has not been immune to this trap. The late Metropolitan Nankyama, has been an advocate of adoption of the positive African pre-Christianity cultures into our theology and Church life. For him, those cultures played a prophetic role. Despite the concept of the incarnation of

theology and orthopraxis, the old and the new types have been left many times to run side by side. Archbishop Anastasios Yannoulatos on the hand moved a step further from *lex credendi*, by encouraging the transfiguration of some cultural values into the liturgical life of the Church such as the use of drums, dancing, and clapping of hands. And he has been on the forefront in the financing of the iconography project in African style, translations, writings, and printing of Orthodox Liturgical Service, and Catechistical books in vernacular languages, beside encouraging Church buildings without the separation wall, the iconostasis. Africanization or contextualization, for this matter, is a part of the continuous dialogue between the eternal truth of the gospel, the African culture(s), and the western Christianity and civilization. Stretching too far the contextualization concept of theology could result into syncretism and secularism. It is my hope that syncretism and ‘the sinister influences of secularism’³ could be avoided, if only, we were unified unto one voice and common witness as Christians. The temptation of alienating theological forms from the real Church and her real life is embarrassing and dangerous to the Church which is the true experience of Heaven on earth⁴.

Separation of traditions from the Tradition

The Africans used to pass on their traditions through the word of the mouth such as story-telling around the fire-place in the middle of the nights. For this reason the Africans may feel at home with the Orthodox application of ‘Tradition’ notion as guide in our theology. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, the Divine Word is incarnated in the life of the faithful. In each culture there is a give and take dynamism. There is no one formula. The meeting of one culture with another always create tension within any given social group of which the Church is not exceptional – such forces would include the conservatives, liberals, and the radicals.

Over the 2000 years of unbroken unity (of the Orthodox Church), there is no doubt that in each local Church there have emerged traditions which are by-product of historico-socio-cultural forces which at times are difficult to distinguish from the authentic or original traditions, the *Tradition*. Sometimes, the missionaries to Africa from Europe were not so consciously aware of the *nominalism*⁵ factor they were exporting to Africa, and as such there has been failures to bridge the chaos of generation-gap in terms of forms of Church’s life from the ‘reality whose presence, power, and meanings is meant to express and as a consequence, the transformation of the forms into an end in itself’. This has been a negation of Orthodoxy – for the task of the Church was not, and is not to preserve the ‘ancient beautiful forms’, but the reality. The pick and choice model is not the best answer for the cunning enemy of God can use it effectively to foster more and more divisions. The patristic writers such as Gregory of Naziazus, Origen, Augustine, observed many positive elements or wisdom in the pagan world which they recommended for adoption in the Church but acceptance had been through the ‘acid test of ethos’⁶. Any alteration of the central truth of the Church would be tantamount to betrayal of the identity of the Catholic Church.

The Church as body of Christ, has the responsibility to affect and implement changes:

In the Orthodox Church the issue of canon laws, and the ecclesiology are becoming stumbling blocks in the life of the Christians. The educators, the Bishops and theologians pay lip service to the theology they preach, and as such theology does fail to dialogue with the culture of the local people. In Africa, our Church is still young, with the property as those of the early Church but ironically we are experiencing a ‘transfer’ of already made traditions which we are supposed to assimilate. The end result is the failure of ‘orthodoxia’ to correlate with ‘orthopraxis’. John Mbiti critique is to follow the New Testament order which is ‘Christianity first, and then Jew or African or Indian, or English’⁷. As theologians and teachers, it is our duty to raise a prophetic voice as regards dialogue with the pluralistic cultures of our modern days, encourage liturgical renewal, participation and ecumenical search of Christian love and unity in a

visible form in the spirit of love, unity, and truth. As long as we fail to find that ‘cutting edge’, our Christian mission is misplaced and we are in for tough days ahead.

Teaching theology

In the African traditions, teaching was informal, life long and less ado with modern time factor. Time, according John Mbiti, was arranged on an ‘ontological rhythm’ running series of never ending circles or repetitive succession⁸. With the time becoming a scarce commodity in the life of a modern African, teaching religious matters is becoming the more difficult. The only quality time at disposal is limited by the modern life rhythm – consumerism, economic progress, modernization, and other secular factors; Sunday has become the day for Church matters such as liturgy, Catechetical classes, but also for recreation. So the best alternatives for educational purpose is Liturgy, seminary training, and personal reading endeavours of Christian literature since now the literacy rate is ranging about 60 or 70 percent. In this case both the formal and the informal educational approaches could be utilized to extend our Christian witness. This requires the establishment of libraries at Seminaries and Mission headquarters, Sunday schools, presentations on mass media such as radios, television, and newspapers. Even in the availability of man-power, there are Ecclesiastical bureaucracy and financial constrain as negative factors during the implementations stage.

a/ Seminaries

Given the tribal differences in all parts of Africa, most courses are conducted in English; and liturgies Swahili, and other vernacular languages, such as Luganda, Gikuyu, Luo, etc. It should be noted that most of the seminarian candidates have no wide prior knowledge of the Orthodox faith and others are simply converts whose desire is to learn about orthodox, so we use a three dimensional approach to introduce and expose the students to as many Orthodox and heterodox literature sources as possible: *African tradition, present day, and the Church dimension*. These approaches help open dialogue as regards coloration of our traditional heritage, gathering of individual personal experiences in every life, and reflection on the Orthodox ‘ethos’ in relationship with other Christian sects. The main aims are, at time used to expose the students to pluriform dynamics, and as a fall back to compensate for our failure to provide such courses as Islam, Social political science, Ecumenism and African Religion.

b/ Liturgy

It has been our experience in the Orthodox Church that the ‘Holy Table’ is the best teacher in terms of Orthodox theology. Professor Vassiliadis concurs in this aspect with the late Father Florovsky that ‘*Lex Orandi*’ has a privileged priority over ‘*Lex Credendi*’⁹. He maintains that the *lex credendi* depends on the devotional experience and vision of a worshipping community. He highlights that ‘Liturgy’ does not necessarily mean par say the sacrament of Holy Eucharist but all the Church’s sacraments and rites which reflect the holistic life of the Church. Each day a Christian or seminarian is exposed to and participate in the life of the liturgy, his identity changes. The old man dies and a new one resurrect and hence becomes a member of the body of Christ, the heavenly community on earth, the Eucharistic community, the Church. The experience of a new life is expressed in the language of symbols, rituals. In this aspect, I find the Orthodox Church rituals to be very similar with those of the African cultures in the area of prayer, sacrifice, priesthood, eschatology, and sense of family community. The intensive usage of ‘rituals’ in the Orthodox service may be hard for a simple African to understand the doctrinal ramifications and explanation of the various movements in service, but the ritual movements and gestures easily create a ‘magical’ experience and a new ‘doxological’ reality in mind-set of his/her world reality. In other words, ‘rituals transmit culture and create a reality’ such that ‘culture for rituals are more to a society than are words to the thought’.¹⁰ The traditional spiritual world in the mind of an

African could be an asset to be put at good use by any orthodox theologians to enhance a deeper eschatological life orientation which was taken for granted by African traditions. It is not surprising that Islam has succeeded in Africa: worship is conducted in an Arabic language and also filled with the ritualistic gestures or symbols, but despite that their population is on the rise now accounting for 40% of the total African population. The Orthodox Church, unlike Islam, regards all languages to have taken a form of glorification after the Pentecostal experience.

In glorification of God, the Bible and most of liturgical texts have been translated into vernacular languages of different ethnic groupings in Africa. In this way the mystical powers of the Holy Spirit can be positively appreciated, participated in, and lived. However not as magic experience, but above the traditional magical powers, the power of God's Kingdom.

c/ Participatory Liturgy

It is sad to note that in Europe, many Christians have lost the mystical powers embedded in Eucharist life and the Church regarded as an association or a theatre where as actors or performers and spectators: the priest and the singer or choir does all the worshipping and the Christian watch on till the dismissal. Even the response of the word 'Amen' is a big deal. To this effect, Metropolitan Apostolos of Kilkis, says that 'Liturgy losses its divine mysterious experience and hence become but magic'. In the traditional African worshipping service would be compared to that of the early Christian where every body was a participant, irrespective of sex, class, and age. In an African Orthodox Church setting, singing and dancing by Christians to the Lord would be taken as a given, save the conservative forces within which tend to deter freedom of expression in worship. Even children sing, thus eliminating rooms for the technocrat performers in the Church serves. However, the Orthodox theologians need to move one step further by changing or writing new relevant prayer books which actually reflect the African rhythm, and reflective of a deeper spirituality, the incarnated 'ethos'.

d/ Liturgy after liturgy

As a dismissal blessing, the celebrating priest, says: 'Let us depart in peace'¹¹. This marks a new beginning of the life of a Christian outside the Church walls. Sometimes the priest forgets that all his folk live on different level of hierarchy of needs. With some starving, sick, homeless, or displaced, the social gospel become the more important and crucial in our proclamation of the good news to the poor, captives, and the sick (Luke 4, 18-19). The priest, despite his age bracket, takes on the role of a traditional elder whose role was to counsel, to judge, defend the down trodden, and provide to the have-nots. In any case the faithful look at their local priest as the provider, example of charity, hard laborer, and pillar of love and reconciliation, besides being the spiritual role model. On a national level, the Orthodox Church has joined hand with the Protestant and Roman Catholics through Joint Christian councils to provide relief assistance, such as food, clothing, and construction of shelters for those civil war and earth quak victims, the poor and the displaced. Besides joining hands with other Christians, efforts are made to join with Moslem to provide educational facilities, medical needs, defense of human rights, and alleviation of poverty. Many Christian denominations and Islam have abused the social gospel to apply it as vehicle for conversion. Charity and love must be signs depicting our inner necessity to express our love in Christ.

¹ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission : Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 1998, 448. Bosch sees inculturation agents the Holy Spirit and the local community. And factors of context include the local dynamics such as social, economical, political, and religion.

² James Stamoolis, *Eastern Orthodox Mission Theology Today*, 1986, 61f. The hallmark of incarnation goes beyond the translation of the Scripture, or Liturgical texts, but the embodiment of God's truth in the languages and cultures of the people.

³ Ion Bria, *Go Forth in Peace: Orthodox Perspective on Mission*, Geneva, 1986, p. 15.

⁴ Alexander Schmemmann, *Church, World, Mission: Reflection on Orthodoxy in the West*, Crestwood, 1979, p. 21-21.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁶ Anastasios Yannoulatos, *Various Christian Approaches to the Other Religions: A Historical Outline*, Athens, 1971, 21f.

⁷ Keith B. Anderson, *Introductory Course and African Traditional Religion*, Nairobi, 1986, p. 176-177.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

⁹ Petros Vassiliadis' article on Peace, Tolerance: An Orthodox Perspective, November 1998, p. 2.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 3. Vassiliadis claim that rituals in the liturgical life take on a 'performance kind of speech' and there it is surely a form of communication which treasure is embodied in the various liturgies of the Church.

¹¹ Bria, 1986, p. 38.

**CONSIDER THE BAMBOO OF THE FIELD;
HOW THEY GROW: CHALLENGES AND IMPERATIVES
OF CHRISTIAN UNITY IN ASIA IN THE 21ST CENTURY***

Kondothra M. George

Many Christians in the ancient Roman empire believed that their “universal” empire was a God-given tool for Christian unity and missionary expansion.¹ Unity, universality and order were the essential elements that constituted the *pax romana*, the great peaceful condition in the vast empire. The Christian Church in the Roman empire had the same ideals.² The imperial structure and the Church order thus could complement each other. But unfortunately the first four centuries witnessed two major divisions around Christological issues – the Nestorian and the Chalcedonian. Several imperial authorities tried their best to keep the church united. Sadly the church chose to be divided.

The idea of Christian unity is sometimes bafflingly self-contradictory. The Church repeats the high priestly prayer of Jesus in all ages: “that they may be one as we are one”. It proclaims unity of the Body of Christ as a great ideal, but the church by itself is apparently unable to maintain unity. Often external political authority, pressure or persecution may unite Christians rather than genuine initiatives from within the church. Christians in India, from Roman Catholics to Pentecostals, now experience a sort of unity and togetherness because of the recent spurt of violence against Christians. Once the violence stops every church may return once again to its own business, least bothered about other communities.

In China, the various church denominations could together form a post-denominational church in a situation of political pressure. It is fairly easy to guess what might happen when the political situation changes.

Modern ecumenical movement has created several models of unity. Actual application of these models, in various degrees of success or failure, has been limited almost entirely to the churches of the Reformation tradition. It is mainly in this tradition that division and proliferation occurred during the last 500 years. The membership of an ecumenical organization like the WCC, constituted in 1948, swelled to a considerable extent over the past 50 years due to this phenomenon.

Some Models

Let me mention briefly some of the proposed models of unity.³

a/ Organic Unity: The Church is conceived as a living organism with the characteristic diversity of its various members. The Faith and Order movement began with the vision of “a Church so united (that) the ultimate loyalty of every member would be given to the whole body and not to any part of it”. More than 60 united churches have emerged in the 19th and 20th centuries following the organic model. Many denominations with particular identities and forms of church life ceased to exist. The formation of the Church of South India in 1947 from Anglican, Methodist, Reformed and Congregationalist streams was an example of organic unity. The organic model aimed at creating national (“local”) churches expressing the fullness of Christ’s body in a particular place. Some United Churches within the Reformation tradition followed this model.

b/ Conciliar Fellowship:⁴ The Nairobi Assembly of the WCC in 1975 followed up the earlier Faith and Order discussions and proposed a “conciliar” manner in which “councils of representatives of all

local churches at various geographical levels” could express the unity of the local churches. The idea emerged from the ancient ecumenical councils of churches which developed a mode of bringing all the local churches together for deliberating on fundamental doctrinal matters of common concern and from councils of local churches which met periodically to make decisions on social ethical and disciplinary questions affecting the church in a particular locality. The Uppsala Assembly of the WCC (1968) envisioned “a genuinely universal council” that may speak once again for all Christians and lead the way into the future. On this basis, the Faith and Order Commission began a study on conciliarity understood as “the coming together of Christians-locally, regionally or globally – for common prayer, counsel and decision, in the belief that the Holy Spirit can use such meetings for his own purpose by reconciling, renewing and reforming the Church by guiding it towards the fullness of truth and love” (Louvain 1971). Later the Salamanca consultation of Faith and Order (1973) as well as the Nairobi Assembly of the WCC (1975) stated their guiding vision for the unity of the Church: “The one Church is to be envisioned as a conciliar fellowship of local churches which are themselves truly united. In this conciliar fellowship, each local church possesses in communion with the others, the fullness of catholicity, witnesses to the same apostolic faith, and, therefore recognizes the others as belonging to the same church of Christ and guided by the same Spirit”.

The Orthodox Churches showed particular interest in the conciliar model.

- c/ Communion of Communions: This is a proposal especially from within the Roman Catholic Church, put forward in 1970 by Cardinal Willebrandts, Secretary of the Secretariat for Unity at the Vatican. A larger ecclesial allegiance with a common dogma, sacraments and basic ordering of ministry will accommodate different confessions with their particular theological emphasis and method, discipline, liturgical life and spirituality. The Bishop of Rome, however, would exercise in the one church “a unique ministry in the service of unity”. This model arises probably from the Roman Catholic experience of “Uniate” or Oriental Catholic Churches whose tradition and membership come predominantly from the Orthodox Churches.

These models have been useful in the ecumenical reflection on unity, but none of them satisfactorily answers the plethora of questions practically confronting the churches in their way forward. Thomas Best gives a summary of such questions and issues that need to be addressed:

1. What should be the structural form of the one church at local, regional and global levels;
2. What should be the nature of authority to be exercised for maintaining unity;
3. How is the proper balance between unity and diversity in the one church achieved;
4. How do we accommodate new ecumenical thought on the nature of the church, particularly the concept of *koinonia* (fellowship);
5. How do we conceive the relationship between the visible unity of the church and the renewal of its life, witness, mission and service?

Politics of “One World”

The modern ecumenical movement projected a grand vision encompassing the whole world. Its perception of ‘internationalism’ at the beginning of the 20th century was inspired by the hope for ‘one world’⁵. John R.Mott, one of the pioneers of the movement traveled the length and breadth of the world and was called the most traveled missionary after St.Paul himself.

The movement revived an old word *oikoumene* to express its vision – “the whole inhabited world”. The word, however, had strong political-cultural ancestry since it was the synonym for the Roman empire in ancient times. *Politically* the borders of *oikoumene* was simply the borders of the Roman empire. *Culturally* it represented the powerful Graeco-Roman civilization.

In projecting a vision of internationalism the western pioneers of the Christian *oikoumene* were inadvertently legitimizing the colonial expansion of the European imperial powers, which was at its height in early 20th century. Again the ever expanding borders of the ecumenical-missionary movement coalesced with the mighty, ever-expanding frontiers of western empires. So politically interpreted from a non-western perspective “the one world” projected by the modern ecumenical movement was essentially a spiritualized form of western imperial ambitions. Culturally it represented the powerful Euro-American civilization.

It is the same old “one world” that sticks out of the current phenomenon of globalization, aiming to unite or ‘network’ the world through the new order of market economy, communication and information technology. Politically and culturally, it is the subtly expanding hold of the west over the rest of the world. Contemporary ecumenism has to grapple with the forces of globalization since both ultimately project a united world. The church has to carefully distinguish its own vision of unity from that of the present movement for globalization.

Catholicity and Universalism

The undercurrent of universalism in all western projects has to be critically viewed. The Greek word *katholikos* (catholic) was translated as ‘universal’ in European languages, ‘Universal’ has come to mean, among others, geographical extension. In the Roman Catholic understanding, especially after the colonial expansion of Spanish and Portuguese powers beginning with the 15th century, ‘universal church’ refers to the Catholic Church spread throughout the world.

This, in fact, is a distortion of the Greek adjectival word *katholiki*, which was applied to the church, as in *ecclesia katholiki*. The adjective ‘catholic’ meant the fullness of truth, the plenitude and integrity of the Church, the Body of Christ. It is the totality, the holistic nature of the church. It is not a quantitative category.⁶ Church Catholic is not necessarily a church spread throughout the world and measured in terms of the number of the faithful. So the ‘universalization’ of the church is to be critically understood in light of the colonial expansion and the quantitative church growth.

The Asian sense of plurality and identity of particular cultures is not hospitable to the idea of a “universal” church in the spatial-geographical sense as pointed out above, though some of our Asian churches, faithful to their western ancestry, may try to imitate the model perceived to be successful in wielding power and influence in the world. The universalistic model will require a world structure and a world authority (“universal bishop”) as developed, for example, in the western Roman Catholic Church. The ancient eastern churches as well as the churches of the Reformation rejected this model. We should admit, however, that in the opinion of many this model is still more efficient and impressive than others as far as institutional strength and management expertise are concerned.

Local and Conciliar

The ecumenical discussions, however, often return to the conciliar relationship among the local churches as a viable model faithful to the apostolic period and the early church, that is, before the rise of the patriarchal sees which came up as super episcopal structures on the model of Roman imperial-political structure of the government.

The notion of the “local church” has great significance in shaping a viable ecclesiology for the future. According to the New Testament and the early Fathers of the church, a local church is the church of

Christ in a particular place manifesting the fullness (catholicity) of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church. At the heart of the local church is the community celebration of the Eucharist – the central mystery of the life, death and resurrection of Christ – presided over by the episcopus / presbyter. Every local church is integrally related to other local churches in the same apostolic faith in Christ and the communion in the eucharist. It is the bishop of a local church who together with other bishops from other local churches pastorally oversees that the local church is in unbroken communion with other local churches in the same faith, eucharist and acts of loving service to the world. So the bishop becomes a sign of unity and bishops together in council surrounded by the presbyters and the faithful symbolize the conciliar character of the church.

Relationship and communication in the spirit of sharing burdens and supporting each other is fundamental to conciliarity.

Local church in this sense is not a part of the whole. The early church had no model of part and whole or local and universal churches. Local church is the church Catholic. John Pergamon (Zizioulas), a very distinguished Orthodox theologian, writes: “Catholicity of the church is not to be juxtaposed to locality: it is rather an indispensable aspect of the local church, the ultimate criterion of ecclesiality for any local body”⁷. He believes that the following elements are involved if a local church is to be in full communion with the rest of the local churches:

- a/ That the problems and concerns of all local churches should be the objects of prayer and active care by a particular local church. If a local church falls into indifference as to what is going on in the rest of the world, it is certainly not a church.
- b/ That a certain common basis of the vision and understanding of the Gospel and the eschatological nature of the church exist between a local church and the rest of the local churches. This requires a constant vigilance concerning the true faith in all local churches by every single local church.
- c/ That certain structures (like synods, councils of churches) be provided which will facilitate this communion.

Limitations of the present models

An overview of the various models and experiments in Church unity in the 20th century reveals the following:

- i. The ecumenical movement struggled with the issue of unity among the three major Christian traditions, namely Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant. Verbal and conceptual understanding and agreements have been made, as in the Lima document on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry. But eucharistic communion, practical consensus on doctrine and some sort of a conciliar pattern of relationship are still a long way ahead.
- ii. Some success has been registered within the Protestant family by united and uniting churches. However, this has only checked to some extent the denominational spirit, and could not provide any impetus to the union of all major traditions.
- iii. The Church union efforts so far have been made in the “classical” western style, using western tools of negotiation, common doctrinal statements, highly logical projection of models, set agenda and time frame. Over the years, however, the western churches’ dominance in the process declined, and various churches from the non-western world, mostly poor and once colonized peoples, took over more responsibility. With new contextual theologies and locally relevant ways of Christian witness and mission in the non-western world, interest in the earlier unity agenda and mode of operation declined. Faith and Order is a typical example.

Asian Context

Our attention may now be turned to the Asian context and its particular sensitivities by taking into account the following:

- i. Christianity is still a very small minority, except in the Philippines, in spite of huge efforts made by the Europeans and American powers to evangelize Asia.
- ii. Asian Christians live their daily life in the context of highly evolved religious, philosophical and spiritual perceptions originating in Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Shintoism, Islam and so on. This is quite different from the mono-cultural mono-religious western experience.
- iii. The Asian pluralistic situation extends to political, cultural, ethnic and racial diversity of the Asian population unlike the relatively more homogeneous populations of Europe and America in such respects.
- iv. Contrary to the general impression in the west, Asia has the venerable tradition of apostolic Christianity through St. Thomas the apostle and the later missionaries of the Church of the East.⁹ Semitic context of Christianity can very well dialogue with the Asian religious ethos without necessarily going through the west.
- v. Asia had the experience of two of the greatest religious missions in history long before the western colonial missions came there - the Buddhist mission and the East Syrian mission. Both were peaceful and did not use any coercive methods or political power to convert people by force unlike the western missions, which were mostly aggressive and accompanied by the coercive power of western colonial empires.

A Bamboo Meditation

In the light of the above observations it is clear that Asia will have to evolve its own methods for re-conceiving Christian unity.

Without, however, going to the rational-conceptual possibilities, let me turn to nature, in an Asian and biblical way, for some possible insights on ecclesial unity and witness in Asia. Let me propose a short meditation on the humble bamboo as a metaphor from nature. Bamboo grow all over Asia and so readily appear in our mind as a very ordinary plant. Some people have drawn religious meaning from this modest plant. Let me use the figure of bamboo in the following way:

1. Botanically bamboo belongs to the family of grass: Its “low origin” and ordinary status is a figure for the extreme minority status as well as the situation of most Christians who belong to Dalits, Minjung and other oppressed people. They are treated as grass and straw as they do not wield power. We should positively recognize our very modest status as grass as well as the “grass roots” situation for reflection on unity. “Sharing of suffering” and “solidarity of the broken people” are important aspects of unity in the Asian context.
2. Bamboo is hollow inside: At the heart of the incarnation of Christ is the mystery of the self-emptying (*kenosis*) of God. This is God’s identification with the powerless and the voiceless. It sounded hollow, that is, foolish and scandalous to Greeks and Jews, peoples with great history and self-conscious identity. Self-emptying hollowness of incarnation, however, sounded hope for all those who had no history or identity.

In the Asian Buddhist tradition *sunyata* (emptiness) is central to religious awareness and enlightenment. Some scholars would relate Sunyata to the kenosis of God and apophatic approach to the divine

mystery.¹⁰ Here also the hollowness of the bamboo suggests itself as a metaphor. Western theology (or “God-talk”) and the discourse on unity most often ignored the self emptying (*sunyata*) of the mystery of God and proceeded on the basis of their self-confident rationality and neat logical schemes for the unity of the church. Further, the confidence and heavy trust in the power of the institution of the church created power centers rather than preaching of the gospel to the poor. Missionary initiatives from the colonial period certainly produced many good results in the educational and medical fields. But gradually they built up more institutional power than could be afforded by poor Christians and non-Christian communities around. The Church speaking in the language of power brokers cannot witness to Christ in Asia. One of the elements that provoke the anti-Christian movement in India today is precisely the high power concentration in some Christian institutions sustained by foreign funds and connections.

3. The bamboo can, if needed, put forth roots and shoots at every joint. Each joint thus carries the fullness of the plant just as the ecclesial catholicity or fullness is manifested in every local church. It is not the part-whole relationship but the plenitude of truth holistically present in every local church.
4. One single bamboo shoot produces in time numerous bamboo by proliferation. But once grown they all look the same, of equal length and strength. There is no unhealthy hierarchy in between them. This provides an insight into the relationship between local churches. There is no “mother church” or “daughter church”, nor “older” or “younger churches”. The ecclesiological paternalism fostered by the missionary movement is not acceptable in the bamboo model. Nor the argument of antiquity, that is, churches founded in the first century are superior to the ones founded in 10th or 20th century, is acceptable.

There is one Christ, one faith, one baptism. We are all founded on the same foundation of Christ, built up by the power of the Spirit. The primal shoot is Christ himself.

5. Bamboo grow as a community. There is no individual bamboo living all alone. As soon as you grow a bamboo plant, it begins to produce shoots. The ancient Christian adage says: *unus Christianus nullus christianus* – single Christian is no Christian. It can be said of local churches. An isolated local church without profound spiritual-moral connections with other local churches is no church.
6. Bamboo branches are mutually and supportively interlocked like people holding each other’s arms. But their stems clearly show their particular identity. Local churches rooted in the same Trinitarian mystery, distinct in their particular identity, hold each other in the same faith in Christ, eucharistic communion and mutual love and service. This gives them strength and a deep sense of solidarity. Groups of bamboo in their solidarity can resist powerful natural forces that try to break them. The Church of Christ is invincible against the gates of hell.
7. Bamboo is flexible but unbreakable. Living bamboo is flexible and agile enough to respond to the context or environment in their changing phases. But in adverse circumstances they never break nor are uprooted. The Church of Christ in Asia is not to be insensitively rigid nor uncompassionately dogmatic. It can discern the signs of the times. Yet it does not compromise nor break in the face of demonic worldly power.
8. Bamboo bloom once in a blue moon. The fact that they take ages to blossom tells us something about the eschatological character of the Church of Christ here and now. The Church in history is not a social action agency nor a business corporation. You cannot expect to reap the full harvest or weed out all the unwanted plants in history itself. They may grow together until the final harvest as Christ said.

There is final fulfillment of the Church in the Kingdom of God. The Church in history can at best be the icon of the Kingdom. Our final hope in the great blossoming of all our existence, when “the whole creation will be set free from bondage” to the present spatio-temporal order, is decisive for our involvement in the life of the world here and now.

9. In the fellowship of bamboo, that is, in the way they grow together as one household and stand together as if in a “council”, we can discern the nature of their inter-relationship. In this “conciliar” fellowship as one family each bamboo can check with the neighbors about their common origin, the unbroken continuity of their genetic tradition and their common posture vis-à-vis the earth and sky, wind and rain, sun and moon. This is again a figure for the conciliar fellowship among local churches, which together constitute the household of God. They can check with each other for their shared apostolic faith, the integrity and continuity of their life-tradition and their openness to God’s creation in witness and service.

It might appear to some that I am bamboozling the whole issue of Christian unity using the figure of bamboo in Asia. But Asian religious tradition takes vivid analogies, metaphors and types from nature. Christ did the same in his teachings. Asian theology has to deliberately move away from western logic, however fascinating, in order to rediscover a new order of reality, a fresh perception of time and space and a new Asian enlightenment.¹¹ Why not begin with the humble grass, at the “grass roots” level?

Conclusion:

We can only do the planting and watering for unity. Growth itself is the work of God (1 Cor. 3:6)

1. We have meditated on the figure of living bamboo. None of the observations will fit the dead ones. Only spiritually vibrant local churches, open to each other and to God’s world have the right to speak about unity of the Body of Christ.
2. *Kenotic* humility in solidarity with the humble ones at the lowest level has to be the hallmark of Asian local churches. Imitating western triumphalism in Asia will bring more competition, disunity and counter witness in our Churches.
3. Our Asia Churches have to take upon themselves the task of “preaching the gospel of peace” in total non-violence and deep compassion, remembering the great Buddhist and East Syrian missions in Asia. Let us not count heads.
4. Learning lessons from the celebrated acculturation of the Semitic (West Asian) gospel to Hellenistic culture, to Latin mind set and to the dazzling civilization of western Europe and America, let us delve deeply into the roots of our own culture(s) in order to appropriate anew the life-giving gospel of Christ. We in Asia are not bound to pass through the past historical processes of hellenization, Latinization and westernization of the gospel.
5. If the first Asian Theological Students Conference in Bangkok (1956) stimulated a historic shift from the global to the regional ecumenism Regional Ecumenical Organizations (REOs), let us now resolve to manifest true ecumenism at the local level around the “local church” in the fullness of truth and love.

¹ Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions*, SVS Press, 1989, New York, p.29, 376

² Ibid., p.33

³ See Thomas Best, “Models of Unity” in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, Geneva, WCC, 1991.

⁴ See E. Lanne, “Conciliarity” in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, Geneva, WCC, 1991.

⁵ Konrad Raiser, *To be the Church*, Geneva, WCC, 1997, p.23-24

⁶ See for a very useful study of the idea of catholicity Michel Stavrou, “The Catholicity of the Church” in *Sourozh*, No.72, May 1998, p.8-23.

⁷ John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, New York, SVS Press 1993, p.257. This much celebrated work provides a thoroughgoing answer to some of the crucial ecclesiological question raised in the course of the ecumenical movement.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p.257-258.

⁹ The recent studies in Asian Christianity and its historical roots attempts to raise the awareness that it is not simply a product of western missions, as popularly assumed, but Asian Christianity is connected to the great eastern Christian tradition in spite of historical gaps. See John C.England, *The Hidden History of Christianity in Asia: The Churches of the East before 1500*, 1996, ISPCK, Delhi and CCA, Hong Kong, Reprint 1998.

T.V.Philip, *East of the Euphrates: Early Christians in Asia*, CSS & ISPCK, 1998., *Ecumenism in Asia*, ISPCK, & CSS, 1994., Edinburg to Salvador, ISPCK & CSS, 1999.

¹⁰ See Masao Abe, “Kenotic God and Dynamic Sunyata” in J.B.Cobb and C.Ives, eds. *The Emptying God*, Maryknell, Ny, orbis, 1990, p.10. Also see K.M.George, *The Silent Roots*, Geneva, WCC, 1994, p.3.

¹¹ See Paulos Mar Gregorios, *Enlightenment East and West*, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, N.Delhi, 1989. Mar Gregorios calls for a fresh look at the Asian Buddhist idea of enlightenment as a possible alternatives for European enlightenment which denied the transcendent dimension of reality and enthroned human reason.

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JUBILEE
JESUS' MESSAGE FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY
Gloria and Ross Kinsler

The year 2000 was a Jubilee year for many – Protestants, Catholics, and others. The Jubilee 2000 campaign for debt relief has been a great success – as far as it goes. As we move beyond the year 2000, the celebrations and campaigns linked to that Jubilee year, many may be asking, What happens next?

Is the biblical Jubilee intended to be an occasional event, to be enacted just every 50 years? Is debt relief the end or the beginning of a much more basic concern of God's people for all people? Have we gotten to the bottom of the Jubilee message?

Many Bible passages are yielding surprising new meaning when viewed through Jubilee lenses. And they speak with remarkable relevance to what might be called the two greatest concerns that humankind will have to resolve in this new century, if indeed there is to be another millennium for our descendents or for life in any form. We might well ask ourselves, What is Jesus' message, his Jubilee message, for this new century?

The ecological crisis is already causing enormous damage, and evidence is multiplying that if major correctives in human behavior are not made very soon, certainly within this century, the biosphere will reach a point of no return in the march toward planetary death.

The world economic order is accelerating as never before the concentration of wealth and the deepening of poverty in every region, limiting employment possibilities for hundreds of millions to slave-like labor and excluding hundreds of millions more from paid employment with social benefits, depriving growing majorities from minimal standards of nutrition, schooling, and healthcare, potable water, housing, and electricity.

These great threats to life are already having devastating effects in Sub-Sahara Africa and elsewhere. They will certainly affect our children and grandchildren. But current tendencies indicate that significant changes will not take place before it is too late.

The Lesson of the Manna

We'll begin by looking at three of Jesus' sayings, of which only the third has traditionally been tied to Jubilee. The first is linked to the Sabbath Day, the second with the Sabbath Year, the third with the Jubilee year. All three offer clues to the biblical vision of abundant life for all.

The first text is found in Matthew 4:3-4, when Jesus was tempted in the wilderness. He had fasted for 40 days; he was hungry.

The tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But he answered, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

This passage, along with the other two temptations, should provide important clues to the whole Gospel story. That's why it was included in Matthew's introduction. We might think, on first reading, that Jesus

is saying that God's Word, which has been called spiritual bread, is more important than material bread. This would fall nicely into the spiritual vs material dualism so persistent among most branches of Western Christianity. But we should notice, if our Bibles offer cross references in the footnotes, that Jesus' words are in fact taken from Deuteronomy 8:3, an important text in which Moses, reviewing the Law for the people of Israel as they are about to enter the Promised Land, reminds them of the lesson of the manna in the wilderness. So we have to turn back to Exodus 16.

The parallel is remarkable. Jesus was hungry after fasting 40 days in the wilderness, before beginning his ministry. Israel was hungry at the beginning of 40 years in the wilderness, before entering the Promised Land. Jesus was tested, and he referred back to Israel's testing, the story of the manna in the wilderness, one of the great lessons of all time. Having just been liberated from slavery in Egypt and from Pharaoh's pursuing army, the Hebrew ex-slaves could think of nothing better than the fleshpots and bread of Egypt. As Ched Myers puts it, they had to learn how to live in freedom! So their Liberator God, Yahweh, taught them a fundamental lesson, providing daily bread/manna with repeated instructions to take just enough for each member of every household. Again and again some disobeyed and had to be corrected. The lesson was sealed with the Sabbath instruction to set aside the seventh day to remember always that they were liberated slaves called to live a lifestyle and to establish a socio-economic order in which *all would have enough and none would have too much* (Exodus 16:18). Social analysis did not begin with Karl Marx, and liberation theology did not begin in the late 20th Century. Both began with the Exodus, with the Law of Moses, and with Jesus!

When Jesus responded to the tempter with those words, "One does not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God," he was not diminishing the importance of material bread. He was reaffirming the Sabbath mandate to ensure that all have enough material bread and none more than enough. This was the pertinent word of God for Jesus' ministry as he faced poverty, slavery, disease, and hunger in First Century Palestine. It is the pertinent word of God today, as we face a world economic order that is accelerating the concentration of wealth and the growth of poverty and hunger and marginalization as never before.

Lest we think that this is just a peculiar reading of an isolated text, we really should look for other passages in which Jesus and the early church taught the same message.

In Matthew 5:3-10, for example, the opening section of the first of five discourses in Matthew, the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus enumerates blessings of God's Reign (Matthew prefers "the Kingdom of Heaven" out of respect for God's name) upon the poor and those who are in solidarity with the poor ("the poor in spirit"), those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger and thirst for justice (clearer than "righteousness"), the merciful, the pure in heart, peacemakers, and those who are persecuted because they struggle for justice. Luke's version of the Beatitudes refers more directly to "you who are poor" and "you who are hungry," but both versions are linked to the manna lesson that all should have enough bread!

The Lord's Prayer, Matthew 6:9-13, also in the Sermon on the Mount, includes the petition, "Give us this day our daily bread," which is a direct reminder of the lesson of the manna. We are to ask for and to gather just enough, not more than enough. In fact we can only pray this prayer if we are committed to everyone ("us" not "me") having enough bread!

Later in the same chapter, Matthew 6:16-18, we are instructed not to store up treasures "where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal" but in God's Reign ("heaven"), which provides for all

abundantly when all share equally. This is another reference to the manna in the wilderness, for when some persisted in hoarding the manna, in looking for more than their share even on the Sabbath Day, it was spoiled!

The following paragraph, Matthew 6:22-23, speaks about the healthy eye and the unhealthy eye, which darkens the whole body, no doubt referring to the same temptation and reinforcing the message of God's Reign. For immediately, in verse 24, Jesus counterpoises two masters, God and Mammon ("wealth"). Those who are devoted to wealth accumulation reject ("despise") the God of the Exodus.

Finally, in Matthew 6:25-34, Jesus exhorts his followers not to worry about food, drink, or clothing, with the seemingly romantic notion that we should live each day like the birds of the air and the lilies of the field. Our economic realities may indeed be far more complicated than they were in First Century Palestine, but our life is no more precarious than it was then for most people. The lesson of the manna provides an essential clue here again. When all God's people agree to limit their demands to their real needs, that is, to share fairly all that they have, in solidarity with those who are more vulnerable, then there will be enough for all, because there is enough for all. We won't need to worry and accumulate for tomorrow's worst scenarios. This is not a romantic idea; it just requires an alternative lifestyle, a different socio-economic reality!

Perhaps at this point we should jump over to Acts 2:43-47 and 4:32-35. The coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, at the birth of the church, produced extraordinary phenomena, among them the sharing of possessions and goods and daily bread. The believers remembered and practised "day by day" the Sabbath Day teaching of the manna in the wilderness!

Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the Temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to the number those who were being saved. Acts 2:43-47.

And let us not forget that Paul makes specific use of the lesson of the manna in 2 Corinthians 8:1-15. One of his mission strategies, mentioned in 1 and 2 Corinthians, Romans, and Galatians, was to gather contributions from these and other churches for the poor in Jerusalem. In this passage he uses various arguments to convince the Corinthian believers to carry through on their earlier promise. On the one hand he notes that the poorer congregations of Macedonia were abundantly generous in spite of their extreme poverty. On the other hand he indicates that the Corinthian believers are more affluent and still have not made their contribution. What he then pleads for is "a fair balance between your present abundance and their need." And then he cites Exodus 16:18: "The one who had much did not have too much, and the one who had little did not have too little."

The Option for the Poor

Another paradigmatic saying of Jesus is found in Matthew 26:10-12. We are now at the end of Jesus' ministry, when Jesus is to be crucified. Jesus and his disciples are preparing for the Passover; the chief priests and elders are conspiring to arrest and kill Jesus. A woman comes into the house where Jesus and his disciples are gathered; she pours a very costly ointment on his head; the disciples complain that it should have been sold and the money given to the poor.

But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, “Why do you trouble the woman? She has performed a good service for me. For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. By pouring this ointment on my body she has prepared me for burial.”

Once again we find, at first reading, a rather unexpected message, as if Jesus were rejecting what we now call “the option for the poor.” Rather, Jesus seems to be making an option for Jesus! As in the previous passage, it would be easy to spiritualize or theologize Jesus’ words. His sacrifice is far more important than any act of charity for the poor. But again, as in the previous passage, we discover that Jesus’ saying, “You always have the poor with you,” is taken from Deuteronomy, from a long passage concerning the Sabbath Year, Deuteronomy 15:1-18. We find the words cited by Jesus in verse 11, but we also find other words in verse 4 that seem to carry a contrary message: “There will, however, be no one in need among you.” The larger passage contains two main mandates for the Sabbath Year: the cancellation of debts, verses 1-11, and the liberation of slaves, verses 12-18. Clearly the purpose of both these mandates is to eliminate poverty and oppression. In ancient times the principal mechanisms of poverty and oppression were debts, inevitable whenever crops failed, and slavery, the result of inability to repay debts. The rich were the only source of loans, and if they broke the taboo against charging interest, they could take over lands mortgaged by poor debtors and even make additional profits by employing the disinherited peasants and their families as day laborers or slaves. The Sabbath Year mandates were designed to intervene in this pernicious economic system and offer a new beginning for the poor and oppressed.

Once again the foundation of these laws was the Exodus, God’s liberation of the Hebrew slaves from Egypt. God’s intention was to create a people who would continue to live in freedom and not fall back into wealth and poverty, debts, and slavery, as Deuteronomy 15:15 states so clearly:

Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God redeemed you; for this reason I lay this command upon you today.

The text even warns the people not to be “hard-hearted or tight fisted” toward needy neighbors at the approach of the Sabbath Year, when debts would be cancelled, but rather to “give liberally and be ungrudging.” For the needy neighbor “might cry to the Lord against you,” as the Hebrew slaves cried out to Yahweh in Egypt and were delivered.

So, when Jesus cited these words, “you always have the poor with you,” he was not by any means minimizing the cause of the poor. In contrast to his disciples, who recommended selling that expensive perfume and giving alms to the poor, Jesus reminded them of the Sabbath Year mandates to cancel debts and free the slaves, that is, to reverse the primary mechanisms of wealth accumulation and impoverishment. This dimension of Jesus’ mission was leading him to a final confrontation with the powers of his day in Jerusalem, to the terrible death by crucifixion, for which this woman was anointing his body.

This reading can give us insight to many other passages.

One direct reference to canceling debts appears in Matthew’s version of the Lord’s Prayer, Matthew 6:12: “Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.” This petition has lost most of its meaning because it has been divorced from the Sabbath Year mandate and the mechanisms of wealth accumulation and impoverishment. Once that connection is made, we can recover that primal meaning, but we must ask ourselves in how many ways are we implicated in those very mechanisms. We must ask ourselves whether we are in fact willing to forgive our debtors, that is, to break the chains of debt that are now enslaving persons, institutions, and whole classes, races, nations, and regions.

A remarkable story about debtors and creditors appears in Luke 5:27-32, the conversion of Levi. This tax collector responded to Jesus' call, "Follow me" and "left everything" to follow him. Jesus then went to Levi's house and participated in a banquet with a large crowd of tax collectors and sinners, who no doubt were primarily poor debtors. This naturally provoked concern among the scribes of the Pharisees, who were guardians of the status quo. After all, the tax collectors were by definition primary agents of the exploitative power structures of Rome and the Jerusalem elite, and now they were fraternizing with their natural enemies, the poor sinners (debtors). If Levi and other tax collectors were to make common cause with poor debtors, they might undermine the domination system!

This is precisely what we find in the parallel story at the end of Luke, the conversion of Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1-10. When Zacchaeus, a chief tax collector and a rich man, meets Jesus and is converted, he announces that he will give half of his possessions to the poor and return fourfold any fraud he has committed, which might take the other half of his possessions! In other words the debt system by which the rich elite exploited poor debtors was indeed breaking down. Finally, Jesus says, "Today salvation has come to this house."

Mark's story of the healing of a paralyzed man, Mark 2:1-12, does not mention debt cancellation, but it uses the corresponding verb, "release," four times. This unfortunate soul was no doubt marginalized physically, because of the paralysis, socially, because his only usefulness would be as a beggar, economically, because his family probably went into debt supporting him and seeking healing for him, and spiritually, because he was excluded from Temple worship as impure. The passage highlights four times Jesus' words, "Your sins are forgiven," that is, "released." In light of the Sabbath-Jubilee vision, we might conclude that Jesus' intention was to free this child of God, and his family and neighbors, from all these dimensions of oppression—paralysis, poverty, social exclusion, debt, impurity – and also from the common belief that his impediment was the result of sin.

This focus on exclusion is evident in two parables of Jesus in Luke 14, the Parable of the Wedding Banquet and the Parable of the Great Dinner. In both cases Jesus indicates that God's Reign gives priority not to those whom the dominant social order exalts but rather to those at the very bottom: "the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame." The Sabbath-Jubilee mandates are concerned with the basic economic mechanisms of wealth accumulation and exclusion, but they are also concerned with the other physical, social, and spiritual mechanisms of exclusion that often accompany the economic ones.

Finally, we may turn once again to the Pentecost experience and note that the description of that experience includes a direct reference to Deuteronomy 15, which was our starting point. Acts 4:32-35 includes these expressions:

The whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul.
No one claimed private ownership of any possessions.
Everything they owned was held in common.
Great grace was upon them all.
It was distributed to each as any had need.

The phrase from Deuteronomy 15:4 is cited in Acts 4:34: "There was not a needy person among them." This was and is, of course, the purpose of the Sabbath-Jubilee mandates, which are founded not on external laws but on inner transformation by faith through grace. The recent global campaign for debt relief is based primarily on Deuteronomy 15. The Sabbath-Jubilee mandates, reaffirmed by Jesus and the first Christians, provide us with spiritual roots for our response to the central economic problem of our time: poverty.

Liberation of the Oppressed

Finally, we turn to the key Jubilee text of the New Testament, Luke 4:16-21, in which Jesus, reading from Isaiah 61:1-2a, declares that his mission is:

to bring good news to the poor . . .
to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

This is a priority passage in Luke's Gospel, because it comes at the very beginning of his story of Jesus' ministry. Mark and Matthew begin the story by telling that Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming "the Kingdom of God has come near." Luke omits that critical reference to God's Reign, choosing rather to place at this point the story of Jesus' appearance at the Nazareth Synagogue. Luke does refer to God's Reign in other passages, but here he reveals that God's Reign comes as "the year of the Lord's favor," which is Isaiah's way of referring back to the Year of Jubilee. After reading the Isaiah passage, Jesus says, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

Scholars are divided on this matter, because the Isaiah passage it does not mention the 50th year or the 7th year, nor does it explicate all four Sabbath-Jubilee mandates: rest for the land, cancellation of debts, freedom for slaves, and redistribution of the land. On the other hand, we must ask, What did Jesus mean by good news to the poor and liberation for the oppressed if he did not have in mind precisely the Sabbath-Jubilee vision, which we have found in so many other Gospel texts?

Another important observation is that Luke adds a phrase that appears not in Isaiah 61:1-2a but in Isaiah 58:6: "to let the oppressed go free." This addition could have come from Luke, an earlier tradition, or a later scribe. We prefer the interpretation that it comes directly from Jesus, who wanted to emphasize this dimension of God's Reign, of the Sabbath-Jubilee vision. Isaiah 58 is a Sabbath text that focuses on true worship. In particular the text reveals that Israel's God is not interested in spirituality expressed as pretentious fasting. Rather:

Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of injustice,
to undo the thongs of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?

Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover them,
and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

Clearly Jesus adopted this understanding of spirituality throughout his ministry, an understanding that corresponds with the Sabbath-Jubilee vision. So the inclusion of the phrase, "to let the oppressed go free," in the Nazareth reading of Isaiah 61:1-2a is most appropriate, reinforcing the liberating nature (release) of God's Reign in Jesus' ministry.

Both Luke 4:18-19 and Isaiah 61:1-2a (plus 58:6), through their use of the phrase “the year of the Lord’s favor,” lead us back to Leviticus 25, which is the main text establishing the Jubilee Year. We began our exploration with the establishment of the Sabbath Day in Exodus 16, then turned to the Sabbath Year in Deuteronomy 15, and now come to the Jubilee Year, the 50th year, a super-sabbath year based on the formula seven times seven. This chapter actually begins with mandates for the seventh year, which in this case is concerned with rest for the land. Then it goes on to the 50th year, which was announced with trumpets (Hebrew: *yobel* or ram’s horn) on the Day of Expiation, Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the year, when sacrifices were made to remove the sin of priests and people alike. The striking new mandate, which presupposes debt forgiveness and includes liberation from slavery, is to return all Israelite families to their original land.

You shall hallow the fiftieth year and you shall proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you: you shall return, every one of you, to your property and every one of you to your family. Leviticus 25:10

This completes the earlier mandates by enabling all the people to recover the basic means of life and dignity, that is, to live in freedom, to overcome the mechanisms of wealth accumulation for some and impoverishment for many. For the land was the primary means of economic survival, social security, cultural identity, and human realization within the extended family, clan, tribe, and nation. Thus the land was sacred, as it is still today among indigenous peoples. It was not merchandize to be bought and sold, except under extreme conditions that would be rectified through family redemption rights and through the Jubilee:

The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants. Throughout the land that you hold, you shall provide for the redemption of the land. Leviticus 25:23-24

This was the foundation upon which God’s people were to live as a free people, as people of Yahweh, the God who had brought their ancestors out of slavery in Pharaoh’s Egypt. Throughout Leviticus 25 they are reminded from whence they come, to whom they owe their life, and thus how they are to live.

I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to give you the land of Canaan, to be your God. Leviticus 25:38

They are my servants, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt; they shall not be sold as slaves are sold. Leviticus 25:42

To me the people of Israel are servants; they are my servants whom I brought out from the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God. Leviticus 25:55

This then was the foundation for Isaiah’s prophecy and Jesus’ ministry, as we shall see in many of the Gospel teachings.

We return briefly to the Beatitudes in Matthew 5:3-10, which speak of various dimensions of poverty and blessing. We note here that the meek, no doubt those who had lost their land through the very mechanisms that we have noted, “will inherit the land (earth).” Is not this a direct reference to the Jubilee provision, according to Leviticus 25?

Another Sabbath-Jubilee text, Mark 10:17-34, reveals how that was not only possible but actually took place in Jesus' ministry. Jesus challenged the rich man, who wanted to ensure for himself eternal life, to sell all his possessions, give the money to the poor, and follow him. "He was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions." Jesus then explained to his disciples that it is virtually impossible for a rich person to enter God's Reign, for, as he had pointed out in other sayings, they have Mammon/money as their God. But Peter then says, "we have left everything and followed you," and Jesus declares that they will "receive a hundredfold now in this age—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields." This is not romantic utopianism. Jesus' followers apparently were already sharing all that they had, so all had access to a hundredfold of families or households. Like the manna in the wilderness. Like the return of every family to their land every 50th year. Like the feeding of the multitudes in the wilderness, according to Mark 6:30-44 and 8:1-10.

Let's go back now to Mark 4:3-9, the Parable of the Sower and look at it with similar Sabbath-Jubilee lenses. We note that some seed fell among unproductive soils, but the passage seems to emphasize the abundant yield of that which fell into good soil. It produced thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold. As in so many other texts, the tendency has been to spiritualize or allegorize Jesus' message. But in keeping of the previous passage, which is the only other place where we find the expression "hundredfold," Jesus may very well be saying here that there will be enough for all, even abundance, if only all will share what they have, in keeping with Sabbath-Jubilee economics!

Lest these readings seem too simple, turn now to the Parable of the Talents, Matthew 25:14-30, which on first reading seems to be completely contrary to our Sabbath-Jubilee readings. The wealthy master distributes large sums of money to three of his slaves in order to gain large profits. When he returns from his long journey, he settles accounts, praising the slaves who produced 100% profits and condemning the one who buried his allotment. Most interpreters of this story, which seems to be about usury and debt exploitation of needy peasants by rich landowners, are left with spiritualized or allegorized readings about using God's gifts to bear fruit for the Kingdom. An alternative is to recognize that it is in fact about economic exploitation, and the hero of the story is not the master nor the other slaves but the one who refused to participate and suffered the consequences, as did Jesus and his followers.

Luke's Gospel is the one that most clearly emphasizes the economic dimension of the Good News of God's Reign, of Jubilee. Rene Kruger has developed a semiotic analysis of Luke in his article, "La conversión del bolsillo: la isotopía económica en el evangelio de Lucas" (The Conversion of the Pocketbook: the Economic Isotope in Luke's Gospel), *RIBLA* 30, pp. 98-128. After examining exhaustively all references to wealth and poverty, the powerful and the humble, some 41 texts, he arrives at the following thematic complexes that make up an important dimension of Luke's message:

1. The abyss between poor and rich.
2. Jesus' solidarity with the poor and the adverse, judgment on the egotistical rich.
3. The ethics of sharing.

These three are related dynamically, producing an economic inversion or conversion. This is evident from the beginning of Luke in the Magnificat, Luke 1:47-55; it is emphasized in Luke's version of the Beatitudes, which are placed in apposition to his Woes; and it is posed as a matter of life and death in Jesus' parables, such as the Parable of the Rich Fool in Luke 12:13-21 and the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31. The dominant ideology of First Century Palestine presumed that the rich were the blessed ones and the poor accursed, but Jesus taught that the poor are primary in God's Reign and the rich exclude themselves from God's Reign.

Since Luke also wrote Acts, we should expect to find a similar focus there. In fact we find, parallel to the Nazareth Sermon in Luke 4, the Pentecost experience in Acts 2-4. And here we see the enacting of “the year of the Lord’s favor,” the Jubilee, when the new believers begin to share all that they have. For the Book of Acts, then, the Jubilee experience of Acts 2-4 is to be seen as normative for the early church, just as Jesus’ proclamation of Jubilee, based on Isaiah 61, was normative for his ministry.

Finally, we turn to the experience of the Lord’s Supper in 1 Corinthians 11:17-34. At the heart of this passage we find the ancient formula that Paul claims to have received from the Lord, which has been the heart of Christian worship through the centuries. But verses 17-22 and 27-34 are a devastating rebuke for the Corinthian believers, for some, no doubt the more prosperous, who came early, selfishly took all the food, and others, slaves and poor and women who arrived later, were left with nothing. Paul tells them they are not in fact eating the Lord’s Supper, for they are showing contempt for the church, ignoring the body and blood of the Lord, humiliating those who had gained full humanity in Christ above all social divisions. They were violating the Jubilee mandates!

At the beginning of this study we pointed to two great threats to life that all humankind must resolve if our descendents and the biosphere are to survive. All that we have been able to deal with so far can be considered a response to the global economic order, which is concentrating wealth and increasing poverty as never before in human history. This is what the biblical Jubilee was all about from the time of the ancient legal codes and the prophets, of Jesus and the early church.

The other threat to life is the destruction of the biosphere, which has only become a problem during the last 200 years of industrialization and must be resolved in the next 100 years. Our remaining task, as people of faith, is to trace the concern for creation, which like the economic issue is a concern of the Sabbath Day, the Sabbath Year, and the Jubilee year. For all three speak of rest for the land and those who work the land, for work animals and even for the wild beasts. This concern is not divorced from the economic concern, for it is precisely the omnipresent drive for profit that continues to propel us all toward the precipice of ecological collapse. The ecological and economic changes necessary for the continuation of life on this planet beyond the Twenty-First Century will ultimately require a powerful spiritual vision such as the Biblical Jubilee.

PART II

THEOLOGICAL TEACHING AND GENDER PERSPECTIVE II CONFERENCE OF LATIN AMERICAN WOMEN THEOLOGY PROFESSORS

Irene Foulkes

After centuries of exclusion, women now study theology and, in many denominations, receive ordination to the ministry. Women have also been incorporated into the faculty of seminaries and university departments of religion, and play an active role in theological research. Along with their contribution to the theological process in general, women professors present to their institutions the gift of new questions. One of these was expressed by Dr. Anaida Pascual, professor of the University of Puerto Rico, in her lecture at the Conference: how can our institutions transform their pedagogy that excludes many people and discourages others, into a pedagogical approach that values plurality, diversity, and the multi-voiced quality that is found in all human beings? Her audience agreed with Anaida that perhaps part of the answer to this question will be provided by the growing chorus of liberating accents coming from women in academia.

Taking up this challenge; 35 women professors from 15 Latin American countries, gathered in Nicaragua for 5 days in January, 2000, convened by the Community of Latin American Ecumenical Theological Education (CETELA) and the Latin American Biblical University (UBL), of Costa Rica. The organizing committee included the dean of the Evangelical Faculty of Theological Studies (FEET), Managua, together with the rector and women professors of the UBL, an institution characterized by its evangelical history and ecumenical character. The Conference was also characterized by its ecumenicity: participants represented a full range of denominations, from pentecostal groups to historic protestant churches and the Roman Catholic church.

The road already traveled

Hardly a third millennium novelty, this “Second Conference” builds on an earlier event, held in 1994 in Costa Rica. At that time the professors focused their attention on the related themes of feminist theology and hermeneutics, pedagogy and women, and the contribution of gender theory then being developed. Five years later the time was ripe for reconvening women professors – more numerous now – in order to explore new dimensions of gender theory and its relevance for theological teaching. The practical goal: integrate a gender focus into all aspects of the work of theological institutions.

Gender analysis, now included in many disciplines related to theological education, such as sociology, philosophy, psychology, history, pedagogy and literature. It is widely accepted that every society moulds its members’ psychological and social development according to that society’s definition of the character and conduct believed to be appropriate for each sex. This assignment of specific traits to men or to women (a common example in the West: “logical reasoning” believed to characterize men, in contrast to “intuitive or emotional thinking” in women) is usually accompanied by an unequal value assessment, weighted in favor of the purported male qualities as over against the characteristics considered typically female.

Culturally conditioned gender constructions, no matter how mistaken some of their elements might be, nevertheless constitute part of the baggage of every human being. Consequently, we need to recognize that all knowledge and science – including theology – is affected by the gender perspective that researchers

and expositors, unconsciously perhaps, carry with them into their work. During the period when Latin American theology was being developed, it was repeatedly pointed out that the socio-economic and racial-ethnic identity of all theologians has always played a significant role in their presuppositions and attitudes, as well as in the way they have focused on the object of their study. Traditionally, this fact has not been consciously taken into account, or very little importance has been attached to it. Only when theologians in Latin America consciously assumed their identity in terms of low socio-economic class and marginalized “third world” peoples (in contrast to the middle class, politically dominant character of “first world” theologians), did it become clear that social location influences the theological task. It has a profound effect in defining what will be discovered in the course of exegetical study, and also the way in which those discoveries will be incorporated into theological constructs. The same can be said for black theologians in the United States, who incorporated into their own work the hermeneutics of their 19th century ancestors on the slave plantations, and went on to construct a theology of an anti-imperialist, liberating God who brings to light the inherent worth of marginalized people.

It is increasingly recognized that, together with class and racial-ethnic factors, gender conditioning has directly influenced the development of biblical exegesis and systematic theology, beginning in the earliest Christian centuries. A privileged place to research this fact is found in seminaries and university religious departments, with their growing numbers of women professors and students. This present process is similar to what happened in the development of theology from the perspective of the poor in general, or of people who are excluded because of their race or ethnic group. Marginalized people are the first to demand a new perspective in theology and to begin building it with both experiential and theoretical knowledge. In the matter of gender, this epistemological privilege belongs to women.

The present generation of women theology professors is engaged in developing the theoretical elements and the appropriate procedures to do exegesis and theology in conscious recognition of gender factors. They came to the Conference motivated by this project that should profoundly affect the historic androcentrism of the theological disciplines and to overcome the marginalization and oppression of women in Christian tradition. We expect to tease out the liberating elements that will help churches and Christian institutions to promote a full life for all people, men as well as women. However, we do not feel that this is exclusively a task for women. The goal of gender equity in all areas of life dictates that the work be shared.

Goals

Among the objectives we defined for our work together in the Conference, the women expressed a desire to advance our knowledge of gender theory, research methods, and the use of gender as a category in teaching. Along with attention to the specific problematic of women, we felt that this would help us make worthwhile contributions in the area of theological teaching.

In addition, we emphasized the importance of sharing pedagogical practices that incorporate a gender perspective in our particular subject matter. On the basis of concrete experiences, we outlined sample strategies to aid us and our colleagues (men and women) to develop gender consciousness in our theological work and the teaching that goes with it. We saw that it would be necessary to plan ways to orient all of the teaching personnel in our institutions in gender theory and in teaching from the perspective of gender.

Recommendations

Meeting in groups according to our various teaching areas (Bible, theology, Christian education, pastoral counseling, pastoral theology and liturgy), the professors made several concrete recommendations.

In the area of Bible, the women first outlined a few basic presuppositions, such as the following: Traditional biblical criticism reflects the perspective of its white, Western, middle class, male practitioners, which effectively subordinates women and other marginal, powerless social groups and makes them invisible. Consequently, strategies for biblical research must include new approaches.

- Incorporate gender analysis in all aspects of biblical criticism, in order to uncover the power plays that structure the biblical texts and the world in which they were written.
- Recognize that Old Testament texts are the product of a long process of collection and retransmission of collective memories, in which minority groups have been silenced or subordinated to the voice of the more powerful. In a similar way, during the shorter New Testament period, women, as a powerless group, have been hidden and silenced in the texts.
- Reconstruct and make visible the active presence of women as part of the people present in every biblical context, in spite of the androcentric character of the texts.

The theology group recommended using a method in which theological themes can be deconstructed by means of critical questions that bring to light the following issues:

- Power relations implicit in the formulation of a particular topic in theology;
- The impact that a particular theological definition might have in regard to the situation of women;
- Which social group stands to benefit from a particular theological formulation.

After that initial deconstruction, it is necessary to go on to a critical reconstruction where we redefine theological terms and topics from the perspective of gender, developing alternative biblical, theological, and practical foundations. This group then made additional recommendations for the teaching of theology:

- Include feminist anthropology and gender analysis as useful tools in doing theology;
- Insure that the aspect of gender is present in all parts of the curriculum;
- Require learning to be both cognitive and attitudinal, i.e., course should not only transform concepts but also lead to changes in attitudes – in teachers as well as students.

Professors of practical theology emphasized the importance of linking course work with real life situations, and made several recommendations:

- In the gender aspect of practical theology, introduce field research, developing contacts with people outside of academia and also outside of the institutional church, in order to relate to other expressions of gender oppression.
- Use a variety of resources to access everyday reality, such as case studies, experiences of the students themselves, audio-visuals, literature, poetry, drama, music and direct observation in different locales.

We owe to this group the initiative of creating a web page on the Internet in order to share syllabi for courses, bibliographies, sources for obtaining books, financing sources, book reviews and summaries of books. The web page now exists; interested women professors may write for more information to janmay@racsacsa.co.cr

Strategies drawn up by professors in the area of Christian education (or, pedagogy of religion) draw us outside the walls of university level institutions.

- Form teams, integrate efforts and create spaces for training in a type of Christian education that incorporates a gender perspective, directed to Sunday School teachers and teachers of religious education in grade and high schools.
- Suggest to various theological institutions the creation of a department of pedagogy in order to offer training to different groups, such as, a) seminary and university professors of theology, b) religion professors for secular and church related schools, c) Sunday School teachers and leaders of children's Bible schools. These departments of pedagogy should include courses that integrate education and gender. The perspective of gender should permeate all of the courses offered in the curriculum.

Lastly, the professors of pastoral counseling spoke of the importance of stimulating self-observation for self appropriation as a subject, in order to include this subjectivity in a conscious way in their research. They also recommended that gender analysis be incorporated in every thesis and term paper.

Achievements and challenges

What we have achieved so far in regard to the integration of gender theory and theological teaching can be seen in several ways in the very imaginative presentation that Dr. Wanda Deifelt, professor of theology at the Seminary of the Lutheran Church in Brazil, when she spoke on "The challenge of a new millennium to pedagogy and gender in theological education." Wanda offered the following metaphorical sketch.

The House called Theology

Once upon a time there was a House called Theology. It was an old house, with many rooms, and full of men – also old --, studious men. It was an ancient house, with the reputation of being a place that was almost sacred, because the study carried on there had to do with God, with the truths of the faith and the way people should behave. The house demanded respect and awe.

In this house there were no women, but women came every day to leave food at the door. One day, some of the women took courage and entered by the back door, the kitchen door and they decided to stay. Some of the theologians were shocked to see the women there, but they decided that, well, it was nice to have a feminine presence in the house. Besides, the women could serve them their coffee and tea.

The rooms of the house were large, and they were assigned to different topics. One room was for theology, another for Bible, a third for ministry or practical theology. With entrance doors from all these rooms, there was a library, full of books written by other men, well known and well revered.

In each room the older men taught the younger ones. Their aim was to reproduce, from one generation to another, the things that other theologians had taught, in earlier times, about God the father, the all-powerful God in the heavens.

With the passage of time, some of the women walked through the library and into the other rooms, and they sat down as students. They listened to what the theologians were saying. Some women were in the Bible room, others in practical theology, a few in theology. At first the male theologians did not pay much attention to them; they thought the women were there to serve coffee. But when the women began to express their opinions, showing their competence and theological knowledge, the theologians listened to them, but they were not convinced that women should be there. They gave theological arguments to show that the study of theology was not appropriate for women, that it was unnatural for them. But the women argued strongly against that idea.

Most of the women stayed in the kitchen, but they also took pleasure in talking about God and about their faith. At times, the women who had entered the large rooms of the house, and who were now able to teach theology, Bible and ministry subject, returned to the kitchen and listened to the women there, the women in the kitchen invited the academic women to talk to them about their studies, for they too wanted to know more about theological topics.

One day, during one of those conversations, the women began to analyze more fully the way the house was laid out: how the different areas were distributed, what needs each area had, which things were lacking, and what proposals they had regarding themselves and the rest of the inhabitants of the house.

One of the women was not content with the fact that academic theological knowledge was privilege, while little importance was given to the experience of faith that comes with daily life, or the experience of exclusion, or of exploitation of their work, or of the absence of celebrating pleasure. Everything was biased in favor of the intellect, to the point of degrading the body and the senses. “Everything should be valued,” she said, “and theological study should reflect on topics connected with the needs of women, such as reproductive rights, violence in the home, incest, child labor.”

“But,” said another woman in the group, “do not you think the problem is that women have been seen only as bodies, as nature, as beings whose only destiny is reproduction and maternity, persons who are incapable of reflecting on anything more complicated than a recipe? It seems to me that we have to invest more effort in getting specialized academic training, and to publish more of our discoveries.”

“I think we are too isolated, do not you?”, said another woman. “And not only from the rooms of this house. We are also isolated from the rest of the houses on the street. There are women who study in the houses next door – in philosophy and psychology – but we are not acquainted with their ideas. We should go out and look for them; I believe this is what is called interdisciplinary dialogue. It would be a good idea to open doors that could connect the rooms to each other, and also make the windows larger, so that we could discuss things with other disciplines. But most importantly,” the woman said, “it seems to me that we should get together with other groups that, like ourselves, have entered the house but are not in the larger rooms, the better equipped rooms of the house.”

“Yes, that is true,” continued another woman. “The other day, in the basement, I found some very interesting people who were talking about blackness and about indigenous spirituality. Some of these persons are in the academic spaces, but so far there has not been any dialogue with these persons. This represents a challenge. Also, there are women there who face the same frustrations and have the same dreams that we do. Perhaps we could listen more to their experiences and bring them into our teaching too.”

“That sound correct to me,” said another woman there. “The vantage point from which we look at this House called Theology, and the way we are described by theologians, is similar to what these people in the basement are experiencing. We are marginalized in the curriculum, in publications, in art. As a socially excluded groups we should get together in order to examine all of this and propose a more integrated way of studying our history.”

A few of the men liked to go to the kitchen and listen to the women, but when the talk turned to the subject of asymmetrical power relations in the House and outside of it, the men felt somewhat threatened. In spite of that, a few of them made common cause with the women and showed interest in the discussion, especially with regard to a term that was often used: gender. These men felt that they should analyze their

own theoretical framework, their epistemology, and the mistaken notion that their masculine experience is representative of the whole human race.

The women tried to discuss the subject of gender with their colleagues; they tried to go deeper into gender theory and at the same time broaden their analysis of real life situations. However, the subjects taught in the House called Theology, and the way in which they were taught, did not provide much of an opening for this new aspect.

Some of the women who were involved in teaching theology made attempts to develop different methods, working creatively and with commitment to their sisters. They taught the same subject matter as their male colleagues, but they strongly wanted to revise the established contents of the courses, and the way in which student learning is evaluated. Most of all, they wanted to present women as subjects in history.

In the kitchen the women talked and dreamed of the day when they too would feel like owners of the House called Theology, where, together with men, indigenous groups, blacks, the poor in general, they would be able to share their lives as a gift from God.

6TH THEOLOGICAL SYMPOSIUM OF ASETT (LA) AND CETELA

Introduction

CETELA's (Community of Ecumenical Theological Education of Latin America) sixth theological symposium, held this time in cooperation with the Latin American regional section of the Ecumenical Theological Association of the Third World (ASETT) was attended by sixty-five people from Latin America and the Caribbean. It took place from 2 – 6 July in Cumbayá, Ecuador, a town about twenty minutes from Quito.

The title of the symposium was “Abya-Yala and its faces: theological formation and transversality”. The intention was to create a space for exchange and dialogue to allow these different “faces” of Latin America and the Caribbean to share their theological development and the problems that have marked their theological journey in recent years and also to reflect on the implications and challenges of their particular theological production for the theological formation offered by institutions engaged in this work. The theological “faces” present were indigenous, black, peasant, pentecostal and women (gender).

From the very beginning of the event another “face” was introduced – that of the theological institutions needed to respond appropriately to these theological “faces”.

Part one: Developments

The first part of the symposium was given over to presenting the “faces”, with each having the time necessary to tell about its progress and its limitations. Each presentation was accompanied by symbols representing the different processes.

The first to present itself was **Afro-American theology**, through the *Guasá Group*, represented by Antonio Aparecido and Sonia Querino Santos from Brazil and Romer Portillo from Venezuela. They were assisted by Silvia Regina de Lima, Brazil, a professor at UBL in Costa Rica. Starting with two accounts of creation – one biblical and the other African – they emphasized the communal and narrative nature of their theology. It is therefore a theology of categories, and not of concepts.

The group affirmed its ancestral ties, anchored in the religious and cultural roots deriving from the African genius transmitted by their forebears. Noteworthy here is the predominant role of women, by virtue of their matrilineal heritage. Black women theologians assume their bodies as a locus of theology, first denied by discrimination and exclusion and now affirmed as a sign of God's presence and accepted with their own physical properties. Another key reference point in this theology, situated and immersed in nature, is every-day life, ordinary actions like bathing or drinking a cup of tea, and the energy that surrounds their people.

Campesino (Peasant) theology was presented by Ana de Dios Castro, Anibal Cañaverl and Adriano Qunitero from Colombia. This theology starts with the challenges arising from the land. It is a theology of few words, that speaks instead through the large number of symbols drawn from the daily life of the fields. Its central reference point is the land, hand in hand with the Bible. It is in communion with the vision of the Bible, and that of its indigenous ancestors, which sees the land as sacred, a locus of theology, where God reveals himself in a special way. The land is therefore considered as a living being which produces life in abundance. This theology adopts a prophetic stance in relation to private property, the

expulsion of small farmers from their plots and the use of chemical fertilizers which poison the land. The land expects us to treat it lovingly, gently, kindly as a fellow being. In short, they insisted, the land does not belong to us, but rather we belong to it. This takes us away from the logic of reason to that of the heart, which is another hermeneutical approach used by this theology.

Then came the turn of **indigenous theology**. On the evangelical (protestant) side, it shared the agenda of work drawn up at the Riobamba meeting in March of this year. The parameters of its cosmic vision are cosmo-centric, integrating the community, nature and the divinity in an unbroken whole. The indigenous people are profoundly religious. They can discover the divinity everywhere and in everything. Their theology and their liturgical forms are essentially experiential and not discursive, although they recognize that they cannot operate solely with symbols, and need to be able to back their practice with arguments.

They represented their theological experience with a large indigenous tapestry in which the multiform, multicoloured threads of life and the tradition of the ancestors intertwined to form a beautiful blanket. The presentation was accompanied by the rhythms of Andean music played by the Misión Andina group. Indigenous theology was represented by Margarita de la Torre and Gerónimo Yantalema (Ecuadorian Quechuas), Alfredo Joiner (Nicaraguan Miskito), Luciano Hanco and Domingo Llanque (Peruvian Quechuas), Carlos Intipampa and Humberto Ramos (Bolivian Aymaras) and Eleazar López (Mexican Zapoteco).

Pentecostal theology gave an account of the process undergone since Matanzas, Cuba, in 1997, up to the formation of the Pentecostalism researchers' network in August of last year.

The presenters emphasized the community character of the experience of faith in this theology. Pentecostalism is born and lived out in community; the church is where God's word comes alive, the place where the healing, life-giving action of the Spirit becomes effective. Pentecostal women stated clearly that, despite the fact that, through gifts and charisma, the Spirit affirms their female presence in the church, attitudes still persist that limit their participation in the church and in theological institutions. They also stressed the importance of the ordinary and everyday in the lives of Pentecostal women who assume their experiences of sadness and joy, hardships and hopes in that light. In this theology, the body has a very special value because it is seen as the temple and dwelling-place of the Holy Spirit. They proposed the Holy Spirit as the paradigm traversing all the theologies.

The Pentecostal theology group comprised Senia Pilco (Ecuador), Violeta Rocha (Nicaragua), Joan Figueroa (Puerto Rico), Daniel Oliva (Argentina), Helena Perfors (Netherlands) and Luis Orellana (Chile).

A feature of the presentation of **feminist theology** was the fact that it was given by women and men, reflecting how the way is being prepared for us to speak of gender theology. The members of the groups were Sara Baltodano (Costa Rica), Aleyda Gómez (Colombia), Silvia Regina de Lima (Brazil), Anaida Pascal (Puerto Rico), Marlyn Duarte (Nicaragua), Ana Mercedes Pereira (Colombia), José Duque (Costa Rica), Diego Irrázaval (Peru) and Juan José Tamayo (Spain).

Like Afro-American and indigenous theologies, the group affirmed the ancestral ties their theology, written out of women's experiences of struggle against discrimination in society. These struggles started to gain visibility in the seventies, when they emerged within the church and social movements. Initially they found support in rereading the story of the most outstanding women of the Bible. In a second stage they went on to try to feminize theology, revising the strong patriarchal component present in it. And in a third stage they began to use the categories of gender; femininity was shown to be a social construction.

From there, they went on to question the principal concepts of theology and also began to open up to cultures, dialogue with other subjects and ecofeminism.

The presentation of feminist theology was completed by a report on some of the progress made in the field of theological education; for instance, the proposal that women's presence should be more visible in curricula, in training plans in general and in the teaching of theology.

Father Diego Irarrázaval testified how he was being regenerated through his involvement in the feminist and gender theology group. Moving forward in a gender perspective happens not only at the level of thought, it also requires action for change; it means creating new structures of life and power, it is rebirth as a human being, a liberating experience that is worth all the effort, he said.

The face of the **institutions** was also presented. They acknowledged the limitations of Cartesian logic, because of its absolute character and the way in which it fragments reality. This type of thinking predominates in theological institutions and is an obstacle to the acceptance of the new faces of theology. The presentation used the image of new wine in old skins. It was explained that the transversal approach is different from an inter-disciplinary approach, that it has to do not with thematic questions but with the subjects doing theology and the dialogue between them. It was also explained that transversality is a way of being, an attitude of mind. It is a matter of deconstructing and reconstructing.

Part two: transversal theological dialogue

Following the presentation of these different faces of theology the symposium then turned to dialogue between them. First of all each group met separately to consider the presentations they had heard and the points of convergence and divergence with each.

The results of the group work were shared through a panel made up of one member of each group, under the headings: divergences, convergences and challenges.

The number of common elements in the different theologies was very surprising. We note the following here:

1. Their ancestral ties. The indigenous and African-American groups, as well as the pentecostals and the women stressed that their theologies are not new, but have been around for a very long time.
2. Community experience. All were agreed on the importance of the community as a reference. They emphasized that theology cannot be done detached from the community, with the specific characteristics of each human group.
3. Corporeality. All affirmed the value of the body as a locus of theology, manifestation of the divine and consequently, sacred. Campesino theology insisted that this was not confined to the human dimension but had to extend also to the natural world and the cosmos.
4. The experience of everyday life and activities as a place where God is manifested in cultural values, and in the midst of the joys and sorrows of the communities.
5. Otherness/identity. Recognizing identity and respecting other human and social subjects, with all their particularities.
6. The presence of the Holy Spirit running through all the theologies without exception and giving them their dynamic spirituality.
7. The option for the poor. Reaffirmed as a strong common element in all these approaches and offering the possibility of common commitment.

The spirit of convergence we experienced in our reflections at this symposium enables us to speak of sister theologies which share common perspectives not only in their struggles in the context of advancing neo-liberal globalization, but also in the process of building spaces for life and thought nourished by the hope, faith and spirituality of these traditionally marginalized “faces”.

Certain divergences, above all of a hermeneutical nature, also became apparent. These gave rise to challenges and questions among the groups, but it was stressed that these were far outweighed by the points of convergence.

New wine in old skins

As regards divergences, for the purposes of this report we shall simply mention the tension felt throughout the meeting between these theological “faces” and the theological institutions. All of the former expressed concern that their experience and the innovative proposals they have been making find no echo or support in many of our theological institutions. They feel marginalized by academic theology in both curricula and teaching practice. This state of affairs was described metaphorically as “new wine in old skins”.

The institutions present at the symposium acknowledged this situation. They undertook to look for ways and means of incorporating the proposals of these new theological constructors, but also to make their presence more visible in the institutions. The “faces” for their part insisted that it was not a matter of incorporating them but of changing attitudes and mentalities to enable these new ways of producing knowledge to be appreciated and assimilated.

Part three: Interaction of theology and education

For this part of the meeting the resource persons were Anaida Pascual and Mathtías Preiswerk. Anaida is an educationist, a professor at the University of Puerto Rico. Mathtías is an educationist and theologian lecturing at the Andean Ecumenical Higher Institute of Theology (ISEAT) in Bolivia. Both attended the whole symposium and took an active part in it. The fact of having been an integral part of the meeting enabled them to make a tentative analysis of the theological-pedagogical experience it represented.

Anaida Pascual’s response focussed on a series of questions of a pedagogical nature, trying to help in a practical way to spell out the transversal challenges emerging from the multiple voices and subjectivities expressed in the theologies present at this symposium. Many of these questions were produced by Anaida in accompanying women theology teachers in the process of trying to systematize their feminist theological journey pedagogically.

The following are some of the “transversal challenges from a pedagogical perspective” put forward by Anaida: How to...

1.encourage the spirit of transversality, aiming for a “conversion” that will allow a “culture of transversality” to develop?
2.construct new pedagogies in order to reconstruct ourselves...to make our voices heard and express our subjectivity in many voices ?
3.overcome the elements of violence intertwined (or “transversalized”) in our own theories, methods, policies and educational practice?
4.in the light of new theories and research on the nature of intelligence and how we learn, restore the “intelligence of the spirit” to a central place in our educational practice?

5.make a viable and systematic presentation of theological-pedagogical tasks, both from the standpoint of our specificities and differences, and our affinities and convergences?

Professor Matthías Preiswerk, in his response, shared some thoughts relating to methodology and formulated some educational and pedagogical questions. He declared himself very happy with the methodological process at this symposium. In his opinion enormous progress had been made between this and the symposium in Matanzas, Cuba, in 1997. The methodology used was an inductive one which enabled participants to experience the inter-relationship of theology and pedagogy in a very immediate and existential way. The production of theology by the different faces of Abya-Yala is the production of knowledge. So whether we know it or not, whether we like it or not, it is a clearly pedagogical undertaking, he said.

The methodological process at Cumbayá comprised several important stages in the production of knowledge from the perspective of liberation theology. We began by the sharing of knowledge produced by the different faces. We then went on to dialogue between them; we began to observe one another, to suspect and question one another in a respectful and creative dialogue. The phase that remains pending after Cumbayá is that of cultural negotiation; Preiswerk stressed that we cannot stop at the stage of amiable exchange but must now proceed further to one of negotiation so that together we can develop new categories incorporating the other's categories.

Among his questions he drew attention to one of the transversal axes, the community dimension. He reminded us that individual or personal responsibility cannot be left out of account in community learning. He also pointed out that it was dangerous to allow the agenda of theological education to be set by the churches, as this could put us in a strait-jacket.

One further concern regarding the community aspect had to do with the different way of learning from each perspective. If there is such a thing as a feminine or an indigenous or an African-America or a pentecostal way of learning, what does it consist in? According to Matthías, we are talking here about an infinite line of pedagogical research; into the mechanisms, stages and procedures of learning for each of these "faces". This raises another question which is dramatically urgent in our institutions, namely, what place are we giving to forms of learning other than those traditionally used by academic theology?

Lastly, he asked where the political dimension and strength of these "faces" lay, as well as the alternative and subversive force of their organizations. He thought one possible line emerged in the women's report when they suggested reviving and reaffirming the option for the poor; it being understood that we are not going back to the seventies, when all groups had to merge behind a single historical subject as the standard bearer on the way to power; this element continues not only to be a main axis traversing all the approaches but also offers a common project. He suggested considering the empowerment proposal from the feminists as a means of affirming the identity of each "face", qualifying it for more serious cultural and political negotiations vis-a-vis the other "faces".

Part four : proposals and challenges for theological formation

The following are some of the epistemological and methodological proposals emerging from the group work at the symposium, to be taken in to account in the different programmes of theological formation:

1. That the institutions should create the possibility of research and specialization focussing on the different faces, and not just include them as a topic in their programmes.

2. That the next dialogues should include faces which were not present here: homosexuals and children.
3. That we review our pedagogical methods and strategies in order to change or modify sexist or hierarchical forms of teaching. Learn through dynamic interaction about the communal and the personal, the ancestral and the contemporary, bearing in mind our cultures, contexts and needs, in an interdisciplinary process.
4. That CETELA should be the instrument to help the different groups in education within the institutions and the channel for diffusing their theological production.
5. Work not simply for a change in the curriculum, but for changes in the underlying attitudes in relations between teachers and students, to achieve harmony between thinking, feeling and doing.
6. Epistemological changes: do not simply include these faces on the curriculum but change the ways by which knowledge is constructed.
7. We see the need for an overall common political project within which we can work on local specificities.
8. Enter into a symmetrical process of negotiation among the “faces” without this implying loss of identity.
9. It is essential to work on affirming the identity of each face in order to develop a more fruitful dialogue.
10. Bring together groups of ecologists since the face of nature urgently needs to be represented, even though it is present in the indigenous, African-American, campesino and women’s faces.
11. We propose that CETELA should work on a concrete proposal up to the next consultation to effect face to face negotiation at local and regional level.

We have gathered the challenges of this sixth theological symposium together in this poem produced by indigenous theology.

To this meeting of CETELA and ASETT
We have come from far and near.
We have uncovered a little of our faces,
Marked by suffering and hope.
We have opened our bosom a little to tell of the flowers we have;
And we have scented the fresh variety of the flowers brought by others.
In opening our hearts we have truly talked together like women and men;
And we have recognized that we are brothers and sisters
Who have the same Mother and the same Father.
And as our words came together and intertwined
We knew that, though many things make us different,
Many more make us brothers and sisters.
We saw that the garden of our life is threatened,
Directly aggressed by the laws of the market,
By our lack of care or inappropriate tools and methods.
Like Juan Diego today we keep cutting the flowers from our hillsides
And carry them in the blanket of our mythical-symbolic language
To offer them to our brothers and sisters in our churches
That, with their hearts full of love, they may accept and value them
And we may join together to build the teocalzin or house of God,
Which is also the great house for the human family
Where we live in the dignity of those who have a true face;
Where all the sorrows and lamentations, pain and sadness of
The sons and daughters of Mother Earth will be heard and healed;
Where God the Mother-Father shows us and gives us

All love, compassion, help and protection.
The dreams of our ancestors, handed down in ancient myths and beliefs,
Cannot become a reality in history if we remain alone and isolated.
Theological transversality means harmonizing our differences and
In face of death, transforming them into a life-creating force.
If we assume the share of responsibility that belongs to each of us
Then beyond all doubt a new sun will dawn on the horizon of Abya-Yala
When the causes of the present darkness have been put to flight.
This is the certitude we take back with us to our peoples
And which will give birth to real processes of collaboration
On plans and programmes for Latin American theological formation.
The rich and beautiful variety of our faces
Will form the rainbow of the New Covenant.

Sixth Theological Symposium of ASETT (LA) and CETELA
Final Message

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them the ability.

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each...

But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, "...let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. Indeed, these are drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: "In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and smoky mist. The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day. Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. (Acts 2: 1-21).

We too, theologians from all the nations under Abya-Yala, came to Cumbayá with great expectations, bringing with us the living heritage of our peoples reflected in our different faces – women, African-American, indigenous, mestizo or campesino. This heritage is full of beautiful histories which have never been written down and are not to be found in official history books; but our ancestors lovingly tell them to us in the silence of our marginal spaces.

Here in Ecuador, at the centre of the world, we met as comrades from different backgrounds, united in our passion for theological formation in our churches and determined to walk in solidarity with our peoples. We came for dialogue about our legitimate theological differences, seeking to make them an enrichment and life-giving force for all.

Thanks to the efficiency and kindness of the sisters and brothers who convened and organized this event on behalf of CETELA and ASETT, this 6th symposium became for us profound experience of God, as a family, in an ecumenical climate and under the paradigm of the Holy Spirit.

What we have seen and heard during these days, what we have touched with our hands, we would like now to share with people of good will, with our sisters and brothers in our churches and theological institutions, with our comrades and friends in the movements, groups and communities with whom we are on the road together.

In the creative liturgies at the encounter, we celebrated our life of faith together as a community and felt God's Word breaking in among us: "I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh (on your sons and daughters, young and old, slaves, in heaven and on earth)...Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Acts 2:17-21).

In the active presence of women in church institutions of theological education and the dynamic processes going on in Abya-Yala we discovered that profound theological reflection has been generated bearing a multicultural, woman's face which invites us to recognize our difference as an opportunity to rethink our theological and educational future. The input from feminist theology in this meeting was very important.

CETELA has been a space for theological formation and reflection for the recognition of feminist theology as well as indigenous, African-American and campesino theology. CETELA has been the partner in dialogue of its member institutions and has stimulated and challenged them. It encourages them to start processes in which marginalized bodies and voices can be heard. In CETELA the music that resounds is the harmony composed of the notes which are the lives of women, indigenous, Afro-Americans, peasants, young people, old people and children.

From the theological production of these emerging new subjects we were delighted to find how enriching it is to be introduced to the methodological approaches of others.

Indigenous and Afro-Americans note with satisfaction that, after all the resistance in the past, we now have many convergences in our histories of joy and sorrow. At the meeting we shared our cultural and theological riches with everyone and learned about theirs in return. We realized that in future we have motives for a fruitful dialogue among ourselves and with the other faces of Abya-Yala.

Our campesino brothers and sisters reminded us that we have our roots in Mother Earth. We were struck by the reports they gave about the dramatic situation in which our Mother Earth now is, and the need for all of us to fight to save her and preserve life.

The representatives of the institutions of theological education told us that these institutions are showing concrete signs of openness to the realities of the marginalized faces now emerging in Abya-Yala.

It is comforting to know that, from a spiritual and critical stance, Pentecostal sisters and brothers are concerned about the concrete situation of our peoples and see the Spirit breaking into the world to bring about a resurrection of the dry bones of humanity.

From our different perspectives we realized that there is much to be done, in the theological field and in all the other areas of life. We must continue our dialogue because there is much we still do not know about one another, and the difficulties that persist are the result of our mutual lack of knowledge.

However, different as our faces are, we know that in the depth of our hearts we have much in common: the fundamental importance of the community, symbolic language, life-centred being, religious feelings, belief in our own dignity and the dignity of nature and the struggle to preserve it, our common basis of faith in the God of life, corporeality and the body as the temple of the Spirit, everyday life and the mystery of life, identity/otherness. All this makes us throw ourselves into the task of continuing the dialogue we have started. We therefore conclude the work of this sixth theological symposium of ASETT (AL) and CETELA on a note of hope.

We have raised many ideas and concerns that we want to take up responsibly with those who share our journey. We challenge the institutions of theological education to make a decided move to include the new faces of Latin American theology in their academic areas.

On the occasion of the CETELA meeting we reaffirm our commitment to continue developing processes of theological formation and reflection in our communities from the point of view of the different faces that exist in Abya-Yala, so that this continent of so many bloods and cultures can joyfully express its multiple cultural and social riches, for the glory of God and the good of God's people.

We are certain that for those of us who have been meeting here there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female and that we are all one in Christ Jesus (cf. Gal. 3:28).



“Indigenous rite of Purification” at the 6th Theological Symposium of ASETT (LA) and CETELA.

6ª JORNADA TEOLÓGICA DE ASETT (AL) Y CETELA

Introducción

Con la presencia de unas 65 personas de América Latina y el Caribe, se efectuó entre el 2 y el 6 de julio pasado, la sexta jornada teológica de CETELA, esta vez de común acuerdo con la regional latinoamericana de la Asociación Teológica Ecuménica del Tercer Mundo (ASETT). El lugar fue Cumbayá, Ecuador, población situada a unos veinte minutos de Quito.

El título que se le dio a la jornada fue, “Abya-Yala y sus rostros: formación teológica y transversalidad”. Se buscaba crear un espacio abierto de intercambio y diálogo, en que diferentes “rostros” de América Latina y el Caribe, compartieran las maduraciones y problematizaciones teológicas de su caminar en los últimos años; como también, pensar en las implicaciones y desafíos de la producción de estos “rostros” para la formación teológica ofrecida por las instituciones dedicadas a esta labor. Los “rostros” teológicos presentes fueron: indígenas, negritudes, campesinos, pentecostales y mujeres/género.

Desde el mismo comienzo del evento se creó otro “rostro”, el de las instituciones teológicas para propiciar la interlocución con los “rostros” teológicos.

Primera parte: Maduraciones de los rostros teológicos

La primera parte de la jornada estuvo dedicada a la presentación de cada rostro. Cada cual contó con el tiempo necesario para dar a conocer sus avances y sus limitaciones. Cada presentación estuvo acompañada de símbolos representativos de los diferentes procesos.

La **teología afro-americana** fue la primera en presentarse. Lo hizo a través del *Grupo Guasá*, representado por Antonio Aparecido y Sonia Querino Santos del Brasil y por Romer Portillo de Venezuela. Contaron con el apoyo de Silvia Regina de Lima, brasileña, profesora de la UBL de Costa Rica. Partiendo de dos relatos de la creación, el bíblico y otro de los pueblos africanos, acentuó el carácter comunitario y narrativo de su teología. Por lo cual se trata de una teología categorial y no conceptual. Afirmó su ancestralidad, anclada en las raíces religiosas y culturales provenientes de la genialidad africana, transmitida por los abuelos y las abuelas. En este contexto se destaca el papel protagónico de las mujeres, en virtud de sus raíces matrilineales. Las teólogas negras, asumen su cuerpo como un lugar teológico, negado primero por la discriminación y la exclusión y afirmado ahora como signo de la presencia de Dios, aceptado con sus características físicas propias. Otro referente clave para esta teología es la cotidianidad, que la sitúa y sumerge en la naturaleza vivida a través del baño, el té compartido y la energía que rodea a su pueblo.

La **teología campesina**, fue compartida por Ana de Dios Castro, Aníbal Cañaveral y Adriano Quintero, de Colombia. Esta teología, parte de los desafíos que brotan de la tierra. Es una teología de pocas palabras, habla más por medio de la gran cantidad de símbolos que rescata de la vida diaria del agro. El referente central de esta teología es la tierra de la mano con la Biblia. Comulga con la visión bíblica y de los ancestros indígenas, de que la tierra es un lugar teológico, sagrado, donde se manifiesta Dios de manera privilegiada. Por ello, la considera un ser vivo que genera vida en abundancia. De ahí que asuma una actitud profética frente a la propiedad privada, frente a la expulsión del campesinado de sus parcelas, y al uso de abonos químicos que la envenenan. La tierra espera que nos acerquemos a ella con amor, con afecto, con ternura y con fraternidad. En una palabra la tierra no nos pertenece, sino más bien, pertenecemos a ella, enfatizaron. Esto nos saca de la lógica de la razón a la del corazón, que es otra mediación hermenéutica utilizada por esta teología.

El turno fue para la **teología indígena**. En su vertiente evangélica, compartió la agenda de trabajo trazada en el encuentro de Riobamba, en marzo de este mismo año. Su cosmovisión se mueve dentro de parámetros cosmocéntricos, donde se integran sin fraccionamientos, la comunidad, la naturaleza y la divinidad. El indígena es profundamente religioso. En todo lugar se puede encontrar la divinidad. Su teología y sus expresiones litúrgicas son esencialmente vivenciales, no discursivas, aunque reconocen que no se pueden quedar sólo en lo simbólico, que necesitan argumentar su práctica.

Representaron su vivencia teológica, con un gran tejido indígena, en el que los hilos multiformes y multicolores de la vida y la tradición de los ancestros se entrecruzan para formar un lindo manto. El momento fue dinamizado por los ritmos musicales andinos entonados por el grupo Misión Andina. La teología indígena fue representada por: Margarita de la Torre y Gerónimo Yantalema (Quichuas ecuatorianos), Alfredo Joiner (misquito nicaragüense), Luciano Hanco y Domingo Llanque (quechuas peruanos), Carlos Intipampa y Humberto Ramos (Aymaras bolivianos) y Eleazar López (zapotecos mexicanos).

La **teología pentecostal**, hizo un recuento del proceso vivido desde Matanzas, Cuba, en 1997, hasta la conformación de la red de investigadores-as del pentecostalismo, en agosto del año pasado.

Esta teología, destacó el carácter comunitario de su experiencia de fe. El pentecostalismo germina y se vive en comunidad; es en la iglesia, donde se hace viva la palabra de Dios, donde se hace efectiva la actividad sanadora y dadora de vida del Espíritu. Las mujeres pentecostales, hablaron con claridad de que a pesar de que a través de los dones y carismas, el Espíritu afirma su presencia femenina en la iglesia, aún persisten actitudes que limitan su participación en la misma, como también en las instituciones teológicas. Asimismo, resaltaron el valor de lo cotidiano en la vida de las mujeres pentecostales, quienes asumen desde ahí sus experiencias de tristeza, de alegría, sus carencias y sus esperanzas. Para esta teología, el cuerpo tiene un valor muy especial, por cuanto se considera templo y morada del Espíritu Santo. Propusieron al Espíritu Santo como paradigma que cruza todas las teologías.

El grupo de teología pentecostal estuvo conformado por Senia Pilco (Ecuador), Violeta Rocha (Nicaragua), Joan Figueroa (Puerto Rico), Daniel Oliva (Argentina), Helena Perfors (Holanda) y Luis Orellana (Chile).

La **teología feminista** tuvo la particularidad de que fue presentada por mujeres y hombres, reflejando cómo se va allanando el camino para poder hablar de teología de género. El grupo fue integrado por Sara Baltodano (Costa Rica), Aleyda Gómez (Colombia), Silvia Regina de Lima (Brasil), Anaida Pascual (Puerto Rico), Marlyn Duarte (Nicaragua), Ana Mercedes Pereira (Colombia), José Duque (Costa Rica), Diego Irrázaval (Perú) y Juan José Tamayo (España).

Como las teologías afro-americana e indígena, afirmaron la ancestralidad de su teología, escrita desde las luchas de las mujeres contra su discriminación en la sociedad. Estas luchas empiezan a visibilizarse en la década del setenta, cuando se descubren como parte de la iglesia y de los movimientos sociales. En este momento se empieza a encontrar apoyo en la relectura de las mujeres más destacadas en la Biblia. En un segundo momento, se intenta feminizar la teología, revisando el fuerte componente patriarcal presente en ésta. En un tercer momento, empiezan a utilizar las categorías de género; el ser femenino aparece como construcción social. Desde ahí se cuestionan los conceptos principales de la teología. Asimismo, se empieza a dar espacio a las culturas, al diálogo con otros sujetos y al ecofeminismo.

El balance de la teología feminista fue complementado por algunos de los avances que viene haciendo en el campo de la educación teológica; en tal sentido, propone que se visibilice más la presencia de las mujeres en los currículos, en los planes de formación en general y en la docencia teológica.

El P. Diego Irrázaval, dio testimonio de cómo está siendo re-engendrado mediante su participación en el grupo de teología feminista y de género. Caminar en perspectiva y acción de género, no es solo pensamiento, es acción transformadora, es crear nuevas estructuras de vida, de poder, es un renacer humano, una experiencia de liberación que vale la pena, dijo.

El rostro de las **instituciones** también hizo su presentación. Reconocieron las limitaciones de la lógica cartesiana por su carácter absoluto y por la manera como fragmenta la realidad; este tipo de mentalidad predomina en las instituciones teológicas y es un obstáculo para aceptar las novedades que provienen de los rostros teológicos. Por lo cual se usó la figura de que tenemos vino nuevo en odres viejos. Se aclaró que lo transversal es distinto a lo interdisciplinario, que tiene que ver no con cuestiones temáticas, sino con los sujetos, con el diálogo entre éstos. También se aclaró que la transversalidad es una forma de ser, una actitud. Se trata de de-costruir y construir.

Segunda parte: diálogo teológico transversal

A partir de las colocaciones de cada rostro, se procedió luego al diálogo entre los diferentes rostros. En un primer momento, cada uno se reunió aparte con el fin de considerar colectivamente los aportes socializados, las convergencias y las divergencias frente a cada teología.

Los resultados del trabajo en grupo fueron compartidos a través de un panel, que contó con un-a representante de cada rostro. La síntesis se hizo sobre la base de tres aspectos: divergencias, convergencias e interpelaciones.

Sorprendió mucho ver la cantidad de aspectos comunes entre la diferentes teologías. Resaltamos en este informe, las siguientes:

1. Su ancestralidad. Los indígena y los afroamericanos, como también los pentecostales y las mujeres, insistieron en que sus teologías no son nuevas, sino que se vienen haciendo desde hace mucho tiempo.
2. La experiencia comunitaria. Todas coincidieron en afirmar la importancia de la comunidad como referente. Enfatizaron que no se puede hacer teología desvinculada de la comunidad, con las características propias de cada grupo humano.
3. La Corporalidad. Se afirmó el valor del cuerpo como lugar teológico, de manifestación de la divinidad y por tanto, sagrado. La teología campesina insistió en que esta corporalidad no se queda sólo en la dimensión humana, sino que se tiene que extender a la naturaleza y al cosmos.
4. La cotidianidad vivida y experimentada como lugar de la manifestación de Dios en medio de los valores culturales, de las alegrías y de las carencias de las comunidades.
5. La alteridad/subjetividad. Que tiene que ver con el reconocimiento de la identidad y el respeto de otros artífices humanos y sociales con todas sus particularidades.
6. La presencia del Espíritu Santo que cruza a todas las teologías sin excepción dándole dinamismo a su espiritualidad.
7. La opción por los pobres. Reafirmada como un fuerte elemento común a todos los rostros y que ofrece la posibilidad de una propuesta también común de compromiso.

El espíritu de convergencia en las reflexiones, vivido en esta jornada, permitió hablar de teologías hermanas, que comparten horizontes comunes no sólo en sus luchas en medio del avance de la globalización neoliberal; sino también en los procesos de construcción de espacios de pensamiento y de vida, alimentados por la esperanza, la fe y la espiritualidad de estos “rostros” tradicionalmente marginados.

También se hicieron explícitas algunas divergencias, sobre todo de tipo hermenéutico, que dio lugar a interpelaciones y cuestionamientos entre los “rostros”. Sin embargo se insistió que fueron muchas más las convergencias.

Vino nuevo en odres viejos

En el plano de las divergencias nos limitamos para efectos de este informe, a hacer alusión a la tensión que se vivió durante todo el encuentro, entre los “rostros” teológicos y las instituciones teológicas. Efectivamente, todos los “rostros” teológicos manifestaron la preocupación porque las vivencias y las propuestas novedosas que vienen haciendo, no encuentran eco ni apoyo en muchas de las instituciones teológicas. Se sienten marginados de la academia teológica, tanto en sus currículos como en la práctica docente. Esta situación se describió simbólicamente como “vino nuevo en odres viejos”.

Las instituciones presentes en la jornada reconocieron esta situación. Se comprometieron a buscar los mecanismos para incorporar no sólo las propuestas teológicas de estos nuevos artífices teológicos, sino a ir visibilizando su presencia en las mismas. Por su parte, los “rostros” insistieron en que no se trata de incorporarlos, sino de un cambio de actitud, de mentalidad, para valorar y asimilar estas nuevas formas de producir conocimiento.

Tercera parte: Interacción teología-pedagogía

En esta parte se contó con la asesoría de Anaida Pascual y de Mathtías Preiswek. Anaida, es pedagoga, profesora de la Universidad de Puerto Rico. Mathtías es pedagogo y teólogo y se desempeña como docente del Instituto Superior Ecuménico Andino de Teología (ISEAT) de Bolivia. Tanto ella como él estuvieron presentes en el encuentro y tomaron parte activa en su desarrollo. El hecho de haberlo vivido desde adentro, les permitió hacer algunos acercamientos analíticos de la experiencia teológico-pedagógica de este encuentro.

La reacción de Anaida Pascual, estuvo orientada por una serie de interrogantes de tipo pedagógico que procuran ayudar a viabilizar los retos transversales surgidos de la multivocalidad propia de las subjetividades provenientes de las teologías que se encontraron en esta jornada. Muchas de estas preguntas han sido producidas por Anaida, en el acompañamiento al proceso de las profesoras de teología que busca ir sistematizando pedagógicamente su caminar teológico feminista.

Los siguientes son algunos de los “retos transversales desde una perspectiva pedagógica”, compartidos por Anaida:

1. ...Alimentar el espíritu de la transversalidad, con vías a una “conversión” que posibilite una “cultura de la transversalidad”?
2. ...Construir nuevas pedagogías para reconstruir-nos... para “devenir en voz” y “multivocalizar” nuestra subjetividad?
3. ...Superar las violencias entretrejidas (o “transversalizadas”) en las propias teorías, métodos, políticas y prácticas educativas?
4. ...Rescatar –a la luz de las nuevas teorías e investigaciones sobre la naturaleza de la inteligencia y cómo aprendemos- la centralidad de la “inteligencia del espíritu” en nuestras prácticas educativas?
5. ...Asumir y viabilizar la sistematización del quehacer teológico-pedagógico, tanto desde nuestras especificidades y diferencias, como de nuestras afinidades y convergencias?

El profesor Matthias Preiswerk, en su reacción compartió algunas reflexiones de tipo metodológico y formuló algunos interrogantes educativos y pedagógicos. Manifestó una profunda alegría por el proceso metodológico de esta jornada teológica. En su opinión, entre ésta y la jornada de Matanza, Cuba, en 1997, se dio un avance enorme. Se trató de una metodología inductiva, que permitió vivir de manera muy corporal y existencial, el interrelacionamiento entre teología y pedagogía. Pues la producción de teología desde los rostros de Abya-Yala, es producción de conocimiento. Y por lo tanto, sepámoslo o no, querámoslo o no, es una empresa netamente pedagógica, estimó.

El proceso metodológico de Cumbayá comprendió varias etapas importantes de producción de conocimiento desde la perspectiva de la teología de la liberación. Se partió del intercambio de saberes producidos por los distintos rostros. De ahí pasamos al diálogo de saberes; empezamos a observarnos, a sospechar y a cuestionarnos mutuamente en medio de un diálogo respetuoso y creativo. La fase que queda pendiente, después de Cumbayá, es la de la negociación cultural; Preiswerk, insiste en que no podemos quedarnos en el intercambio simpático, sino que hay que proceder ahora a una negociación en que juntos podamos construir nuevas categorías que asuman las categorías del otro y de la otra.

Dentro de sus interrogantes, llamó la atención acerca de uno de los ejes transversales, el de la dimensión comunitaria. Recordó que no se puede dejar a un lado la responsabilidad individual o personal en el aprendizaje comunitario. Asimismo, aclaró que es un riesgo permitir que sean las iglesias las que le pongan la agenda a la educación teológica pues esto nos puede poner en una camisa de fuerza.

Una preocupación más con lo comunitario, tiene que ver con la manera distinta de aprender a partir de cada rostro. Si existe una manera femenina, indígena, afro o pentecostal de aprender, en qué consiste? Según Matthias, ahí tenemos una veta de investigación pedagógica infinita; sobre cuáles son los mecanismos, las etapas, los procedimientos del aprendizaje de cada rostro. Esto conlleva otra pregunta, que tiene una urgencia dramática en nuestras instituciones, y es qué lugar estamos dando a otras formas de aprender de las que tradicionalmente la academia teológica está utilizando?

Finalmente, se preguntó dónde quedó la dimensión y la fuerza política de esos rostros, así como lo alternativo y lo subversivo de sus organizaciones. Le parece que surgió una pista en el informe de las mujeres, cuando sugerían en algún momento revalorar y reafirmar la opción por los pobres; entendiendo que no estamos volviendo a los años setenta, donde todos los sujetos tenían que confundirse detrás de un solo sujeto histórico abanderado hacia la toma del poder; este elemento, sigue funcionando como un eje que no sólo cruza los rostros, sino que les ofrece una propuesta común. Sugirió tener en cuenta la propuesta del empoderamiento que viene de las feministas, como mecanismo que ayuda a afirmar la identidad de cada “rostro”, habilitándolo para una negociación cultural y política más seria frente a los demás “rostros”.

Cuarta parte: propuestas y desafíos para la formación teológica

Las siguientes son algunas de las *propuestas epistemológicas y metodológicas* de la jornada, surgidas del trabajo en grupos, para que se tengan en cuenta en los diferentes programas de formación teológica:

1. Que las instituciones abran la posibilidad de investigación y especialización con énfasis en los diferentes rostros y no solamente como temas de sus programas.
2. Que en los próximos diálogos se incluyan rostros que no estuvieron presentes: homosexuales, niños y niñas.
3. Revisar nuestros métodos y estrategias pedagógicas para modificar o cambiar las formas sexistas y jerárquicas de enseñanza. Aprender en una dinámica de inter-relación lo comunitario y lo personal, lo

- ancestral y lo contemporáneo; teniendo presente nuestras culturas, contextos y necesidades, en una praxis interdisciplinar.
4. Que CETELA sea el instrumento para ayudar a los diferentes rostros en la formación dentro de las instituciones y que sea mediadora para la difusión de la producción teológica.
 5. Trabajar para que haya no sólo en cambio de curriculum, sino cambios de actitudes profundas en la relación entre docente y estudiantes, para generar congruencia entre el pensar, el sentir y el hacer.
 6. Cambios epistemológicos: no incluir los rostros solamente en el curriculum, sino cambiar las formas de construir el conocimiento.
 7. Vemos la necesidad de un proyecto común político macro donde podamos trabajar las especificidades locales.
 8. Entrar en un proceso de negociación simétrica entre los rostros sin que esto implique perder la identidad propia.
 9. Es menester profundizar y trabajar en la afirmación de la identidad de cada rostro que permita un diálogo más fecundo.
 10. Convocar a grupos de ecologistas debido a que es urgente la representatividad del rostro de la naturaleza, aunque ella se hace presente en los rostros indígenas, afro, campesinos y de mujeres.
 11. Proponemos a CETELA trabajar una propuesta concreta hasta la próxima consulta para practicar la negociación entre rostros a nivel local y regional.

Recogemos los *desafíos* de la sexta jornada teológica en este poema elaborado por la teología indígena.

A este encuentro de CETELA y de ASETT
hemos venido juntos los de cerca y los de lejos.
Hemos mostrado un poco nuestros rostros
marcados por el dolor y la esperanza.
Abrimos un poco el regazo para enseñar las flores que tenemos;
Y nos acercamos a oler las variadas y frescas flores de los otros.
Al abrir el corazón hemos hablado como mujeres y hombres verdaderos;
Y nos hemos reconocido como hermanas y hermanos
que tienen una misma Madre y un mismo Padre.
Cuando nuestras palabras se trenzaron en racimos
comprobamos que muchas cosas nos diferencian
y muchas más las que nos hermanan.
Vimos también que nuestro jardín de vida está amenazado
por las agresiones directas de las leyes del mercado,
por nuestro descuido o por insumos y herramientas inadecuadas.
Como Juan Diego hoy seguimos cortando las flores de nuestros cerros
y las llevamos en las tilmas de nuestro lenguaje mítico-simbólico
para ofrecerlas a las hermanas y hermanos de nuestras iglesias
y así enamorar su corazón para que las reciban y las aprecien
y nos unamos para construir juntos la teocalzin o casa de Dios,
que es también la casa grande para la familia humana,
donde quepamos con dignidad de quienes tienen rostro verdadero;
donde sean escuchados y remediados todos los lamentos,
las miserias, penas y dolores de las hijas e hijos de la Madre Tierra;
donde Dios Madre-Padre nos muestre y nos dé
todo su amor, compasión, auxilio y defensa.
Esto que soñaron nuestros antepasados y nos legaron en mitos y creencias ancestrales

no lo podemos hacer realidad histórica si nos quedamos solos y aislados.
La transversalidad teológica es que armonicemos nuestras diferencias
Y, ante la muerte, las transformemos en dinamismo creador de vida.
Asumiendo la parte de responsabilidad que a cada uno toca
ciertamente que un nuevo sol amanecerá en el horizonte de Abya Yala
tras la derrota de los causantes de la oscuridad impuesta.
Esta es la certeza que llevamos de regreso a nuestros pueblos
y que hará germinar procesos concretos de colaboración conjunta
en planes y programas de formación teológica latinoamericana.
La rica variedad de nuestros rostros bellos
será la base del arco iris de la Alianza nueva.

Sexta Jornada Teológica de ASETT (AL) y CETELA Mensaje Final

Al llegar el primer día de Pentecostés, estaban todos reunidos en un mismo lugar. De repente vino del cielo un ruido como el de una ráfaga de viento impetuoso, que llenó toda la casa en la que se encontraban. Se les aparecieron unas lenguas como de fuego que se repartieron y se posaron sobre cada uno de ellos; quedaron todos llenos del Espíritu Santo y se pusieron a hablar otras lenguas, según el Espíritu les concedía expresarse.

Había en Jerusalén hombres piadosos que ahí residían, venidos de todas las naciones que hay bajo el cielo. Al producirse aquel ruido la gente se congregó y se llenó de estupor al oírles hablar cada uno en su propia lengua...

Entonces Pedro, presentándose con los Once, levantó su voz y les dijo: ..Que os quede bien claro y prestad atención a mis palabras: No están éstos borrachos, como vosotros suponéis, pues es la hora tercia del día, sino que es lo que dijo el profeta: ‘Derramaré mi Espíritu sobre toda carne, y profetizarán vuestros hijos y vuestras hijas; vuestros jóvenes verán visiones y vuestros ancianos soñarán sueños. Y yo sobre mis siervos y sobre mis siervas derramaré mi Espíritu. Haré prodigios arriba en el cielo y señales abajo en la tierra. El sol se convertirá en tinieblas y la luna en sangre, antes de que llegue el Día grande del Señor. Y todo el que invoque el nombre del Señor se salvará’ (Hechos de los Apóstoles 2,1-21)

También nosotras y nosotros, teólogas y teólogos venidos de todas las naciones que hay bajo Abya-Yala, llegamos con gran expectativa a Cumbayá, trayendo en nuestros rostros femeninos, afros, indígenas, mestizos, campesinos la herencia viva de nuestros pueblos. Esta herencia está llena de historias hermosas que no se han escrito o no se hallan en los textos oficiales de la historia; pero que nuestros ancestros nos comunicaron con amor en el silencio de los espacios marginados.

Aquí en Ecuador, mitad del mundo, nos hemos encontrado como compañeras y compañeros de diferentes orígenes y nos hemos unido en la pasión por la formación teológica en nuestras iglesias y por el caminar en solidaridad con nuestros pueblos. Venimos a dialogar sobre nuestras diferencias teológicas legítimas a fin de transformarlas en riqueza de todas y todos, y en fuerza para la vida.

Gracias a la eficiencia y delicada atención de las hermanas y hermanos que, a nombre de CETELA y ASETT, convocaron y organizaron el evento, logramos hacer de esta sexta Jornada una experiencia profunda de Dios como familia en clima ecuménico y bajo el paradigma del Espíritu.

Lo que hemos visto y oído en estos días, lo que hemos tocado con nuestras manos es lo que queremos compartir con las personas de buena voluntad, con las hermanas y hermanos de nuestras iglesias cristianas

e instituciones teológicas, con las compañeras y compañeros de los movimientos, grupos y comunidades con quienes caminamos.

A través de las liturgias creativas del Encuentro celebramos en comunidad nuestra vida de fe y a través del intercambio de experiencias sentimos el irrumpir de la Palabra de Dios que se cumple en medio de nosotras y nosotros: “Derramaré mi Espíritu sobre toda carne (sobre vuestros hijos e hijas, jóvenes y ancianos, siervos y siervas; en el cielo y la tierra) ... Todo el que invoque el nombre del Señor se salvará” (Hechos de los Apóstoles 2,17-21).

En la presencia activa de las mujeres en las instituciones eclesiales de educación teológica y en los procesos dinámicos de Abyayala descubrimos que se ha generado una profunda reflexión teológica marcada por el reconocimiento de un rostro multicultural de mujer que nos invita a reconocer la diferencia como oportunidad para repensar nuestro devenir teológico y educativo. El apoyo de CETELA, desde 1994, a este proceso ha marcado momentos creativos de autoconciencia, producción teológica, obstáculos, diálogo e invitación. Los aportes de la teología feminista en este encuentro fueron muy significativos.

CETELA ha sido un espacio de formación y reflexión teológica para reconocer la teología feminista, de los indígenas, de las y los afros, de las campesinas y campesinos. CETELA ha sido interlocutora e impulsora de desafíos al interior de las instituciones miembros. Ella anima a iniciar procesos en los cuales se identifiquen las voces y los cuerpos marginalizados. La musicalidad en CETELA se armoniza con las notas del ser mujer, indio, afro, campesino, joven, niño, anciano.

Partiendo de la producción teológica de los nuevos sujetos emergentes hemos encontrado con gozo que nos enriquecemos cuando nos abrimos a los aportes metodológicos de los otros.

Indígenas y afros constatamos con satisfacción que, después de muchas resistencias que había en el pasado, ahora tenemos grandes convergencias en nuestras historias de dolor y de gozo. En el encuentro hemos intercambiado y compartido con todas y todos nuestras riquezas culturales y teológicas. Percibimos que tenemos en el porvenir motivos para un diálogo fecundo entre nosotros y nosotras con los otros rostros de Abya Yala.

Las hermanas y hermanos campesinos nos han hecho recordar que en la Madre Tierra tenemos nuestras raíces. Nos impactaron las denuncias que ellos hicieron para mostrar la situación dramática en que se encuentra la Madre Tierra y la necesidad de que todos luchemos por salvarla preservando la vida.

Los representantes de las instituciones de formación teológica nos hicieron ver que estas instituciones están dando señales concretas de apertura hacia las realidades de los rostros emergentes y marginados de Abya Yala.

Es confortante saber que hermanas y hermanos pentecostales, desde una postura espiritual y crítica, están preocupados de la situación concreta de nuestros pueblos y perciben la irrupción del Espíritu en el mundo para una resurrección de los huesos secos de la humanidad.

Desde nuestros distintos rostros hemos percibido que hay mucho que hacer, tanto en el campo teológico, como en todos los demás campos de la vida. Tenemos que continuar dialogando porque aún desconocemos mucho unos de otros, unas de otras. Las dificultades que persisten son consecuencia de este desconocimiento mutuo.

Sin embargo más allá de nuestros diferentes rostros constatamos que tenemos muchas convergencias en lo más profundo del corazón: la importancia fundamental que le damos a la comunidad, el lenguaje simbólico, la vida como centro de nuestro ser, los sentimientos religiosos, las convicciones y las luchas por mantener la dignidad nuestra y de la naturaleza, nuestras bases comunes de fe en el Dios de la Vida; la corporalidad como templo del Espíritu, la cotidianidad y el misterio de la vida, la identidad/alteridad. Todo esto nos lanza a la tarea de continuar el diálogo iniciado. Por eso concluimos con esperanza los trabajos de esta sexta Jornada teológica de ASETT (AL) y de CETELA.

Llevamos muchas luces e inquietudes que queremos asumir responsablemente con quienes comparten con nosotros el mismo caminar. Interpelamos a las instituciones de formación teológica para que incluyan decididamente en sus espacios académicos los rostros nuevos de la teología latinoamericana.

Con motivo del encuentro de CETELA reafirmamos nuestro compromiso de continuar profundizando los procesos de formación y elaboración teológica en nuestras comunidades desde los rostros diversos que existen a fin de que Abya Yala, este continente de todas las sangres y culturas, llegue a expresar con gozo su multiforme riqueza cultural y espiritual para gloria de Dios y bien de su pueblo.

Estamos seguros, estamos seguras que para quienes aquí nos hemos reunido ya no hay judío ni griego; ni esclavo ni libre; ni hombre ni mujer, ya que todos nosotros (as) somos uno en Cristo Jesús (Cf. Ga 3,28).

**PAN-AFRICA SEMINAR OF RELIGIOUS SCHOLARS
ON RELIGION AND POVERTY
OPENING CEREMONY, GHANA, JULY 2000
*Peter J. Paris***

Distinguished guests, colleagues and friends, first of all I would like to welcome each of you to this the first in a series of pan-African seminars of religious scholars on religion and poverty. The idea for this project emerged out of a book I wrote entitled, *The Spirituality of African Peoples: The Search for a Common Moral Discourse*. The purpose of that book was to identify the basic moral and religious structures that have survived in differing cultural forms among African peoples in the diaspora. By doing so, I tried to demonstrate the grounds for developing a common moral discourse among African peoples. Such a pan-African endeavor is greatly needed in our day and, hopefully, this multi-year seminar will be the first stage in founding an enduring pan-African project among religious scholars. In that sense, we may well be pioneers. In other words, we may be laying the groundwork for the birth of a pan-African religious academy.

The purpose of this multi-year seminar is to implement the sub-title of my book by providing a means for African religious scholars on the continent and in the diaspora to undertake a common, critical, and constructive inquiry into an enduring moral and religious problem among African peoples everywhere. More specifically, these scholars will analyze and assess both the historical and contemporary role of religion in understanding the nature of poverty on the one hand, and the present challenge of developing constructive responses to it on the other hand. Our purpose will be realized in the following ways: for each of four years, beginning in July 2000 and ending in 2004, a total of twenty scholars will participate in a seminar held first in Ghana, followed by Kenya, South Africa, and Jamaica. The project will conclude with a an international conference in the United States, June 2004 focusing on the themes developed in the volume of essays resulting from the project.

Each seminar will focus on the relationship of spirituality and materiality among African peoples. Participants have been drawn from different regions of the world namely East, West and South Africa, Jamaica, Brazil, and North America. They have also been drawn from a variety of disciplines in religious scholarship. From the point of view of his/her own specialized methodological perspective, each participant will make issues of gender, class, race, and ethnic/cultural diversity primary issues for analysis and interpretation.

The primary outcome of the seminars will be two-fold: (a) a major volume of essays written both for the author's context and for the wider African world. It is important to note that this volume of essays will be published in each of the regions in order to facilitate its accessibility throughout the African world. (b) a second desirable outcome of the seminars will be the establishment of an International Academy for the Study of Religion and Society among African Peoples on the continent and throughout the Diaspora. Such an academy would be allied with a consortium of colleges, universities, seminaries, academic professional associations, and foundations.

Implicit in this project is the intention to stretch the participants to prepare their essays for readers not only in their own respective contexts but also for the wider African world. That is to say, in writing their essays, each author will be required to draw upon significant bibliographical and experiential resources from each of the contexts in which the seminars were held. In that sense, each author will strive to become a pan-African writer. It is hoped that new knowledge will be generated by this innovative process of cooperative research, study and writing.

In a recent book entitled, *Abolitionists Abroad: American Blacks and the Making of Modern West Africa*, Lamin Sanneh argues that the abolition of slavery in Africa was effected by the antislavery movement of ex-slaves, ex-captives, and their European and Euro-American allies in religion, politics and society. Deeply rooted in the faith of evangelical Protestantism, this antislavery movement culminated in the resettlement of ex-slaves and ex-captives in Sierra Leone and Liberia motivated by the goal to establish a new world based on “public morality, freedom, human dignity, integrity, the rule of law, and justice.” (Sanneh:238)

Similarly, nineteenth century and twentieth century colonialism in Africa was dismantled by the courageous and concerted activities of Africans bent on liberating themselves from the political hegemonies of the western world and establishing independent sovereignties throughout the continent. The triumph of political independence that began in Ghana in 1957 culminated in South Africa in 1994.

Closely, associated with these events was the fall of so-called Jim Crow racism in the United States under the leadership of Martin Luther King, Jr. who was supported morally by African Americans and their friends who embraced that goal.

Under the conditions of slavery, colonialism and racial apartheid, African peoples invariably suffered unrivaled economic deprivation and oppression in the process of making Europeans and Euro-Americans rich. In each of the epoch-making events that marked their liberation from slavery, colonialism and racism, the principal agents for the desired change were the exploited victims themselves: African peoples. They alone had the will and perseverance to maintain the struggle for freedom. Though African peoples eventually won their freedom from slavery, their independence from colonial rule, and the death of racial apartheid, they continue to be victimized by the conditions of abject poverty and its implications for education, health, housing, and social security. Once again, our peoples are being challenged to initiate a new social movement aimed at the global eradication of poverty that disproportionately diminishes the lives of people of color everywhere. Hopefully, African scholars will be on the vanguard of this new form of globalization.

***FINAL COMMUNIQUÉ
OF THE AFRICAN THEOLOGICAL CONFERENCE
NAIROBI, KENYA
14-18 August 2000***

Preamble

As participants of the theological community of the African church, we have come together from fifteen countries in Africa, and from three countries of the African diaspora, to meet at Mbagathi, Nairobi, Kenya, from 14 – 18 August 2000, to reflect on our calling and ministry. We have gathered as representatives of the Conference of African Theological Institutions, the All Africa Conference of Churches, the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians, the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, and the Organization of African Instituted Churches. We have been profoundly challenged by the present crisis in our continent to clarify our role in the service of the church and the wider community.

Concerns and recommendations for action

The Conference notes the following issues and concerns for reflection and action:

1. We lament over the African context and the African crisis. We lament our moral decline, the political and religious conflicts on our continent, the debt burden and the impact of Structural Adjustment Programmes, our dependency on foreign aid, the widespread practice of gender violence, and the ever-growing pandemic of HIV/AIDS. We lament in the understanding that our lamentation drives us to a vision of justice and hope for the future of our continent.
2. In these circumstances, and in order to fully comprehend our situation, the church must be involved in re-claiming dialogue – dialogue with people at the grassroots, with women and those at the margins, and with people of other religious persuasions, so that their concerns and voices become part of our theological reflection. We value in particular the contribution of EATWOT in this regard and encourage them in their endeavors to promote an inclusive and relevant theology.
3. We affirm that the cornerstone and methodology of all our theological reflection must be the inviolability of the dignity and humanity of our African peoples. This should also form the basis of our collaboration and relationship with our partners in the North.
4. In order to realize the full potential of the church in Africa, we recognize the urgent need for our churches and theological institutions to take affirmative action in order to rectify the gender imbalance in our church ministries and in all decision-making processes, in the staffing and enrollment in our theological seminaries, and in the articulation and development of our theologies. In this context we recognize and value the role of women theologians as in the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians that creates a safe space for women to articulate, reflect and develop theologies for the benefit of the whole church and community.
5. We note with approval the forthcoming Decade to Overcome Violence (2001-2010), to be launched by the World Council of Churches (WCC) in January 2001 and commit ourselves to work to identify the root causes of violence in our churches and societies, to conscientize our peoples, and to develop

appropriate mechanisms and programmes to deal with this menace. In our own context we have identified violence against women and children, including domestic violence, female genital mutilation, ritual murders and witchcraft accusations, as a special priority. We acknowledge and repent of the church's share in responsibility for all these forms of violence, both by commission and by omission.

6. Recognizing that the African situation is rapidly changing, diverse, and complex, we note the need to beware of trying to impose a grand narrative as the basis for our theological reflection. We therefore urge the AACC to recognize, encourage and nurture the diverse theological models on our continent. In this context, we note that the paradigm of reconstruction is an emerging model for contemporary theological reflection, but that for many of us this paradigm needs further elaboration and reflection, particularly on the relationship between liberation and reconstruction.
7. We urge the church in Africa to look for and mobilize local sources of finance for our theological and ecumenical institutions, and to develop strategies for their better management. We believe that self-reliance and self-financing are critical for African peoples' ownership of theological programmes, of our institutions of learning, and of our church structures, theologies, and development. Self-reliance is also central to the development of personal dignity, self-worth, and a positive self-image.
8. We note and deplore the apparent decline of African ecumenism, and the growth of large denominational institutions such as theological seminaries and universities. In the light of this we urge the church in Africa to evaluate its understanding of the African and biblical roots of ecumenism, if the gains we have already made are not to slip away in the promotion of denominational and parochial interests.

ASIA CONFERENCE OF THEOLOGICAL STUDENTS
KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA
August 14-19, 2000

Seventy students, theological faculty and administrators, and ecumenical leaders participated in the Asia Conference of Theological Students (ACTS) that was held at the Archdiocesan Pastoral Centre, Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on August 14-19, 2000. The participants came from 19 countries from all over Asia and several from Africa, the Pacific, Europe and North America, and represented the major theological schools of the Protestant and Orthodox constituencies of the Conference of Churches in Asia (CCA). Twelve Catholic students coming from Catholic theological schools in Indonesia, Malaysia, India, Japan, Korea and the Philippines attended the Conference as full participants. Sponsored by the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA), planning and support of the Conference was shared with the Office of Ecumenical and Inter-religious Affairs of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC-OEIA) and the Council of Churches in Malaysia (CCM). CCM was the official host of the Conference. A generous grant from the Council for World Mission (CWM) assisted in covering the travel of participants.

The last gathering of theological students called by the CCA took place over forty years ago as part of one of the preparatory meetings that led to the formation of the East Asia Christian Conference (EACC) in 1957. Gathering over forty years later and called to link ecumenical concerns with training for the pastoral ministry and to present ecumenical work as part of "being Church" and therefore part of the work of those who serve the Churches in various forms of ministry, ACTS 2000, as the Conference was referred to by one of its participants, met in plenaries and discussion groups that revolved around four major presentations:

- a/ A presentation on the theme of the Conference "The Ecumenical Movement in Transition: Concerns and Challenges for a New Generation" by Dr. Konrad Raiser, the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches.
- b/ A presentation on "Theology and Ecumenical Life in a Global Era: Concerns, Challenges and Coalitions" by Dr. Damayanthi M.A. Niles of the Christianity in Asia Project of the University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK.
- c/ A presentation on "The Challenges and Imperatives of Christian Unity Towards the 21st Century: Lessons and Perspectives" by Fr. Dr. K.M. George, the Principal of the Orthodox Theological Seminary in Kottayam, India.
- d/ A presentation on "God's People Amidst all of God's People: Ecumenism and the Challenge of Religious Plurality" by Fr. Thomas Michel, Executive Secretary of the FABC-OEIA and Secretary for Inter-religious Dialogue of the Jesuit Curia in Rome.

Students led the worship and Bible Study of the Conference, and shared national and sub-regional reports on the "State of the *Oikoumene*" in Group and Plenary Discussions. A welcome message to the Conference was given by Bishop Lawrence Thienchai, the Episcopal Chair of FABC-OEIA in which he expressed the hope that the Conference will "lay the foundations" that will "see the real and tangible beginnings of unity amongst all Christians in Asia." A welcome dinner hosted by the CCM was attended by leaders and representatives of the major Church bodies and congregations in Kuala Lumpur. Dr. Konrad Raiser, the General Secretary of WCC, Dr. Feliciano V. Carino, the General Secretary of the CCA, Dr. Herman Shastri, the General Secretary of CCM, and Mr. Anthony Row, a lay leader of the Methodist Church of Malaysia who is one of the Presidents of the CCA, were received by the Prime

Minister of Malaysia, Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, at the Office of the Prime Minister in Putrajaya during the Conference.

Theological Students to Help Evolve New Theologies

In his address, Bishop Lawrence Thienchai, the Episcopal Chair of the FABC's Office of Ecumenical and Inter-religious Affairs (OEIA), urged the delegates to prepare for the day when they will be "at the forefront of your church's activities, especially in assisting in the evolution of its theological thoughts and commitments." This, the bishop said, would be the "long-term effects" of the Conference, which "aims to lay the foundation for the future," and which Bishop Thienchai prays, "will see the real and tangible beginnings of unity amongst all Christians in Asia."

Quoting from Pope John Paul II's *Ut Unum Sint*, Bishop Thienchai reminded us that the mandate of the Lord that "they might be one" (Jn 17:20) "is the basis not only of the duty, but also the responsibility before God of God's people" to foster relationships across Christian denominations. How, then, can we remain divided as Christians since "division openly contradicts the will of Christ?" Thienchai sees hope in efforts such as ACTS, which brought together about 70 delegates from some twenty countries representing many different Christian denominations among whom were a dozen Catholics, as "the little bit" which each person can do to "help foster Christian unity."

In introducing ACTS, the chief organizer Feliciano Carino, intimated that the last time ACTS was held, it was the year 1956 when Carino himself was a participant as a student of theology. "It is of great importance to note that so many of the theological students who participated in that theological students conference have provided some of the more important leadership of the ecumenical movement in Asia" Carino continued. Thus, Carino hopes that the present ACTS "will provide initiative towards the formation of networks of pastoral and theological work in the region" and that it will also "provide occasion to engage theological students towards the discussion and understanding of issues, concerns and perspectives of the ecumenical movement and to consider commitment to ecumenical life and thought in the region and worldwide as a vital part of being Church in Asia."

The decision to hold ACTS at the Kuala Lumpur's Catholic Archdiocesan Pastoral Centre was in itself very much a theological statement. Being a Protestant-initiated conference but which saw the active participation of Catholics, through FABC's Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, the choice of a specifically Roman Catholic institution spoke volumes of the CCA's desire to foster Christian unity. Not only did the mainly Protestant delegates come to talk about ecumenism, they also had the opportunity to live together for about a week under the same roof in a very Catholic atmosphere. Through it all, respect and appreciation for one another were the hallmarks of ACTS.

Inclusiveness: The Ecumenical Agenda of the Future

"A commitment to inclusiveness and to overcoming any form of discrimination" will mark much of the ecumenical work of the new generation, asserts Konrad Raiser during his keynote address to the Conference. Raiser continued to state that "the effort to build inclusive communities has been a distinctive feature of ecumenical discussion with regard to the gender issue, the place of persons with disabilities, the recognition of indigenous cultures, etc." He, however, raised a caution and suggested that "with regard to particular moral concerns, especially around human sexuality, the ecumenical discussion seems to touch limits of its commitment to inclusiveness." Raiser also pointed out another area which has been "controversially discussed" namely, "the relationship with people of other faiths and their place in the

Christian understanding of God's will for human society and history." But he suggests that "the crucial test" of the ecumenical agenda would be how "the criterion of inclusiveness is being applied to the understanding of Christian unity and the inclusive scope of the ecumenical movement."

In his lecture, Raiser pointed out that there have been "diversity and contradiction between different approaches of interpretation" for the ecumenical movement. For instance, "traditional objectives of unity, mission and service have become ambiguous in themselves." "The crucial challenge in a situation of imposed globalization," he suggests, is the "ability to affirm diversity and difference as vital preconditions for sustainable life in community." "Unity," Raiser asserts, is "too static and abstract a category, too closely linked to particular patterns of political rule and domination." More important, Raiser continued, is the challenge to mission and evangelism as a result of "a situation of world-wide religious resurgence and the emergence of religious plurality as a condition in most societies." Even as the ecumenical movement has been engaged in inter-faith and inter-religious dialogue, "the implications of religious plurality for understanding the missionary calling of the church have not yet been spelled out." This, therefore, "remains one of the areas of sharp controversy within the ecumenical movement."

Later in the evening, Raiser presented a "dinner talk" to members of the Council of Churches of Malaysia who gathered to welcome the participants of ACTS as well as the WCC General Secretary on this his very first visit to Malaysia. Bishop Murphy Pakiam of the Kuala Lumpur archdiocese and Bro. Augustine Julian of the Catholic Bishops' Conference were also on hand to welcome Raiser. ACTS, an initiative of the Christian Conference of Asia, saw the inclusive participation of the Catholic Church, through the FABC's Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs (OEIA). In the words of Thai Bishop Lawrence Thienchai, the Episcopal Chair of FABC-OEIA, this "is not by any coincidence," but represents "a commitment on our part to be actively involved in activities which foster ecumenical dialogue and relationships."

You Don't Dialogue with Violent Criminals

How is dialogue possible in today's social climate? Christians pointedly ask, "How can you engage in dialogue with people who are burning your churches, raping your sisters, massacring your villages and killing your clergy?" "YOU DON'T," asserted Fr. Thomas Michel in responding to questions raised during his address at the Conference. Jesuit Father Michel, an internationally renowned scholar of Islam and proponent of inter-religious dialogue, then went on to say that "you don't dialogue with violent criminals, with people who have given themselves over to hatred, just as St. Paul did not dialogue with the fanatics and the murderers of Ephesus." Having analyzed St. Paul's two-year stopover at Ephesus as "raising the whole question of inter-religious dialogue for Christians" Michel suggested that "dialogue presumes good will and a certain level of openness to others. You don't dialogue with an angry mob. You try to avoid them, just as Paul avoided the mob by staying out of the city centre in Ephesus."

The very down-to-earth and pragmatic Michel suggested that when the streets are filled with young men armed with heavy weapons, "you don't engage in dialogue." Instead, "you gather your children and whatever possessions you can carry on your back and you flee the area." He then went on to say that unfortunately recent history has shown that "it is the reasonable and peace-loving people who flee their homes and become refugees, often abandoning their possessions to the looters and scavengers. In such conflicts, it is not the meek who inherit the land, but the violent."

Fr. Michel was quick to remind that "the vast majority of our neighbors, whether they are Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists or Confucianists, want, just as we do, peaceful, harmonious societies." "They are not

violent and they do not hate,” he asserted, speaking from his many years of personal engagement in interfaith work in nearly every country across the globe. “We do them an injustice when we say that Hindus are anti-Christian or that Muslims are violence-prone, just as we know that others do us an injustice when they say that Christians are only interested in making converts and money,” adds Fr. Michel. He, therefore, cautioned that we do not get into some kind of “persecuted Christians” complex, just because priests have been killed or churches burned. Moreover, Michel pointed out, “Christians are not always innocent victims, but sometimes perpetrators of violence towards other.” Substantiating this, Michel said that “if we include Ireland, Bosnia, Kosovo, Iraq, Rwanda and Chechnia, we must confess that it is probably Christians who are worldwide the greatest perpetrators of violence towards the followers of other religious groups.”

In addressing the delegates, Fr. Michel, the Ecumenical Secretary of the FABC, challenged the delegates to “dreaming” and “having a vision of the future.” For, Michel adds, “those who don’t have a vision of the future become passive victims of history, not its shapers.” Appropriately, Michel’s presentation, entitled “God’s People amidst All of God’s People,” touched on his own personal dream of unity among Christians as well as his vision of building societies that respect cultural and religious pluralism.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ON ETE PROJECTS

Nyambura J. Njoroge

We would like to bring to your attention a few things regarding projects that ETE Programme supports. We would also like to share a letter from a former colleague of ETE Programme in its earlier incarnation the Programme of Theological Education (PTE), Prof. Ross Kinsler.

We believe that most of you are aware that after Harare Assembly of the World Council of Churches in December 1998, significant restructuring has taken place in the Geneva office. In the new structure Ecumenical Theological Education (ETE) Programme is located in the Education and Ecumenical Formation Team (EEF-Team) in the Cluster of Issues and Themes. Instead of three executive secretaries for ETE, today we have one executive secretary in Geneva responsible for the global coordination of ETE mandates as well as focusing on Africa/Middle East. However, to assist in the work of the other regions, alternative ways of working are being established. Despite the reduced staff, ETE continues to support projects in Africa/Middle East, Asia/Pacific and Caribbean/Latin America regions. We are in the process of exploring ways of similar support for Central and Eastern Europe countries.

With regard to these projects, we receive applications for:

- Faculty development from Ecumenical (Interdenominational) Theological Institutions and faculties of theology who wish to improve the level of their staff in undertaking Masters or Ph. D. degrees;
- Library development, especially for books that promote the practice and teaching of ecumenism and women-articulated theologies and from other marginalized and minority groups such as the Dalits, Aborigines, Tribal societies, etc.;
- Creative and innovative patterns and models of ecumenical theological education, which are relevant, contextual, inclusive and authentic. A good example are models that provide the full integration of women-articulated theologies, which some call gender-focused studies or feminist studies;
- Theological Education by Extension (TEE) and Distance Education Programmes, which are ecumenical;
- Exchange of faculty and theological students for conferences, seminars and short studies;
- Theological Associations of Theological Institutions (for assemblies or conferences).

One of the major focus of ETE is to facilitate and encourage critical ecumenical consciousness, practice and teaching in the churches and theological institutions. In view of this, for each project proposal that is sent, we are concerned that the project promotes and facilitates ecumenism in that particular context. Since ecumenism attempts to respond to the biblical imperative of engaging in God's mission in unity while affirming and embracing our God-given diversities and differences, we are also mandated to ask who is missing at the ecumenical table. For many years, women and other marginalized groups have been missing at the table of theological education and ministerial formation. As such, we pay attention to how these projects address gender discrimination and justice and the inclusion of all God's people. Recently, the network of people with disabilities has also brought to our attention their exclusion and the need for theological institutions to pay critical attention to their concerns and theologies.

The staff is responsible for screening the projects and the final decision on the applications is the responsibility of ETE Working Group, which meets once a year (between April and June). Apart from supporting these projects with a limited amount (the most ETE is able to offer is \$10,000), the staff carries out advocacy work with partners and churches when a project meets the above criteria but ETE is

unable to help or additional funding is needed. This is usually the case with faculty development where the budget exceeds \$10,000. To minimize delay in screening the applications, please note the following:

- Applications should be processed by the responsible administrator (president, principal, rector or academic dean) of theological institutions and associations **not individuals**;
- Applications should have a clear explanation of the objective(s), a budget (in local currency and US Dollars, indicating the exchange rate), demonstrating the contribution made locally and if other partners have been approached or have made contribution;
- Clear indication how the project supports and promotes ecumenical consciousness and practice, e.g. which are the sponsoring denominations that will benefit from a well-equipped library. In other words, is theological institution in question ecumenical?;
- Applications should bear the name, position, address, of the responsible person and for those projects where other staff persons are involved, clear indication of their responsibility must be explained. For instance, if a theological institution is beginning a creative and innovative model of integrating gender studies, who is (are) responsible person for initiating the model? What is their relationship to the institution, (fulltime, part-time, consultant, etc.);
- In order for ETE office to be accountable to our partners who support our ecumenical activities and to evaluate the effectiveness of our activities, we require progress report or the outcome of the project within one year after receiving the support;
- For faculty development applications, see p. 74-76 in this issue;
- In case the project is approved, indicate the bank details where the money should be sent;
- All applications and inquiries for Caribbean and Latin America should be sent to Mr. José Duque, ETE Consultant, Universidad Bíblica Latinoamericana, Apartado 901, 1000 San José, Costa Rica, Tel. + + 506 224 2791, Fax: + + 506 283 6826 and Email eteduque@racsa.co.cr
- For Africa/Middle East, Asia/Pacific and Central/Eastern Europe should be sent to Nyambura Njoroge, ETE Geneva office. Email nn@wcc-coe.org
- Given the amount of work and time involved in screening these projects, we encourage you to send complete information as outlined above latest 30th November.

With regard to increasing the number of women theological students and as faculty members in theological institutions and faculties of theology in the South and Central and Eastern Europe we appeal to you all and encourage you to participate in developing the **Sarah Chakko Theological Endowment Fund**. Recently we received stocks worth \$22,500 (US Dollars) from one woman!

Finally, some of you may have come across the book *The Biblical Jubilee and the Struggle for Life: An Invitation to Personal, Ecclesial and Social Transformation*. (Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY, 1999), written by Ross Kinsler and Gloria Kinsler. Without going into details, we reproduce the airmail letter that Ross sent to us regarding this book, which can serve as a basic resource for group study, and hope that you will consider taking up the challenge put to all of us as Christians.

We believe that this book, has much in common with Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) process and also the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) challenge to the Reformed family and to the wider church, for “a committed Process of Recognition, Education, Confession and Action (*Processus Confessionis*) regarding Economic Injustice and the Destruction of the Earth”. We understand that the WCC has supported this process, but we have not heard how it is being taken up at the local church level and at other levels, such as the theological schools. We recognize that these challenges are complex and may be controversial, but they are basic and essential for our calling as disciples of Jesus Christ and as churches.

We fear that momentum may be lost as the Jubilee 2000 campaign levels off and the year 2000 comes to an end. As many have pointed out, global economic injustice and ecological devastation are going to be the central issues of this century. They are the primary threats to life for humankind and the biosphere. They must become central theological and spiritual concerns of our churches at all levels, as the WARC proposal indicates. We find that Sabbath economics and Jubilee spirituality run throughout the Bible and provide powerful motivation to Christians to take up these concerns.

Our book is selling well, now in its second printing at Orbis Books, Box 308, MARYKNOLL, NEW YORK 10545-0308, USA Fax: 1-914-945-0670 orbisbooks@maryknoll.org – plus a printing by Paulines in the Philippines for the Asian market---but we need to intensify our efforts. **Orbis has agreed to offer a 40% discount for orders of 10 (ten) or more copies, which we requested to encourage small groups to take up the study. We hope you will inform others of this offer through your networks.** Perhaps ETE will want to challenge theological schools and networks to share what they are doing in terms of these issues. (Ross Kinsler)

As always, we look forward to working with you for indeed the work of ETE is not limited to the Geneva Office but is happening among you as you take up the challenges and opportunities that the ecumenical movement has to offer.

APPLICATION FOR FACULTY STUDY/TRAVEL GRANT*

A. Please enclose:

- 1) Name of the applying Theological Institution/Faculty of Theology;
- 2) Name of the applying administrator (president/principal, rector or academic dean);
- 3) Name of the faculty member (Candidate) going for studies;
- 4) Agreement with the Institution that the Candidate returns to said institution for minimum period of five years;
- 5) A copy of a letter of admission for study;
- 6) A complete budget from the admitting Institution for the whole duration of the studies;
- 7) Available resources including any scholarship grant and local support;
- 8) Photograph of Candidate (attach to application);
- 9) Two References, at least one of which should be from the candidate's Church.
- 10) The list of member churches that sponsor the Institution or faculty of theology that is making the application or those churches that send students to your institution for study.

B. Please note:

1. Application for the coming academic year must be received in the ETE office before the end of November.
2. ETE grants are made to institutions and **not** to individuals.
3. Study programmes that are already underway **cannot** be considered for a grant.
4. Encouragement is given to candidates to study in their own region/continent.
5. Encouragement is given to candidates to study in seminaries or University faculties where Ecumenical Formation is practiced.
6. Preference is given to applications for women faculty.

*Spanish and French version will appear in January 2001 Issue of MF.

Application for Faculty Study/Travel Grant

Family name:

Other Names:

Date of birth: (M/D/Y) Nationality: Marital Status:

Name of Children (if any) and dates of birth:

.....

Denomination:

Present address:

(Fax/Tel/Email)

.....

Present occupation:

Education:

Institution(s) and years:

.....

Qualifications:

Work Experience:

.....

Proposed Course of study:

..... Duration:

Institution:

Is admission assured? If so, for when?

(Attach document of admission)

Budget in local currency and US Dollars (indicate exchange rate):

1. Tuition per year:

(Attach supporting letter from admitting institution)

Board and lodging:

Other (e.g. travel):

2. Available resources: Amount

Source:

3. Local support:

4. Request to ETE:

Brief statement of project/course, purpose, significance of and programme of study, rationale for choice of proposed place of study. (Continue on separate sheet, if necessary.)

Background information on sending institution, name, history, church affiliations, size of faculty and student body, programmes offered, special emphases, etc. (Continue on separate sheet, if necessary.)

Signature of candidate:

Name and Signature of head of institution (president/principal/ rector/ dean) and official stamp:

.....

Place: Date:

**ADVERTISEMENT
VACANCY - GENERAL SECRETARY, CWM**

The Council for World Mission (CWM) is a community of 31 Christian denominations worldwide with a commitment to the Gospel of Lord Jesus Christ. CWM provides a forum for mutual support, exchange of ideas and people and a pool of financial resources where everyone contributes and receives each other as equals. The governing body is made up of representatives from all member churches with a council which helps resource sharing through three permanent programmes – finance and stewardship, personnel resources and training, mission development and education. As a progressive mission organisation, CWM promotes the equal participation of churches from South and North in sharing missionary personnel. It aids churches to become self-reliant economically and self-determining in their mission planning. Ecumenically, it has become a forum for new theology and mission thinking.

**CWM is now looking for a new General Secretary.
The post becomes vacant in November 2001.**

We welcome women and men applicants who are highly motivated, visionary, dynamic and enthusiastic with a commitment to the Christian faith and the ability to lead CWM through a period of significant change.

CWM seeks applications from anyone able to meet the requirements of the post of General Secretary regardless of gender, cultural or ethnic background, disability or age.

Applicants must:

- have experience of leadership in a Christian organisation
- have proven ability in managing people, information, tasks and financial resources
- demonstrate an understanding of global mission issues and thinking
- demonstrate a high level of theological understanding, ideally with a post graduate level qualification
- be able to work sensitively across gender and culture.

The successful applicant will work well in teams, motivate and facilitate others' initiatives, learn and be able to help others learn from experience. The role requires someone who can identify mission challenges, make strategic plans and manage their implementation. Excellent written, presentation and listening communication skills are essential.

The contract is a fixed five-year one, renewable once at review. The post will be based in the UK (London) with extended periods travelling; however, styles and organisation of work within the senior staff team may reduce the amount of time spent away from London.

BENEFITS:

- Salary according to experience within Grade G of CWM's salary structure
- 24 days' annual leave
- Pension scheme
- Assistance to non-UK residents with housing and relocation
- Home leave allowance for non-UK residents every 2 years

For information pack and application details, please contact:

Juliana Dwuma
Council for World Mission
Ipalo House
32-34 Great Peter Street
London SW1P 2DB
Fax +44 (0)20 7222 3510 or email juliana@cwmission.org.uk

Closing date for receipt of applications: 28th February 2001

Sarah Chakko

Cómo puede ayudar:

● **Haga correr la voz.** Distribuya este folleto entre posibles donantes, entre sus colegas y conocidos; utilice también las redes informáticas. Si necesita más ejemplares, puede dirigirse a la persona mencionada en el reverso o hacer fotocopias del folleto. Si en su organización existe un boletín informativo o alguna publicación periódica, publique un artículo o un anuncio sobre el Fondo Sarah Chakko en su próximo número. Y de a conocer el Fondo por el medio de comunicación que con frecuencia es el más eficaz de todos: de viva voz.

● **Contribuya económicamente.** El Fondo Sarah Chakko de Dotación para la Formación Teológica se financiará no sólo con donaciones de Instituciones, sino también con donaciones individuales, según los medios económicos de cada persona, continuando de esta manera una tradición por la que, mediante contribuciones modestas, las mujeres han apoyado muchas de las actividades de divulgación y de servicio de las iglesias.

● **Procure saber qué mujeres estudiantes están interesadas en participar en programas de formación teológica.** Se espera que las primeras donaciones del Fondo se otorguen el año 2002.

● **Solidarícese con las mujeres que siguen cursos de formación teológica.** Arnieles y no se olvide de ellas en sus oraciones.

Para más información puede dirigirse a:

Nyumbura Njoroge
 Secretario Ejecutivo
 Formación Teológica Ecuaménica
 Consejo Mundial de Iglesias
 Apartado de correos 2100
 1211 Ginebra 2
 Suiza
 Teléfono: +41 22 791 61 11
 Teléfono directo: 791 61 93 / 61 08
 fax: +41 22 791 64 06
 Correo electrónico: mf@wcc-coe.org
 cc: fd@wcc-coe.org

Las contribuciones pueden hacerse de la siguiente manera: **enviando un cheque a nombre del Consejo Mundial de Iglesias o la dirección arriba indicada.** **Mediante transferencia bancaria a las cuentas del UBS Címboro redaccionales abajo.** **Para otros forms de transferencia, diríjase a Nyumbura Njoroge al fin de obtener la debida información.** **En todas las donaciones ha de especificarse claramente para el Fondo Sarah Chakko de Dotación para la Formación Teológica.**

UBS
 Apartado de correos 2600
 CH-1211 Ginebra 2
 Suiza (Switz) UBSWCHZH2AI
 Números de cuenta:
 Francos suizos: 240-695149.00 A
 Dolares EE.UU.: 240-695149.60 X
 Euros: 240-695149.61 D
 Marcos alemanes: 240-695149.70 L

Fotografía Chris Beck / CMI



Fotografía Peter Willms / CMI



de Dotación para la
 Formación Teológica

Fondo
 Sarah
 Chakko



Fondo Sarah Chakha de Dotación para la Formación Teológica

Cada vez son más numerosas las mujeres que siguen cursos de formación teológica en todo el mundo. Sin embargo, las limitaciones financieras -sobre todo en países del Sur- impiden que muchas mujeres cualificadas y de gran dedicación se preparen para el servicio y la dirección en sus iglesias.

Esta combinación de riqueza de recursos humanos y escasez de recursos financieros fue observada por los equipos que visitaron diferentes iglesias y grupos de mujeres en todo el mundo a lo largo del Decenio Ecuuménico de Solidaridad de las Iglesias con las Mujeres (1988-1998). Durante el Festival de Harare, Zimbabwe, que puso fin al Decenio en diciembre de 1998, se dio un paso importante para hacer frente a esta situación: la creación del Fondo Sarah Chakko de Dotación para la Formación Teológica.

El Fondo toma el nombre de una educadora ortodoxa de origen indio que fue la primera mujer presidente del Consejo Mundial de Iglesias (CMI), y rinde homenaje a las muchas mujeres que han puesto sus dotes de dirección al servicio de las iglesias y del Movimiento Ecuuménico -en sus contextos locales, en ámbitos nacionales y regionales, y a través de los organismos ecuménicos mundiales. El objetivo del Fondo Sarah Chakko es lograr que las mujeres puedan continuar aportando contribuciones similares en el futuro.

El Fondo se centrará preferentemente en iniciativas que tengan en cuenta la creatividad

de las mujeres en los ámbitos teológico y ecuménico e intentará facilitar la participación de mujeres en programas de formación teológica.

Durante un periodo de cinco años, el Fondo Sarah Chakko tratará de dotarse de un fondo de 3 millones de dólares EE.UU. mediante donaciones de instituciones y particulares. Será administrada por un grupo consultivo de mujeres, provenientes de tres organizaciones internacionales de iglesias con sede en Ginebra, que trabajará en colaboración con asesores regionales. Los ingresos del Fondo se utilizarán para apoyar tres tipos de formación teológica para mujeres, tanto laicas como ordenadas:

- **Licenciatura en teología** (o equivalente), realizada generalmente en el propio país o continente y en una institución docente comprometida ecuménicamente y que demuestre interés por las teologías feministas;
- **International Feminist Doctor of Arts Ministry**. Curso de doctorado de tres años de duración impartido por el Seminario Teológico de San Francisco y diseñado a formar teológicamente a mujeres que ocupen ya puestos directivos en su iglesia y comunidad;
- **Seminarios ecuménicos de corta duración** como los que se imparten en el Instituto Ecuuménico de Rossey.

Sarah Chakha
1905-1954



Sarah Chakko nació en el sur de la India en el seno de una familia muy devota que pertenecía a la Iglesia Ortodoxa Siria. En una ocasión dijo que se había formado teológicamente escuchando a su madre leer la Biblia en voz alta. Estudió Historia y Pedagogía en el Queen Mary's y en el Presidency College de Madras y, posteriormente, en las Universidades de Chicago y de Michigan.

Tras graduarse en Madras, Sarah Chakko enseñó Historia en el Isabella Thoburn College, una escuela ecuménica bajo el patrocinio de la Iglesia Metodista de los Estados Unidos y situada en Lucknow, en el Norte de la India. La escuela -de la que fue nombrada directora en 1945- se convertiría en su hogar para el resto de su vida. Realizó frecuentes viajes por Asia, Europa, América del Norte y Oriente Medio.

Participó activamente en el Movimiento Estudiantil Cristiano (MEC) y en la Asociación Cristiana Femenina, y formó parte del reducido equipo que el MEC de la India envió en misión a China, en 1946, para ponerse en contacto con los estudiantes universitarios de ese país. En la Primera Asamblea del Consejo Mundial de Iglesias (Amsterdam, 1948), Sarah Chakko presentó el Informe de la comisión de estudio sobre las mujeres. Durante 1950 y 1951, dejó el Isabella Thoburn College para dedicarse plenamente a la Comisión del CMI sobre Vida y Acción de las Mujeres en la Iglesia. En 1951, fue nombrada presidenta del Consejo Mundial de Iglesias, sucediendo a T.C. Chao, de China. Fue la primera mujer que desempeñó este cargo.

En 1951, regresó a Lucknow, donde organizó, en 1953, la reunión del Comité Central del CMI. Su Iglesia la nombró delegada en la Segunda Asamblea del Consejo Mundial de Iglesias (Evanston, 1954). Había comenzado a preparar con entusiasmo este trabajo cuando, en enero de 1954, murió de un ataque al corazón mientras jugaba al baloncesto con unas estudiantes.

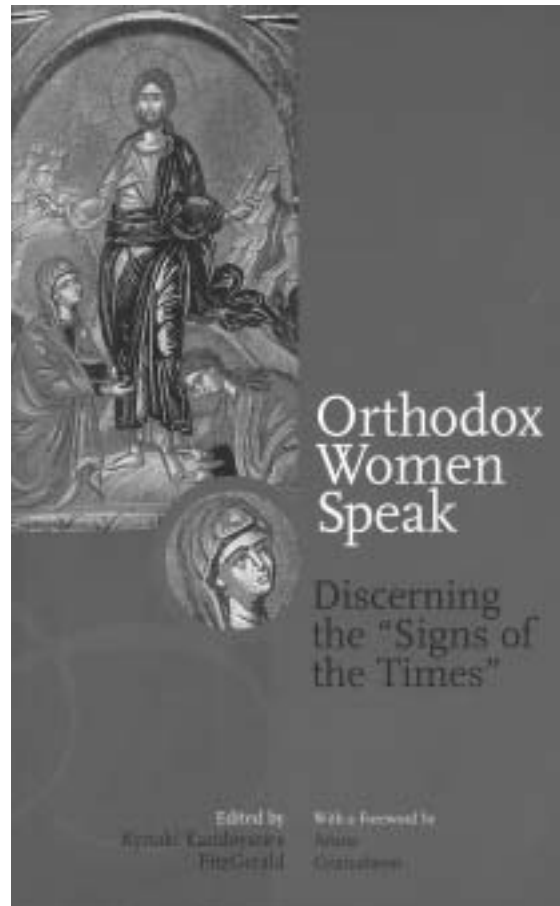
Orthodox Women Speak

This unique collection offers a range of contemporary Orthodox voices addressing key issues around the role and place of women in the life of the church.

While the contributors share a rootedness in the Orthodox tradition, the diversity of contexts, experiences and approaches represented makes for a richly textured survey as well as setting a challenging agenda for the future.

Drawing on biblical and patristic sources, the lives of saints, the work of theologians and the experiences of Orthodox women today, these eighteen women and three men open up perspectives that speak not only to Orthodox churches but to all Christian churches seeking to «discern the signs of the times» at the turn of the millennium.

Included are the reports from two consultations of Orthodox women organized by the World Council of Churches in the context of the Ecumenical Decade - Churches in Solidarity with Women, and co-hosted by the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Patriarchate of Antioch.



Kyriaki Karidoyanes FitzGerald, an Orthodox theologian and licensed psychologist, has often represented the Ecumenical Patriarchate at theological and ecumenical conferences and has taught at theological schools in Europe and the USA. She is the author of Women Deacons in the Orthodox Church (Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1998).

Published by WCC Publications in the context of the Ecumenical Decade - Churches in Solidarity with Women

