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Welcome to the
Journey of Hope



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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PLEASE NOTE THIS IS A DOUBLE ISSUE

Letter from staff.....	3
Notes on Contributors.....	4
Theological Education and Ecumenical Formation: Some Challenges	6
<i>Esther Mombo & Joseph Galgalo</i>	
Theological Education as Catalyst for Ecumenical Formation in Africa: The Role of Associations of Theological Institutions - The Case of WAATI	14
<i>Emmanuel Martey</i>	
Cheminement d'Espérance. L'enseignement théologique en Afrique: Vers Quels Horizons ?	28
<i>Tharcisse Gatwa</i>	
Moving Forward in Hope - What Prospects for Theological Education in Africa?	48
<i>Tharcisse Gatwa</i>	
The State of Theological Education in Southern Africa: Issues and Concerns	66
<i>Paul H. Gundani, Madipoane Masenya, Tinyiko S. Maluleke, Isabel Phiri</i>	
Ministerial Training for the 21 st Century: A South African Case Study	74
<i>Klaus Nürnberger</i>	
Uma Ideia Sobre Educação Teológica em Moçambique	82
<i>Elias Zacarias Massicame</i>	
A Glimpse of Theological Education in Mozambique	98
<i>Elias Zacarias Massicame</i>	
Lay Training Centres in Africa: Instruments of Social Transformation	96
<i>Jonah M. Katoneene</i>	
Theological Libraries: Tools of Evangelism and Ecumenism	105
<i>Catherine Maina-Ouma</i>	
What Theological Education for Africa Today?	108
<i>Kenneth R. Ross</i>	
CATI Policy Statement	192

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LETTER FROM THE STAFF

Dear readers,

On behalf of the staff in the WCC Education and Ecumenical Formation Team, Africa Desk and the Council-wide Framework on Special Focus on Africa, I wish to welcome you to this special issue that is dedicated to theological education and ecumenical formation in Africa. You may recall that in the October 2001 issue of *Ministerial Formation* (No. 95), we announced the “Journey of Hope in Africa Continued: A Critical Evaluation of Theological Education and Ecumenical Formation” (p.73-81). We have had good responses from people and institutions involved in theological education and ecumenical formation in Africa, including a few partners in the North. We are now in the process of preparing for the Conference to take place in Johannesburg, South Africa, 16-23rd September 2002.

The critical evaluation was based on decisions made at the WCC eighth (jubilee) assembly, held in Harare, Zimbabwe, December 1998, when Africans and Africans in Diaspora covenanted with God (see page...) to make a difference in Africa by embarking on the journey of hope. The gathered global church promised to accompany African churches and the people of Africa on this journey. The Harare assembly affirmed *the dream of Africa*, expressed by African participants in an earlier event in Johannesburg, May 1997, that stated:

We are proud in seeing a vision of the journey of hope of African churches for the development of the continent for the twenty-first century. We are determined to work out this vision that promises life with dignity for the African people... This is a vision that

- ✓ calls us to work together and creatively to be in solidarity with one another, to accompany those among us with burdens too heavy to carry alone;
- ✓ compels us to work towards the elimination of the barriers and walls that divide and enslave us;
- ✓ provides us with instruments to reconcile broken relationships and heal wounds inflicted by violent ways of resolving misunderstandings and conflict;
- ✓ can be realized if Africans agree to work together in the spirit of pan-Africanism, and manage their human and natural resources responsibly and ethically, together and in partnership with one another and with nature.¹

The staff that initiated the critical evaluation on theological education and ecumenical formation in Africa strongly believes that we must involve the teaching, training and capacity building instruments of the churches, if this dream and vision will indeed see the light of the day. In this issue, we begin to accompany the churches in Africa by having a glance of what is happening in these institutions and to discover the major concerns and challenges that theological educators and lay leadership trainers encounter in their various ministries. Some of the papers are written by individuals while others worked in groups or carried out interviews. To give a more comprehensive picture, we recommend that you read *The Ecumenical Review, Vol. 53, Number 3, July 2001*, (Geneva: WCC Publications), on “Transforming Ecumenism in Africa in the 21st Century”. Several of these challenges have been highlighted in previous conferences and consultations, however, we hope that through the spirit of Harare Covenant, we will discover strategies that will force us to make a difference.

We would like to hear from you, your experiences and perspectives on what has worked best for you in your struggle to be relevant, contextual, evangelical and ecumenical as well as achieving academic excellence in our world today. We also hope that this special issue will be inspirational to other regions as they seek to work together in theological education and ecumenical formation.

Welcome to the Journey of Hope in Africa!

Nyambura Njoroge, programme staff,
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¹ Diane Kessler, ed. *Together on the Way: Official Report of the Eighth Assembly of the World Council of Churches*. (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1999:224).

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THE HARARE COVENANT, December 1998

OUR COVENANT WITH GOD

We, the people and churches in Africa, give thanks for the manifold blessings bequeathed upon us by God.

We acknowledge that African leaders have committed crimes against their own kith and kin in the past and at present times.

We repent now of our sins against each other and beseech you O God to heal our land and deliver us from all evil.

Our hearts are yearning to be freed from despair so that we may endure in faith, because of God's promise to restore our dignity and fulfil all our dreams.

May God grant us the wisdom and knowledge to harness the growing public goodwill towards a new vision of life for our people in Africa and for the rest of the world.

Let us renew our faith in the God of love in whom our future is safe and our grief is turned into great joy.

We, African people on the continent and in the diaspora,

Having been reminded afresh of our difficult past.

But, inspired by the stories of resistance with courage and sacrifice of our foreparents,

And empowered by the signs of hope such as increasing acceptance of democratic governance, the end of the apartheid regime, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa,

We hereby renew our commitment to reconstruct and rebuild our communities and work tirelessly for a future of Africa full of life in abundance. We commit ourselves to:

- continue the unfinished task of transforming our social, political and economic systems and institutions for an inclusive and just society;
- seek and pursue peace and reconciliation for our people and communities;
- establish appropriate ethical values in work, governance and management, and good stewardship;
- do everything in our means to overcome the scourge of HIV/AIDS;
- affirm the right of African children to hope for a bright future which we shall help to work out with all our strength and all our ability;

We therefore renew our covenant with God in fulfilling these promises and invite men and women of goodwill, and especially this Assembly, to accompany us in this journey of hope.

THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION AND ECUMENICAL FORMATION: SOME CHALLENGES

ESTHER MOMBO & JOSEPH GALGALO

Introduction

The woes that beset Africa are manifold. Underdevelopment, rampant injustice, and endemic corruption aside, the HIV/AIDS pandemic and dehumanising poverty are perhaps the greatest challenge of them all. While the members of the body of Christ in this careworn continent enjoy no immunity from these common miseries, the church is also faced with an equally daunting challenge to witness to Christ, bind the broken, seek the lost, uplift the lowly, and propagate the good news of the kingdom. To effectively stand up to this multifaceted challenge the church would need a sound grounding in her conviction of faith, theological and doctrinal values, and a clearly defined and fervently pursued purpose in mission and service. If the church, despite these numerous challenges, would efficiently apply her vast spiritual and theological resources, there is the hope that the church can make the difference in the society. It is plausible to suggest that relevant and adequate theological training, ministerial formation, and ecumenical co-operation that can help the churches to unite in their pursuit of the ultimate goal of establishing the ideals of the one and the same kingdom of God, would be the best place to begin in dealing with the many challenges.

While theological education could be suggested as part of possible solution, it is in itself beset by numerous challenges. It could only help the mission of the church, if theological education is properly delivered and integrated within a holistic approach that is contextually relevant and methodologically effective. This paper identifies four recent challenges that face theological education, in the context of ecumenical formation, with specific examples mainly drawn from Kenya. The four challenges have been identified as curriculum development, library resources, accreditation and relationships between different theological providers.

Curriculum

The quest for relevant curriculum in theological education is not new in theological circles. Numerous articles have appeared in significant journals in the area of theological education.¹ Way back in 1980 Masamba ma Mpolo writing on theological curriculum commented:

In most cases theological education has been too theoretical, academic, a carbon copy of Western culture not geared toward the proclamation of the kingdom of God but toward the maintenance of the church structures and the perpetuation of theological jargon. Most students who graduate from theological colleges and start their work in parishes find themselves distant from laity.²

The reasons for this state of affairs lie in the content of the curriculum, which is not centred in praxis, people and issues. He suggests that possible solution should be sought in developing a curriculum, which is oriented towards inclusion of these concerns. Questions about the relevance of the curriculum of theological education have continued to be a subject of discussions in various conferences on theological education in Africa.

In Ghana (1986), the curriculum was a subject of discussion and the following message was sent to the churches and theological educators in the various institutions:

¹ S. Neil, "African Theological Survey" in *International Review of Missions* (April 1950) 207-211; F.G. Welch, *Training for Ministry in Eastern Africa*, Limuru AETC 1963; G.N. Amayo, "Theological Education for Modern Africa," in *Africa Theological Journal* 6 (1977) NO 1 42-52; M.S. Mugoba, "Theological Education in Africa," in *Missionalia* 8 1980 NO 1 27-31.

² Masamba ma Mpolo, "Theological Education in the 80's: Some Reflections on Curriculum Renewal in Africa," in *Ministerial Formation* No. 10 (1980) 6-8.

Rethink the context and methodology of theological education and recommend that contextualized curricula, bibliographies, theological and Christian education material resources, including books and commentaries be developed.³

Similar concerns were raised at Naro Moru (1998)⁴, Nairobi (October 1999),⁵ and first and second Mbagathi (August 2000⁶ and March 2002 respectively).⁷ At the biennial conference of the Association of Theological Institutions in Eastern Africa (ATIEA) to celebrate its fortieth anniversary at Limuru the importance of curriculum renewal was underscored. 'The next conference be a symposium on curriculum development with the main speaker (s) on theological methodology.'⁸

The above synopsis indicates how the issue of curriculum has been of great importance in theological conferences. Therefore the issue of a continual assessment of the relevance of theological curriculum is not new and one wonders whether we should merely be *discussing* this in the 21st century or doing something *more*. A survey of the current curricula from a few randomly selected theological colleges in East Africa indicates that most theological colleges operate through the conventional western model of the sevenfold departments: i.e. Biblical Studies (Old and New Testaments), Theology and Philosophy, Church History, Religion and Missiology, Pastoral and Practical Studies, and Christian Ethics. In those theological colleges where the sevenfold model is not strictly followed, a variation is done so that there are more or fewer areas.⁹

While it is true that the structures are generally what the founders of the theological colleges imported, the source is not as such a major issue. The issue is whether the content of the curriculum is relevant and adequate to prepare the students for the challenges of ministry. The issue of structure and content is not the same for all colleges and one will be wrong to generalise. It is true to say that there are areas where both the structure and content have largely remained the same as what was inherited from the founders, and anything new is given a weekend seminar rather than a full course. Courses such as HIV/AIDS, Women Ministries, family life etc. The reasons for this vary but they include lack of space on the time table lack of personnel to teach those courses, fear of the leadership and or sponsors of an institution. Even though the reasons are valid, the quest for a relevant curricular call for the creation of spaces for courses that are topical issues.

Reasons range from the policies or attitudes of the leadership of the sponsoring churches to funding agencies, and the administration and staffing of the institution.

³ J.S. Pobee, . and J.N. Kudadjie, *Theological Education in Africa: Quo Vadimus?* (Accra; Asempa , 1986), p.192

⁴ Report on the AACC Christian Theological and Tertiary institutions consultation Naro Moru, Kenya

⁵ Resolutions of meeting of African theological associations, in *Ministerial Formation* No 88(2000) 60

⁶Final communiqué of African Theological Conference Nairobi, Kenya 14-18 August 2000 in *Ministerial Formation* 91 (2001) 64.

⁷CATI Policy Statement from a consultation held 26 February –March 1st 2002

⁸ Resolutions of the 38th ATIEA Conference held at Limuru April 3-7, 2002

⁹ Catalogues / prospectus of the following colleges: St. Paul's united Theological College, Limuru, catalogue of 2000-2001; Tumaini University Makumira University prospectus 2002-2003; Uganda Christian University, Mukono .prospectus 2001-2002; Tangaza College Academic Handbook 2001-2002, Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology 2001-2002, Nairobi international School of Theology 2002-2003

The task of total curricular renewal is quite daunting, and has serious problems. Curriculum development is not only an issue for theological institutions but also a concern at any level of education and training. The task requires more than academic and professional experts making proposals for curriculum reform, if such proposals are made without involving those charged with policy making at the ground level the proposals or resolutions remain at the conference level. It is therefore clear that a conference drawing its participants from an exclusive clique of academic and professional delegates is not the best place to begin dealing with the issues of curricular change. First the conference discussions do not always reflect the right picture of the situation of the curriculum of the theological colleges. Secondly, there is a general lack of procedure or mandate to put into practice the discussions or recommendations of the conference resolutions. Unless the policy makers are willingly brought on board and included in the decision-making process, implementation is bound to fail.

Third, sometimes the participants who pass resolutions at conferences are not involved in theological colleges per-se.¹⁰ Even if such conferences may be attended by those who are involved in theological education, when they return to their stations of work not much of the conference proceedings is reported or acted upon. The reason for the latter is either due to sheer indifference or lack of proper forum at the station of work. At any rate, theological colleges who send their staff to such conferences are not constitutionally bound to implement the recommendations of the conferences regarding proposals to revise the curriculum. Thus there seem to be a chasm between the conference proceedings and theological institutions. If the colleges or churches were bound by such proceedings, then it would be unlikely that the same topic would have occupied these conferences since 1986.

There is also the challenge to keep abreast with the changing times, lack of necessary resources to undertake relevant research, and innovate or adapt the curriculum as need may arise, and in apposite time. The widespread impact of national and international Tele-evangelists who have invaded the contemporary mass media is a challenge, for example, that calls for a critical appraisal of the existing curriculum. Such impact may hinder theological students and teachers from defining correctly the mission of the Church or the curriculum. It may also cause them to compromise their academic standards and spiritual formation.

Finally, there are problems in giving theological curricula a clear doctrinal and ideological identity. In Kenya, for example, the tension between the ecumenical and the denominational is always felt. Take, for instance, St. Paul's United Theological College, Limuru.¹¹ The partner churches are supposed to make policies, which govern the institution in regard to ministerial formation. While in theory these denominations will support ecumenical theological formation, in reality they are expanding their bible schools into private denominational universities. This is despite the fact that in 1989, at a national council of church conference they resolved the following in the training of pastors:

¹⁰For example the Conference at Mbagathi 2000 when the All Africa Conference of Churches/ Conference of Africa Theological Institutions/ Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians/ Organisation of African Instituted Churches were three papers all on theological education, and the curriculum in Africa : 'Theological and Ministerial formation in Africa'; 'The impact of theological Institutions in Africa'; and 'Trends in Theological Education in Africa' were present by scholars from Religious Departments not geared towards Ministerial Formation.

¹¹ It is an ecumenical institution run by the Anglican Church of Kenya, The Presbyterian Church of East Africa, The Methodist Church of Kenya, The Reformed Church of East Africa, and the National Council of Churches of Kenya.

...Concerned that we must equip the church with manpower(sic) that can facilitate this transformation, we affirm to support St. Paul's United Theological College as the future ecumenical university of the member churches to act ecumenically in ministering in each part of the country in the spirit of the Kikuyu Conference of 1913.¹²

It is true as John Pobee rightly points out that, different churches would rather build their own universities, not least, "propelled by denominational rivalries."¹³ Regarding the development of a contextually relevant and ecumenically enriching curriculum, there seem not to be real commitment. This is seen from the workings of the committees for academic matters, which deal with curriculum, and also staffing of ecumenical institutions. Coupled with the above problems are other issues, e.g. conditions of libraries, publications and pressure to become private universities in order to survive in this century.

Library conditions

Another challenge to establishing a relevant theological institution is establishing and maintaining a library resource that will support the delivery of the concerns and the content of the curriculum. Measuring the worth of an academic institution by the measure of the worth of its library collection is perhaps crude but not at all an unrealistic yardstick. Not only the sheer volumes but also the quality and the relevancy of the material held determines, or bears greatly on its worth. A library is not only an absolute need for an institution of learning but is also a resource that demands constant updating in terms of materials and information held therein. Efficiency in its management, adequate and convenient storage and retrieval system, good atmosphere and general accessibility are mandatory for any library. Meeting these multiple demands have always been a challenge for the libraries in Africa, the advancement of communication technology and easy accessibility of information in the 21st century not withstanding.

Institutions in Africa have always struggled with these challenges. Their problem is further compounded by perennial poverty, having to do with archaic facilities and outmoded academic literature, inability to produce locally relevant materials, and especially now having to evaluate the viability of the traditional mode of delivery and the need to explore the use of internet resources as an alternative to the traditional 'hard copy' type of libraries. In this age of increased consumerism, there is also increased selectivity and the need to keep abreast with the changing times and the dictates of the ever-shifting 'preferential options.' None of this will be cost free and the indomitable financial constraint is not only a common challenge but also a real threat to the very existence and continued relevance of the libraries of our institutions.

Peter Lor in a paper, "*Current International Trends in National Libraries*," observes how Internet, beside financial resources is becoming the major factor "threatening the relevance and viability"¹⁴ of the traditional libraries. Speaking specifically of 'National Libraries,' which could also be true for any traditional library, he further observes that, "new forms of publications proliferate on the World Wide Web (WWW)," and he raises a pertinent question whether it is "still necessary ... to assemble collections that are representative of the world's output if the required items can be

¹² S. Kobia & G Ngumi *Together in Hope, the Official Report of the Mission Conference 1989*. NCKK Nairobi: 1991. 108.

¹³ "Ecumenical Formation in the Service of a Renewed Church," in *The Ecumenical Review* vol. 53 No.3 July 2001 , p.327

¹⁴ Presented to the Third Meeting of the Standing Conference of African National Libraries and University Libraries of East, Central and southern Africa (SCANULECS), Eldoret, Kenya, 21 July 1998, p.2

supplied in the form of photocopies or digitised text?”¹⁵ This is an ‘option’ with great potential for making available unlimited ‘menu’ coupled with an advantage of direct and immediate access to information that one needs. We must, however, note that it also presents a possible confusion, requires specialised skills, and definitely cost prohibitive. Despite these challenges, could one propose that electronic publication and automation for access to WWW is not an option but a must for theological institutions in Africa, and about the only way forward for the libraries of the 21st century?

Relevancy, adapting to changing needs, modernising and qualitative adequacy is imperative for any library, whether in Africa or elsewhere. It must be robust in adapting to the changing environment while at the same time exploring new possibilities of collecting, storing, utilising, and preserving information, alongside the maintenance of the traditional ‘hard-copy’-oriented collection of literature. The future should be seen as a situation where one can neither ignore nor do away with resources generated through both print and electronic media.

Modernising and adapting to the changing situation is costly and financial ability or inability has direct bearing on the success of such a project. As one writer on the subject aptly puts it:

“... Libraries all over the world are facing major problems related to the implosion of new technology ... this will result in major funding problems for ... libraries around the world because of diminishing resources ... rising costs for journals and library materials, ever escalating costs for new technologies and networks, and few facilities to accommodate the growing demand for more services from the users.”¹⁶

Theological institutions must accord priority to the quality and relevance of their libraries. The biggest hurdle is funding and the institutions have no alternative but to source funds and allocate accordingly to their library developments. Maybe an ecumenical approach where different denominational institutions seek to transcend their boundaries, pull resources together, and establish a modern library facility, networking of resources, etc for the benefit of all should be encouraged as a possible way to meet the challenge. An access to electronic media and especially IT has an added advantage beside the unlimited access to information. It can be a forum for interactive engagements where ideas can be shared and opinions exchanged.

Accreditation

The role of departments of Religious Studies in the public universities in some parts of Africa does not include preparing church ministers. Peter Mumo observes that ‘the task of the departments of Religion is to equip professionals with knowledge of different faiths and their influence in Africa.’¹⁷ While the basic concerns of most theological colleges include equipping church leaders with knowledge of different world faiths, specific Christian doctrinal and theological concerns for the service of the church in society. Even with this in mind the reality is different. There exists in some areas a certain appraisal of theological institutions vis-à-vis departments of religion in the public universities. This appraisal is loaded with prestige-bias. Theological colleges’ misgivings about the public universities’ departments of religious studies, and often-misinformed judgements by the latter against the former.¹⁸ For one reason or another, public universities are regarded as more prestigious than theological institutions.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p.2

¹⁶ Brown, A. Freida, “*University Libraries: Managing Change.*” A Paper prepared for: United States International University (USIU), Nairobi, N.D. p.3

¹⁷ Peter Mumo oral interview, February 2002.

¹⁸ Cf. What Nyambura J. Njoroge called, “unhelpful perceptions” where she quotes and critiques Emmanuel A Obeng’s claim that theological colleges’ “entry requirements are low – placing emphasis on

This attitude causes theological institutions to go scampering to obtain government charters to operate as private universities. The government anyway, now requires any institution offering higher education to have a licence, mainly for the purpose of quality control. To achieve this, a government-appointed Commission of Higher Education whose members are secular university dons with little or no idea of theological education and ministerial formation assesses theological curricula.¹⁹

Should a theological institution be required to be answerable to a regulatory authority, a secular academic standard board? Who should determine the course content, curricula concerns and the quality of theological education? Is self-regulation adequate and reliable for ensuring acceptable standards in any institution of learning? These are challenges, which can neither be ignored nor easily surmounted. No wonder the issue of accreditation has been top on the agenda for many theological institutions for sometime now. The university charter has to be acquired not only to fulfil a requirement, but also perhaps for image boost and not least the colleges are waking up to the need to diversify courses to meet economic challenge.

The question often overlooked is of how much theological institutions compromise its mission, focus or primary goals, confessional freedom, etc in order to meet the requirements set by the licensing authority. There is always the risky openness, accommodations, and compliance with political inclinations that theological institutions are often coerced into. There is, however, the obvious advantage of having a specially designated commission to ensure an all-round quality education. The stated objective of the Kenyan commission for the higher education, for example, as stipulated in the ‘standardisation, accreditation and supervision rules, of *The Universities Act*, is to ensure that, “a university meets and continues to meet the standards of academic excellence set by the commission.”²⁰ The Accreditation body is, however, equally concerned with other crucial issues such as adequacy and appropriateness of physical facilities, health and safety standards, economic viability, all for the good of the institution,²¹ while at the same time indirectly safeguarding the public against unscrupulous entrepreneurs out to con the public through offering substandard academic qualifications. The demand for acceptable standards regarding physical facilities would, for example, certify that buildings are structurally sound and thereby ensuring the safety of users of such premises. Requiring the institution to adhere to approved health standards such as proper sanitation, fire safety, adequate utilities, etc equally safeguard the users against health risks.

Accreditation, therefore, should be seen not simply as a control mechanism or a political tool, but rather as a necessity and to be pursued by theological institutions for the advantages it entails. Diversifying courses, for example, as required by the Accreditation Board would mean an increase in enrolment and subsequently more financial income for the institution. This in turn ensures economic viability, and reduces donor dependency, which hitherto has been the pecuniary mainstay of many theological colleges despite the unreliable nature of such a financial source. Another added advantage could also be mentioned. Opening up to larger public does not only afford an opportunity for Christian witness through the principles which the institution stands for, but also

vocation rather than on intellectual ability. People with mediocre intellect therefore have found and are still finding their way into the ministry of the church.” In “The Way Forward: Sustaining the Ecumenical Vision in Eastern Africa in a Context of Growing Isolationism,” A Paper presented to ATIEA 40th Anniversary, 3-7 April, 2002 Limuru, Kenya p.13

¹⁹ Examples from Kenya theological colleges which have either been accredited or are working towards accreditation. Scott Theological College, St. Paul’s united Theological College, Kenya Highlands Bible College, Kenya Methodist University; Presbyterian Church of East Africa Pastoral Institution.

²⁰ “The Universities (Establishment of Universities) Standardization, Accreditation and Supervision Rules, 1989,” Part 1:1 in *Kenya Gazette Supplement* No.9, March 3, 1989, p.90

²¹ *ibid.* pp.104 – 120, cp. p.96.

presents possibility of ecumenical encounter and understanding among the institution's constituents and stakeholders who presumably would be drawn from across denominational, ethnic, racial and faith divides. However, one thing must be mentioned. Theological institutions must be allowed a fair representation to the Accreditation Board, or at least offered an amenable forum to present and if need be defend, the ideals that the institution cannot compromise, its primary mission, and specific curricula concerns.

Relationships

A brief word may be said about 'relationships' as a challenge to theological education and especially ecumenical formation in Kenya, before we make some conclusions. Sam Kobia observes that the effort towards ecumenism in East Africa predates the first ecumenical conference of 1910. He laments that the present state of "the fragmented church in the region is a far cry from the united church that was a stated objective as far back as 1908."²² If anything worth mentioning came out of those early efforts there was the formation of an umbrella body which since have become a kind of 'membership club' in the name of National Council of Churches in Kenya²³ bringing together most of the churches. There was also the birth of the so called 'alliance institutions.' St. Paul's United Theological College in Limuru initially started as a divinity school by Church Missionary Society (CMS) in Mombasa. The Anglican church moved the school to Limuru in 1930. From 1955 the college became ecumenical, with the Methodist Church of Kenya, the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, the Reformed Church of East Africa, and the National Council of Churches, taking up invitations for joint partnership over the years.

The joint training venture in an ecumenical college, however, may soon be consigned to pages of history. On the one hand the churches appear to show their commitment to ecumenism by participating in the college councils and sponsoring some students. But on the other hand the same churches are establishing their own denominational universities with faculties of theology. These churches naturally give funding priorities, curricula development, staffing etc to their own denominational institutions rather than ecumenical ones. Enrolment is also affected as churches send more students to their own institutions, and this takes away the opportunity of ecumenical training. The apparent lack of sincerity and open dealings with one another also causes undue mistrust and further weakens the effort towards meaningful ecumenicity. It will not be far from true to say that denomination has become the 'beggars badge' where churches find it easier to raise funds for denominational work from their denominational partners abroad, than they would for ecumenical projects. Who will be ready to sacrifice this useful potential key at the altar of ecumenism?

Denominational identities have, anyway, become deeply entrenched such that people cannot help but simply belong, and perpetuate their denominations. Ecumenical initiatives are either dismissed as an intention of domination or patronising on the part of the more established churches. It is not always the case even where ecumenical training occurs that there will be constructive engagements between the different denominations. There is no guarantee that living and learning together will automatically translate into a better understanding of one another. The denominations seems to be only going along with this alliance in which they find themselves, sending their students into this ecumenical institution, not for the international purpose of ecumenical training, or the promotion and support of the same, but because it happens to be one place where they have been doing their training as 'joint owners' of the place.

²² "Denominationalism in Africa: The Pitfalls of Institutional Ecumenism," in *The Ecumenical Review*, vol.53, No.3 July 2001, p.299.

²³ The National Council of Churches in Kenya which was formed in 1943 could be said to be a consolation prize after the Kenya Missionary Council formed by the 'Alliance' in 1924 failed to deliver a united church as per the initial vision.

We have noted that ecumenical training is not necessarily the best crucible for ecumenical ministerial formation or even promotion of ecumenical co-operation. The ecumenical institutions have, however, a better chance and an opportunity to foster the ideals of the united church of Christ. Perhaps the existing ecumenical institutions should be encouraged to take more deliberate move towards more ecumenical collaboration. As Pobee²⁴ observes, ecumenical institutions stand a better chance of fostering relationships, an opportunity for understanding one another better, and the possibility to overcome the suspicions and mistrusts that often characterise the relationship between different denominations. Although none of this can automatically be guaranteed, as we said earlier, still the institutional setting is unrivalled as the opportune field to sow the seeds of ecumenism. Despite the challenges it obviously presents, it would be worth pursuing as a way forward for ecumenical efforts.

Conclusion

It is impossible to exhaustively discuss all the challenges that beset theological education and ecumenical formation in the given space and time. Those that came up for mention are the most demanding concerns, which commonly occupy many theological institutions. The intended objective of this paper was to draw attention to some pressing issues and challenges that face theological education and ecumenical formation. And hopefully provoke constructive debate that may afford pointers for the way forward. It is obvious that both formal and informal engagements, either at institutional or association levels, and perhaps even individual levels has been going on. While this should be encouraged, it is perhaps time when colleges and churches should take more active role in self assessment and focussed planning with regard to contextually appropriate theological education, ministerial training, and ecumenical formation.

It is rather unfortunate that what has hitherto gone on, with regard to suggestions for the way forward, has been delivered in form of criticisms, isolated practical efforts, conference papers, and debates among conference participants who may not always hold the mandate to transfer their excellent ideas into practice. We recommend that this gap between theory and practice should be bridged by, one- widening the circle of participants in the debate, two- involving all the stakeholders in theological training, encouraging more ecumenical ventures and demonstrating, in ways possible, the advantage of partnerships. This can be demonstrated, for example, when whatever little resource one holds is combined with that of the other. Our partner sisters and brothers from other continents who are helping to champion denominationalism should be involved in the journey of hope by supporting ecumenical theological education rather than denominationalism.

²⁴ Op. Ci t., 321.

***THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION AS CATALYST
FOR ECUMENICAL FORMATION IN AFRICA: THE ROLE OF
ASSOCIATIONS OF THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTIONS —
THE CASE OF WAATI***

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To most students of theology, theologians and theological educators in the West African sub-region, the West African Association of Theological Institutions (WAATI), with its member institutions has been the cradle and catalyst for ecumenical theological formation.

Member institutions of WAATI have become the matrix of ecumenical convergences. As an association of theological schools, seminaries and colleges including departments of religion in secular universities, WAATI has been one of the most ecumenical institutions in Africa. Although membership is drawn from ecumenical, denominational as well as secular schools, WAATI's meetings and conferences have always facilitated and encouraged ecumenical spirit.

For many years, the Association has provided ecumenical forum for theological discussions and exchange of ideas among academic institutions in Cameroon, Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Nigerian and Sierra Leone. Participants to WAATI conferences from these countries represent various church traditions and denominations including Adventists, Anglicans, Baptists, Catholics, Charismatics, Evangelical Church of West Africa (ECWA), Lutherans, Mennonites, Methodists, Pentecostals, Presbyterians and the African Instituted Churches (AICs).

In this essay, it is not my intention to provide facile answers or offer simple solutions to *all* the complex problems being posed by the strong anti-ecumenical forces operative on the African continent; rather, I am responding to the *ecumenical call* and the invitation to a "journey of hope" that requires the best of all of us as we learn what ecumenism and theological education in an increasingly pluralistic cultural and interreligious contexts are all about.

Theological Education and The Ecumenical Mandate

Ecumenism is no stranger to theological education in Africa although, lately, ecumenism and denominationalism are competing with each other in theological education. For example, as early as November 1942, the Trinity College (now Trinity Theological Seminary) in Ghana was founded as an ecumenical effort in theological and ministerial formation by its original sponsoring churches.¹

Today, in the history of the Church, ecumenical education is even more critical and it calls for a new ecclesial reality of reconciling and equipping God's people for mission—a reality far much better than the parochial interests of denominational self-preservation.

Ecumenical theological education affirms the communal and corporate nature of our human existence as expressed in the fundamental functions of the *ecclesia*. The Church's very dividedness is, doubtlessly, a hindrance to its mission in the world. Ecumenism is therefore not just an "extra" but an important and constitutive part of the Church of Christ and, as such, it is very essential to theological education.

The very term “ecumenism” could be used in two related senses.² On the one hand, ecumenism refers to a three-level meaning: the unity and renewal of the whole Christian Community; the worldwide mission of the Church; and the unity of the whole human family—the whole inhabited earth.³ On the other hand, Douglas Meeks has traced the meaning of ecumenism to its Greek root, *oikos*, meaning “household” or “home.” For him, *oikos* “provides the root meaning not only for the *oikoumene* but also for economy and ecology,” and he maintains that the survival of the globe would be determined in these three spheres.⁴

Consequently, the questions of *oikos* are questions of life and death: “To be homeless is to be subjected to death.” Meeks underscores the fact that even if the questions which are raised by *oikos* “in their ancient senses no longer seem sophisticated enough,” they are still “starkly real and irreducible.” He writes:

The question of economy is, will everyone in the household have access to what it takes to live and live abundantly? The question of ecology is, will nature have a home, its own living space? The question of the *oikoumene* is, will the peoples of the earth be able to inhabit the earth in peace? Taken together they constitute *oikoumene* as the most comprehensive horizon for the church’s service of God’s redemption of the world. These are questions of creative justice, that is, God’s power of life against death.⁵

Veritably, our contemporary understanding of *oikoumene* should not limit our ecumenical vision only to the unity and renewal of the church. As John Pobee has rightly observed, “. . . the unity of the church cannot be the sole *raison d’être* of ecumenism.”⁶ It is true that included in this vision is reference to the unity and renewal of the whole Christian Church, its world-wide mission, as well as the unity of the whole human family. However, ecumenical theological education in Africa needs to include the more radical questions of life and death as raised by Douglas Meeks.

The life stories of Africa and, about Africans themselves—their pain and sorrow, misery and despair—now become part of the “datum” of theological education. Could you imagine the impact on theological education in Africa if instead of introducing theology as an academic discipline with definitions, methods, norms and principles, theological educators begin with requirements that each student be exposed to the real life situation of poverty, suffering, pain, oppression and struggle of African people. Besides, students may be made to read books such as Walter Rodney’s *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (1982); Frantz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963); Ali Mazrui’s *The African Condition* (1980); Kwame Nkrumah’s *Neocolonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* (1966); Steve Biko’s *I Write What I Like* (1986); Ama Ata Aidoo’s *Anowa* (1970); and a number of other works written by Africans that present the real life situation of the continent.⁷

With such a different approach, theology then becomes the “second act” and commitment to the struggle of our people for anthropological dignity and for full humanity becomes the first. Furthermore, with this approach, we would be confronted with the importance of the contextualization of theology; social analysis as an interpretive tool in theology; the conflictual situation of the world in which we live and *do theology*; the need to take a preferential option for the poor; and the importance of beginning the theological task with the study of people’s lives as creatures of God revealed in Scripture vis-à-vis the distortions, alienation and brokenness brought about by human sinfulness.

Ecumenism, therefore, involves the liberation of the whole inhabited earth. Our vision, then, is to create an ecumenically renewed and reconstructed theological education that would be faithful and in line with the African quest for an authentic liberation of the whole inhabited earth—a quest which also seeks to bid farewell to the culture of death and decay and advocates for reconstruction.

It is this ecumenical mandate that necessitates the new ecumenical commitment for theological education. As theologians and theological educators, we “often feel at fault for the failure to inform our students about the ecumenical mandate of the church and to help them to become practical ecumenists.”⁸

Frontiers of Theological Education

The ecumenical mandate of the church to bring not only unity and renewal, but also, the service of reconstructive liberation to the whole world calls on African theologians and theological educators to reconceive, re-envision and redirect the whole enterprise of theological education in Africa.

This has serious implications for theological education. First, if our ecumenical vision *also* refers to the unity and renewal of the whole Christian Church, then, theological formation cannot be confined to the clergy or few members of the Church. It is for the *laos*—the whole people of God.

Second, if still, part of this vision is the Church’s worldwide mission and the unity of all humankind, then theological education in Africa ought to be taught and done in relation to the people of other faiths, and therefore has to take *inter-religious dialogue* seriously. Furthermore, such an *oikoumenic* vision challenges the Church in Africa to embark on a global mission: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, *and to the ends of the earth.*”⁹ However, such a “globalization” programme of the African Church is to be distinguished from the globalization policy being discussed in the West especially in North America. Globalization in theological education as espoused in America appears to be the theological justification of the United States government’s global expansionist policy.¹⁰

Theological Education For the Whole People of God

Theological education is for the whole people of God—*laos* or *ecclesia*—equipping them for the whole ministry of Jesus Christ. The ordained ministry is just one of the many *ministries* of the *ecclesia*. Theological education is therefore not confined to “ministerial formation.”¹¹

Although seminaries are a critical locus for theological education, they by no means exhaust the whole of the theological educational agenda. Theological education is broader than degrees. Seminary education is only a part of theological education.¹² There is a large number of Christians who will never seek seminary degrees. There are still others who will go to seminaries or, will study theology but would not seek ordination. Theological education is therefore not the exclusive prerogative of those seeking to be ordained. It is for the laity as well.

Theological education is a tool that facilitates the training and equipping of all God’s people for the variety of church leadership roles and ministries. In WAATI member seminaries and universities, students seek and undergo theological formation to enable them work in various fields. Graduates (lay or ordained) from these academies are found in a variety of spheres of service. Some are working as university lecturers and professors, headmasters/headmistresses and principals to schools and colleges, chaplains to academic and other institutions (e.g. Armed Forces, Police, Navy, Prisons, Fire Service, Industries, Market etc). There are others also who are high executives in secular establishments and para-church organizations. In Trinity Theological Seminary, for instance, course

programmes (e.g. Modular, TEE etc) offered in the evenings and between semesters attract medical doctors, lawyers, engineers, teachers, foreign diplomats, CEOs, as well as church leaders including those from the neo-pentecostal or charismatic and African Instituted churches.

To this end, theological education can adopt a methodology that may be formal, non-formal or informal. Within the West African sub-region, different methods of theological education have been adopted by theological educators and churches to equip women, men and young people for the various ministries. Different methods are used in training those seeking ministerial formation and laity who either become full-time students or, part-time students in full-time employment.

Inter-religious Dialogue

The plurality of religious faiths is a given reality and a rapidly growing phenomenon in Africa. If this is so, how then do our ecumenical as well as inter-religious concerns become an integrated focus of theological institutions and seminaries?

Presently, the enormous challenge facing theological institutions and educators in Africa is how theological education is able to develop methodologies that will adequately equip and enable beneficiaries of the process to interpret not just the Christian experience, but will also have the ability to interpret non-Christian experiences which our increasingly pluralistic culture provides so as to deepen their practical holistic ministry and ecumenical commitment.

Definitely, it has to take a new or revolutionary commitment to train church leaders, theologians and Christian laity who are able and willing to share a vital interest in ecumenical issues with others. The *oikoumenic* understanding of the mission of the Christian church poses serious challenges to both Evangelicals and Ecumenicals. While on the one hand, inter-religious dialogue questions “the particularistic and sometimes dominating thrust of Christian mission”; on other hand, the attempt “to proceed directly to universal community without taking the difficult path of conversion” has also been questioned.¹³

To a large extent, Africans have learned from the experience of living and ministering in profoundly pluralistic religious and cultural setting and therefore, theological educators and African theologians are challenged not just to think theologically about the doctrinal confessions of Calvinists, Wesleyans, Catholics, Lutherans, Pentecostals or Charismatics; but also, how to think theologically about the faith of our Muslim or Traditionalist neighbours. How do we *think* or *act* theologically about our own faith in the context of the faith of our neighbours?

For WAATI, like other associations of theological institutions, the issue of relating our Christian faith to the faiths of our neighbours is not an abstract construct. It is real. By its very character, WAATI, like some associations, is exclusively *Christian*. It is not *inter-religious* like The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (The Circle). Again, unlike The Circle that depends on *individual* membership, WAATI depends on *institutional* membership.¹⁴ What then happens to departments of religious studies in secular universities whose faculty membership includes non-Christians? What happens if the Head of Department is not a Christian but say, a Muslim or, a Traditionalist? This is precisely the existential situation in which some institutions in Africa find themselves and, it becomes an *issue* that can no longer be ignored but be addressed within the context of ecumenical theological formation.¹⁵

Our theological education should respond to the plurality, diversity and inter-dependence of the human and global community in which we need to learn how to live together.¹⁶

Ecumenical Theological Formation: WAATI's Agenda

Theological Education and Ecumenical Formation

For our ecumenical concerns to become an integrated focus of our theological institutions, there is the need for a broader perspective of theological education that is inclusive of ecumenical formation. John Lindner has given a concise methodological description of ecumenical formation following the Bossey model. He writes:

Ecumenical formation is an interconfessional and intercultural process of reconciling and equipping the Church for its ministries¹⁷

According to Lindner, ecumenical formation is interdisciplinary, encourages sharing and self-criticism, and “is always grounded in a contemporary issue(s) in the church and society.”¹⁸ Ecumenical formation then is equipment for life—enabling us live the Christian life in a divided world; in a pluralistic and culturally diverse society and a religiously intolerable community. One would therefore agree with S. Wesley Ariarajah who says that; “ecumenical formation is about life, people and relationship.”¹⁹ It is preparation to live in this complex world of ours.

Because of the complexity and cultural diversity of our global society, we need a different new approach to theological education—a new approach that is different from what has been called the “professional model” for ministry which has “resulted in the adoption of cultural values and images of education that undermine the praxis of the prophetic stance of the church.”²⁰ Rather, our theological education must begin with “formation” and not “professionalism” which does not connect theology and practice. Commenting on this “formation model,” Karen Lebacqz writes:

Formation is designed to create leaders of the people, not theologians of the establishment. It cares less about academic specialization and more about the student's ability to apply her or his knowledge concretely where the suffering is.²¹

Formation as an approach to theological training is, then, more consonant with *conscientization*—making people aware of the situation in which *they are* and the situation in which *they ought to be*. This is what brings an authentic and lasting transformation of the oppressive status quo. According to Konrad Raiser, in an ecumenical context, formation “is not limited to programmes of instruction; it is more than training and even education. It refers to the whole process of equipping, enabling, raising awareness, shaping or transforming attitudes and values.”²²

Therefore, in the true sense of the term, formation is a process that integrates scholarship and praxis. It is, thus, experiential and not attainable exclusively through academic pursuit. Within the ecumenical movement, the process of ecumenical formation, like other related topics such as spiritual formation, moral formation and ministerial formation, has involved the integration of scholarship and praxis.²³

The integration of scholarship and praxis calls for an entirely new theological and educational methodology in all the courses taught in African seminaries and theological schools. It calls for a

more socially responsible approach to theological education and ministry. The ecumenical contextual matrix of each discipline in the educational curriculum must be highlighted using ecumenical viewpoints and resources so that the seminary and theological class become both academic and ecumenical experience.

Furthermore, this same integration calls for a different *content* for the educational process. The curricula of most seminaries and theological colleges only enable students “to have academic fellowship with heretics long dead than with the living brethren of the church today.”²⁴ Theological education in Africa would be excellent only if it spoke to *people who are alive*, and found *people* to be relevant. It is only then that we can talk of a relevant ecumenical theological formation in Africa. Our theological education should not scratch where it is not itching.

Ecumenical Praxis: Confronting the Issues

As an ecumenical as well as a theological community, WAATI has, in recent times, become increasingly aware that the process of ecumenical formation should always be grounded in contemporary issues—having to do with shaping people’s lives and transforming their attitudes and values in both church and society.

Since the mid-1990s, WAATI has been raising serious issues at its biennial conferences—issues that are not just *confronting* contemporary church and society, but are also *challenging* to theological education and calling on the discipline to be more socially responsible and *action-oriented*. These include culture and gender issues aimed at pointing out the androcentric bias in theological formation within the West African sub-region; issues of poverty; the phenomenon of refugees and the displaced in Africa; religion and morality; and issues on spiritual formation in the theological process.

Women, Culture and Theological Education

In the 1996 Conference of WAATI held in Nigeria,²⁵ the Association observed that women in Africa had not been treated equal with men in dignity, opportunity and power. Women also “lag behind in theological education field than in other fields of endeavour.”²⁶

WAATI’s analysis identified three cultural characteristics and how these function in the particularity of women’s experience in African society. The final “Communique” issued by the Conference states:

First, there is the *Gender Character of Culture* which portrays the prevailing consciousness as masculine. Secondly, the *Paradoxical Character of Culture* which, on one hand, resisted foreign domination and called the whole colonial system into question; and on the other hand, discriminates against and dehumanizes the very people it fought so hard to liberate from colonial servitude. Thirdly, *Ideological Character of Culture*, which is used to justify patriarchy. These three characteristics are concretized in certain aspects of traditional marriage and family life which have had untold hardships and psychological consequences on African women.²⁷

The Conference deplored the exclusion of women in the process of ecumenical theological formation and was convinced that “theological education can enable women empowerment; that is, achieving their God-given potentials, personalities and roles in society.”²⁸

WAATI noted the deterrent factors to theological education for women. Among these was the culture of “death and decay,” which include; “frustrations, fear, (destructive) selfishness, corruption, but worse of all blasphemies, heresies and the commercialization of the gospel of Jesus Christ.”²⁹ Besides, discouraging attitudes of church leaders and male theologians are “another stumbling block, especially in the area of ordained ministry.”³⁰ Among the recommendations of this Conference were; that

- We encourage the admission of female students into theological institutions
- Theological institutions introduce Liberation theologies including Feminist theology [i.e. African Women’s theology], Black theology etc. in their curricula
- Institutions increase the employment of female professors, lecturers etc.
- Pastors’ wives be given theological education, at least, to the Diploma level
- In our efforts at theological education of women, we should go beyond syncretism towards integration and inculturation, so as to create what can be termed “cultures of life,” to replace the “cultures of death and decay”
- Theological institutions and churches organize special courses for all categories of women
- Theological institutions be encouraged to formulate a theology of African Culture
- Churches be encouraged to sponsor women for theological education, and help develop solidarity groups, with the view to emancipating women, and
- Theological institutions encourage and develop research into cultural practices that are inimical to women.³¹

Poverty, Refugees and the Displaced

The theme for the 1998 Biennial Conference of WAATI was “The Gospel, Poverty and the Displaced in West Africa” and was held at the Trinity Theological Seminary, Legon in Ghana.³²

In the Conference, WAATI noted that poverty had been ravaging Africa and over 41 per cent of sub-Saharan Africans lived below the poverty line. WAATI understood poverty “to mean lack of opportunity to develop one’s abilities, to control one’s life because of economic deprivation, political injustice, and disorientation of one’s life due to several natural and unnatural factors.”³³

WAATI pinpointed such factors as structural imbalance of society, demographic increases and environmental degradation as among the root causes of poverty in the West African sub-region. Poverty in Africa has resulted in hunger, malnutrition, illiteracy, diseases, inadequate medical care, brain drain, lack of housing, low self-esteem, powerlessness. Poverty induces many women into prostitution and other anti-social practices. It makes children street hawkers depriving them of education needed in nation building. Street Children involve themselves in immoral practices including sexual activities resulting into teenage pregnancies, drug addiction and are exposed to deadly diseases such as HIV/AIDS.

The Conference of the West African Association of Theological Institutions (CATI) saw the phenomenon of refugees and displacement as so alarming that the African continent could be described as “a haemorrhage of refugees.”³⁴ References could be made to the Horn of Africa (Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea); the Great Lakes area (Rwanda, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo); the West African sub-region (Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau) and other troubled areas where countless Africans experience misery and suffering as refugees and displaced persons.

A distinction is made between *refugees* and *displaced persons*. While the status of a refugee inherently implies movement across international borders; displaced persons also leave home but do not cross international borders, they remain within their country. However, more often than not, both refugees and displaced persons “are grouped together simply because of sameness of their predicament.”³⁵

Displacements are motivated, among other things, by economic hardships occasioned by bad governments and manifest in miserable life conditions. Whatever motivates the phenomenon of displacement is an anomalous condition that needs corrective measures. WAATI agreed that among the refugees and displaced persons in Africa, women and children are the most vulnerable.

Furthermore, WAATI saw the problem of poverty and displacement in the two-thirds of the world as a result of structural injustice—unfair distribution of wealth in an unjust world economic (*dis*) order. Such injustices need to be addressed. There is therefore the need for a new economic paradigm based on biblical ethical principles to ensure equitable distribution of what God has given to humankind.³⁶ To this end, WAATI called on the Christian churches, theological institutions and seminaries to:

- Denounce oppressive structures and all forms of exploitation of the poor;
- Sustain on a more regular basis, humanitarian services to the poor and the displaced;
- Help heal the inner wounds in the displaced through spiritual care and assistance;
- Be involved in the capacity building of the poor and the displaced persons in society;
- Encourage the provision of facilities for the training of refugees and the displaced in spiritual and character formation, ethics and vocational education;
- Organize seminars and workshops from time to time on theological reflection on poverty and displacement;
- Engage in efforts to reconcile dissenting factions, and to prevent causes to the refugee phenomenon that lead to poverty and displacement in West Africa;
- Impress upon countries in West Africa to enact laws that would promote human rights projects and social justice, and assist the church in its prophetic mission to the poor and the displaced in West Africa.³⁷

Religion and Morality

The theme of the 2000 Biennial Conference of WAATI that was held at the Nigeria Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomosho, Oyo State in Nigeria was “Religion and Morality in West African Society.”³⁸ The papers presented at the Conference explored in general the role of religion and morality in contemporary West African society.³⁹

A common finding in the papers was that despite the rather high level of religiosity among West Africans today, there is decay in the quality of moral life. Several factors were identified to account for this state of affairs. These include urbanization, economic pressures, ethnocentrism, militarism, cumbersome procedures that encourage corruption, uncritical adoption of foreign values and practices, and, ironically, a flagging in religious outlook and spirituality.

There was a call for finding realistic ways of combating the rising phenomena of immoral acts, the abuse of human rights, violence and the general permissiveness. It was further observed that if West African society is to survive and attain an appreciable level of development in the post-modern global world, it must give priority place to the development of moral character in general and work ethics in particular; for, moral character is a *sine-qua-non* of development.

Among other things, the Conference, to this end, urged the body of theologians and the church to work out ways of directly or indirectly making an input in the formulation of national policies to ensure that the ethical and moral dimensions are duly recognized.

Spirituality and Theological Education

The next WAATI Conference takes place in August 2002 in Ghana under the theme, “Spirituality and Theological Education in Africa.”⁴⁰ WAATI recognizes the need to have a broader perspective of ecumenical theological education that is inclusive of spiritual formation. The increasing interest in spiritual formation in the sub-region calls for a response from theological institutions and seminaries.

We have realized that most African seminaries and colleges are foreign in outlook and, although, the foreigners may be gone, the foreign garb still remains intact. Consequently, spirituality has suffered greatly as the focus on theological formation is shifted almost entirely on academic achievements. Theology should not be separated from spirituality; they belong together. Just as spirituality without theology is ignorance, so also theology without spirituality is impotence.

Theological education in our academies only focuses on God (the Supreme Being) and leaves out the other spirits that matter so much to the African. In contemporary Africa, *popular spirituality* takes all other spirits seriously including ancestral spirits and evil spirits. Therefore, church members expect products of seminaries especially, those who undergo ministerial formation to be the channel of God’s power who are able to help them solve their spiritual problems—problems of childlessness, parental and ancestral curses, witchcraft, spiritual marriages, excessive drunkenness, and strange diseases not “understood” by modern western medicine.

Furthermore, in *popular spirituality*, people believe the ordinary Christian as well has a ministry (cf. Mark 16:17; Luke 10:19) and some seek theological formation, not to be ordained into the sacramental ministry or, for any seminary degree, but to be equipped to handle the forces of evil that attack, harass and oppress them or family members.

The interlocutor of African theological hermeneutics in the 21st century is different from Schleiermacher’s educated nonbeliever (atheist) of the 19th century, or, that of the early 20th century liberal theologian who did not believe in miracles. Speaking from the African context, one cannot escape the spiritual warfare issues facing the ordinary Christian.

The African who converts from other faiths to Christianity expects her or his pastor and church leader to help ward off demonic or evil spirits just as the witchdoctor and the medicine man/woman in African Traditional Religion, or, the Mallam in Islam help their adherents. What happens if, for instance, after a series of medical examinations in hospital, a Christian couple—married for more than ten years and childless—is told there is nothing wrong with either of them, and yet, they could not have children? What about the young man who “confesses” to a friend that he is behind all the troubles of the auntie he is staying with who has no child and no husband and is in her early forties?⁴¹ Or, the woman who claims a spiritualist has intimated that her family has been cursed at a certain shrine: she has already lost three of her children, and the last is suffering from the same sickness that has killed the other three—sickness not understood by medical doctors. Will you dismiss this?

Theological education as taught in our schools lacks spiritual praxis. Spirituality is action oriented. No doubt, one question that cannot escape our August Conference will be whether spirituality can at all be *taught* or *caught*?⁴² Spirituality is rather of praxis than of a dogma. Our vision to create theological awareness for the whole people of God in Africa must be rooted in *Afro-Christian* spirituality guided by biblical as well as Africa’s religio-cultural and socio-economic realities.

Theological Education Guided by Ecumenical Interests

Evidently, as a theological community WAATI—like any other association of theological institutions in Africa—faces more and more challenges as we all come to understand and appreciate our ecumenical mandate, vision and responsibility. The *oikoumenic* agenda of theological formation should engender ecumenically responsible training that will bring radical changes in method, structure and vision in theological education.

It is to this end, that the current phenomenon of establishing denominational universities in Africa is to be viewed with grave concern.⁴³ Furthermore, some of these denominational institutions expect that their faculty members should belong to their respective churches. As these churches establish their own denominational academies, the searching questions they all face are those being asked about the health of their ecumenical commitments.

How willing and ready are the churches, locally, nationally, and regionally to move beyond self-protective habits into proactive witness, ministry and theological formation? In these fermenting times, where will the parochial interests of denominational self-preservation lead us?

Veritably, in ecumenical co-operation, we get to know each other better, and this makes it easier to work co-operatively toward solving issues of poverty and oppression that are high on the African theological agenda. Besides, such co-operation brings liberative reconstruction not only at the ecclesial level but also at the personal and cultural levels—it brings cultural reconstruction whose “components include politics, economics, ethics, aesthetics and religion.”⁴⁴

Never before in the history of the Christian Church in Africa is ecumenical theological education more critical. As both *ecumenical* and *theological* communities, the associations of theological schools in Africa have a tremendous task to perform: to be the cradle and catalyst not just for theological training, but also, for ecumenical formation. Already, they have taken the ecumenical initiative and can therefore build upon the interdenominational make up and ecumenical realities already inherent in their activities and experiences.

However, in their interactive processes, these associations of theological schools should guard against false unity that has been a major criticism of the ecumenical movement. “The suspicions about the ecumenical movement,” writes Douglas Meeks, “center around the false unification of the church culturally, racially, ethnically, [sexually] or nationally”; and there are many Christians today who would not want unity “in terms defined from the perspective of northern, white, male, industrial dominance” and, who also are committed to work against such false unity—unity that is devoid of justice.⁴⁵

An authentic theological education in Africa in the 21st century should then engender social justice and socially responsible ministry which involve a radical critique of society through analysis of all oppressive structures and seek to promote capacity building of the poor and the disinherited.

What now follows, I would like to give additional suggestive challenges that should help in our efforts to integrate theological education and ecumenical formation. Theological formation in Africa in the 21st century will be excellent if:

- Theological education would show commitment to ecumenical education, and seminaries and theological schools would include this vision in their statements of purpose or mission statements.
- Theological institutions would encourage ecumenical research and publication.
- The curriculum design and revision of theological institutions would reflect ecumenical vision and commitment.
- University and seminary libraries and bookstores would include ecumenical resources.
- Theological schools especially, the denominational ones, would consciously recognize and give credit for ecumenical commitments and participation in promotion and other considerations.
- Seminaries and other theological institutions would be sensitive to ecumenical commitment in the selection and appointment of faculty members, visiting scholars and professors, as well as speakers on campuses including preachers.
- All theological institutions would share the best-kept secret of ecumenism and become information centers for ecumenical theological formation.

Presently, there is a high rate of brain drain of theologians and theological educators because there is no room for development. In some institutions, criteria for faculty promotion and tenure are non-existent. Unless comprehensive and meaningful policies on recruitment and retention of faculty are formulated by theological institutions; and, until the criteria for reviews and promotion of faculty are changed, we will not be able to bring a meaningful change in theological education.

It now becomes the responsibility of every theological institution and seminary to provide a place for ecumenical formation. It is when this is done that theological formation in Africa will be excellent.

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¹ The original three sponsoring Churches are the Methodist Church, Ghana; Presbyterian Church of Ghana and the Evangelical Presbyterian (E.P.) Church. In 1967, the joint Anglican Diocesan Council of Ghana joined, followed shortly by the AME Zion Church. Presently, the Accra Diocese of the Anglican Church is also a sponsoring member. However, there are non-sponsoring Churches which as well use the Seminary in training their leaders. These include AME Church, the Mennonite Church, Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Baptist Church, Charismatic Churches, and the African Instituted Churches (AICs).

² See Russelle E. Richey (ed), *Ecumenical and Interreligious Perspectives: Globalization in Theological Education* (Nashville, Quarterly Review Books, 1992) p. 132.

³ Michael Kinnamon, "Globalization in Theological Education: Naming the Issues in Ecumenical Perspectives and Religious Dialogue," *Quarterly Review* 11/1 (Spring 1991) p.71. Cf. *ibid.* p. 32.

⁴ M. Douglas Meeks, "Globalization and the *Oikoumene* in Theological Education" in Russelle E. Richey (ed), *Ecumenical and Interreligious Perspectives: Globalization in Theological Education*, p. 5.

⁵ *Ibid.* p.6

⁶ John S. Pabee, "Ecumenical Formation in the Service of a Renewed Church," *The Ecumenical Review*, vol. 53, No. 3, July 2001, p. 322.

⁷ See Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Washington D.C., Howard University Press, 1982); Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York, Grove Weidenfeld, 1963); Ali Mazrui, *The African Condition* (New York, University of Cambridge, 1980); Kwame Nkrumah, *Neocolonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* (New York, International Publishers, 1966); Steve Biko, *I Write What I Like: A Selection of His Writings*, edited by Aelred Stubbs, (San Francisco, Harper & Row Publishers, 1986); Ama Ata Aidoo, *Anowa* (London, Harlow, 1970). *Anowa* is the saga of the struggle of the African Woman. See also Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Daughters of Anowa: African Woman and Patriarchy* (New York, Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1995).

⁸ Meeks, op. cit. p. 4.

⁹ Acts 1:8 (NIV). Emphasis added.

¹⁰ For discussions on globalization in theological education in American context, see: Donald J. Shriver "Globalization of Theological Education: Setting the Task," *Theological Education* (Spring 1986), pp. 7-18; David S. Schuller, "Globalization in Theological Education" Summary and Analysis of Summary Data, *Theological Education*, (Spring 1986), pp. 19-56; Francis Cardinal Arinze, "Globalization in Theological Education," *Theological Education*, (Autumn 1986), pp. 7-31; Babara Brown Zigmund, "Theological Education as Advocate," *Theological Education* (Autumn 1986) pp. 44-48; Don S. Browning, "Globalization and the Task of Theological Education in North America," *Theological Education* (Autumn 1986), pp. 49-59; See also, the essays contributed in Russell E. Richey (ed), *Ecumenical and Interreligious Perspectives: Globalization in Theological Education* (Nashville, Quarterly Review Books, 1992).

¹¹ This expression is often used to mean training for the ordained ministry.

¹² See Richey, *Ecumenical and Interreligious Perspectives*, p. 128.

¹³ Meeks, op. cit. p. 6

¹⁴ See Nyambura J. Njoroge, "Transforming Ministerial Ecumenical Formation," *The Ecumenical Review*, vol. 53, No. 3 July, 2001, p. 314.

¹⁵ It is my hope that this *issue* would be raised at the ongoing interactive process of the "Journey of Hope in Africa" which culminates in the South African Conference in September 2002. In point of fact, what Mercy Oduyoye says concerning students who study at Religious departments and those who study in seminaries could equally apply to those who teach both categories of students. She writes: "For The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, both those who study at Departments of Religion and those who train in Church theological institutions are theologians." See her article, "Theological Education for Women in Africa: 1978-1992—A Sample Survey" in *Transforming Power: Women in the Household of God*, edited by Mercy Amba Oduyoye, (Accra, Sam-Woode Ltd., 1997) p. 52.

¹⁶ Within the West African sub-region, there are countries (e.g. Gambia, Mali, etc) and states within countries (e.g. Nigeria) that have majority Muslim population and/or have declared themselves Muslim (States) with the introduction of Sharia Laws. In some of these areas, Christians are in the minority.

¹⁷ John B. Lindner, "Ecumenical Formation: A Methodology for a Pluralistic Age," *Theological Education*, vol. 34, Supplement (1999), pp. 10f. By the "Bossey Model" is meant the practice and methods of ecumenical formation as practice at the Ecumenical Institute of the World Council of Churches, Bossey Switzerland.

¹⁸ Ibid. p. 10

¹⁹ S. Wesley Ariarajah, "Changing Frontiers of Ecumenical Theology: A Challenge to Ecumenical Formation," *Ministerial Formation*, April 2000, No. 89, p. 16

²⁰ Karen Lebacqz, "Getting Our Priorities Straight: Theological Education and Socially Responsible

Ministry” in *Theological Education for Social Ministry* edited by Dieter T. Hessel, (New York, The Pilgrim Press, 1988), p. 77.

²¹ Ibid. p. 77

²² Konrad Raiser, “Fifty Years of Ecumenical Formation: Where Are We?” *The Ecumenical Review*, vol. 48 No. 4, October 1996, p. 440, cited by Lindner, “Ecumenical Formation: A Methodology for a Pluralistic Age.” p. 10.

²³ John Lindner sees ministerial formation, spiritual formation and moral formation as important aspects “of the more inclusive term ecumenical formation.” See Lindner, “Ecumenical Formation: A Methodology for a Pluralistic Age,” p. 10

²⁴ John S. Mbiti, “Theological Impotence and the Universality of the Church” in *Mission Trends No.3: Third World Theologies*, edited by Gerald H. Anderson and Thomas F. Stransky, (Grand Rapids, Paulist Press/Eerdmans, 1976), p. 17.

²⁵ The 1996 Biennial Conference of WAATI was under the theme: “Women, Culture and Theological Education.” It was held at the Adventist Seminary of West Africa (now Babcock University) Ilishan-Remo, Ogun State, Nigeria from 28th July – 3rd August. Papers presented at the Conference included: “Women and Culture in Contemporary Africa”; “Relevance of Theological Education for Women”; “Women in Nation Building: A Biblical Approach”; “Women Ordination Revisited”; “Culture and Women Ministry: Implication for the Church”; “Women, Health Development and Theological Education”; “Women and Home Education: Basis for Theological Education”; “Women in the Nigerian Baptist Convention: The Pace-setters for Men in Missions”; and “A Feminist Reading of Numbers 27:1-11; Judges 11:1-40 and Mark 5:25-34.” These papers have since been published in a book entitled, *Women, Culture and Theological Education* edited by Protus O. Kemdirim and Mercy A. Oduyoye, (Enugu, Nigeria, Snaap Press, 1998).

²⁶ Kemdirim and Oduyoye, *Women Culture and Theological Education*, pp. 33, 175.

²⁷ See *ibid.* p. 175, cf. pp. 44-50.

²⁸ Ibid. p. 176

²⁹ Ibid. p. 176

³⁰ Ibid. p. 176

³¹ Ibid. pp. 178-179.

³² The Proceedings of this Conference had been published as: *The Gospel, Poverty and the Displaced in Africa: The Case of the West African Sub-Region* edited by Emmanuel Martey and Mary Gerald Nwagwu (Accra, Ghana, Presbyterian Press, 2000). Papers presented at the Conference included: “Root Causes of Poverty and Displacement in West Africa: A Theological Reflection”; “The Church’s Efforts at Raising the Quality of Life in West Africa: The Case of Sierra Leone”; “Biblical and African Tradition of Hospitality: An Option for Refugees and the Displaced”; “The Impact of Poverty and Displacement on Women and Children”; “Realizing the Vision of Isaiah 65:17-25 in West Africa”; “The Church and the Displaced in Society”; “The Gospel, Poverty and the Displaced in West Africa: The Liberian Case”; “The Parousia: The Ultimate Solution to Poverty and Displacement in West Africa.”

³³ See the “Final Communique” in *The Gospel, Poverty and the Displaced in Africa*, P. 115.

³⁴ Ibid. p. 115, cf. p. 47.

³⁵ Ibid. p. 48

³⁶ Ibid. pp. 29-30

³⁷ Ibid. pp. 116-117

³⁸ I am grateful to my colleagues; Professor Joshua Kudadjie—my immediate predecessor as WAATI Chairman, and Dr. Rebecca Ganusah who also chairs the Ghana zone of the Association, for providing me with information on the theme of the 2000 Conference. The two are the appointed editors of the book to be published on the proceedings of this Conference. The book, bearing the title of the theme of Conference is to come out later in the year before the 2002 Biennial Conference in August in Ghana.

³⁹ The papers presented include; “Religious Practices and Moral Behaviour”; “Religion, Morality and National Development”; “An Overview of Contemporary Godliness in the Morality of West Africa Society”; “Igbo Traditional Morality and the Challenges of Urban Settlement”; “The Impact of Religion on Morality in West Africa”; “Sources and the Enforcement of Morality in Igbo Traditional Society”; “Preparing Youths for Responsible Adulthood: The Challenges of the Church”; “Religion, Morality and West African Society: A General Overview with a Backdrop on West African Traditional Religions”; “Morality and Higher Education in West Africa: The Nigerian Experience.”

⁴⁰ The Conference will take place at the Valley View University, Oyibi, Ghana from 4th-9th August, 2002.

⁴¹ Less than a week ago, a post-graduate female student who is also a teaching assistant in one of the member institutions of WAATI visited me to narrate this—with tears—what her own nephew claimed to be doing. When she was told of this, she did not say anything to the nephew, but he—knowing that she had been informed about it—had since left the house to his own mother.

⁴² Among the items on the agenda for the 2002 Conference are Healing and Deliverance services arranged to take place at the Mount Olivet Methodist Church, Dansoman, Accra in the evenings. Participants will join this local Church for the Revival Service. It is expected that the Spirit of Christ who is the Agent of healing and deliverance will heal and deliver the people of God.

⁴³ See John Pobe, “Ecumenical Formation in the Service of a Renewed Church,” p. 327. Here, Pobe mentions countries like Zimbabwe, Ghana, Kenya, Zaire (now Democratic Republic of Congo), and Nigeria. For instance, in the case of Ghana, the denominations that have established their own universities include: Seventh Day Adventists, Methodist, Lutheran, Presbyterian and two of the newer Neo-Pentecostal (Charismatic) churches, namely; International Central Gospel Church and Christian Action Faith Ministries. Recently, the Dominion University College belonging to Christian Action Faith Ministries has converted to Dominion Theological Seminary after finding the going very tough. Other denominations like the Evangelical Presbyterian and Anglican Churches are also planning to establish their own.

⁴⁴ J. N. K. Mugambi, *From Liberation to Reconstruction: African Christian Theology After the Cold War* (Nairobi, East African Educational Publications, 1995), pp. 15-17.

⁴⁵ Cf. Douglas Meeks, “Globalization and the *Oikoumene* in Theological Education,” p. 4

**CHEMINEMENT D'ESPERANCE. L'ENSEIGNEMENT THEOLOGIQUE EN
AFRIQUE : VERS QUELS HORIZONS ?**

Tharcisse GATWA

Avec la collaboration de

Jean Pierre Thiam, Viateur Ndikumana, Lévi Ngangoura et Matthieu Bouba

L'initiative *Cheminement d'espérance en Afrique*, présentée par l'équipe "Education et formation œcuménique", est un processus interactif critique d'évaluation de la manière dont nous préparons les jeunes, les femmes et les hommes à occuper des postes de responsabilité dans l'Eglise. Il s'agit de répondre à des questions clé telles que : qu'avons-nous fait de particulièrement valable au cours du demi-siècle écoulé ? Comment pouvons-nous à partir de là, avancer dans le 21^e siècle ? Où avons-nous commis des erreurs, pouvons-nous les corriger pour faire évoluer les choses ? Le COE se préoccupe également de savoir comment les chrétiens et les églises d'Afrique réagissent aux graves problèmes qui affectent le continent tels que l'extrême pauvreté, la violence, la corruption et les maladies. Enfin quels types de théologie et quels systèmes de valeurs éthiques sous-tendent et contribuent à façonner l'Eglise, le Christianisme et l'Œcuménisme en Afrique.

Le présent papier examine la situation de la formation théologique en Afrique francophone au sud du Sahara, la transmission des connaissances à travers l'édition et la diffusion du livre, les recherches et publication dans nos institutions théologiques ainsi que la situation des bibliothèques. La réflexion s'enrichit des résultats des débats organisés autour du thème du cheminement d'espérance, séparément avec des enseignants, et avec un groupe d'étudiants de maîtrise et doctorat provenant de différents pays (Cameroun, RDC, Sénégal, Rwanda).

Le plan institutionnel

Depuis les années 1970 les institutions de formation théologique d'Afrique francophone sont regroupées au sein d'une Association des Facultés et Ecoles de Théologie (ASTHEOL). L'ASTHEOL a deux branches, à Kinshasa, au sein de l'Université Protestante du Congo pour l'Afrique Centrale (Congo-Zaïre, Rwanda, Burundi et Angola), et à Yaoundé au sein de la Faculté de Théologie Protestante pour l'Afrique de l'ouest (Congo-Brazzaville, Gabon Cameroun, Togo, Bénin, Tchad, Côte d'Ivoire Sénégal, Burkina Faso, Niger et Guinée Equatoriale). Les deux branches de l'ASTHEOL fonctionnent sous le parapluie de la *Conference of African Theological Institutions* (CATI) dont le siège est à Nairobi. L'ASTHEOL s'est donné comme buts :

- De réexaminer constamment, avec les églises, le rôle des institutions de formation théologique et pastorale dans la société africaine ; promouvoir l'enseignement théologique en Afrique Occidentale et Centrale ;
- d'étudier les programmes des cours et l'équivalence des diplômes ; d'encourager et de coordonner la recherche théologique et la production des textes divers ;
- de rédiger et diffuser "Flambeau", revue de théologie pour l'engagement de l'Eglise dans le monde africain en collaboration avec les Editions CLE (Yaoundé) et CEDI (Kinshasa).

Pour mener à bien ces tâches, l'association a prévu de nommer un secrétaire régional travaillant à plein temps.

Malgré la guerre persistante dans la région des Grands Lacs qui a ralenti puis annihilé les contacts entre la plupart des institutions de la région, la branche de Kinshasa continué à fonctionner, tant bien que mal. Par contre celle de Yaoundé s'est endormie depuis 1981. C'est pour essayer de la remettre sur les rails tout en établissant les ponts entre Kinshasa et Yaoundé que le Doyen de la Faculté de Théologie Protestante, Dr Maurice KOUAM, réunit depuis 1999 les diverses institutions de ces deux sous-régions. En septembre 1999, en août 2000 et encore en septembre 2001 les doyens, les secrétaires académiques et les bibliothécaires de ces institutions se sont retrouvés et ont commencé un travail d'échanges qui, de plus en plus, aboutit à des résultats palpables. Le Directeur des Editions CLE – CLE étant un partenaire historique des institutions théologiques et un instrument des églises en matière d'édition du livre en Afrique – a été associé aux activités. Les échanges ont jusqu'ici porté sur l'harmonisation des programmes d'enseignement, l'harmonisation du niveau du recrutement des étudiants, les années d'études par cycle et les diplômes, l'échange des enseignants, la situation des bibliothèques ainsi que la mise en place d'un canevas des publications dans les différentes disciplines en coopération avec les Editions CLE. Avant de revenir sur chacun de ces aspects, il convient de donner quelques points de repère sur certaines de ces institutions.

1. L'Université Protestante du Congo

L'Université est née en 1959 en tant que *Faculté de Théologie Protestante du Congo belge et du Rwanda-Urundi*. Plus tard elle est devenue la Faculté de Théologie de l'Université libre du Congo (ULC) en 1963. Après son exclusion de l'Université Nationale du Zaïre suite à la laïcisation de l'enseignement en 1974, elle est devenue la Faculté de Théologie de l'Eglise du Christ au Congo. Aujourd'hui elle est l'une des facultés et centres universitaires de l'Université Protestante au Congo érigée en 1994 par l'Eglise du Christ au Zaïre (aujourd'hui, Eglise du Christ au Congo). La Faculté de Théologie offre un programme de formation de graduat en trois ans, de licence en deux ans et de doctorat en 4 ans dont deux années obligatoires de DES. Selon les statistiques de l'année académique 2000-2001, la situation se présentait comme suit : 153 étudiants en graduat dont 20 femmes, 98 étudiants en licence dont 6 femmes, 9 étudiants en DES et 10 étudiants en Doctorat. Pour l'encadrement, la Faculté a 32 enseignants dont 16 visiteurs.

2. La Faculté de Théologie Protestante de Yaoundé

La Faculté a ouvert ses portes en février 1962 avec la ferme ambition de "former des théologiens africains capables de repenser la révélation chrétienne dans son essence en remontant à la source biblique et en la dégageant de ce que des siècles de chrétienté ont ajouté...". Tout en continuant à servir plusieurs églises de l'ensemble de l'Afrique francophone (y compris Madagascar) et lusophone, la Faculté est aujourd'hui une institution appartenant à 13 églises de la Côte d'Ivoire, du Togo, du Bénin, du Cameroun et du Gabon. Elle offre des programmes de formation pour un cycle de licence d'une durée de trois ans après l'enseignement secondaire, de maîtrise pour une durée de deux ans et de doctorat pour une durée de cinq ans y compris le DTA. A la rentrée académique de 1999/2000, la faculté avait 157 étudiants inscrits dont 25 en maîtrise et 26 en doctorat. Le personnel académique comprenait 14 enseignants dont 6 vacataires. En plus, la Faculté a initié un programme de formation des laïcs pour une durée de deux ans ainsi qu'un centre de formation de femmes.

3. L'Institut Protestant de théologie de Porto-Novo (Bénin)

Ce lieu de formation a commencé en 1920 comme une Ecole des catéchistes de la Mission méthodiste wesleyenne. L'école a changé de nom plusieurs fois. En 1925 le centre a pris le nom de Séminaire Protestant de Porto-Novo, en 1962 elle est devenue Ecole Pastorale Evangélique de Porto-Novo et en 1998 elle prit le nom actuel de Institut Protestant de Théologie de Porto-Novo.

L'Institut dessert les églises de la sous-région, l'Eglise Evangélique Presbytérienne du Togo, l'Eglise Méthodiste du Togo, l'Eglise Protestante Méthodiste du Bénin, l'Eglise Protestante Méthodiste de la Côte d'Ivoire et est en partenariat avec la Mission de l'Eglise Méthodiste de Grande Bretagne, la Communauté des Eglises en Mission (CEVAA) et la Faculté de Théologie Protestante de Yaoundé. Il offre des programmes de formation étalés sur deux niveaux, la licence en trois ans et la maîtrise en deux ans. Lors de la rentrée académique de 1998/1999 l'établissement a enregistré 33 étudiants encadrés par un corps enseignant de 4 permanents et 4 vacataires.

4. L'Institut Luthérien de Théologie de Meiganga

L'Ecole Théologique de Meiganga a été transformée en Institut de Théologie dès 1995. En 1999 deux programmes continuaient à se chevaucher, avec 16 étudiants de l'ancien régime du niveau pastoral appelé à disparaître graduellement et 14 étudiants dans le programme de licence. Le personnel académique était constitué de 10 enseignants avec des diplômes variant de Bachelors of Arts au Ph.D.

5. La Presbyterian Theological Seminary of Kumba (Cameroun anglophone)

L'école a ouvert ses portes en 1898 comme centre de formation des catéchistes de la Mission de Bâle, à Béthel, Douala avant d'être transféré l'année suivante à Buéa. En 1932 un séminaire de formation de trois ans fut ouvert à Nyasoso mais c'est en 1952 qu'une vraie école pour la formation des Pasteurs démarra au même lieu. Le programme actuel de formation de Pasteurs et des Théologiens fut inauguré en 1962 par la Presbyterian Church of Cameroon, anglophone (PCC). Toutefois, c'est en 1994-95 que le séminaire fut transformé en Institut de Théologie. Deux programmes s'y chevauchaient, the New Bible and the Old Bible theological programmes. L'établissement comptait 57 étudiants de l'ancien système et 14 du nouveau système. La durée de formation de niveau licence est de trois ans sanctionnée par la rédaction et la présentation d'un mémoire. Le corps professoral comprenait 10 enseignants à la rentrée académique de 1999/2000 y compris 2 vacataires.

6. L'Institut Baptiste de Théologie de Ndiki (Cameroun)

L'école est devenue Institut en 1997. Comme pour la plupart d'autres instituts deux programmes s'y chevauchaient : un niveau des évangélistes et un niveau pastoral, le niveau licence étant envisagé à long terme, l'établissement comptait en 1999, 17 étudiants dans le niveau évangéliste et 14 au niveau pastoral. La formation pastorale dure 4 ans avec présentation d'un mémoire. C'est une école confessionnelle appartenant à l'une de différentes branches des églises baptistes, qui de temps en temps, accueille des étudiants des autres branches baptistes, UEBC et EBC.

7. L'Institut de Théologie Protestante de Ndoungué (Cameroun)

Le rayonnement de l'Ecole de Théologie de Ndoungué s'était étendu bien avant les indépendances et les autonomies des églises africaines à plusieurs pays francophones d'Afrique pour lesquels elle formait les Pasteurs¹. L'inauguration à Yaoundé de la Faculté de Théologie Protestante ainsi que des écoles et facultés de théologie dans plusieurs pays a rétréci son aura mais elle continue à réclamer sa vocation internationale et interconfessionnelle. Elle accueille les étudiants de l'Eglise Evangélique du Gabon, de la Guinée Equatoriale et des Eglises Evangélique et Union des Eglises

¹ Par exemple, les deux premiers pasteurs de l'Eglise Presbytérienne au Rwanda, la première église protestante installée dans le pays, ont été formés à Ndoungué, Naasson Hitimana et Ildéphonse Muzigamfizi de même que la plupart de leurs cadets y compris Michel Twagirayesu, E. Gafaringa ou E Munyensanga. Hitimana a été président de l'Eglise de 1964 à 1977 et Twagirayesu président de 1977 à 1994.

Baptistes du Cameroun. En 2001/2002, l'Institut compte 28 étudiants au niveau de baccalauréat et 15 au niveau de licence. L'encadrement est assuré par un personnel académique d'une dizaine d'enseignants dont deux docteurs seulement, un historien et un Néo-testamentaire.

8. L'Institut de Théologie de Bibia (Presbytérien)

L'Institut résulte de la transformation de l'ancienne Ecole de Théologie de l'Eglise Presbytérienne Camerounaise. Le nouveau système d'enseignement a été inauguré en 1999. A cette date les deux programmes continuaient à se chevaucher, le niveau pastoral, le niveau de licence. Malgré son caractère confessionnel, l'Institut garde une vocation œcuménique et internationale puisqu'il accueille des étudiants venant de diverses églises des pays limitrophes comme le Gabon, la République Centrafricaine, la Guinée Equatoriale. La durée de formation pour la licence a été portée à quatre ans avec présentation de mémoire de fin d'études.

9. La Faculté de Théologie Protestante de Butare (Rwanda)

La Faculté a été inaugurée en 1990 en tant qu'excroissance de l'ancienne Ecole de Théologie². La guerre qui a éclaté au Rwanda à partir du Nord du pays en Octobre 1990, ensuite les massacres et le génocide de 1994, ont perturbé les programmes au point que la première promotion de la jeune Faculté n'avait pas pu terminer sa formation. Pendant le génocide, la Faculté a été durement touchée, le doyen de la Faculté, le Rév. Dr Faustin Rwagacuzi, fut assassiné avec toute sa famille, plusieurs étudiants aussi.

Lorsque le pays retrouva le calme, la situation des ouvriers des églises comme dans l'ensemble du pays était désespérée, plusieurs Pasteurs ayant été tués d'autres étant partis en exil à l'étranger. En septembre 1995 les églises ont résolu de réouvrir la Faculté avec un programme spécial de formation de Pasteurs d'une durée de deux ans combinant la résidence et le travail dans les paroisses. Le programme de Licence a repris en 1996 tandis que le programme spécial a duré jusqu'en 2001. A cette date, la faculté avait 43 étudiants dans le programme spécial et 26 en licence. L'encadrement académique est aujourd'hui assuré par 4 enseignants permanents et plusieurs visiteurs venant de l'étranger.

La bibliothèque compte plus de 8000 volumes et est informatisée. Elle est gérée par deux cadres formés en bibliothéconomie. La Faculté dispose d'une salle d'informatique avec six ordinateurs et imprimantes où les étudiants peuvent taper eux-mêmes leurs travaux et mémoires. En plus les étudiants et les enseignants bénéficient des services de la bibliothèque et des recherches du Centre Ocuménique de Recherches et Vulgarisation Théologique (CORVT) de l'Eglise Presbytérienne au Rwanda qui est située dans la même enceinte. Ce centre qui s'occupe de la formation théologique par Extension a effectué et publié plusieurs travaux de recherche sur la vie, l'histoire de l'église, sur de nombreux thèmes bibliques et théologiques.

² Première institution de formation théologique au Rwanda, mise en place depuis 1970 par les principales églises protestantes, l'Eglise Presbytérienne au Rwanda, l'Union des Eglises Baptistes, l'Eglise Anglicane et l'Eglise Méthodiste, l'Ecole de Théologie de Butare recrutait des candidats titulaires du diplôme des moniteurs (D4/5) qui étaient alors formés pendant 4 ans au ministère pastoral. La plupart d'entre eux ont poursuivi des études jusqu'au niveau de doctorat dans de prestigieuses universités en Afrique et Europe.

10. L'Université Presbytérienne d'Afrique à Kigali (UPAK)

Dans le souci de répondre aux exigences de la formation des cadres, dans un pays durement frappé par le génocide de 1994, et en accord avec l'Etat Rwandais, l'Eglise Presbytérienne au Rwanda, en prévision de son centenaire qui sera célébré en 2007, a officiellement initié lors de son Synode Général de décembre 2001, son projet de création d'une Institution Universitaire à Kigali. Le Conseil Universitaire s'est déjà réuni et mis en place les lignes directrices. L'Université sera une Institution de formation à l'Excellence et tentera de sortir des sentiers battus dans le but notamment de répondre aux besoins de l'Afrique en général et la vocation de la région des Grands Lacs et du Rwanda en particulier. Elle sera guidée par une éthique chrétienne dans le but de former des cadres compétents et fiables pour le développement du continent mais aussi pour la propagation des valeurs de l'Evangile dans la gestion des affaires en Afrique. Elle complétera les structures existant plutôt que d'entrer en concurrence avec elles. Ainsi, l'université ouvrira ses portes en 2004 en tant que fédération de trois Institutions de hautes études universitaires : l'Ecole de Hautes Etudes de Hôtellerie et du Tourisme (EHET). L'Ecole de Hautes Etudes des Ingénieurs Commerciaux(EHEIC) et éventuellement, l'Ecole de Hautes études des Ingénieurs des Assurances et enfin l'Ecole de Hautes Etudes de Traduction et d'interprétariat (EHETI).

*11. La Faculté de Théologie Protestante de l'Université Libre des Grands Lacs
(Goma, RDC)*

La Faculté de Théologie fait partie de l'Université Libre des Pays des Grands Lacs. Au départ il y eut l'Institut Supérieur de Théologie Protestante qui avait commencé dans le début des années 1980. Quand l'Université Libre des Grands Lacs a vu le jour au début des années 1990 la théologie est devenue l'une de 3 facultés à côté des facultés de Droit et de Gestion. La guerre du Congo-RDC qui a commencé à l'est du pays, région où est située l'Université a ralenti les mouvements des étudiants qui provenaient des pays de la région et de différentes parties du RDC aujourd'hui sous différentes administrations autonomes. L'Université elle-même a moins de 1000 étudiants et la faculté de théologie, une centaine, encadrés par une dizaine d'enseignants.

Enfin, il convient de signaler que dans le cadre de la coopération entre les Facultés Universitaire de Théologie Protestante de Bruxelles, l'Université Libre des Pays des Grands Lacs et la Faculté de Théologie de Butare, une réflexion a commencé dans le but de pouvoir former sur place les formateurs de formateurs au niveau doctoral. La première rencontre a eu lieu, le 11 mai 2002 entre les Recteurs de ces trois institutions et un document de base sera publié prochainement. Lorsque ce projet verra le jour, il permettra à la fois de réduire les coûts élevés déployés aujourd'hui pour la formation des cadres, le déplacement et le séjour de leurs familles en Europe et également de relever le défi de la carence d'enseignants, les doctorants pouvant commencer eux-mêmes à assurer l'assistanat dans leurs disciplines respectives.

12. La Faculté de Théologie Protestante de Mansimou (Congo-Brazzaville)

En 1998 l'Eglise Evangélique du Congo a pris la décision d'élever l'ancienne Ecole de Théologie en Faculté de Théologie. Ce fut le premier Institut du genre au Congo-Brazzaville (pour les églises protestantes). Le moins que l'on puisse dire c'est que la Faculté manquait l'essentiel y compris les enseignants. Une seule personne était titulaire d'un Doctorat, Dr Joseph Sita qui assumait à la fois les charges de doyen et seul professeur de l'Ancien et Nouveau Testament. L'essentiel du corps enseignant provenait de l'Université Protestante de Kinshasa et de l'Université Marian Ngouabi de l'Etat.

Entre temps, la guerre civile est intervenue, en 1997/98 et a tout détruit. La librairie fut complètement vandalisée. Le personnel académique et les 23 étudiants se dispersèrent dans les pays limitrophes. Lors de la rencontre des institutions théologiques à Yaoundé en septembre 1999, un appel était lancé aux églises, partenaires et facultés de théologie pour accueillir ces étudiants. Un calcul rapide montrait qu'il fallait plus ou moins US\$ 4,500 par an pour intégrer chacun de ces étudiants dans un nouvel établissement. A notre connaissance, l'appel de Mansimou n'a pas été entendu. Avec le retour de la paix bien que relative, en 1999, la Faculté a réouvert ses portes dans des conditions encore précaires.

Il existe d'autres lieux de formation théologique dont nous n'avons pas pu recueillir les données, la Faculté de Théologie d'Ambatonakanga de l'Eglise du Christ à Madagascar, la Faculté de Théologie Evangélique d'Abidjan, la FATEB à Bangui, ainsi que plusieurs écoles dont l'Ecole de Théologie de Bouar en RCA, l'Ecole de Théologie de Ndjamena au Tchad.

13. La Faculté de Théologie Evangélique du Cameroun

Créée en 1997, la FACTEC est une institution de formation théologique de la Mission de l'Eglise Evangélique Camerounaise (MEEC) soutenue par les missions sud-coréennes. Bien que la faculté déclare "accueillir les candidats de toutes les dénominations protestantes et pentecôtistes cherchant une formation théologique complète et équilibrée", les autorités de cette église se montrent allergiques à l'œcuménisme. La Faculté est logée dans les bâtiments du siège de l'église ce qui permet au Président de l'Eglise d'être à la fois Doyen et un de trois enseignants permanents. Depuis la rentrée 2001/2002, 16 étudiants sont inscrits à la Faculté. Celle-ci a introduit des changements pour dispenser la maîtrise après une formation de 4 ans.

Former les cadres de l'église. Oui mais avec quels outils ?

Il s'agit dans cette section de réfléchir sur la misère des bibliothèques et centres de recherche dans les institutions francophones. Dans une réflexion comme celle-ci, il convient d'abord de faire le point sur certaines idées reçues qui annihilent la créativité. Il s'agit par exemple, pour les pasteurs et théologiens africains de se complaire dans l'idée, pas toujours louangeuse que les civilisations africaines étaient essentiellement orales et que donc il serait superflu d'exiger d'eux une approche intellectuelle rigoureuse, une production scientifique qui évolue avec les temps. C'est aussi se complaire dans l'idée que les "Africains lisent peu" et donc n'ont pas besoin d'être ennuyés avec de longs débats "philosophiques". Rappelons d'abord l'influence de la civilisation négro-africaine à la civilisation grecque. Le cas a magnifiquement été documenté par les savants tel que Cheik Anta Diop³, Théophile Obenga et d'autres. Rappelons aussi le niveau jamais atteint de nos jours du développement culturel des villes qui furent des centres de rayonnement des savoirs, comme Alexandrie et Tombouctou dont la grande bibliothèque fut brûlée lors des conquêtes de l'Islam.

Aujourd'hui la grande majorité des chrétiens et du public africain exige un effort des nouveaux cadres théologiques et ecclésiastiques pour dépasser non pas l'oralité en tant que tel, parce qu'elle est une source des connaissances et d'ouverture, mais de contribuer à la fois à la production et la diffusion des savoirs et de mettre en place de véritables stratégies pour éduquer les communautés. Or la situation des bibliothèques des facultés et écoles de théologie, du moins en Afrique Francophone, laisse à désirer. On a, à la limite, des publications théologiques produites par les Occidentaux et Nord-Américains pour la plupart des ouvrages datés. Le nombre de volumes est très en deçà du minimum requis pour répondre aux besoins de formation que ces institutions prétendent dispenser.

³ Voir notamment ses ouvrages *Antériorité de civilisations Nègresou Nations Nègres et Cultures*.

Les responsables des bibliothèques qui, depuis 1999, se réunissent chaque année à côté des doyens et des secrétaires académiques, ont fait un triste constat. D'abord les bibliothèques sont le parent oublié des budgets des Facultés et Instituts de Théologie. Très peu d'entre elles sont informatisées, et loin est l'idée d'interconnexion qui leur permettrait un échange interfacultés ou interinstituts. Ensuite, rares sont les bibliothèques qui ont un responsable attitré. A part Kinshasa, Yaoundé, Butare et Porto-Novo, d'autres sont gérées, soit par un professeur, soit par un étudiant qui ouvre quand il est disponible. Cet environnement ne favorise pas une activité académique adéquate. Si l'on reconnaît que le déplacement démographique du Christianisme va du Nord vers le Sud il y a là urgence pour que les théologiens africains se mettent au travail.

Voyons à titre d'illustration la situation des librairies de certaines de ces Facultés et Instituts de Théologie. Pour l'année académique 1999/2000 la librairie de la Faculté de Théologie Protestante de Yaoundé avait 17500 ouvrages y compris les revues et journaux. Son budget annuel s'élevait à US\$ 8,000 y compris pour les salaires du personnel. L'Institut Théologique de Porto-Novo, au Bénin, a 5000 livres avec un budget annuel de US\$ 3,200. Le séminaire de l'Eglise Presbytérienne de Kumba⁴ a 5950 ouvrages. L'Institut Théologique de Ndoungué a plus de 5000 livres pour un budget annuel de US\$ 3,000. L'Institut Luthérien de Meiganga dans le Nord Cameroun déclarait 9300 livres pour un budget annuel de US\$ 1,300. L'Institut théologique baptiste de NdiKinimeki a 3500 ouvrages sans budget défini. Enfin, l'Institut Théologique de Bibia (de l'Eglise Presbytérienne Camerounaise), a 5000 livres avec US\$ 950. La faculté de théologie de Butare a 8000 ouvrages. Le cas le plus déplorable est celui de Mansimou au Congo-Brazzaville dont la librairie a complètement été pillée pendant les deux guerres civiles qui ont ravagé le pays dans la deuxième moitié des années 1990. La bibliothèque de la Faculté de la Mission Evangélique Camerounaise qui ne participe pas aux rencontres d'autres institutions, comprend quelques centaines d'ouvrages mais n'a ni responsable, ni budget connu.

Il convient de constater que ces statistiques sont souvent gonflées. Une personne ressource qui a récemment visité l'Institut Théologique de Ndoungué a sauté sur ses nerfs quand elle a vu les statistiques : "De ces 5000 livres déclarés" a-t-il dit, "seuls 500 sont utiles. Le reste serait fait d'une littérature coloniale douteuse". La situation est pour le moins inquiétante. Par exemple on peut considérer que Yaoundé est le mieux loti. Cependant l'on doit admettre que sur les 17500 volumes déclarés, au moins le tiers est inutilisable. L'on doit aussi avoir à l'esprit que cette institution a plus de 150 étudiants et qu'elle délivre des doctorats (entre 25 et 30 étudiants étant inscrits au cycle de doctorat) ce qui demande une rétention à longue durée d'un bon nombre d'ouvrages en dehors de la librairie. C'est donc mesurer l'ampleur de la misère.

Les Rencontres des facultés et Instituts de Théologie à Yaoundé (1999, 2000 et 2001) : un premier pas !

Depuis trois ans que la plupart des institutions présentées se réunissent à Yaoundé sur invitation du doyen de la Faculté de Théologie Protestante de Yaoundé, Maurice Kouam, un certain nombre d'objectifs ont été atteints. En premier lieu, ces institutions ont eu des échanges qui leur ont permis de mieux se connaître. Chaque institution a donné des informations concernant l'historique, les infrastructures, la situation des programmes d'enseignement, la population estudiantine et enseignante, la situation des bibliothèques. Ils ont ensuite passé en revue tous les curricula et procédé à une harmonisation aussi bien des contenus que de la durée de formation, des durées de formation que de recrutement des étudiants et des enseignants. Les participants ont adopté un programme de formation et d'échange du personnel des bibliothèques, d'informatiser celles-ci et décidé de mettre en place une Centrale d'information et de bibliographie qui sera la plaque tournante pour les autres bibliothèques à partir de Yaoundé. Concernant la création d'une Université Protestante de

⁴ Le Séminaire appartient à la presbyterian Church of Cameroon qui est anglophone.

l'Afrique Occidentale ils ont demandé que la Faculté de Théologie Protestante de Yaoundé en devienne le noyau. Lors de la rencontre de 2001, les participants ont réfléchi sur les conditions pouvant amener les institutions théologiques francophones à être compétitives et performantes. Ils ont formulé des recommandations dont les plus importantes sont les suivantes :

- a. Mettre en place un comité scientifique au niveau de chaque institution de formation et au niveau régional. Ce comité aura pour tâches : superviser les productions intellectuelles des institutions théologiques et les programmes d'enseignement ; évaluer les performances des professeurs, les structures et facilités (bibliothèques, etc.) ; instituer, structurer et harmoniser les grades académiques des enseignants.
- b. Ils ont formulé une recommandation consistant en la "tenue d'une rencontre entre les chefs d'église, les professeurs et les représentants des chrétiens à la base" pour réfléchir et orienter la formation des théologiens.
- c. Dans le but de suppléer à la carence des enseignants, ils ont aussi décidé d'identifier les meilleurs étudiants en maîtrise et de les orienter aux études doctorales en commençant par les domaines où les besoins sont les plus criant : Ancien Testament, Histoire de l'église, Histoire des Religions.
- d. Les responsables des institutions théologiques ont mis en place un projet d'élaboration de manuels d'enseignement théologiques en Afrique avec pour commencer deux ateliers : un atelier en 2002 pour élaborer des ouvrages sur la théologie pratique, la systématique-éthique et les sciences bibliques. Et un atelier en 2003 pour élaborer des ouvrages dans les disciplines suivantes : Histoire ecclésiastique, Histoire des religions ; sociologie, philosophie et anthropologie.
- e. Dans une autre recommandation, ils ont réitéré les conditions à remplir pour l'ouverture d'un Institut, soit : avoir au moins trois docteurs en théologie ; avoir un fond documentaire d'au moins 7000 volumes et des infrastructures nécessaires pour la bibliothèque, salles de cours et logements.
- f. Enfin les participants ont mis en place un plan d'échanges de professeurs dans le but de suppléer la carence d'enseignants à Brazzaville, Biblia, Kaélé, Meiganga, Butare, Ndoungué, Goma, Kumba et Porto-Novo.

Présentement ces résolutions sont un pas qui a été franchi dans le sens des échanges et de l'harmonisation. Toutefois, en l'absence d'une structure institutionnelle pouvant en assurer le suivi, la concrétisation des objectifs fixés reste hypothétique.

De sérieux problèmes subsistent

Au regard de la description que nous venons de faire des problèmes sérieux se posent à la formation théologique en Afrique. Nous en mentionnons certains sans prétention d'exhaustivité. Je voudrais pour cela me servir des réflexions des étudiants-pasteurs qui ont participé à une partie de la présente réflexion⁵. Ces étudiants ont résumé leurs préoccupations concernant la situation de l'église et de la formation de futurs cadres en trois principaux points: l'absence de communication et de dialogue entre les théologiens d'une part et entre les théologiens et les congrégations à la base d'autre part ; la culture générale insuffisante et l'isolement des lieux de formation.

⁵ Ont participé à cet échange: past. Matthieu Bouba, baptiste, enfin de formation doctorale; pasteur Pierre Thiam, Sénégal (maîtrise); past.Viateur Ndikumana, anglican, Rwanda (Maîtrise) et Lévi Ngangoura, baptiste, Congolais (doctorant).

a. Le dénominationalisme

Alors qu'à la veille des indépendances, un effort avait été réalisé qui a conduit à la création d'institutions œcuméniques dans le but de forger l'unité des églises, petit à petit l'on est revenu au dénominationalisme. Certaines écoles ont été créées par des groupes qui se sont détachés des églises institutionnelles pour fonder une nouvelle église parfois à la base ethnique ou régionale. Egalement, il est possible d'imaginer que la plupart d'écoles et instituts étant des anciennes écoles catéchétiques des missions aux premières heures d'évangélisation, les nouvelles églises ont eu difficile à couper le cordon ombilical avec les "missions mères". Ainsi reste-t-on avec l'Institut baptiste x, l'Institut luthérien y, l'Institut presbytérien z, etc. Dans certains cas comme au Rwanda le niveau des cadres dans certaines églises était tellement bas qu'il ne pouvait pas répondre aux exigences académiques (l'Eglise Anglicane) et le départ ou le boudement constituait le seul moyen pour éviter le camouflet. Parfois aussi, l'église a peur d'intégrer une vieille école des catéchistes dans des institutions œcuméniques pour éviter les ennuis avec la "mission-mère" qui reste la vache-laitière à la condition de dicter des ordres à la jeune église.

D'autres écoles enfin sont le résultat du refus de dialogue œcuménique comme la Faculté de Théologie de Bangui et d'Abidjan appartenant à l'Association des Evangéliques d'Afrique et de Madagascar ou la Faculté de Théologie de la Mission Evangélique au Cameroun des Coréens. Les tendances que représentent ces églises ont toujours manifesté une certaine distance vis-à-vis de celles qui adhèrent au mouvement œcuménique. En tout état de cause l'émiettement a des conséquences graves. Il conduit à la dispersion des énergies et des ressources. Il conduit à l'isolement, à la sclérose et enfin de compte, à la médiocrité.

Pour illustrer le point le Pasteur Bouba, parlant de l'expérience du Nord Cameroun dit : "en semaine, les chrétiens vivent en harmonie et c'est le dimanche qu'interviennent les clivages. Les chrétiens attendent de chefs d'églises l'action sur le terrain, un projet œcuménique, un travail commun où ils se retrouvent en train de bâtir ensemble une même nation".

b. Le manque de vision

Mettre en place un centre de formation universitaire, même dans les pays qui en ont les moyens, demande non seulement la disponibilité des ressources, mais avant tout, une grande vision. Qui dit vision, la Bible nous le rappelle, dit planning, préparation, la mise en place des stratégies pour utiliser les investissements humains et matériels, les recherches et prospectives. Or, une institution de formation universitaire c'est non seulement un forum mais un carrefour des échanges et de synergies des connaissances. A la base de cette observation l'on peut se demander si la création des institutions théologiques des églises protestantes d'Afrique francophone obéit à une quelconque planification. Sans études préalables, un chef d'église peut un bon matin, décider de créer une école et parfois l'installer dans un lieu isolé. Il s'agit ici des entités aux infrastructures dérisoires avec une population insignifiante. Trois établissements sur la vingtaine étudiés dépassent les 100 étudiants. Le reste n'atteint même pas les 50.

A mon sens, la recherche de la rentabilisation des infrastructures et des enseignants qui peut passer par l'organisation des colloques nationaux et internationaux, l'animation des activités culturelles et sportives, l'environnement intellectuel, social et culturel, devrait amener les églises et les organisations œcuméniques à se fixer un seuil de population estudiantine et enseignante en dessous duquel, l'institution ne peut pas être considérée comme universitaire. Leur situation géographique est la plupart de temps excentrée au point qu'il est difficile d'envisager la possibilité des échanges.

b. L'ostracisme intellectuel

Sur le plan académique, le pire que l'on puisse craindre, l'ostracisme intellectuel, fait partie des problèmes d'existence. Tout est en défaut : enseignants non qualifiés et en nombre insuffisant, absence de bibliothèques et cadre de recherche. Les programmes de cours ne sont jamais établis - chaque enseignant se débrouillant au gré de son expérience. Dans la plupart des cas, il n'existe ni conseil scientifique ni structure habilitée pour l'accréditation des programmes et des diplômes. Tout cela place les quelques dizaines d'étudiants et la poignée de main d'enseignants dans une marginalité et un isolement intellectuel et culturel tels qu'ils sont incapables de développer de partenariats et des échanges avec d'autres institutions universitaires. Dans ces conditions il est vraisemblable que toute personne ayant un diplôme universitaire de haut niveau qui est affecté là-bas ressent la décision comme une punition et cherchera la première occasion pour en sortir.

Pour illustrer l'ostracisme qui affecte certains de ces instituts, prenons le cas de Ndoungué. Malgré son aura du passé, à 5 heures de route de Yaoundé et à 2h1/2 de Douala sur une route peu carrossable, avec sa bibliothèque mal équipée, sans un seul ordinateur, sans canevas des cours, Ndoungué est aujourd'hui un site isolé de tout environnement culturel pouvant favoriser la créativité intellectuelle.

Parlant de cet isolement suicidaire dont sont l'objet les lieux de formation protestants, les étudiants qui ont partagé avec moi la présente réflexion ont émis la pensée suivante :

“Il faut que les théologiens sachent qu'il existe d'autres sciences. Les théologiens doivent être humbles, partager, dialoguer, accepter que leur point de vue puisse être mis en cause. Or une faculté qu'on jette dans les montagnes est renfermée dans une tour d'ivoire. Aujourd'hui dans chaque faculté l'on a besoin d'enseigner les sciences humaines, et cela coûte cher. Il faudra aider les églises protestantes à créer de véritables universités en vue de permettre aux facultés de théologie d'évoluer dans un environnement universitaire cohérent. Avec la Faculté de Théologie ou de l'Université, les théologiens réalisent que la distance avec d'autres disciplines se rétrécit. Les futurs leaders des églises appréhendent les préoccupations de la société à côté de futurs gestionnaires et décideurs politiques d'une même nation qu'ils sont tous appelés à servir”.

Cette réflexion rejoint le moratoire, ou pour reprendre la terminologie des milieux catholiques, l'inculturation qui est une invitation à la maturité de l'église africaine. La réalité actuelle en Afrique est celle des églises dirigées par des nationaux. Et il y a plus de leaders formés qu'il y a 3 ou 5 décennies. Mais comme le rappelle Antoine Babe (*Eglises d'Afrique. De l'Emancipation à la responsabilité*) et Paulin Poucouta (*Lettres aux Eglises d'Afrique*), beaucoup d'Africains ont pris les rênes des affaires mais n'arrivent pas à mesurer la responsabilité qui incombe à cette fonction, soit, de véritablement prêcher l'Évangile qui libère les peuples de la colonisation et l'impérialisme spirituel, de la mendicité financière et qui les guérit des stigmates des préjugés de la race.

Très peu ont fait un effort pour inculturer l'évangile dans le terroir encore moins souligner le rôle de l'Afrique dans l'histoire de la rédemption de l'humanité. Pour qu'elle soit réhabilitée dans son rôle historique ; pour que les chrétiens africains soient mis en confiance comme des citoyens d'un continent de l'avenir du Christianisme, un travail en profondeur doit être mené. Les théologiens africains doivent cesser de quémander les livres européens produits pour des pupitres vides et par des auteurs dont la plupart ne posent plus pieds dans une église. Si les théologiens africains prennent aujourd'hui l'engagement de s'investir dans l'évangélisation de leur continent et d'édifier la théologie universelle, d'appréhender une histoire toujours à refaire, alors ils doivent se remettre au travail.

Mais c'est là où le bas blesse. L'enseignement théologique en Afrique se situe à la croisée des chemins comme le montre les réflexions d'Antoine Babe, de Poucouta et d'autres. C'est qu'il faut établir un lien entre la rigueur académique et les exigences ecclésiales. Le problème a été débattu dans plusieurs forums où il a été démontré que l'absence de recherches et des publications du personnel académique de nos institutions les rendent peu crédibles au niveau scientifique national et international. Certains théologiens africains se défendent par deux arguments : d'abord qu'ils sont liés par des engagements pastoraux et ecclésiaux qui ne leur laissent plus de temps nécessaire à la recherche. Ensuite, disent-ils, ces institutions ont été créées et sont dirigées par les églises qui leur demandent de former de pasteurs non des chercheurs. Pour certains comme Dr Emmanuel Bissu qui enseigne dans une de ces "institutions de montagne", les conditions matérielles sont difficiles certes, les charges pastorales sont là, mais parfois, tout cela devient un prétexte pour cacher la paresse intellectuelle de certains.

d. De l'ostracisme pastoral

L'ostracisme dans les lieux de formation poursuit le pasteur et théologien africain dans la pratique de son ministère. Revenons aux deux autres points soulignés par le groupe d'étudiants, l'absence de dialogue entre théologiens et le peuple de Dieu, et l'insuffisance de culture générale. A part quelques rencontres occasionnelles privées, les théologiens et leaders des églises africaines ne communiquent ni ne dialoguent au niveau dénominationnel et encore moins entre les diverses dénominations. Ce manque de communication et de dialogue est aussi perceptible au niveau local où beaucoup croient que le Pasteur reste peu à l'écoute de sa congrégation.

Si tel est le cas, le Pasteur parle pour lui-même, de manière autonome, ne connaissant ni n'échangeant sur les problèmes de la société. Les exemples viennent du Sahel qui présente des similitudes dans les différents pays de la région, la prédominance de l'Islam et la désertification. Pour Pierre Thiam (Sénégal) et Matthieu Bouba (Nord Cameroun) dans un environnement où l'Islam est prédominant à plus de 90%, le défi est de communiquer et de dialoguer sans heurter l'autre. Et dans cette région du Sahel les questions environnementales deviennent des problèmes d'existence du fait de la forte désertification. Or très peu d'églises ont développé une pastorale appropriée.

Viateur Ndikumana et Lévi Ngangoura développent une même analyse en ce qui concerne la région des Grands Lacs. Dans une région à démographie galopante et à vocation pastorale et agricole l'on vit et respire les conflits nourris de manipulations ethniques alors que le SIDA fait des ravages. Dans ces conditions former les chrétiens qui ne soient pas de nom, ni du dimanche, demande un investissement pour une nouvelle vision du Christianisme. Un christianisme qui dépasse ce que le théologien Camerounais, Jean-Marc Ela appelle le *psittacisme* pour reformuler le catéchisme en vue d'une consommation théologique tenant compte des exigences des droits de l'homme, de la justice économique et politique, du dialogue entre les différentes couches sociales, de l'éducation de base du peuple de Dieu.

Cette absence de dialogue du Pasteur avec la société relèverait d'un autre problème identifié, l'absence de culture générale. Pour M. Bouba, les cadres des églises sont formés à un niveau bas. La plupart des cas, les églises forment les catéchistes ou évangélistes qui deviennent des pasteurs. A la limite certains sont envoyés dans une école ou institut de théologie où, étant donné que les bases fondamentales de l'instruction manquent, n'acquièrent aucune ouverture sur le monde.

e. Dépendance financière

Une institution universitaire ça bouffe l'argent et les églises africaines n'en ont pas. La dépendance financière est presque cause commune pour toutes les institutions dont l'essentiel des sources des revenus proviennent de l'extérieur. Lorsque des facultés à caractère œcuménique comme Yaoundé, Kinshasa ou Butare ont été mises en place, c'était à la fois, pour encourager l'unité des églises mais aussi pour alléger le fardeau financier des partenaires œcuméniques qui sont presque les mêmes et se comptent dans les doigts d'une seule main. Le retour au dénominalisme signifie que là où ces partenaires devaient financer la formation de deux ou trois docteurs en Ancien Testament, ils en financeront 15. Là où il fallait équiper une bibliothèque de 50000 volumes pour donner la base décente d'une recherche universitaire, il en faudra dix fois plus, là où il fallait équiper une salle d'informatique de 10 ordinateurs pour permettre aux enseignants de saisir leurs cours et recherches et aux étudiants de taper leurs mémoires et thèses, il en faudra 150, etc.

Il existe un lien entre le dénominalisme et la dépendance financière. Les partenaires œcuméniques qui apportent l'appui financier aux églises sont presque les mêmes. Par rapport à la dispersion d'énergies et des moyens, forts de la marge d'influence dont ils disposent, ils devraient initier une réflexion en vue de persuader les églises à bâtir ensemble.

Le niveau académique et culturel dans les institutions théologiques.
Un peu d'effort ! Encore de l'effort !

Quand en 1961, la Faculté de Théologie Protestante de Yaoundé ouvre ses portes sur la colline de Djoungolo, c'est tout un espoir non seulement pour les églises mais pour la nation. L'institution de formation supérieure précède de deux ans, l'Université du Cameroun, à Yaoundé qui verra le jour en 1964. Cet espoir pour les nations africaines a été exprimé par la sollicitude dont l'institution a été l'objet de la part des autorités politiques du Cameroun. C'est d'abord le Président de la République, feu Ahmadou Ahidjo, un Musulman, qui préside la cérémonie d'inauguration.

Malgré les pesanteurs du départ, malgré les moyens limités l'on peut porter à l'actif de la Faculté de théologie Protestante de Yaoundé la formation d'un nombre croissant des leaders des églises d'Afrique principalement francophone. Ainsi avant l'introduction du programme doctoral à Yaoundé et à Kinshasa plusieurs lauréats de Yaoundé ont poursuivi leurs études dans de prestigieuses universités en Europe et Amérique et n'ont pas démerité. Plusieurs diplômés de cette institution sont aujourd'hui à la tête de leurs églises comme en Côte d'Ivoire, au Bénin, au Togo, au Rwanda ; au Cameroun, au Congo Brazzaville, en Guinée Equatoriale, au Gabon, en Centrafrique, etc.

Ceci dit, tout en reconnaissant l'effort fourni, les besoins en personnel de qualité supérieure se font de plus en plus criards du fait de la croissance exponentielle des chrétiens. D'ailleurs beaucoup d'observateurs y compris les églises ne manquent pas de reprocher à ces lieux de formation d'offrir des diplômés dont les connaissances sont inadaptées aux besoins réels de l'église aujourd'hui.

Beaucoup d'observateurs souhaitent que les institutions de formation surtout celles d'entre elles qui sont œcuméniques appuient sur l'accélérateur pour s'ériger en véritables structures qui s'approprient le devenir de l'église en Afrique. Pour le moment ces institutions doivent encore surmonter un bon nombre de handicaps. D'abord la qualité de la formation dispensée n'est pas à la hauteur des besoins de toutes les couches de la société. Alors que le niveau culturel et intellectuel des populations africaines a monté même si nous devons reconnaître d'énormes disparités, la qualité de l'enseignement dispensé est restée livresque, ayant connu très peu de progrès par rapport au curricula élaborés lors de leur création au lendemain des indépendances.

Si par contre les églises pensent que les facultés de théologie forment beaucoup plus les intellectuels que les pasteurs et les ministres de la communauté- ce qui n'est pas vrai - il est facile de démontrer qu'il y a plutôt inadéquation entre les programmes de formation dispensés et l'objet et la méthode offerts qui ne permettent pas aux futurs dirigeants d'église d'appréhender les nouveaux problèmes imbriqués de loin différents de ceux de 1960. Alors que nous continuons à affronter les conséquences d'une histoire de souffrance, de déni de dignité et d'humanité, des conséquences de l'esclavage, de la colonisation et la néocolonisation, les problèmes d'identité culturelle en rapport avec l'évangile, la pauvreté et la faim, l'endettement, la corruption, la dilapidation des ressources par une bourgeoisie irresponsable, la globalisation, les pandémies comme le SIDA...laissent à genoux les peuples du continent le plus riche de la planète. Tout cela ne peut pas laisser indifférent l'église qui doit se souvenir que la doctrine de la foi chrétienne prend sa substance en un Dieu qui protège les opprimés, les pauvres et ceux qui aspirent et œuvrent pour la Paix et la Justice. Il n'est donc pas exagéré de dire qu'il manque un pont entre l'enseignement des disciplines classiques et tous ces défis du continent.

Par ailleurs, depuis près de deux décennies maintenant, certaines églises protestantes dans certains pays, en RDC, au Kenya, au Zimbabwe, à Madagascar, au Rwanda, au Cameroun, en Côte d'Ivoire, ont lancé des projets de création des universités. Certains se sont concrétisés, d'autre pas encore. Au Cameroun, des laïcs ont réfléchi et élaboré des statuts pour la création d'une Université Protestante. Alors que l'idée, qui n'a trouvé aucun appui ferme de la part des dirigeants ecclésiastiques moisi dans les tiroirs l'église Catholique – qui pourtant est arrivé dans le pays près d'un demi-siècle après les Protestants – a mis en exécution son plan de création des universités sur l'ensemble de l'Afrique. Il y a ainsi l'Université Catholique d'Afrique centrale à Yaoundé avec deux campus à Nkol Bison et Ekounou et comprenant entre autres facultés, la théologie, la philosophie et le droit canon (L'université ouvrira bientôt des campus à Point-Noire et à Bangui) ; une université à Abidjan, une à Madagascar, une en Afrique de l'Est.

Pour que les chrétiens puissent imprimer une certaine éthique dans la société, les églises protestantes doivent accepter de mettre ensemble les moyens pour créer des entités œcuméniques qui puissent apporter quelques repères éthiques, politiques et morales. L'église peut en essayant de dépasser les clivages. Recruter les étudiants et les enseignants pour une vie dans une université pluriconfessionnelle détruire graduellement le démon du dénominationalisme.

Les Editions CLE : un catalyseur d'une pensée théologique

L'histoire du Centre de Littérature Evangélique - Editions CLE - remonte aux initiatives qui ont eu lieu au lendemain des indépendances africaines notamment la Conférence de Kitwe, en Zambie, en 1961 qui a mis en place les stratégies pour la production et la diffusion de la littérature chrétienne. Il fut ainsi créé comme l'équivalent du centre œcuménique de Mindolo, en Zambie pour les églises anglophones. Créé lors de l'assemblée constitutive tenue à Yaoundé du 8 au 12 octobre 1962, le Centre de Littérature Evangélique, Editions CLE, a officiellement démarré ses activités le 01 janvier 1963. Les Editions CLE appartiennent aux églises d'Afrique en général, par le biais de la Conférence des Eglises de Toute l'Afrique qui en est membre, et à certaines églises protestantes d'Afrique francophone, en particulier. Les plus actives d'entre elles sont les suivantes : l'Eglise Méthodiste de Côte d'Ivoire, l'Eglise Evangélique Presbytérienne du Togo, l'Eglise Méthodiste du Bénin, l'Eglise Evangélique du Cameroun, l'Eglise Luthérienne du Cameroun, l'Eglise Presbytérienne Camerounaise, la Fédération des Eglises et Missions Evangéliques du Cameroun, l'Eglise Evangélique du Congo, l'Eglise du Christ au Congo, le Conseil Protestant du Rwanda, la Conférence des Eglises de Toute l'Afrique (CETA) ainsi que les Alliances Bibliques du Cameroun et du Congo. Ces institutions administrent les Editions CLE par le biais d'une assemblée générale et d'un conseil d'administration qui se réunissent une fois par an et qui en nomment un directeur.

A ce jour les Editions CLE ont un répertoire des publications de plus de 500 titres couvrant divers secteurs d'activité de la vie : religion, théologie et littérature chrétienne, philosophie, romans, récits et nouvelles, théâtre, essais, études, poésie, etc. Pour continuer à inviter les Africains et autres à traiter les vrais problèmes du continent dans une véritable éthique chrétienne, les Editions CLE ont récemment étoffé le nombre des collections pour accroître les productions théologiques.

Collection littérature pour jeunesse et enfants

Cette collection intitulée "Clé pour l'avenir" et destinée aux jeunes et enfants a démarré en 1997. Dans le cadre de notre plan d'action 2000-2004, nous produisons au moins 5 nouveaux titres par an. Il s'agit pour les adultes ainsi que les jeunes qui ont les dons d'écrire de dépasser les histoires du lièvre et de la tortue pour emmener les enfants africains à être plus créatifs, inventifs, et conquérir les sciences, les mathématiques, l'environnement, l'espace. Il s'agira aussi d'aborder les thèmes d'éducation, du caractère de l'enfant, fables, nouvelles, romans, bandes dessinées, Abécédaires, Albums...

Parmi les projets en cours et dont nous souhaitons l'inauguration lors de la célébration du 40^{ème} anniversaire en 2003 signalons le «Dictionnaire des personnalités célèbres du monde Négro-Africain» dont les recherches sont avancées, «Une encyclopédie des sciences et de l'environnement», «Les écrivains Négro-Africains expliqués aux élèves du primaire», des recueils de contes, des romans, etc.

"Réflexion Théologique du Sud"

Lancée en 1999, la collection donne l'occasion de publier quatre livres par an en anglais et en français. Le livre ne devra pas dépasser 50.000 mots. Les livres sont écrits par des auteurs protestants et catholiques, de tendance œcuménique ou évangélique ; un équilibre devant être recherché entre hommes et femmes. Le livre est vendu pour un prix modeste en vue de favoriser une large diffusion (4 Euros) en Afrique et (12 à 15 Euros) en Europe. La collection est pilotée par un comité comprenant plusieurs théologiens chevronnés. Alors que la plupart d'éminents théologiens africains sont beaucoup plus connus en Europe et Amérique que sur leur terre natale, la collection vise à diffuser – grâce à un prix accessible – la pensée théologique des auteurs africains d'abord sur le sol de leurs ancêtres, ensuite dans le reste du monde. Pour donner l'exemple de récentes publications mentionnons les livres de Kā Mana : *Chrétiens et Eglises d'Afrique. Penser l'Avenir* ; le livre de Kwame Bediako du Ghana, *Jésus en Afrique* ; le livre de Mercy Oduyoye (Ghana-Nigeria) : *les Colliers et les Perles, réflexions d'une femme africaine sur le christianisme africain* ; le livre de Laurenti Magesa (Tanzanie), *Le Catholicisme Africain en Mutation. Modèles d'église pour un siècle nouveau*. Tous ces ouvrages sont publiés en français et en anglais.

Livres de référence académique

Lancée en 2001, cette collection répond à un triple objectif. Il s'agit premièrement d'amener les théologiens africains à participer à la recherche et à la création des savoirs dans le domaine des sciences sociales et religieuses. De ceci découle un deuxième devoir : participer à l'édification de la pensée et la théologie chrétienne. Enfin, nous **voulons combler la carence** des ouvrages de référence académique dans le cadre de l'enseignement des disciplines théologiques et des sciences sociales en Afrique francophone. La collection est en mesure de produire 5 titres par an dans les diverses disciplines théologiques à la condition que nos théologiens - qui ont été suffisamment sensibilisés à travers nos multiples contacts et correspondances - nous soumettent des manuscrits. Les prévisions de publication pour 2001 portaient sur 5 titres dans les disciplines suivantes :

Exégèse, Théologie et Herméneutique du Nouveau Testament ; Monde, Eglise et Royaume de Dieu ; Anthropologie et Ecclésiologie ; l'intégration de la communication dans la formation théologique en Afrique. Lors de leur rencontre de septembre 2001 à Yaoundé, les théologiens francophones ont lancé un plan d'action visant à réunir chaque année au sein d'une institution théologique, Porto-Novo, Yaoundé, etc., un atelier pour la production des ouvrages.

Autres publications théologiques

Dans cette recherche de créativité intellectuelle des théologiens africains nous avons publié un certain nombre d'ouvrages qui sont des outils indispensables dans l'enseignement théologique : *Le Saint Esprit interroge les esprits*⁶ de Masamba ma Mpolo (Congo-Zaïre), *La Sagesse cachée de Dieu. Une justification de la foi chrétienne* de Bame Bame ; *La Réforme du Culte. Une nécessité pour les églises d'Afrique* de Célestin Kiki, *Christianisme en Quête d'Identité en Afrique* de Jean-Paul Messina, *Petite histoire des Canons de la Bible* de Samuel Ebo, *La Nouvelle Evangélisation en Afrique* de Ka Mana coédité avec Karthala, *La Nouvelle théologie des femmes africaines* de Hélène Yinda et Kä Mana, *Dictionnaire œcuménique de missiologie* (collectif) coédité avec CERF et Labor et Fides s'inscrivent dans cette optique. Dans les mois qui viennent nous publierons un ouvrage sur *l'Introduction au Nouveau Testament* par Emmanuel Bissu, un commentaire sur le *Décalogue* par Simon Dossou en attendant les manuscrits promis par les théologiens lors de leur rencontre de septembre 2001 à Yaoundé.

Témoins africains de l'Évangile

Avec cette collection lancée en 2001, les Editions CLE voudraient offrir aux lecteurs et aux Chrétiens une série de mémoires et de témoignages sur des personnages pionniers de l'Évangile en Afrique. Il s'agit de ceux dont la vie, l'œuvre et l'histoire méritent d'être contées. Il s'agit aussi de reconstituer le fil des événements qui accompagnent chacun de ces hommes dans leur cheminement singulier, leur engagement, leur vie et influence, leur vocation et leur mission en vue de l'instruction et de l'éducation du peuple de Dieu en Afrique. Ces publications de mémoires et monographies sur les personnes qui ont été "les Pionniers de l'Évangile en Afrique" sans que leurs noms apparaissent dans les grandes bibliographies et encyclopédies missionnaires donneront l'occasion aux Africains d'écrire le récit de leur conversion et de leur baptême et de dire, indépendamment de toute influence, ce qu'ils veulent faire de leur foi en Jésus-Christ.

Littérature d'édification spirituelle

Notre plan d'action 2000-2004 a identifié quelques domaines dans lesquels le ministère des Editions CLE peut compléter celui des églises en matière de littérature chrétienne et théologique. Il s'agit de :

- supports de culte et prière (hymnes, catéchismes, liturgies, livres de prière),
- thèmes divers d'éducation et éthique chrétienne.

⁶ Une approche psychanalytique et pastorale originale sur un nouveau phénomène dans les activités des sectes, les rêves et maris mystiques de nuit qui terrifient les femmes mariées.

Nous avons étoffé un plan de production pour chaque église membre au cours de notre assemblée Générale de janvier 2001 à Douala. Mais ici comme dans les autres collections, la réussite est tributaire de la réponse des théologiens et chrétiens qui se décideraient à galvaniser les énergies nécessaires pour graver dans les cultures et la conscience de leurs peuples la nourriture spirituelle en vue d'une croissance normale. Les ouvrages *Prière, Jeûne et Offrande* de Simon Njami-Nwandi, *Pas à Pas* de Lucette Woungly Masaga sont quelques exemples. Nous attendons les manuscrits des autres théologiens, églises et chrétiens africains.

L'édition du livre en Afrique francophone : une gageure

Les maisons d'édition en Afrique Sud-Sahara se heurtent à une montagne de problèmes. Le tout premier qu'il convient de mentionner est la faiblesse ou le manque de structures et d'institutions qui puissent promouvoir l'édition du livre. Par rapport au métier de l'édition du livre qui a plusieurs siècles derrière lui, les maisons africaines sont jeunes et peu équipées en personnel formé pouvant faciliter l'émergence d'une génération capable de produire un livre compétitif et militer pour la mise en place d'une véritable politique d'édition, d'impression et de distribution. On avait espéré que le problème serait graduellement résolu avec la mise en place des écoles de journalisme, dont certaines comme l'ESSTIC à Yaoundé, se sont dotées d'une filière en édition. Mais c'était sans compter avec les aléas qui affectent le système éducatif africain : absence d'enseignants qualifiés et d'équipement adéquat et surtout d'un environnement de l'édition et l'impression du livre pour permettre de passer de la théorie à la pratique.

Le deuxième problème est celui de l'absence de mécanismes de distribution qui est amplifié par la concurrence du livre venu d'Europe et d'Amérique du Nord. En fait nous avons d'un côté des groupes multinationaux du Nord ayant des moyens colossaux et des siècles d'expérience aussi bien dans le métier que dans le lobbying. D'un autre côté, se trouvent des groupes multinationaux couvrant le marché africain avec l'ambition d'en garder le monopole. Ces groupes, en plus des budgets énormes venant de fusion ou de rachat d'autres entreprises d'édition et de presse, reçoivent de leurs ministères de la coopération et de la culture des subsides, des exonérations et des garanties de toute sorte pour l'exportation et la commercialisation des livres. Le cas le plus manifeste est celui de livres Nouveaux Horizons diffusés par les ambassades américaines dans les pays francophones surtout à l'attention de futurs décideurs, puisqu'ils sont essentiellement destinés aux étudiants des universités et des cadres des entreprises pour un prix imbattable (généralement l'équivalent de 2 à 3 dollars américains). Lorsqu'une fois j'ai demandé au Directeur de Nouveaux Horizons, M. Anderson qui me rendait visite, si les Editions CLE pouvaient coproduire des livres avec les Nouveaux Horizons, il m'avait répondu par un non catégorique. Et pour expliquer son non il avait ajouté: "Nous vendons les idées américaines et c'est tout".

Certains observateurs y compris, Pasteur Ype Schaaf, fondateur des Editions CLE et de l'Alliance Biblique du Cameroun, ont émis l'hypothèse très contestable que les Africains racontent des histoires mais ne sont pas de grands lecteurs⁷. D'où pour lui, il faut des livres très peu épais, imprimés de façon lisible avec des contenus non abstraits mais concrets (comprenez qu'il faudra omettre les débats philosophiques et théoriques pour aborder les questions de vie pratique).

La réalité, il me semble, est tout autre et se situe au niveau du troisième problème qui est la mère de tous les autres : le combat culturel encore à gagner par le Sud. Face aux éditeurs et distributeurs du Nord qui n'aiment pas les idées du Sud et prennent pour prétexte la qualité de l'édition, il n'existe pas de politiques culturelles dans nos Etats. Nous avons des maisons jeunes qui éditent des livres chez les imprimeurs locaux dont les intrants sont fortement soumis aux conditions douanières et fiscales au même titre que les produits commerciaux. Ainsi donc, vouloir exporter le livre

⁷ Bible, Mission et littérature écrite, CLE 2001.

produit en Afrique, en l'absence des politiques d'incitation devient une illusion. Pour certains acteurs publics des pays francophones, la politique du livre se limite à la signature de la Convention de Florence. Or celle-ci est essentiellement une invitation à la libéralisation et la détaxation des livres fabriqués au Nord et exportés vers les pays du Sud. L'application de cette convention favorise le livre importé du Nord fortement subventionné. Loin de promouvoir les industries du livre au Sud, elle les détruit du fait du combat à armes inégales. Par contre la Convention de Nairobi sur la détaxation des intrats de fabrication du livre n'a pas encore été ratifiée par les Etats du Sud pour augmenter les chances de fabrication du livre en Afrique. Etant donné les conditions socio-économiques difficiles que connaissent les populations africaines, étant donné aussi les habitudes qui n'ont pas été éduquées dans le sens de développer l'amour du livre, d'en faire un produit de première nécessité, les maisons d'édition africaines indépendantes sont obligées de mener un combat pour la survie. Survivre en produisant un livre qui soit à la portée du grand public.

Mais là ne s'arrêtent pas les problèmes. Le livre est produit dans les langues étrangères, français, anglais, portugais, espagnol dont les locuteurs dépassent rarement les 10%. Eu égard à cette situation, nous ne pouvons aspirer à aucun développement si nous sommes incapables de produire et de diffuser les savoirs. S'il fallait que les Africains soient réellement maîtres de leur destin, les divers intervenants, devraient mettre en place des politiques cohérentes, créer des structures et des réseaux de financement et de distribution du livre (en pensant à l'assurance et à l'exportation) qui ne soient ni l'étalage des folklores ni les recueils des discours de «présidents-fondateurs» mais une véritable pensée africaine.

Des supplétifs francophones ou ...“français”

Si les éditeurs du Nord n'avaient pas de subventions publiques énormes ou s'ils étaient soumis comme ceux du Sud aux tracasseries et procédures de toute sorte lors de l'exportation du livre, leur prix serait prohibitif ou tout au moins en compétition avec le livre produit en Afrique. Pour contourner la difficulté, certaines maisons qui veulent conquérir le marché africain ont commencé à produire des livres pour la plupart écrits par des Africains ou des Africanistes, pour un prix spécial avec des thématiques spécifiques au continent. Le Seuil, une des grandes maisons d'édition chrétienne en France qui a publié dans le passé un certain nombre de livres des protestants a sensiblement diminué ses interventions sur l'Afrique du fait des exigences économiques. En Suisse, il y a chez les Protestants, Labor et Fides qui également connaît pas mal de problèmes. Du côté catholique, le CERF créé par les Dominicains s'intéresse également aux livres des protestants. La communauté de Taizé a aussi publié des livres écrits par les Frères et diffusés largement en France, en Suisse et en Afrique dans différentes maisons. Chez les Catholiques, il existe deux types de structures en Afrique. D'abord les librairies et des maisons d'édition de Saint Paul dans plusieurs pays qui font un effort dans la production et la diffusion de littérature chrétienne. Ensuite les diocèses dans lesquels des missionnaires sont actifs peuvent aider les congrégations à organiser une littérature chrétienne catholique dans leur pays natal. Il reste que les ordres spécialisés, surtout la Congrégation de Saint Paul, servent l'orthodoxie de Rome en publiant du matériel ayant reçu l'imprimatur de l'épiscopat. Des théologiens africains ayant opté pour une voix libre et indépendante doivent chercher un éditeur en dehors de l'Afrique.

Les évangéliques français, suisses et canadiens disposent d'un certain nombre de petites maisons d'édition qui travaillent sur le continent. En plus les grandes agences de littérature biblique et évangélique anglaise et américaines sont actives en France et aussi dans quelques pays d'Afrique de langue française. Il s'agit surtout de la Ligue pour la Lecture de la Bible (Scripture Union) et de CLC (Croisade du Livre Chrétien : Christian Littérature croisade). Avec un tel panorama d'éditeurs et diffuseurs, la diffusion de la littérature chrétienne en français en provenance de l'Europe et

du Canada se fait avec des méthodes différentes souvent compétitives et rivales. Ainsi trouve-t-on des groupes "missionnaires" surtout américains qui produisent des littératures diffusées gratuitement dans plusieurs pays surtout ceux de la bande sahélienne. Ceci ne favorise pas une culture du livre dans la mesure où, très peu parmi les pasteurs, étudiants en théologie et évangélistes, très mal payés d'ailleurs, chercheront à surmonter ce handicap de la division pour investir dans la constitution d'une bibliothèque ou librairie⁸.

En ce qui concerne la littérature générale, deux maisons d'édition françaises ont un intérêt spécial pour l'Afrique, Karthala et l'Harmattan. A côté de la littérature générale elles publient des livres théologiques et missiologiques écrits par des gens du Sud et des spécialistes des problèmes du Sud. Dans un nombre de cas, cela se fait en collaboration avec des congrégations missionnaires. Mais les heureux élus sont généralement des personnes vivant au Nord.

Des palliatifs

Dans le but de combler les insuffisances de livres dans les bibliothèques des facultés et écoles de théologie, deux initiatives font leur chemin en France. D'abord celle d'un ancien enseignant de théologie au Cameroun, le Pasteur français, Daniel Bach. Celui-ci a mis en place à Guebwiller en Alsace en France, une Centrale de Littérature chrétienne francophone (CLCF), destinée à obtenir bon marché des livres théologiques et à les diffuser auprès des enseignants, des théologiens, des pasteurs et étudiants dans le but de leur permettre de se constituer une petite bibliothèque. Daniel Bach est en contact avec une quarantaine d'institutions théologiques auxquels il envoie les livres. Certains éditeurs et maisons de mission européennes assistent dans le financement de son travail. En 1999 il a pu envoyer 2700 livres théologiques.

Une autre structure est *Excelsis* créé par Jan Dijkman. Excelsis, avec son dépôt à Begude de Mazenc dans la Drome, au sud de la France, distribue dans les librairies chrétiennes, évangéliques et générales en France et d'autre pays pour des prix et des réductions commerciales. En plus Excelsis dispose d'une maison d'édition évangélique. Excelsis calcule pour l'Afrique les mêmes prix que pour l'Europe. Seulement la plupart des livres sont envoyés comme cadeaux payés par les missions occidentales ou par le biais des contacts de la fondation Excelsis en France, Etats-Unis et aux Pays-Bas pour subventionner l'envoi des livres chrétiens en Afrique.

Livr'Afrique est née d'une collaboration d'un nombre d'éditeurs évangéliques en France avec comme but de fournir des livres bon marché à l'Afrique. Son directeur Idris Davies a eu l'idée de faire en sorte que quand un livre chrétien est produit en France ou en Suisse, on accepte d'imprimer 1000 exemplaires de plus destinés à l'Afrique pour un tiers du prix commercial. *Livr'Afrique* a des dépôts à Abidjan, en Côte d'Ivoire, à Ouagadougou au Burkina Faso, à Ndjaména au Tchad, à Douala et Yaoundé au Cameroun et à Lomé au Togo.

L'on convient et l'on se plaint malheureusement dans l'idée qu'à la base d'expériences, la diffusion de livres en Afrique francophone est beaucoup plus facile à partir de la France. C'est pour cela que *Livr'Afrique* a son dépôt central à Lorient à côté de Montelimar dans la Drome.

⁸ Les alliances bibliques sont un modèle plus ou moins différent puisqu'elles demandent une participation de chrétiens pour l'acquisition de leur Bible.

Le temps de nous investir

Quel que soit le plus que ces différentes structures apportent aux facultés et écoles de théologie, la réponse au problème de publication et de développement des bibliothèques par les Africains eux-mêmes, reste entière. Car il est fort à craindre que se crée une sorte de Père Noël des théologiens, facultés et séminaires, constituant ainsi une inhibition à la créativité voire offusquant la nécessaire mission que ces institutions doivent attribuer aux maisons d'édition africaines. Si les cadres théologiques africains ne perçoivent pas le don en livres comme un défi à relever dans un court terme avec un désir ardent de contribuer de manière originale à la théologie chrétienne universelle, c'est qu'ils se seront dérobés de leur devoir. De la sorte ces "amis de l'Afrique" auront simplement mis en place de nouvelles formes de colonisation et d'impérialisme culturel. C'est pour cela que l'appel des maisons d'édition africaines pour le financement et la création des réseaux de distribution du livre mérite une oreille attentive par les théologiens, les chrétiens africains et les partenaires missionnaires.

Dans presque toutes les institutions, la recherche et la publication est un tabou. Le manque des moyens est un prétexte pour ne pas en parler. Pour les amis qui ont participé à la réflexion sur la formation théologique, un appui crucial des partenaires œcuméniques serait bienvenu ; il consisterait à aider les Africains à "consommer la théologie de chez-nous en permettant la publication des pensées théologiques du Sud et en planifiant les échanges". Les partenaires œcuméniques peuvent aider à mettre en place les Commissions scientifiques et d'accréditation des diplômes et des programmes de formation et de recherche. Ils pourraient financer les congés sabbatiques planifiés par les universités qui donneraient lieu aux publications, celles-ci étant la condition d'avancement en grade académique.

La Bible nous confirme dans le fait que les temps du renouvellement viennent toujours après les grands moments de crise. Et c'est ce message que nous devons proclamer en Afrique pour exorciser tous les prophétismes de malheurs. Nous devons travailler jour et nuit pour ce temps de la renaissance, en réveillant le génie créateur des Africains dans nos villages, dans nos institutions de théologie, nos écoles primaires et dans chacune de nos communautés de foi.

Dans une articulation de la vocation de la théologie africaine de la Reconstruction, le théologien kenyan, Jesse Mugambi estime que le mythe d'une Afrique des ténèbres, l'Afrique de la misère et de la pauvreté, le mythe d'un continent de conflits et de la faim doit être remplacée par le mythe d'un continent d'avenir, l'avenir du Christianisme, le Continent ou le Soleil se lève ; le continent qui peut nourrir ses enfants. Cette analyse sous-tend tous les travaux d'une nouvelle génération de théologiens africains qui, à la suite de Kagame, Mbiti, Sawyer, Idohu, Mulago, Malula, Burgess Carr et John Gatu, Desmond Tutu ou d'Allan Boesak, croient avec raison, que le temps est venu pour la reconstruction morale, sociale, économique, culturelle et politique de l'Afrique. L'environnement politique est de plus en plus favorable⁹. Les théologiens africains devraient se sentir interpellés pour l'honneur, la dignité et le salut de ce continent.

Pistes d'avenir

Cette réflexion a essayé de jeter un regard sur la situation de différentes institutions de formation en Afrique mais aussi de soulever la problématique de la formation en général. Je voudrais, pour la conclure proposer un certain nombre de points à tenir en considération lors de l'élaboration du plan d'action de 5 ans à Johannesburg :

⁹ Cfr l'initiative NePAD lancée par un certain nombre de chefs d'Etats africains.

1. Dans le domaine de la recherche et des publications :

- Mettre en place un fonds de recherche et publications permettant la publication chaque année d'au moins un ouvrage dans chaque discipline classique d'enseignement théologique (plus les disciplines connexes : philosophie, anthropologie, sociologie).
- Mettre en place un fonds permettant de financer de congés sabbatiques des enseignants des facultés et instituts de théologie. Le comité scientifique des institutions de formation théologique et universitaire mettra en place des critères de financement de congés sabbatiques – avec contrat à l'appui- de manière à ce que chaque bénéficiaire présente un projet de recherche et publication pendant la durée de son congé.
- Dans chaque institution, initier un journal ou revue de recherches à paraître au moins une fois par an.

2. Dans le domaine des bibliothèques :

- accroître la capacité de recherche et documentation en informatisant toutes les bibliothèques des institutions agréées et en créant un centre de documentation et d'échanges interuniversitaires.
- fixer un objectif de 15.000 volumes au minimum dans chaque institution décernant un diplôme de licence.

3. Dans le domaine de la formation :

- Soutenir les initiatives visant à former les formateurs sur place en Afrique sans pour autant supprimer les possibilités d'interaction et de complément de recherches à l'extérieur.
- Soutenir les projets de création d'institution universitaires protestantes en Afrique de manière complémentaire selon les vocations des sous-régions.

4. Dans le domaine de l'accréditation des programmes et des enseignements :

- Mettre en place et faciliter le travail d'une Commission scientifique d'accréditation des programmes, des enseignements et des publications académiques.

**MOVING FORWARD IN HOPE
WHAT PROSPECTS FOR THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION
IN AFRICA?¹**

Tharcisse GATWA

in collaboration with

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The initiative *Moving Forward in Hope (Cheminement d'espérance) in Africa*, as presented by the Education and Ecumenical Formation team, is an interactive process of critical evaluation of our way of preparing youth, women and men for responsible positions in the church. We have to answer key questions such as: What did we do in the past half-century which was particularly worthwhile? Starting from there, how shall we move forward in the 21st century? Where have we made mistakes, and can we correct them in order to make progress? The WCC is also concerned to know the responses of Christians and churches of Africa to the serious problems affecting our continent, such as extreme poverty, violence, corruption and disease. Finally, what kinds of theology and what ethical value systems are fundamental and formative for church, Christianity and ecumenism in Africa?

This paper will examine the situation of theological education in French-speaking sub-Saharan Africa, the spread of knowledge through the publication and distribution of books, research and publication in our theological institutions and the state of our libraries. Our reflection has been enriched by the conclusions of discussions organised around the theme of *Moving Forward in Hope*, in separate sessions with teachers and with a group of students in masters' and doctoral degree programmes, coming from different countries (Cameroon, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Senegal and Rwanda).

The institutional level

Since the 1970s, the theological training institutions in French-speaking Africa have been grouped together in an Association of Theological Faculties and Schools (ASTHEOL). ASTHEOL has two branches, one in the Protestant University of the Congo at Kinshasa, for Central Africa including the Congo-Zaire, Rwanda, Burundi and Angola, and the other in the Protestant Faculty of Theology at Yaoundé, for West Africa including the Congo-Brazzaville, Gabon, Cameroon, Togo, Benin, Chad, Ivory Coast, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Niger and Equatorial Guinea. These two branches of ASTHEOL operate under the umbrella of the Conference of African Theological Institutions (CATI) with headquarters at Nairobi, Kenya. ASTHEOL's purpose is:

- to re-examine continually, together with the churches, the role of theological educational institutions and training for the parish ministry in African society; to promote the teaching of theology in West and Central Africa;
-
- to study the courses of instruction and the recognition of diplomas; to encourage and to co-ordinate theological research and the production of various texts;
-
- to edit and distribute the *Torch (Flambeau)*, a theological review for the work of the church in the world of Africa, in collaboration with Editions CLE (Yaoundé) and CEDI (Kinshasa).

¹ Translated by WCC Language Service.

To carry out these tasks, the Association plans to appoint a full-time Regional Secretary. Despite the persistence of war in the Great Lakes region, which has slowed down and then cut off contacts amongst most of the institutions in the region, the Kinshasa branch has continued to struggle along. The one in Yaoundé, however, has been inactive since 1981. To try to start it up again, and to establish co-operation between Kinshasa and Yaoundé, Dr. Maurice Kouam, Dean of the Protestant Faculty of Theology, has been holding meetings of the various institutions of the two sub-regions since 1999. In September 1999, in August 2000 and again in September 2001 the deans, academic secretaries and librarians of these institutions came together and began a sharing of ideas which has had increasingly tangible results. The director of Editions CLE took part in these activities; CLE has historically been a partner of the theological institutions and an instrument for publishing of church books in Africa. The exchanges to this point have been concerned with the harmonising of courses of study, of the levels of recruitment of students, of the number of years of study per cycle and of diplomas; with faculty exchanges, the situation of libraries and with setting up a schema for publications in the different disciplines in co-operation with Editions CLE. Before discussing each of these aspects, let us first provide some reference points on some of these institutions.

1. *The Protestant University of the Congo*

The University was founded in 1959 as the *Protestant Faculty of Theology of the Belgian Congo and Rwanda-Urundi*. In 1963 it became the Faculty of Theology of the Free University of the Congo (ULC). It was excluded when the university was secularised in 1974 as the National University of Zaïre; it then became the Faculty of Theology of the Church of Christ in the Congo. Today it is one of the faculties of the Protestant University of the Congo, founded in 1994 by the Church of Christ in Zaïre (now the Church of Christ in the Congo). The Faculty of Theology offers a three-year graduate training programme, a two-year bachelor's degree programme and a four-year doctoral programme including two obligatory years of DES (Diplôme d'Etudes Supérieures). The statistics for the academic year 2000-2001 give the following picture: 153 students in the graduate programme including 20 women, 98 in the bachelor's programme including six women, nine DES students and 10 doctoral students. The faculty consists of 32 teaching posts including 16 visiting faculty members.

2. *The Protestant Faculty of Theology of Yaoundé*

The Faculty opened its doors in February 1962 with the firm ambition of "training African theologians who can take a fresh look at the essence of the Christian revelation, going back to its biblical source and freeing it from all that has been added by centuries of Christianity...". While it continues to serve a number of churches throughout French-speaking and Portuguese-speaking Africa (including Madagascar), the Faculty today is an institution belonging to 13 churches in Ivory Coast, Togo, Benin, Cameroon and Gabon. It offers courses of study for a three-year bachelor's degree (following secondary school), a two-year master's degree and a five-year doctor's degree programme with DEA (Diplôme d'Etudes Appliquées). At the beginning of the academic year 1999/2000, the Faculty had 157 students, including 25 in the master's and 26 in the doctoral programme, and 14 teachers including six supply teachers. The Faculty has further initiated a two-year lay study programme and a women's training centre.

3. *The Protestant Theological Institute of Porto Novo, Benin*

This educational institution begun in 1920 as a school for catechism teachers for the Wesleyan Methodist Mission. The school has changed its name several times; in 1925 it took the name of the Protestant Seminary of Porto Novo, in 1962 it became the Evangelical School for Pastors of Porto Novo, and in 1998 took the present name of the Protestant Theological Institute of Porto Novo. It serves the churches of the sub-region, including the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Togo, the

Methodist Church of Togo, the Protestant Methodist Church of Benin, the Protestant Methodist Church of Ivory Coast, and works in partnership with the Methodist Church Mission of Great Britain, the Community of Churches in Mission (CEVAA) and the Protestant Faculty of Theology of Yaoundé. It offers training programmes at two levels, a three-year bachelor's degree and a two-year master's degree programme. At the beginning of the 1998-1999 academic year 33 students were registered, and the teaching staff included four permanent and four supply teachers.

4. *The Lutheran Theological Institute of Meiganga, Cameroon*

The Meiganga Theological School became a Theological Institute in 1995. In 1999 there were still two overlapping programmes, with 16 students in the old pastoral training programme which is being phased out and 14 students in the bachelor's degree programme. The faculty consists of ten teachers with qualifications ranging from B.A. to Ph.D.

5. *The Presbyterian Theological Seminary of Kumba, in English-speaking Cameroon*

The school opened its doors in 1898 as a training centre for catechism teachers of the Basel Mission, at Bethel, Douala, and moved the following year to Buéa. In 1932 a seminary with a three-year programme was opened at Nyasoso, but it was in 1952 that a real training school for pastors was launched at the same place. The present training programme for pastors and theologians was inaugurated in 1962 by the English-speaking Presbyterian Church of Cameroon (PCC). However, it was in 1994-95 that the seminary became a theological institute. There are two overlapping theological programmes, the Old Bible and the New Bible Programmes, with 57 students in the former and 14 in the latter, newer system. A bachelor's degree requires three years of study concluding with a dissertation. There were ten on the teaching staff at the beginning of the 1999-2000 academic year, including two supply teachers.

6. *The Baptist Theological Institute of Ndiki, Cameroon*

The school became an institute in 1997. As in most of the other institutes, there are two overlapping programmes, one for evangelists and one for pastors, with long-term plans to offer a bachelor's degree. In 1999 there were 17 students in the evangelism programme and 14 at the pastoral level. The pastors' training programme takes four years and includes a dissertation. This is a confessional school belonging to one of the different branches of the Baptist churches, which from time to time also takes in students from the other branches, UEBC and EBC.

7. *The Protestant Theological Institute of Ndoungué, Cameroon*

The School of Theology at Ndoungué was widely influential long before the African churches in several French-speaking African countries, for which it trained pastors², gained their independence or autonomy. After the Protestant Faculty of Theology was founded at Yaoundé, along with theological schools and faculties in several other countries, its influence was reduced, but it continues to assert its international and inter-confessional vocation. It draws students from the Evangelical Church of Gabon, from Equatorial Guinea, and the Evangelical Churches and the Baptist Union of Cameroon. In 2001-2002, the Institute had 28 students at baccalaureate (secondary school final exam) level and 15 in the bachelor's degree programme. It has a faculty of about ten, of whom only two have doctorates, one in history and one in New Testament.

² For example, Naasson Hitimana and Ildephonse Muzigamfizi, the first two pastors of the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda, the first Protestant church to be established in the country, were trained at Ndoungué, as were most of their successors, including Michel Twagirayesu, E. Gafaringa or E. Munyensanga. Hitimana was president of the church in 1964-1977, and Twagirayesu was president in 1977-1994.

8. *The Theological Institute of Bibia (Presbyterian)*

The Institute was formerly the School of Theology of the Presbyterian Church of Cameroon. The new system of instruction was inaugurated in 1999. At this writing there are still two overlapping programmes, one at pastoral level and one leading to a bachelor's degree. Despite its confessional character, the Institute preserves its ecumenical and international vocation, accepting students from various churches in the neighbouring countries such as Gabon, the Central African Republic, and Equatorial Guinea. The bachelor's degree programme has been extended to four years, concluding with a dissertation.

9. *The Protestant Faculty of Butare, Rwanda*

The Faculty was inaugurated in 1990 as an outgrowth of the old School of Theology³. The war which broke out in Rwanda, beginning in the north of the country, in October 1990, followed by the massacres and genocide in 1994, disrupted the programmes to the extent that the students of the first year at the young Faculty were not able to complete their course of study. The Faculty was severely affected by the genocide: the Dean of the Faculty, Dr. Faustin Rwagacuzi, was murdered with his entire family, as were several of the students.

After calm was restored, the situation of the church and its workers was as desperate as that of the whole country, as a number of pastors had been killed and others had gone into exile abroad. In September 1995, the churches decided to re-open the Faculty with a special two-year training programme for pastors, combined with residence and work in parishes. The bachelor's degree programme was resumed in 1996, but the special programme continued until 2001. At this time there are still 43 students in the special programme and 26 bachelor's degree candidates. There are four permanent teaching faculty members and a number of visiting faculty from abroad.

The library has more than 8,000 volumes and has been computerised. It is managed by two employees qualified in library science. The Faculty has a computer room with six computers and printers, where students can type their papers and dissertations themselves. In addition, both students and faculty benefit from the services of the library and the research being done at the Ecumenical Centre for Theological Research and Popularisation (CORVT) of the Presbyterian Church of Rwanda which is housed in the same building complex. This Centre, which offers theological extension courses, has carried out and published a number of research works on the history and life of the church and on numerous biblical and theological topics.

10. *Presbyterian University of Africa at Kigali (UPAK)*

To meet the demand for appropriate training of leaders in a country which had suffered great losses in the 1994 genocide, the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda made an agreement with the Rwandan government to institute a university at Kigali. The project was formally launched at the church's General Synod in December 2001, looking ahead to the celebration of the church's centenary in 2007. The University Council has already met and established some guidelines. The University will be an institution aiming at excellence in education and seeking to blaze new trails in order to meet the needs of Africa in general, and in particular those of the Great Lakes area and Rwanda.

³ As the first theological education institution in Rwanda, set up in 1970 by the main Protestant churches, the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda, the Baptist Union and the Anglican and Methodist Churches, the School of Theology at Butare recruited students who had earned diplomas as teaching assistants (D4/5) for a four-year pastoral ministry training programme. Most of them subsequently earned doctorates at prestigious African and European universities.

It will be guided by Christian ethics, aiming to train competent and dependable leaders for the development of the continent, and also to propagate the values of the Gospel for business management in Africa. It will complement the existing structures rather than competing with them. Thus the University will open its doors in 2004 as a federation of three institutions of higher education (*écoles de hautes études*): the College of Hotel and Tourism Management (EHEHT), the College of Commercial Engineering (EHEIC), the College of Translation and Interpretation (EHETI), and possibly also the College of Insurance Engineering.

11. *The Protestant Faculty of Theology of the Great Lakes Free University at Goma, Democratic Republic of the Congo*

The Faculty of Theology is part of the Free University of the Great Lakes Countries. It originated as the Graduate School of Protestant Theology in the early 1980s. When the Great Lakes Free University was founded in the early 1990s, theology was made one of its three faculties along with law and business. The war in the Congo which began in the east of the country, the region where the University is located, lengthened travel times for students coming from the various countries of the region and from different parts of the Congo which today are under various autonomous administrations. The entire University has less than 1000 students, and the faculty of theology has about a hundred, with about ten teaching staff.

It should be mentioned that thinking has begun in co-operation with the University Faculties of Protestant Theology in Brussels, the Free University of the Great Lakes Countries and the Faculty of Theology at Butare, towards the goal of being able to train professors who can teach doctoral students. The first meeting was held 11 May 2002 with the Rectors of the three institutions, and a basis document will be published soon. When this project is realised, it will serve both to reduce today's high costs of educating management-level personnel, moving their families to Europe and maintaining them there, and also to meet the challenge of the lack of doctoral-level teachers, since the doctoral students themselves can begin serving as assistant teachers in their disciplines.

12. *The Protestant Faculty of Theology at Mansimou, Congo-Brazzaville*

In 1998 the Evangelical Church of the Congo took the decision to upgrade its old School of Theology to a Faculty of Theology. It was the first institution of its kind in Congo-Brazzaville for the Protestant churches. The least which can be said is that this Faculty was lacking in the essentials, including teaching staff. Only one person held a doctorate, Dr. Joseph Sita, who had to serve as dean as well as being the only professor of Old and New Testament. Most of the teaching staff came from the Protestant University of Kinshasa and the state Marian Nguabi University.

In 1997-98 the civil war intervened and destroyed everything. The library was completely vandalised. The academic staff and the 23 students fled to neighbouring countries. At the meeting of theological institutions at Yaoundé in September 1999, an appeal was made for churches, partner organisations and faculties of theology to take in these students. A quick calculation revealed that it would cost around \$4,500 a year to integrate each of these students into another institution. As far as we know, the appeal from Mansimou received no response. With the return of relative peace in 1999, the Faculty re-opened its doors under still quite insecure conditions.

13. *The Evangelical Faculty of Theology of Cameroon*

Founded in 1997, FACTEC is a theological training institute for the Evangelical Church of Cameroon Mission (MEEC), supported by South Korean missions. Although the Faculty announces that it “accepts students of all Protestant and Pentecostal denominations who seek a complete and well-balanced theological education”, the authorities of this church have proved to be allergic to ecumenism. The Faculty is housed in the buildings of the church headquarters, which enables the church president to be both the dean and one of the three permanent teaching staff members. At the beginning of the school year 2001-2002, 16 students were enrolled. Changes have been made so that a master’s degree may be earned in four years.

Educate leaders for the church, yes - but with what tools?

There are other theological education institutions about which we have not been able to obtain information: Ambatonakanga Faculty of Theology of the Church of Christ in Madagascar; the Evangelical Faculty of Theology at Abidjan, the FATEB at Bangui, as well as several schools, including the Bouar School of Theology in the Central African Republic and the Ndjamena School of Theology in Chad.

In this section we will consider the poverty of the libraries and research centres in the French-speaking institutions. In a paper such as this, one must begin by taking stock of certain generally accepted ideas which destroy creativity. An example is the acceptance by African theologians and pastors of the not very laudatory idea that African civilisations were essentially orally based, so that there was no use in expecting a rigorous intellectual approach or the evolution over time of scholarly achievement in Africa. Another example is to settle for the idea that “Africans don’t read very much”, and don’t need to be bored by long “philosophical” discussions. Let us begin by remembering the influence of black African civilisation on Greek civilisation. This has been magnificently documented by scholars such as Cheik Anta Diop⁴, Théophile Obenga and others. Let us also recall the level of cultural development, never regained in our time, of the cities which were centres of the influence of learning, such as Alexandria, and Timbuktu whose great library was burnt down during the Islamic conquests.

The great majority of Christians and of the general public in Africa today expect the new church leaders and theologians to make an effort to go further - not necessarily to leave oral culture itself behind, since it is a source of knowledge and of openness, but rather to contribute to both the achievement and the dissemination of knowledge, and to put in place real strategies for the education of their communities. However, the state of the libraries in faculties and schools of theology leaves much to be desired, at least in French-speaking Africa. At most they are using theological publications produced by Westerners and North Americans, mostly out of date. The quantity of books available is far below the minimum required to meet the needs of the education these institutions claim to be providing.

The librarians who have been meeting every year since 1999, along with the deans and academic secretaries, have found to their sorrow that, first of all, libraries are the poor relations of theological institutions’ budgets. They are very seldom computerised, and are far from grasping the idea of interconnectedness which would make exchange possible among faculties or institutes. Furthermore, the libraries are seldom in the care of a qualified person. With the exception of Kinshasa, Yaoundé, Butare and Porto Novo, they are managed either by a professor or by a student who works when he has time. This is not a favourable environment for adequate academic work. If one takes into account that Christianity is moving demographically from the North to the South, there is an urgent need for African theologians to get to work.

⁴ See especially his works *The Anteriority of Black Civilisations*, or *Black Nations and Cultures*.

Let us illustrate this with the situation of some of the libraries of these theological faculties and institutes. For the academic year 1999-2000, the library of the Protestant Faculty of Theology at Yaoundé had 17,500 titles including periodicals. Its annual budget was \$8,000 including staff salaries. The Theological Institute of Porto Novo, Benin, has 5000 books and an annual budget of \$3,200. The seminary of the Presbyterian Church at Kumba⁵, Cameroon, has 5950 titles. The Theological Institute of Ndoungué has more than 5000 books, on an annual budget of \$3,000. The Meiganga Lutheran Institute in north Cameroon says it has 9300 books, on an annual budget of \$1,300. The Baptist Theological Institute at Ndikinimeki has 3500 titles and no definite amount budgeted. The Theological Institute of Bibia (of the Presbyterian Church of Cameroon) has 5000 books and a budget of \$950. The Butare Faculty of Theology has 8000 titles. The most deplorable case is that of Mansimou in Congo-Brazzaville, whose library was pillaged completely during the two civil wars which ravaged the country in the late 1990s. The library at the Evangelical Faculty of the Cameroon Mission, which does not come to the meetings of the other institutions, has several hundred titles, but no one is in charge of it and no budget figure is known.

It must also be noted that these figures are often inflated. A resource person who recently visited the Ndoungué Theological Institute hit the roof when she saw these statistics. "Of these 5000 books they say they have, about 500 are actually useful," she said. "The rest consist of rather dubious colonial literature". The situation is disturbing to say the least. Consider, for example, that Yaoundé is the best endowed. However, of the 17500 titles it has catalogued, one has to admit that at least a third are not fit to be used. And it must be kept in mind that this is an institution with more than 150 students, and that it awards doctorates - between 25 and 30 students are enrolled in its doctoral programme, which calls for long-term preservation of a large number of titles outside the bookshop. This gives an idea of the poverty we have here.

Meetings of theological faculties and institutes at Yaoundé in 1999, 2000 and 2001: a first step

For three years most of the institutions of which we are speaking have been meeting at Yaoundé at the invitation of Maurice Koam, Dean of the Protestant Faculty of Theology there, and a certain number of objectives have been reached. First and foremost is the sharing which has allowed these institutions to get to know one another. Each institution has provided information about its history, infrastructures, programmes of instruction, student population and teaching staff, the state of its library. Then they have reviewed all their curricula and begun moving towards harmonisation of their content as well as the length of courses of study, and recruitment of students and teachers. The participants have adopted a programme of training and exchanges for librarians and of computerisation, and have decided to set up an information and bibliography centre at Yaoundé which will serve as a clearing-house for the other libraries. With regard to the founding of a Protestant University of West Africa, they have asked for the Protestant Theological Faculty of Yaoundé to serve as the nucleus.

At their meeting in 2001, the participants reflected on the conditions under which the French-speaking theological institutions could become competitive and accomplish more. They formulated a series of recommendations, of which the following are the most important:

- a. Each educational institution should appoint an educational committee, and there should also be one at regional level. The mandate of this committee would be supervision of the intellectual output and teaching programmes of the theological institution; evaluation of the work of professors, structures and facilities such as libraries; institutionalisation, structuring and harmonisation of the academic degrees of teachers.

⁵ The seminary belongs to the English-speaking Presbyterian Church of Cameroon.

b. “A meeting should be held with church leaders, professors and representatives of grass-roots Christians” to reflect on and give guidance for theological education.

c. In view of the lack of available teaching staff, the best students in master’s degree programmes are to be identified and encouraged to study for doctorates, beginning with the areas of greatest need: Old Testament, church history, and history of religions.

d. The heads of theological institutions have begun a project to prepare manuals of theological instruction for the African context, beginning with two workshops: one in 2002 to develop manuals on practical theology, systematic ethics and biblical studies, and one in 2003 to write on church history, history of religions, sociology, philosophy and anthropology.

e. The conditions to be fulfilled in setting up an institute were repeated: have at least three faculty members with doctorates in theology; have a basic documentation of at least 7000 titles and the necessary infrastructures for the library, classrooms and student lodgings.

f. A plan was established for exchanges of professors in order to supplement the lack of teaching staff at Brazzaville, Biblia, Kaélé, Meiganga, Butare, Ndoungué, Goma, Kumba and Porto Novo.

At present these resolutions represent a step forward with regard to exchanges and harmonisation. However, the absence of an institutional structure for monitoring them leaves the likelihood of their being realised somewhat in doubt.

There are still serious problems

In view of what we have just described, there are serious problems for theological education in Africa. We will mention a few, without by any means covering the whole list. In doing this, I would like to make use of the commentaries of student pastors who participated in part of these reflections⁶. These students summed up their concerns with regard to the situation of the church and the education of its future leaders under three main headings: the lack of communication or dialogue among theologians on one hand, and between theologians and local congregations on the other; the lack of culture in general; and the isolated locations of educational institutions.

a. Denominationalism

Just before the churches became independent an effort was made, through the creation of ecumenical institutions, to bring about unity among the churches, but they have returned gradually to denominationalism. Some schools were also founded by groups which broke off from the institutional churches to form new churches, sometimes on an ethnic or regional basis. It is equally possible to imagine that, since most of the schools and institutes were founded as schools for catechism teachers by the missions when they began their work of evangelisation, the new churches had trouble cutting their umbilical cords tying them to their “mother missions”. Thus the schools have remained the Baptist Institute of X, the Lutheran Institute of Y, the Presbyterian Institute of Z, and so forth. In certain cases, as in Rwanda, the level of leadership in some churches was so low that it could not meet the academic demands (Anglican Church), and going or staying away was the only means of avoiding a snub. There are also times when a church is afraid to integrate a former school for catechism teachers into ecumenical institutions, preferring to avoid any trouble with the “mother mission” which remains its milk cow on condition of being able to dictate to the young church.

⁶ Those who participated in this sharing were Baptist pastor Matthieu Bouba, who is concluding his doctoral studies; Pastor Pierre Thiam, Senegal (master’s degree programme); Anglican curate Viateur Ndikumana, Rwanda, (master’s degree programme); and Lévi Ngangoura, Baptist from Congo (doctor’s degree programme).

Other schools are the result of refusal of ecumenical dialogue, such as the Faculty of Theology of Bangui and Abidjan, which belongs to the Evangelical Association of Africa and Madagascar, or the Faculty of Theology of the Korean Evangelical Mission in Cameroon. These churches represent trends in Christianity which have always kept their distance from those who joined the ecumenical movement. In any case, this crumbling of the church has serious consequences. It leads to the dissipation of energies and resources, and to isolation, hardening of positions, and ultimately, to mediocrity.

To illustrate this point, Rev. Bouba says of the experience of northern Cameroon: "During the week, Christians live in harmony - it is on Sunday that divisions appear among them. Christians expect church leaders to go into action wherever they are - an ecumenical project, work to do together, so that they can find the way back to one another, all working together to build one country."

b. Lack of vision

To set up a centre for university education, even in countries which have the means, requires not only the availability of resources, but above all a comprehensive vision. The Bible reminds us that vision means planning, preparations, setting strategies for the use of human and material investments, research and forecasting. However, an institution for university education is not only a forum, but also a crossroads for exchange of ideas and for synergies of knowledge. On the basis of this observation one might wonder whether there has been any planning involved in the creation of theological institutions by the Protestant churches in French-speaking Africa. Without any previous investigation, a church leader decides one fine day to set up a school, and sometimes installs it in an isolated place, with very little infrastructure and an insignificant population. Of the twenty or so establishments we studied, only three have more than 100 students. The others have less than 50 apiece.

In my view there should be a prior study of the practicality of infrastructures and of teaching staff, which could be carried out through national and international symposia. The need for leadership of cultural activities and sports, and for a suitable intellectual, social and cultural environment, should lead the churches and ecumenical organisations to set a number of students and of teachers below which the institution cannot be considered to function at university level. The geographical location of many institutions is so far from population centres that it is difficult to imagine how exchanges of ideas with others could be carried out.

c. Intellectual ostracism

The worst thing one could imagine at the academic level, intellectual ostracism, is nonetheless part of the problems faced. Everything is deficient: there are not enough teachers and their qualifications are insufficient, libraries and research facilities are lacking. There are no established programmes of instruction, so it is up to each faculty member to decide on the basis of personal experience what should be taught. In most cases there is neither an academic council nor a structure qualified in accreditation of degree programmes and diplomas. All this consigns the few dozen students and the handful of teachers to such intellectual and cultural isolation and marginalisation that they are unable to develop partnerships and exchanges with other university-level institutions. Under these conditions, it is likely that anyone with a diploma from a university of high standing who is sent to such a place would regard the decision as a punishment and would look for the first opportunity to leave.

To illustrate the ostracism which some of these institutes experience, take Ndoungué, for example. Despite the influence it previously had, Ndoungué today, 5 hours away from Yaoundé and

2 ° hours from Douala by road, and one which is barely passable by automobile, with its badly equipped library, not one computer and no organised plan of instruction, is isolated from any sort of cultural environment which might foster intellectual creativity.

Speaking of this suicidal isolation to which the Protestant educational institutions are subjected, the students who shared their thoughts with me made the following observation:

“Theologians need to know that there are other branches of knowledge. Theologians need to be humble, to dialogue and share with others, and to accept questioning of their own point of view. But a faculty of theology which has been stuck somewhere in the mountains is shut up in an ivory tower. Each faculty needs to be able to teach the humanities, and that is expensive. The Protestant churches must be helped to set up real universities, so that faculties of theology can evolve in a coherent university environment. Here theologians can realise that there is not such a great distance between them and the other disciplines. The future leaders of the churches can learn to understand the concerns of the society along with future business managers and political decision-makers, in the one nation which they are all called to serve.”

This thinking concurs with that of moratorium, or to use the Catholic terminology, inculturation, which invites the African churches to become mature. Today’s reality in Africa is that church leaders are nationals of African countries, and there are more trained leaders than there were 30 or 50 years ago. But as we are reminded by Antoine Babe (*Churches of Africa; From Emancipation to Responsibility*) and Paulin Poucota (*Letters to African Churches*), many Africans have taken the reins without fully understanding the responsibilities involved in, for example, truly preaching the Gospel which liberates people from colonization, spiritual imperialism and financial mendicancy, and cures them of the stigmata of racial prejudice.

Very few have made the effort to inculturate the Gospel, to say nothing of emphasising the role of Africa in the salvation history of humanity. If Africa is to be rehabilitated in its historical role, if African Christians are to develop their confidence as citizens of a continent where Christianity has a future, there is thorough-going work to be done. African theologians must stop begging for European books which have been written for empty pulpits, and by authors most of whom no longer set foot in a church. If African theologians are to make the commitment today to invest themselves in the evangelisation of their continent, to make their contribution to universal theology, and to comprehend their history which still needs to be rewritten, then they need to get to work.

But this is where the shoe pinches. Theological education in Africa is at a crossroads, as the reflections of Antoine Babe, Poucota and others show. A link needs to be established between academic rigour and the requirements of the churches. The problem has been discussed in a number of forums, where it was demonstrated that the dearth of research and publications on the part of the academic personnel of our institutions makes them seem to lack credibility at the level of national and international scholarship. Some African theologians defend themselves with two arguments: first, that they are so tied down by their work as pastors and church leaders that they have no time for research, and secondly, that these institutions were created by the churches, and are under their direction, for the purpose of training pastors, not researchers. For some, such as Dr. Emmanuel Bissu who teaches in one of the “mountain institutes”, the material conditions are certainly difficult and the pastoral obligations are there. But sometimes, for some, all this becomes an excuse for intellectual laziness.

d. *Ostracism in the pastorate*

Ostracism in the training institutions follows the African pastor or theologian into the performance of his or her ministry. This brings us back to two other points made by the student group - the absence of dialogue between theologians and the people of God in the churches, and the lack of culture in general. Apart from occasional private encounters, African theologians and church leaders do not communicate or dialogue with one another at the denominational level, and even less so between different denominations. This lack of communication and dialogue can also be observed at the local level, where many think their pastor very seldom listens to his congregation.

If this is the case, the pastor speaks only for himself, autonomously, neither knowing nor sharing with others the problems of the society. Examples are given from the Sahel region, where the different countries share the problems of the predominance of Islam and of desertification. For Pierre Thiam in Senegal and Matthieu Bouba in northern Cameroon, in a 90% Islamic environment, the challenge is to communicate without offending the other. And in this region, environmental issues become matters of life and death in view of serious desertification. But very few of the churches have developed appropriate forms of pastoral ministry.

Viateur Ndikumana and Lévi Ngangoura have developed a similar analysis with regard to the Great Lakes region. In this region of soaring population increases, of farmers and herdsmen, people live and breathe the conflicts inflamed by ethnic manipulation, and are ravaged by AIDS. Under these conditions, educating Christians who are not such only in name, nor only on Sundays, calls for investment in a new vision of Christianity - a Christianity which goes beyond what the Cameroonian theologian Jean-Marc Ela calls *parrotting (psittacisme)*. It means reformulating the catechism in the light of a theology accomplished enough to meet the challenges of human rights, economic and political justice, dialogue between the different sectors of the society, and of fundamental education for the people of God.

This absence of dialogue between pastors and the society would be related to another problem which has been identified, the general lack of culture. M. Bouba feels that church leaders are being trained at a low level. In most cases, the church trains catechism teachers or evangelists who then become pastors. At best, some are sent to a school or institute of theology where the fundamentals of the instruction being given are lacking, and thus do not have their minds opened to the world.

e. *Financial dependency*

A university eats up a lot of money, and the African churches do not have such funds. Financial dependency is common to almost all these institutions - their funding comes essentially from abroad. When the ecumenical faculties of theology were begun, at Yaoundé, Kinshasa or Butare, the intention was both to encourage church unity and to lighten the financial burden on the partners who are the same in almost all cases, and who can be counted on the fingers of one hand. But the resurgence of denominationalism means that, where these partners were expecting to fund two or three doctorates in Old Testament, they are now paying for 15. Where the intention was to equip a library with 50,000 volumes, to form a decent basis for university research, this is now needed ten times over; where the intention was to equip a room with 10 computers, so that teachers might type their course notes and research papers, and students their theses, 150 are now needed, and so on.

There is a link between denominationalism and financial dependency. The ecumenical partners who give financial support to the churches are almost always the same ones. In view of the dissipation of energies and of funding, on the strength of the margin of influence which they have, they should initiate discussion with an eye to persuading the churches to build their educational institutions together.

**The academic and cultural level in the theological institutions.
Let's keep trying!**

When the Protestant Faculty of Theology at Yaoundé opened its doors on Djoungolo Hill in 1961, it represented a hope not only for the churches, but also for the nation. As an institution of higher education it preceded by two years the founding of the University of Cameroon at Yaoundé in 1964. The hope thus offered to African nations was expressed in the concern shown by the political authorities in Cameroon; first of all, it was the late President of the Republic, Ahmadou Ahidjo, a Muslim, who presided at the inaugural ceremony.

Despite inertia at the beginning and limited resources, the Protestant Faculty of Theology at Yaoundé can claim credit for having educated an increasing number of leaders for the churches of predominantly French-speaking Africa. Thus, before doctoral degree programmes were introduced at Yaoundé and Kinshasa, a number of graduates of Yaoundé successfully continued their studies at prestigious universities in Europe and America. The heads of quite a few churches hold degrees from Yaoundé, for example in Ivory Coast, Benin, Togo, Rwanda, Cameroon, Congo Brazzaville, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and the Central African Republic.

Having said this, and in recognition of the efforts it represents, the crying need for highly qualified personnel only increases more and more, due to the exponential growth in the number of Christians. Furthermore, many observers, including the churches themselves, have certainly reproached the training institutions with providing graduates whose knowledge is not relevant to the real needs of the church today.

Many observers wish that the training institutions, especially the ecumenical ones, would move faster towards creating structures for themselves which are appropriate to the direction in which the church is growing in Africa. For the moment, these institutions have quite a few handicaps to overcome. First of all, the quality of training they provide does not come up to the needs of all sectors of the society. The cultural and intellectual level of African peoples has risen, even though enormous disparities must be acknowledged, but the quality of education provided has remained tied to books, and very little progress has been made beyond the curricula which were established when the schools were set up, right after the churches gained their independence.

If, on the other hand, the churches think that the faculties of theology are training intellectuals much more than they are training pastors and ministers for the community - which is not true - it can be easily demonstrated that it is rather the disparity between the courses of study offered and the object and methods of study, which does not help future church leaders to understand new complexes of problems which are far different from those of 1960. We are continuing to be faced with the consequences of a history of suffering, of denials of dignity and humanity, of slavery, colonization and neo-colonization; with the problems of cultural identity in relation to the Gospel, with poverty and hunger, debt, corruption, the squandering of resources by an irresponsible bourgeoisie, globalisation, pandemics such as AIDS... which have brought to their knees the peoples of the richest continent on the planet. All this cannot fail to have importance for the church, which should remember that the Christian faith teaches substantially that God protects the oppressed, the poor and those who long for, and work for, peace and justice. Thus it is no exaggeration to say we are in need of a bridge between the classical disciplines and teaching and all these challenges of the African continent.

Furthermore, in the past twenty years certain Protestant churches have launched new university projects in certain countries - in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in Kenya, Zimbabwe, Madagascar, Rwanda, Cameroon and Ivory Coast. Some have taken concrete shape, others not yet.

In Cameroon, some laypersons in the church thought through a set of statutes for a new Protestant University. But while their idea received no solid support from church leaders and was left to moulder in the back of a drawer, the Catholic Church - though it arrived in the country half a century after the Protestants - had begun to carry out its plan to found universities throughout Africa. Thus there is a Central African Catholic University in Yaoundé, with two campuses at Nkol Bison and Ekounou, with faculties of, among others, theology, philosophy and canon law. This university will soon open other campuses at Point Noire and Bangui. There is another such university at Abidjan, another in Madagascar, and another in East Africa.

In order for Christians to impress their particular ethic on the society, the Protestant churches must be willing to put their resources together and to create ecumenical bodies which can provide ethical, political and moral reference points. The church can do this if it tries to overcome its divisions. Recruiting students and teachers to live together in a multi-confessional university will gradually destroy the demon of denominationalism.

CLE Publishers: a catalyst for theological thinking

The history of the Centre for Evangelical Literature - CLE Publishers - begins with the initiatives which were undertaken right after African countries became independent, notably at the Kitwe Conference in Zambia in 1961, which established some strategies for production and dissemination of Christian literature. Thus it was set up as the French-speaking equivalent of the English-speaking churches' Ecumenical Centre at Mindolo, Zambia. Following its constitutive assembly at Yaoundé, 8-12 October 1962, the Centre for Evangelical Literature, CLE Publishers, officially began operations on 1st January 1963. CLE Publishers belongs to the churches in Africa generally, through the All-Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), which is a member of CLE, and to certain French-speaking Protestant churches in particular. Of these the most active are the Methodist Church of Ivory Coast, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Togo, the Methodist Church of Benin, the Evangelical Church of Cameroon, the Lutheran Church of Cameroon, the Presbyterian Church of Cameroon, the Federation of Evangelical Churches and Missions of Cameroon, the Evangelical Church of the Congo, the Church of Christ in the Congo, the Protestant Council of Rwanda and the Bible Societies of Cameroon and the Congo. These institutions administer CLE Publishers through a general assembly and an administrative council, which meet once a year and appoint a director for CLE.

To date, CLE Publishers have a list of more than 500 publications covering different genres and disciplines: religion, theology and Christian literature, philosophy, novels, stories and short stories, plays, essays, studies, poetry etc. To continue to invite Africans and others to deal with the real problems of the continent under a genuinely Christian ethic, CLE Publishers recently expanded the number of its collections to increase its theological publishing capacity.

Collection of literature for children and youth

This collection, entitled "Key to the Future" and intended for children and youth, was started in 1997. Under our action plan for 2000-2004 we publish at least five new titles a year. We want to enable both adults and young people who are talented writers to go beyond stories of hares and tortoises and encourage African children to be more creative and inventive and to master science, mathematics, the environment and outer space. There are also works on education and on the character of children, fables, short stories, novels, comic books, ABCs, albums...

“Southern Theological Reflections”

This collection, started in 1999, gives us the opportunity to publish four books a year in English and French, of 50,000 words or less. The authors are Protestant and Catholic, evangelical or ecumenical, and we seek a balance between women and men. The books are sold at a modest price - 4 Euros in Africa, 12-15 Euros in Europe - in order to promote wide distribution. The collection has a steering committee of several seasoned theologians. Since most eminent African theologians are much better known in Europe and America than in their own native lands, the collection aims, by means of an accessible price, to disseminate the theological thinking of African authors first on their ancestral soil, then in the rest of the world. Examples of recently published titles are *Christians and Churches of Africa. Envisioning the Future. Salvation in Christ and the Building of a new African society*, by Kä Mana; *Jesus in Africa. The Christian Gospel in African History and Experience*, by Kwame Bediako of Ghana; *Beads and Strands. Reflections of an African Woman on Christianity in Africa*, by Mercy Oduyoye of Ghana and Nigeria; *African Catholicism in Transition. The models for a Church for a new Century*, by Laurenti Magesa of Tanzania. These works are all published in both French and English.

Academic reference books

Launched in 2001, this collection has three objectives. Its purpose is primarily to encourage African theologians to participate in research and the creation of knowledge in the area of social and religious studies. A second obligation arises from this: to participate in building Christian theology and thinking. And finally, we would like to meet the need for more academic reference books, which are in short supply in the fields of teaching of theological disciplines and social sciences in French-speaking Africa. The collection is in a position to bring out five titles per year in the various theological disciplines, on condition that our theologians - who have been made sufficiently aware of this through multiple contacts and correspondence - submit manuscripts to us. For 2001 we are planning to publish five volumes in the fields of exegesis, theology and hermeneutics of the New Testament; the world, the church and the Kingdom of God; anthropology and ecclesiology; and the integration of communication into theological education in Africa. At their September 2001 meeting in Yaoundé, the French-speaking theologians agreed an action plan, under which they will hold a workshop to encourage the production of books every year at one of the theological institutions, such as Porto Novo or Yaoundé.

Other theological publications

In seeking intellectual creativity among African theologians, we have published quite a few books (in French) which are indispensable tools for teaching theology: *The Holy Spirit Tests the Spirits*⁷ by Masamba ma Mpolo, Congo-Zaïre; *The Hidden Wisdom of God: a Justification of the Christian Faith* by Bame Bame; *Reforming Worship, a Necessity for Churches in Africa* by Célestin Kiki; *Christianity in Search of an Identity in Africa* by Jean-Paul Messina; *A Brief History of the Biblical Canons* by Samuel Ebo; *The New Evangelisation in Africa* by Kä Mana, published jointly with Karthala; *The New Theology of African Women* by Hélène Yinda and Kä Mana; and the *Ecumenical Dictionary of Missiology*, a collective work published jointly with Cerf and Labor et Fides. In the coming months we will be publishing an *Introduction to the New Testament* by Emmanuel Bissu and a commentary on the Ten Commandments by Simon Dossou, and we are expecting more manuscripts promised by the theologians at their September 2001 meeting at Yaoundé.

⁷ An original psychoanalytical and pastoral approach to a new phenomenon in the activities of sects, namely dreams and mystical marriages which terrify married women at night.

African witnesses to the Gospel

With this collection, launched in 2001, CLE Publishers plans to offer readers and Christians a series of memoirs and testimonies on important pioneers of the Gospel in Africa.- persons whose lives, accomplishments and stories are worth telling. This will include reconstituting the chain of events which accompanied each of these persons on his or her unique path, their commitment, their lives and influence, their vocation and their mission to instruct and educate the people of God in Africa. These publications of memoirs and monographs on people who were “pioneers of the Gospel in Africa”, even though their names do not appear in the major bibliographies and encyclopaedias on missions, give Africans the opportunity to write the story of their own conversions and baptisms and to say, independently of any influence, what they want to do as believers in Jesus Christ.

Literature for spiritual edification

Our plan for 2000-2004 identifies some areas in which the ministry of CLE Publications can complement that of the churches in respect of Christian and theological literature. These are:

- aids for worship and prayer (hymnals, catechisms, liturgies, prayer books)
- various topics in education and Christian ethics

We developed a publication plan for each member church during our General Assembly at Douala in January 2001. But here, as in the other collections, success depends on the response of theologians and Christians, on their decision to galvanise the necessary energies to bring the spiritual nourishment for normal growth to the conscience and cultures of their peoples. Books such as *Prayer, Fasting and Offering* by Simon Njami-Nwandi and *Step by Step* by Lucette Woungly-Massaga are examples. We await manuscripts from other African theologians, churches and Christians.

Book publishing in French-speaking Africa: a challenge

Publishing houses in sub-Saharan Africa run into mountains of problems. The first which should be mentioned is the weakness, or the lack altogether, of structures and institutions which could promote book publishing. Within the book publishing trade which has a history of several centuries, African publishing houses are young and not well equipped with trained personnel who could bring forth a generation capable of competitive book production, and could campaign for adoption of real policies for publishing, printing and distribution. It had been hoped that the problem could be gradually resolved when schools of journalism were set up, including some, such as ESSTIC at Yaoundé, which offer courses in publishing. But this failed to take into account the vagaries of the African educational system: the lack of qualified teachers and adequate equipment, and especially of an environment for book publishing and printing which allows the theory to be put into practice.

The second problem is the absence of distribution systems, aggravated by competition from European and North American books. We have in fact on one hand multinational groups in the North which possess colossal financial resources and centuries of experience, both in the trade and in lobbying on its behalf. On the other hand there are multinational groups which cover the African market and whose ambition is to keep their monopoly over it. In addition to their enormous budgets resulting from mergers or buying out other publishing and news firms, these groups receive subsidies from their countries' ministries of co-operation and culture, and all sorts of exemptions and guarantees for the export and marketing of books. The most striking case is that of the “New Horizons” books which are distributed by the US embassies in French-speaking

countries, especially targeting future decision-makers, since they are essentially distributed to university students and management-level business personnel at an unbeatable price - in general, the equivalent of two or three US dollars. Once I asked the director of New Horizons, Mr. Anderson, who was visiting me, whether CLE Publishers could co-publish these books with New Horizons, and he replied with a categorical No. And to explain his No, he added, "We're selling American ideas, that's all."

Some observers, including Pastor Ype Schaaf, founder of CLE publishers and of the Bible Society of Cameroon, have posed the very questionable hypothesis that Africans are story-tellers but are not great readers⁸. Thus for him books should be as thin as possible, printed very legibly, and the contents should be concrete rather than abstract; note that this would mean eliminating philosophical and theoretical discussions and concentrating on practical matters.

It seems to me that the real place to look is at the third problem, which is the mother of all problems: the cultural struggle which the South still has to win. Over against the publishers and distributors of the North, who don't like the ideas coming from the South and make the quality of publication an excuse not to buy them, our States do not have policies on culture. We have young firms which publish their books with local printers, whose imported materials in turn are heavily subject to tax and customs regulations, the same as for commercial products. Thus to export a book produced in Africa becomes an illusion, in the absence of incentive policies. For some public figures in French-speaking countries, policies on books are limited to signing the declaration of Florence, which is essentially an invitation to liberalise and lift tariffs on books made in the North and exported to the countries of the South. If this convention is applied, it favours the strongly subsidised books imported from the North. Far from promoting the book industry in countries of the South, the convention destroys them by subjecting them to unequal combat. On the other hand, the Nairobi Convention on lifting tariffs on the materials for book manufacture has not yet been ratified by the states of the South to increase the opportunities for book manufacturing in Africa. Given the difficult socio-economic conditions under which Africans live, and given the lack of education which could encourage such attitudes as a love of books and giving books priority as a necessity of life, independent African publishing houses are obliged to struggle in order to survive, which they do by producing books for the general public.

But the problems do not stop there. Books are produced in foreign languages, French, English, Portuguese, Spanish, which are rarely spoken by more than 10% of the population of our countries. In view of this situation, we cannot aspire to any kind of development if we are not capable of producing and disseminating knowledge. If Africans are really to master their own destinies, those in power should establish coherent policies and create structures and networks for financing and distribution of books (not forgetting insurance and export) which are neither showcases for folklore nor collections of speeches made by "founding presidents", but real vehicles for African thinking.

French-speaking and "French" suppliers of the market

If the publishers in the North did not have enormous public subsidies, or if they were subjected, like those in the South, to all sorts of red tape and harassment in exporting books, their prices would be prohibitive, or at least such that African-produced books could compete with them. To get around the difficulty, certain publishers who want to corner the African market have begun producing books, written mostly by Africans or specialists on Africa, on topics specific to our continent and sold at special prices. Le Seuil, one of the major Christian publishers in France who

⁸ Bible, Mission and Written Literature, CLE 2001.

in the past published books by Protestants, has markedly diminished its titles on Africa due to economic restrictions. The Protestant publisher Labor et Fides in Switzerland has had similar problems. On the Catholic side, the Dominican publisher Cerf is equally interested in books by Protestants. The Taizé Community also has published books written by the brothers and distributed widely in France, Switzerland and Africa through different firms. The Catholics have two types of structure in Africa - first, the Paulist bookshops and publishers in several countries which make an effort to publish and distribute Christian literature, and second, the dioceses where missionaries are active which help congregations provide Catholic Christian literature in their native land. The fact remains that the religious orders, especially the Paulists, serve the orthodox line from Rome, since they publish material which has received the imprimatur of its Bishop. African theologians who have chosen to speak with a free and independent voice have to look for a publisher outside their continent.

The French, Swiss and Canadian evangelicals have a number of small publishing houses working in Africa. Moreover, the big English and American evangelical and Bible literary agencies are active in France and in some French-speaking African countries, especially the Scripture Union and the Christian Literature Crusade (CLC). With such a panorama of publishers and distributors, Christian literature in French coming from Europe and Canada is disseminated by different methods, often competing and rivalrous ones. Thus one finds "missionary" groups, especially Americans, distributing free literature in several countries, especially in the Sahel region. This tends to work against a book culture, to the degree that few pastors, theology students or evangelists, badly paid as they are, will try to overcome the handicaps of these divisions to invest in setting up a bookshop or library⁹.

With regard to general literature, two French publishers, Karthala and Harmattan, take a special interest in Africa. Besides general literature they also publish theological and mission study books written by people from the South and specialists in problems of the South. This is often done in collaboration with missionary congregations. But the lucky authors who are chosen are generally people living in the North.

Palliative measures

Two initiatives are under way in France to fill the need for books in the libraries of African faculties and schools of theology. A French former teacher of theology in Cameroon, Daniel Bach, has set up a Centre for French-language Christian literature (CLCF) at Guebwiller in Alsace, to buy theological books at bargain prices and distribute them to teachers, theologians, pastors and students to enable each to have a small personal library. Bach is in contact with some forty theological institutions to which he sends books. Some European publishers and mission societies help in financing his work. In 1999 he was able to distribute 2700 theological books.

Another structure is "Excelsis", started by Jan Dijkman; it has a warehouse at Begude de Mazenc in the Drome, in the south of France, and distributes books to Christian bookshops, both evangelical and general, in France and other countries at commercial discounts. It also has an evangelical publishing house. Excelsis calculates the same prices for Africa as for Europe, but most of the books are sent as gifts paid for by missions in the West, or through the Excelsis Foundation's contacts in France, the United States and the Netherlands who subsidise the sending of Christian books to Africa.

"Livr'Afrique" (Afri-Book) is a cooperative effort of a number of evangelical publishers in France to provide books to Africa at low prices. Its director, Idris Davies, had the idea that when a Christian book is printed in France or Switzerland, 1000 extra copies could be printed to be sent to Africa at a third of the commercial price. Livr'Afrique has warehouses at Abidjan in Ivory Coast,

⁹ The Bible societies are a somewhat different model, since they demand that Christians participate in order to acquire a Bible.

at Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso, at Ndjamena in Chad, at Douala and Yaoundé in Cameroon, and at Lomé in Togo.

Unfortunately we have to agree to and accept the ideal that, based on experience, it is much easier to distribute books to French-speaking Africa by sending them from France. Thus Livr'Afrique has its central depot at Loriol, near Montelimar in the Drome.

Time to invest ourselves

Despite all that these different structures can do to help the faculties and schools of theology, the same answer remains to the problem of publishing and development of libraries by Africans themselves. The fear is real that having a sort of "Father Christmas" for theologians, faculties and seminaries inhibits their creativity and even offends against the mission to which these institutions should be calling African publishers. If African theological leaders do not see the gifts of books as a challenge to be taken up in the short term, and do not have an ardent desire to make their own original contribution to the whole of Christian theology, they have had their task stolen away from them. In a way, these "friends of Africa" have simply reinstated new forms of colonialism and cultural imperialism. So the appeals of African publishers for the financing and creation of distribution networks for their books deserve attention from theologians, African Christians and their missionary partners.

In almost all these institutions, research and publication is taboo. The lack of financial means is an excuse for not even talking about it. For our friends who have taken part in this reflection on theological education, crucial support from ecumenical partners would be welcome; it would consist in helping Africans to "read our own home-grown theology, by enabling the publication of the theological thought of the South and by planning exchanges of ideas". Ecumenical partners could help to set up education commissions qualified to accredit diplomas, courses of study and research projects. Partners could also finance sabbatical leaves, planned by universities to allow time for scholars to publish as a condition of academic advancement.

The Bible affirms that times of renewal always follow major crises. This is the message that we must proclaim in Africa, to banish the prophecies of doom. We should work night and day for this time of rebirth, awakening the creative genius of Africans in our villages, our theological institutions, our primary schools and each of our faith communities.

The vocation of African Reconstruction theology has been articulated by the Kenyan theologian Jesse Mugambi, who believes that the myth of Africa as the dark continent, of its poverty and suffering, its conflicts and famines, should be replaced by a myth of Africa as a continent of the future, of the future of Christianity - the continent where the sun is rising, the continent which can nourish its children. This analysis is supported by the works of a whole new generation of African theologians who, following in the footsteps of Kagame, Mbiti, Sawyer, Idohu, Mulago, Malula, Burgess Carr and John Gatu, Desmond Tutu or Allan Boesak, are right in believing that the time has come for the moral, social, economic, cultural and political reconstruction of Africa. The political environment is becoming more and more favourable¹⁰. African theologians should consider themselves called upon in the name of the honour, the dignity and the salvation of our continent.

¹⁰ Cf. the NEPAD initiative launched by a number of African heads of state.

**THE STATE OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA:
ISSUES AND CONCERNS**

Paul H. Gundani, Madipoane Masenya, Tinyiko S. Maluleke, Isabel Phiri

Introduction

The Southern African context is socially, politically, racially, religiously and economically diverse and complex, as such, it does not lend itself to easy characterisation. It is therefore not a simple task to come up with a comprehensive paper on theological education in the region. What we can only do is to give a bird's eye-view of the situation in theological education in the region, without necessarily claiming to offer definitive statements. Where necessary we give specific examples so that the local context is not overshadowed and blurred by the universal picture.

Foreign Theologies in Africa

The history of theological education in the region has basically been characterised by foreignness, that is, foreign theological content, methodology, and languages. In the case of South Africa, however, there are more foreign theological teachers than there are in other countries in the Southern African region. Theological education in the region has been captive to the North Atlantic world view, and is showing little signs of struggle out of this form of oppression. The Southern African region has become a willing recipient of donations from the North Atlantic. No wonder that the products of these theological institutions bear the western brand and have become strangers to the African context (cf. also Poerwowidagdo 1995: 59). This is ironic in a field like theology, an enterprise that involves the human encounter with, and reflection of, the Supreme source. If Christian theology is basically concerned with God in the situation of a human being and the quest for God in the human situation (de Gruchy: 1996), it therefore has to be offered in a language, context and content that makes sense not only to the student of theology, but also to the faithful whom he/she is meant to serve after graduating.

One main concern with theological training is whether the historical-critical method is still worthwhile for an African student of the Bible. Our concern is that the method is outdated and useless if it results in an ivory tower product far removed from the daily needs of the African people. It is for a good reason that M. Masenya, in her attempt to capture the views of many grassroots African-South African Bible readers, has argued:

Therefore return the Bible to me I pray
Allow my context to interact with my Bible reading
I have less interest in ivory-tower theologies and hermeneutics
Can I afford that luxury?
Neither do I have interest in theories and concepts!
Isn't my thirst for a praxiological commitment to redress poverty, the oppressive
status of women and blacks?
I couldn't care more about the hidden meaning in the narrative....(2000:21)

We are therefore suggesting that theological education in Southern Africa, and particularly in South Africa, should adopt a deliberate and conscious account of the socio-economic, cultural, political and spiritual contexts of the black majority with the aim of transforming these contexts into worthy habitable spaces. The changes that Southern Africa is undergoing demand theologies that are transforming. Authentic Africanization is not an option but an imperative in a changing Southern Africa. A radical Africanization of theology is an imperative for Southern Africa. An agenda for such a process is partially formulated by Maluleke who argues that :

Africanization is not merely a change of form, it is a change of content, method, objective and vision so that theological education, religious and church praxis contributes to and facilitates the total liberation of the poorest of the poor of Africa. Therefore it is not how classical Christological doctrinal assertions can be presented in African forms but also how African Christians are shaping and can reshape theology. It is not enough to look at what the Bible has, and can do for Africa; we must also begin to look at what Africa can do to the Bible. (2000:16)

The report on the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) Christian Theological and Tertiary Institutions Consultation in Africa which met at Naro Muru underscores the need for Africa to develop contextual models that speak to, and interrogate the African context. In a communiqué issued at Naro Muru, the participants “ recognised that in many respects the pattern and context of theological education in Africa are based on models imported from the West which do not take sufficient account of the distinctive needs of church and society in contemporary Africa....” (2000:61) Subsequently, a CATI policy statement called for the transformation of theological curricula in order that it addresses “... burning issues affecting African people such as: poverty, diseases especially HIV/AIDS, environment, gender, justice, human rights, reconciliation, conflict resolution and peacemaking.” (2002:2) This list is far from exhaustive as there is need also to take full cognisance of emerging African-South African theologies from the Pentecostal, Charismatic and AIC churches. (cf. Pobe1997: 159). It is sobering to realise that more and more African-South African people are leaving the historical churches for these new spiritual homes. This situation alone puts pressure on main-line churches, theologians and theological institutions to become more contextual in their sermons and theological curricula. It is clear that context-oriented theological education is no longer a luxury for theologians but also an imperative for ministers. To this end we applaud and commend organisations such as the National Initiative for the Contextualization of Theological Education (NICTE) and the Church Leadership Trust (CCLT) for their commitment to contextualise theological education in South Africa (cf. 2000:1-3,38).

The question of Africanization of theology can never be complete without the inclusion of African Traditional Religions in the curriculum offered by theological institutions in Southern Africa. We have observed that while African religions constitute key courses in theological colleges in Southern Africa, South African theological institutions have generally sidelined them. Empirical studies under way do show, however, that African-South Africans continue to operate within the African religious world view in spite of their conversion to one or other of the Abrahamic religions (cf. ongoing research by Isabel Phiri undertaken for the Oral History project at the University of Natal). Introducing African traditional religions in theological curricula in South African theological institutions will go a long way towards equipping ministers with skills to assist their members to manage the spiritual context in which Christianity is incarnated.

A Theology of Religions

Apart from the preponderant African religious world view that Christianity faces, there are diverse religions thriving in Southern Africa, more so in South Africa. Our experiences and investigations reveal that Christian churches are suspicious of other religions, be they Abrahamic or not. Whilst inter-faith dialogue is carried out at Non-Governmental and summit levels, e.g. Parliament of Religions, World Conference of Religions for Peace (WCRP), the United Religions Initiative (URI), we note with regret that little is happening in the churches and theological institutions in Southern Africa towards the articulation of a theology of religions and the formulation of a framework for inter-religious dialogue and collaboration.

The phenomenological approach and the history/science of religion approach to the study of religions which religious studies departments/faculties offer, should be considered as a mere first stage towards the appreciation of other religions. Churches and theological institutions and /seminaries should however consider being involved in a more interactive process of inter-religious dialogue and praxis. To behave as if the Christian's neighbour (who could well be a Hindu) will just disappear from the face of the earth because we so wish is mere wishful thinking. The churches and theological institutions should stop the practice of burying their heads in the sand like the proverbial ostrich: They should instead, reflect on their religious contexts and come up with theologies that promote peace, religious co-existence, freedom of conscience and respect for diversity.

An open mind which does not only affirm difference and diversity, but also leaves room for inter-religious dialogue and collaboration is an absolute necessity in a multi-religious context that Southern Africa has become. Ministers who are equipped with knowledge and skills of inter-religious dialogue and collaboration can insulate their flock against religious fundamentalism or encapsulation. Southern Africa is better off without the religious conflict that has riven communities in regions such as the Middle East and Asia. Such conflicts can only divert our energies from more pressing issues like poverty, non-literacy, HIV/AIDS to name but three. Equally, Southern Africa is better off with the beauty epitomised in our religious diversity. Our spiritual creativity thrives better in a context of religious diversity and is stifled by religious uniformity and complacency. The Southern African region is yet to fully recover from the effects of religious dogmatism and fundamentalism that typified apartheid theology.

Ecumenical Studies

The scandal of denominationalism continues to plague African Christianity without abating. The ecumenical gains of the twentieth century, which the ecumenical world celebrated with hope in Harare in 1998, are surely threatened by the unprecedented rise of the spirit of competition and conflict among the African churches. In South Africa the ecumenical movement is in a state of malaise. What still remains are incoherent projects, campaigns and programmes. As the nation faces national catastrophes, e.g. the HIV/AIDS crisis, poverty, unemployment, etc. the ecumenical movement is responding to it in the most fragmented manner.

A new era seems to have emerged where denominational theological schools and universities are glorified and inter-denominational theological institutions are frowned upon. This spirit of competition has become more manifest in countries like Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Ghana and Zimbabwe. This "disease" has already manifested in South Africa where, an inter-denominational theological institution of renown, the Federal Seminary in Natal (FEDSEM) is a proven casualty. Founded during the apartheid era, FEDSEM became a powerhouse of progressive theology and a renowned centre for ministerial formation. However, as soon as Apartheid collapsed, the

ecumenical vision that was behind FEDSEM also took a nosedive and crashed on its back. In its place were born multiple denominationally-based confessional seminaries, which unlike FEDSEM, had little ecumenical praxis. Since the collapse of FEDSEM, many theological institutions have closed

down with those that continue surviving doing so only by the skins of their teeth. Meanwhile, the new denominational theological institutions founded after the demise of FEDSEM are already facing financial and other crises of their own. The more fundamental issue however, is that the fragmentation that followed affected both the theological curricula and content negatively. The demise of FEDSEM, in turn signalled the demise of an ecumenically managed ministerial training programme that allowed for a cost-effective utilisation of human, capital and technological resources in a country where economic resources were monopolised by a select few. We can only ask whether the churches that pulled out of FEDSEM have adequate resources to buy properties only for use by their students. Do they have enough money to set up viable libraries and to link them to cyberspace? Can they employ qualified, well-paid staff? In our view, the South African churches that belong to the World Council of Churches need to revisit their understanding, efficacy and practice of ecumenism. They need to reflect on its relevance in ministerial training.

Theological Consortiums

Whilst it is a foregone reality that FEDSEM is dead and that it has been replaced by many theological institutions, there is still hope to resurrect the ecumenical spirit through the setting up of theological consortiums to enhance the sharing of both human and material resources among churches. Theological consortiums have been successful in many cosmopolitan cities in Africa, Europe and the Americas. They allow for a more cost-effective utilisation of financial and human resources. They also create possibilities for savings to be channelled towards quality theological training. One area in theological training, which could get priority in terms of funding, is Information Technology (IT). Investment in information technology will add value to theological education in Africa in an unprecedented way. It will take theological enterprise to a higher threshold where both teacher and student can interface and interact with global theological trends. With sound theological methodologies, both teacher and student will become better grounded in their local contexts without fear of being carried along whichever direction the global wind blow.

Within these theological consortiums, there is an urgent need to re-introduce ecumenical studies within curricula. This is one of the most effective ways of re-instilling unity among Christians. Ecumenism is an evangelical imperative which theological seminaries cannot forego without serious consequences for Christianity in Africa. Apart from courses on ecumenism, there is also a need for the setting up of student and staff exchange programmes with ecumenical institutions of international renown like the Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation, Kitwe, Zambia and Ecumenical Institute of Bossey, Celigny, Switzerland.

Merging of Religious Studies and theological faculties

As a cost recovery process, many African universities have merged departments of Religious Studies with those of Theology. Lately, South African universities have been forced to close theological faculties because of a number of factors ranging from dwindling budgets for universities to shortage of students to enrol for theological courses. Academic theology is, to put it mildly, struggling along. There has been an exodus of students who used to take Biblical Studies as part of their teacher training programmes, as is still happening in other African countries. Counter-wise, academic theology has not found it easy to reinvent itself in the light of the changing situation.

Merging of departments/faculties of religious studies and theology can be a good idea in situations where enrolments are too low to make the teaching of theology and religious studies economically viable. Although the merging of departments of Religious and Theological studies went on course in state-run universities in most African countries, the South African scenario is still mired in controversy. The raging feud between Christian theology and Religious Studies has broken out into the open as the two fight for turf and favour in a dwindling market and a largely disinterested government. Meanwhile, the government has put processes and policies in place to promote the affirmation of previously disadvantaged groups. This has produced a series of cruel ironies. The few black people who are coming into the white religious and Christian studies are uncertain about their future, as is everyone else. Worse still, black Christians in general feel like they are being made to “pay” for the “sins” of hegemonic white apartheid Christianity whereas their form of Christianity was marginal and even subversive to apartheid.

There is another historical catch to the whole debate between Religious Studies and Christian Theology. For ages, the world has been informed that South Africa is a Christian country with a Christian population in the region of 80%. For generations, one religion received official academic status and support. This no longer makes much sense in the new dispensation ushered in by the 1994 democratic elections. The new South Africa belongs to all and sundry. This is true at least if one takes the 1996 constitution literally. Moreover, there is an ideology in the country, designed to back the constitutional provisions, that drums into South African citizens a new mind set that acknowledges diversity as a strength rather than a weakness. It is this new windfall that other religions are capitalising on and justifiably so. The religions that hitherto, were marginalized are demanding their stake within the academe, and are even boldly claiming that Christian theology should be shown the exit door because of its past “sins”. This is at the heart of the quarrel between Religious Studies and Theology in South Africa today. A closer look into the debate, however, reveals that the same old white males, who were at the centre of the scandal of Apartheid Christian theology, are now at both sides of the new debate. Both sides still claim a monopoly on expertise as well as the right to represent others. Furthermore there is no case to be made in their debates for peculiarly African forms of Christianity - a kind of subversive Christianity - which will not simply be tarred by the same brush as white Apartheid or western Christianity. Are such forms of Christianity not a different type of “religion” from traditional western and Apartheid Christianity?

In the South African environment, if the merging of theological and religious studies is planned properly, taking into account the concerns of all stakeholders, the churches will stand to benefit tremendously, considering their scarce financial resources for rounded ministerial training. What is most critical, however, is the methodology behind the merging process as well as the pedagogical and methodological underpinnings that inform the teaching of theology within the larger package of religious studies. South African theological institutions and departments of religious studies can learn from other African universities where theology has been taught as part of religious studies. Theology has benefited from such a pedagogical arrangement that she is certainly not the queen of sciences but an equal of all the rest of the subjects on offer. Thus she has learnt one or two lessons about the process of humility and kenosis, values that it could only understand in the abstract in an autonomous environment.

Theological Activism or Theological Atavism

It is true that many churches are not edified by the idea of sending their students of ministry to universities. Part of their fear is the secular approach of enquiry that universities thrive on. The other reason, however, is that Church leaders tend to make a simplistic dichotomy between spiritual and intellectual knowledge. Thus by preventing their students from going to universities, they think that they are saving them from the secular theories of the corrupt world. What they want to see of their ministers are innocent teachers who are as meek as a dove but not as shrewd as a serpent (Mt10:16). What they often forget however, is that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. In an attempt to popularise theology in an environment that is sceptical about its practical relevance, some theological institutions offer courses, which link theology to development,

mission, therapy and gender. Even in the heydays of Biblical studies, the growing and more popular approach has been one of jettisoning as much theology from the subject as possible. Many of those seeking to teach and study these fields tend to want to do so with the most minimal theological content. In other words, there is a growing tendency to produce “theological qualifications” with least theology in them. Where is this leading to? Are we not producing ministers who are theologically illiterate?

There is however positive trend in the region. This is illustrated by theological institutions that have become affiliated /associated with Departments of Religious/Theological Studies at universities. As a result of such links, more rounded African theologians have benefited churches a lot. This breed of theologians do not have an inferiority complex when they are thrown to the pastoral deep end and are expected to serve cosmopolitan parishes/circuits. By virtue of their training, which is based on an open enquiry, they can survive the vagaries and complexities of pastoral life.

Churches and Theological Institutions

There is need to create an environment where there is a realisation that churches faculties of Theology and Religious Studies as well as denominational seminaries need each other. A synergy between them can benefit ministers (both ordained and non-ordained) who go out to serve both the church and God’s world. Faculties of Theology and Religious Studies have been known for their contribution towards the welfare of churches through critical inquiry. The latter equips ministers and other theological students with skills not only to question the reality in both church and society, but also to search for answers, which benefit humanity. As South Africa faces dwindling financial resources in its attempts to redress the inequalities of the past, it would be mutually beneficial for churches and faculties of Theology and Religious Studies to develop a synergy that benefits the wider society.

The Death of Intellectual Rigour

The South African Theological scenario is a cause for concern in the whole Southern African region. The end of the cold war and the dismantling of Apartheid ushered in globalizing tendencies that have since affected theological education negatively. One of the consequences that globalization brought with it was the suspension of intellectual debate and rigour. In this situation, doing became more important than analysing and thinking. This fad has capitalised on the growing popularity of and the support from government for technological disciplines, natural and management sciences. Theological education has been caught into this way of non-intellectualism and ultra-activism. Perhaps the popularity of missionary and developmental studies in theology is linked to this new thinking. The question, what can I do after obtaining a theological qualification, has become an important one and so it should.

But if it is asked too early and answered too quickly, we may end up with people who are willing to go out and do, but who do not quite know what to do, how to do it and why.

Part of the problem in South Africa is the simplistic perception that Theology and Biblical Studies are Apartheid disciplines. Ironically, African languages and literature are facing a similar if not worse fate. Are they also Apartheid relics? What is clear is that the disciplines have got to re-invent themselves in the face of a new and hostile environment. It is time for a massive, full-time, all-angles marketing drive for the society to wake up and see their value in life. But before going out to the market, theological educators must first convince themselves that theological education is important and necessary for human consumption. Perhaps this challenge applies equally to the whole of the Southern African region.

An Urgent Call for a Gender Policy in Theological Institutions

Finally, we observe that while governments in the region have gender policies and have adopted quotas for women participation in decision-making at the highest levels of government, theological institutions do not have clear gender policies. They do not have mechanisms of redressing historical inequalities and cultural prejudices against the femalefolk. This is an indictment to Christianity in Africa in general, and to African hermeneutics, in particular. We thus call upon theological educators in Southern Africa to adopt liberative hermeneutical paradigms, which will enable Christians in the region to transcend the temporary benefits of patriarchal domination. We are aware, however, that theological educators alone can not succeed in this noble venture without the support of ordinary Christians and their leaders, ecumenical partners and donors and all people of good will. We particularly call upon the Ecumenical Theological Education (ETE) of the World Council of Churches (WCC), its partners and donors, to push for more women support for Theological/ministerial training. Without an optimum quantity of women theologians taking up strategic positions in theological institutions and in the churches, the clamour for gender equality will remain a pipe dream. This fact was underscored by Father S Mkhathshwa at the opening ceremony of the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies at UNISA in 1998. In his address to the Faculty, on the topic "The future of religion at South African tertiary institutions", Fr Mkhathshwa contented that he did not foresee the demise of theological education in institutions of higher learning. He however, called for an urgent process to transform theological education. In his view, theological education had to be Africanised and femininised. The latter point has been captured in several reports on theological education in Africa (cf. 2000b: 63; 2000a: 60). These documents have emphasised the urgency of including gender issues in theological curricula. Africanizing and feminising are absolute imperatives for theological education as Africa moves into the 21st century. It is no longer a matter of either Africanization or Feminisation: rather it is a matter of both Africanization and Feminisation. We reiterate the distinction between Africanizing and feminising theological education because if we only Africanize without consciously applying a gender analysis to our endeavours, we will end up with a theology dominated by androcentric aspects of both the African culture and the Christian religion. At the end of the day Africa would have regressed. Would that not be a case of "one step forward and three steps backward"? That would be a tragic moment in our quest for a life affirming and life giving, liberative theological education in Africa.

Conclusion

There are many challenges facing theological education in Southern Africa. Although some of them appear to be insurmountable and intractable it is important for all of us to keep focussed in our journey of hope. This is not the time to be distracted by diversionary strategies of our detractors. With the Lord's guidance we will surely overcome. We also need to pray for the spirit of discernment to enable us to cast away a lot of unnecessary baggage that we cling on because of social, cultural and religious conventions, and out of the need for self-preservation. Lest we forget: the Christ that we all serve was a friend of the poor, the downtrodden, the oppressed and the victims of all forms of marginalization. Theological education in Southern Africa cannot be relevant if it fails to inspire the churches in the region to address the needs of these "little ones".

In South Africa, where quite a lot, particularly in the realm of theological education still has to change, there cannot be any justification for maintaining white elephants or of treating anything, least of all Christian theology, as a sacred cow. The onus rests squarely on all those who care for theological education to justify its significance in a changing society, and why it should continue to benefit from state support if it does not have a clear place and role in the process of transformation. Theological education in South Africa and the whole of the Southern African region, should be transformative and pro-active, not inward-looking, backward-looking and reactionary. It is therefore the duty and responsibility of churches, theological educators and all other stakeholders to work towards the transformation of theological education in the region. With such a commitment, we will hopefully justify the place of theology in the educational realm.

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***MINISTERIAL TRAINING FOR THE 21st CENTURY:
A SOUTH AFRICAN CASE STUDY***

Klaus Nürnberger

Introduction

Let me begin with a statement of conviction. Theological education is not the pleasant pastime of religiously interested communities to cater for their spiritual needs. Our society is in crisis. There are discrepancies in life chances between the elites and the marginalised which cry to high heaven. A vast proportion of our population is unemployed. Informal settlements mushroom all over the urban areas. The AIDS pandemic produces untold suffering and hundreds of thousands of uncared-for orphans.

Traditional family structures and internalised norms of behaviour break down under the impact of urbanisation and the lure of enrichment and enjoyment promulgated by the advertising and entertainment industries. On the continent ruthless dictatorships and civil wars lead to millions of refugees. Africa has largely been written off by a globalising economy. There are severe rumblings on our borders. The miracle of our peaceful transition to a democratic society can still explode into chaos and anarchy if the tide of disillusionment and frustration cannot be stemmed in time.

Is all that none of our business as Christians? In Africa the Church of Christ is still in an enviable position. It has both functional grass roots communities and worldwide linkages. It still commands respect. It has a pool of dedicated leaders and followers. It has a vision of a renewed human existence and a transformed world. It can appeal to a transcendent power which it believes is committed to the eradication of evil and the renewal of humanity.

However, when one looks at what actually happens in congregations that gather on Sundays, one is tempted to despair. What kind of impact do Christians really have? Which kinds of people are actually present? Which problems are actually addressed? To me it seems that the basic problem of the Church is a truncated concept of salvation. It is spiritualistic rather than holistic, moralistic rather than transformative, private rather than public, backward-looking rather than forward-looking, authoritarian rather than empowering, static rather than dynamic, boring rather than inspiring.

That is the context in which any reflection on the training of ministers should be seen. Can we really make a difference when we train our future leaders?

Historical background

Five Lutheran mission agencies worked in South Africa (Berlin, Hermannsburg, Norwegian, Swedish and American). Their work led to four regional Lutheran churches which in 1975 merged into the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA). This church inherited two seminaries, Umphumulo north of Stanger in KwaZulu-Natal and Marang near Rustenburg. Both operated at diploma level.

It soon became apparent that the Church could not afford two institutions, but the choice between them was difficult. Dignified histories and diocesan rivalries made themselves felt. Umphumulo had abundant capacity, Marang was located more centrally. After years of uncertainty, it was decided to build up Marang and close down Umphumulo.

When the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) was asked to raise funds for Marang, it sent a delegation to investigate. The latter suggested that Marang too was not an ideal location. It also felt that a vision was needed for the future training of all Lutherans (and Moravians) in Southern Africa.

In the mean time the small white Lutheran Church, which had come about through migration from Germany (UELCSA), had begun training their pastors at the University of Natal. In time ELCSA joined this venture to cater for graduate level studies. Generous support from the Lutheran World Federation made it possible to lay the foundations of an ecumenical training centre which developed first into a Department, then into the School of Theology at the University of Natal.

The School was adopted by the Lutheran World Federation as a regional centre for post graduate scholarship candidates from the African continent. All students resided at the Lutheran House of Studies just across the street from the School.

But the problem of Marang and Umphumulo dragged on. In 1999 ELCSA, UELCSA and the Lutheran World Federation formed the Joint Committee for Lutheran Theological Training (JCLTT). It was a high powered committee, consisting of the Presiding Bishops, General Secretaries and/or Treasurers of both churches, a representative of the LWF, representatives from Umphumulo and Pietermaritzburg and the author as coordinator. Its mandate was to conduct an in-depth investigation into the future of Lutheran theological training as a whole.

The procedure of the JCLTT

The JCLTT began its work in the midst of a momentous transition. Apartheid had been overcome. Democratic principles were entrenched in the constitution. The South African society had become fiercely pluralistic. The churches had lost the privileges, relevance and influence they had enjoyed during the apartheid years. The future of Biblical Studies at schools was in the balance. Religious departments and theological faculties were threatened with closure. Churches experienced financial constraints more serious than ever before. Overseas funding began to dry up. Theological education went into a tail spin.

To lay foundations for the future in such a situation was the opportunity of a life time! It was realised that the recommendations we would come up with would determine the viability and relevance of the Church for decades to come. The JCLTT chose a revolutionary point of departure by asking the following sequence of questions:

- What is God's vision for Southern Africa as a whole?
- In view of this vision, what is the mission of the Church in general and the Lutheran Church in particular?
- What kinds of workers do the Churches need to carry out this mission?
- What kind of training do we need to empower these workers for their tasks?
- What kind of institution would be most likely to offer this training?

A more comprehensive concept of salvation

Let us pause to contemplate this approach. The point of departure was not how our dogmatic tradition could best be preserved, how the spiritual needs of our congregations could be catered for, how our rich liturgical heritage could be fostered. We certainly did not dispise or abandon these concerns. But they were transformed from ends to means. What mattered was God's redeeming love for a world in crisis. The truncated concept of salvation prevalent in the Protestant tradition was again located in the context the all-embracing vision found in the biblical witness.

In this vision sins are indeed forgiven, people indeed find their personal Saviour, peace with God is indeed restored. But peace with God is peace with the Source, Power and Destiny of reality as a

whole. Christ, God's representative, is proclaimed to be Lord over all powers which determine this world. according to the biblical witness, redemption includes political emancipation; economic sufficiency; equity in the distribution of life chances; healing of the sick; new meaning for the confused; direction for the leaderless; acceptance of the outcast; certainty for the anxious, authority for the timid. The Hebrew word for peace, shalom, means comprehensive wellbeing in fellowship with God, the Creator, Judge and Transformer of experienced reality as a whole.

Consultation with the parishes

However, it is no use dreaming up a "vision of God", if this is not the vision of the people on the ground. So the JCLTT decided to consult the parishes. A questionnaire, following the concentric approach sketched above, was sent to all parish councils, circuit councils, diocesan councils and church councils, ideally also to all lay organisations, of the two churches. The staff and the student body of the Seminary were invited to make their contribution independently. Initially some high ranking members of the Committee had to catch their breath. Are bishops not fathers who know best what their children need? Have church leaders not been chosen to represent their people? No, we wanted to hear what the people thought!

The scheme did not quite work out as planned. Authoritarian assumptions are still deeply ingrained in the structures of the church - making the church trail a secular society which has become democratic at least in principle. Many pastors, deans and bishops did not bother to respond, let alone consult their respective councils. The historical, attitudinal and infrastructural differences between the two churches also made themselves felt: 13% of ELCSA and 64% of UELCSA parish councils responded, yielding roughly the same number of responses from each church. The JCLTT decided that those who responded were likely to be the spiritual leaders and took the results seriously as they were. The emerging vision

The outcome was surprising in many ways. The respective histories of the two church bodies had hardly ever intersected; cultural differences had made interaction sporadic at best; apartheid had played its role. Yet the responses to the questionnaire converged to an astounding degree. We had underestimated the power with which the common tradition responded to current experiences of the society. It immediately placed the work of the JCLTT on a solid foundation. The results as such are quite revealing:

- While peace with God remains the prime concern, a caring community and social responsibility figure prominently in the understanding of God's mandate to the church.
- While the ordained ministry continues to play a pivotal role in the church's ministry, a strong emphasis is placed on the priesthood of all believers.
- While the proclamation of the Word of God (law and gospel) is understood to be the essential foundation of the church's activities, considerable emphasis is also placed on a living and loving community of believers, concern for the needs of its social environment, and the Christian responsibility of the laity in their secular contexts.
- There is an astounding commitment to mission, whether to foreign countries or to crisis areas and social issues within the country.
- While it is accepted that the pastor should play a role in this mission, a strong majority feels that all congregation members should be involved according to their gifts.
- While the majority in both church bodies opt for all-round pastors, there is considerable openness in ELCSA for the employment of youth workers, development experts, social workers and teachers. UELCSA respondents also welcome youth workers, but are less enthusiastic about the others.

- There is wide agreement that pastors should be trained at least at first degree level.
- All Lutheran students should be trained together, live together and worship together.
- There is also considerable openness for ecumenical cooperation in the training of ministers. Most respondents also believe that Lutherans can learn a lot from other church traditions.
- There is a high degree of consensus that training should be done through a seminary owned and controlled by the church but linked to a university. Again openness to ecumenical cooperation is apparent in this regard.
- While traditional theological subjects are emphasised in the proposed curriculum, secular subjects such as psychology, sociology and economics are deemed to be essential.

On the basis of these findings, the JCLTT was able to formulate its vision for the future training of Lutheran church workers:

- Common training for all Lutheran candidates,
- at University level,
- in an atmosphere of ecumenical enrichment and cooperation,
- without losing our Lutheran identity,
- aiming at a diversified ministry,
- enabling the church to respond creatively to the crises in the SA society,
- in a partnership which spans the African continent and overseas donors.

Long term sustainability

If the needs of the society are to be the point of departure, it was necessary to consider trends in the social fabric. Enormous migrations from impoverished rural areas to urban informal settlements changed the geographical landscape. Social needs changed from apartheid generated inequities to rapid changes in the racial composition of elites, the power of the unions, escalating unemployment, especially among the youth, deep poverty, homelessness, the AIDS pandemic, teenage pregnancies, corruption, and crime.

The frugality of the government and its attempt to redress glaring imbalances in educational allocations between various population groups led to changes in the funding of tertiary institutions. To free up money for primary sectors, the state reduced subsidies to universities drastically. The attempt to get the economy going, attract investments and create jobs led to an emphasis on outcomes, especially economically significant outcomes.

While the state continued to appeal to religious bodies to address the moral decline of the nation, the future of religious instructions at schools was in the balance. A number of departments of religious studies or biblical studies lost their economic viability. Even old established institutions, such as the Faculty of Theology at Rhodes University, were closed down. Some universities unashamedly sold their degrees to seminaries in exchange for student enrolments to maintain state subsidies - a temptation which the School of Theology resisted.

For the JCLTT it was clear that Lutherans had to pull together with other churches to establish a viable and sustainable institution. For viability and sustainability internal trends too had to be taken into consideration. Most main line churches do not grow in numbers. They lose the youth, the men, the professionals. The number of workers needed by the Churches over the next two decades, their capacity to offer reasonable remuneration packages, the likelihood of attracting students with university entrance qualifications, the particular form of employment (full time, part time, or self-supporting) were causes of concern.

The kind of institution envisaged

New levels of sophistication and status in the pew necessitate higher levels of training on the pulpit. Often lay preachers are better educated than pastors. To gain academic and social status, most seminaries became eager to link up with universities. The continuation of Lutheran training at seminary level was rejected by the JCLTT. The option of abandoning the church's training altogether in favour of University training was also rejected because it would have led to the erosion of Lutheran identity and autonomy. A church institution linked to a University was considered to be the best option.

The JCLTT investigated possible universities and corresponding locations for the church institution. An urban and multi-lingual environment, geographical centrality, financial investments needed, the character of existing university faculties, distance between the church institution and the university, maintenance costs and other factors were taken into consideration and carefully weighed against each other.

A relatively long history of viable relationships between the Lutheran churches and the School of Theology at the University of Natal, its ecumenical nature, its flexible curriculum, its commitment to contextual theology, the heavy investments already made by Lutherans in Pietermaritzburg and the fact that the Lutheran properties were located across the street from the School of Theology all contributed to the choice of the latter.

The relation between church institution and university

The optimal link between church institution and University had to be established. One option was for the church institution to be part of the Pietermaritzburg Cluster of Theological Institutions, without institutionalised links. It would then only be able to offer a diploma. This was rejected. The second option was for the church institution to offer half of the training (two years of the BTh) and the University the other half (third year BTh and Honours). The third option was to integrate both the syllabi and the staff into those of the University.

The dangers of the second option were immediately apparent. The students would compare themselves with full time university students, feel deprived and resent the church's training. The two kinds of training would break apart in the minds of both students and lecturers. The discrepancy in status between university and church staff would lead to resentment and tension.

The JCLTT thus opted for the integrated approach. The new institution would not be a fully fledged seminary, nor a mere residence, but a semi-autonomous outgrowth of the School of Theology with its specific curriculum and community life. It would be called Lutheran Theological Institute.

The staff of the LTI would be seconded to the School of Theology. It would receive remuneration packages on par with those of the university and through the university administration. Particular courses important for the Lutheran ministry would be built into the syllabus of the School of Theology as options. Such courses would be, by Lutheran lecturers but be accessible to all students. In this way Lutherans would be enriched by other traditions and enabled to make their contribution to the ecumenical scene. Common training would lead to an ecumenical network of relationships for future ministers. Secular subjects, such as sociology, psychology, or development theory could be built into the syllabus. Let us look at some detail.

The curriculum

The ideal was a four year course including a BTh and an Honours degree for all students. This would presuppose that all successful applicants had university entrance qualifications. It is not very likely that the churches would find such candidates in sufficient numbers. So the JCLTT decided on a second stream, namely a one-year Access Programme plus the a three-year BTh. The University of Natal had already experimented with an Access Programme and proposed the School of Theology to introduce its own version.

The JCLTT offered to teach half the number of the 8 subjects needed for such a programme, focusing on subjects useful for the ministry: Basic Bible Knowledge, South African Church History, Ethics of Sex and Family Life; and Basics of Financial Administration and/or Organisational Procedures. It was hoped that courses passed at 65% and higher would then be credited for the BTh degree.

Concerning the BTh curriculum no difficulties were encountered. The curriculum of the School of Theology contains open slots such as Cluster options, options for Houses of Studies and self-study projects. These slots could be used to accommodate the special needs of the Lutheran Churches, such as Reformation History, The Theology of Luther and the Lutheran Confessions, Homiletics, and Christian Education.

However, the Bishops were interested in two additions at first year level. This first was a course in Basic Bible Knowledge, which can no longer be presupposed. The other was that students get to know their own tradition so that they have something to fall back on before being exposed to all the other theological approaches offered at the University.

To pave the way for a multi-pronged ministry in the churches, it was decided to offer basic theological training in the first two years and allow for specialisations in the third and fourth year. This would include not only traditional theological subjects but also a differentiation into a ministerial track, a health-related track, a development-related track, a crime-related track and so on. It remains to be seen whether the churches will actually honour such specialisations in their deployment practices.

Staffing

From the outset the JCLTT aimed at avoiding the impression that Lutheran lecturers are of inferior status compared to that of University lecturers. They would be paid remuneration and benefit packages comparable with those of University lecturers. Moreover, the personnel administration of these lecturers would be taken over by the University. They would be appointed at lecturer level, but their academic appointability and their eligibility for academic promotion would be determined by the University.

The integration of the LTI curriculum with that of the School of Theology has the advantage that it would cut out all unnecessary duplications. Only subjects specifically needed by the Lutheran Churches and not offered by the School of Theology would be taught by Lutheran lecturers. Great savings could be achieved without the loss of academic quality. The JCLTT estimated that between 3 and 5 Lutheran lecturers would be sufficient, depending on the degree of integration of the syllabi.

However, this finding caused considerable anxiety. One would have to scrap all ten the existing posts at the Seminary and the Lutheran House of Studies, create new posts according to the new needs of the LTI and go through an advertising and selection procedure. The LTI selection committee would have representatives from both churches as well as the School of Theology.

Understandably existing lecturers expected to be taken over by the LTI. The churches were thus suddenly confronted with the problems surrounding rationalisation which are encountered in the private and public sectors. Fortunately lecturers are pastors of the Churches and would not be retrenched. But redeployment is painful enough. Lecturers earn higher salaries than pastors. They have families to feed, careers to pursue and statuses to defend. It was also argued that the Lutheran Churches would lose their opportunity to build up their own pool of academically trained theologians to outsiders already teaching at the School of Theology. Church leaders were hesitant to forfeit their control over the appointment of lecturers. Nor were they willing to antagonise their academically trained staff.

On the other hand the quality of the training of future ministers of the church had to be the prime consideration. Committed to academic excellence, the University could expect Lutherans to second the best qualified staff they could muster to the School of Theology. There are other academics in the wings who could successfully compete for the posts offered. The Church could also not afford to pay lecturers not really needed at the envisaged remuneration levels. Students could prefer courses offered by University lecturers. Lutheran lecturers not fully occupied could become frustrated and bitter.

A compromise had to be found. The number of lecturers envisaged was raised to eight, including two funded by the Lutheran World Federation for one contract period of three years. They would be appointed on a three-year contract basis after which academic selection procedures would be applied. A core staff of 5 lecturers, one in each subject, was appointed, the rest being auxiliary staff. Lecturers appointed would be funded by their home Churches. This could have the effect that posts not absolutely needed would be culled after successive contract periods. We will have to see how this works itself out.

The recruitment of students

The dearth of matriculants with university entrance qualifications in the country leads to extensive recruitment drives by tertiary institutions and the private sector. The best academic potential is creamed off with the offer of scholarships and guaranteed employment. The Churches cannot compete with the high remuneration packages offered in the secular realm. In a church where the average pastor has to serve between 4 and 6 congregations, persons who want to serve the Church have ample room to do so as lay preachers and teachers. The incentive to become a pastor is low.

There is some truth in the contention of some Church leaders that pastors are not recruited but called by the Holy Spirit. But the danger is that the church is left with the left-overs who find no other employment opportunity and join the ministry for opportunistic reasons. In the past capable candidates who forfeited secular privileges to serve the church normally came from parishes served by an inspiring pastor and sporting a vibrant youth movement. It would seem that this is the precondition of a successful recruitment drive. But it is not easy to bring about.

The Church must find its own niche. Its competitive advantage does not lie at the level of careers and salary packages, but in a product that the South African society needs most at present. People have lost direction. They are lured into a wild pursuit of power and wealth. Job hopping, crime, corruption, sexual extravagance, leading to AIDS and teenage pregnancies, irresponsibility in money matters, such as casinos and lotteries - all these things impoverish and kill our nation.

What we need is a new vision, a new sense of calling, a commitment to serve the wellbeing of the whole, rather than the short lived material interests of private individuals. The drive to instil a new spirit into our youth can also lead to a renewal of the church as a whole. We should expect pastors to preach a relevant message, not a stale morality, but a new vision for South Africa. Lay people must begin to get enthusiastic about a future which can be attained if we are committed. It is indeed the Holy Spirit that must do its work. But the Holy Spirit works through people.

The practical implementation

To work out the detail of the implementation, the JCLTT appointed a number of sub-committees: on constitutional matters, buildings, finance and administration, staffing and curricula, recruitment and admissions. An enormous amount of work had to be done to get the project up and running. The recommendations of the sub-committees were coordinated with each other. Negotiations were conducted between the different role players. Deadlines had to be met, so that the programme can begin to operate at the beginning of 2003 as envisaged. We are still on track, except that the building programme will take longer than envisaged. I will not bore the reader with these practicalities, except to say that a new project of this magnitude demands commitment and sacrifice from many quarters. May God bless it with a rich harvest in God's time!

UMA IDEIA SOBRE EDUCAÇÃO TEOLÓGICA EM MOÇAMBIQUE

Elias Zacarias Massicame

Introdução

“Para termos sucesso na transformação da África através de sua educação, os jovens africanos devem permanecer como africanos genuínos e não tornar-se europeus de pele brancas sua própria sociedade seu próprio país. (...) Não cometam o erro imperdoável de educar as crianças africanas como se fossem francesas. Te proíbo de pô-las a dormir em camas francesas; te proíbo de alimentá-las com comida francesa; te proíbo de ensiná-las a ler e escrever o francês”.¹ (M. Kilaini)

Ora, os ‘ventos de mudança’ que de tempo em tempo sopram e, conseqüentemente, se fazem sentir em muitas áreas da vida humana, entre elas a social, política, cultural e económica - só para citar algumas -, também chegam a atingir toda a actividade e dimensão da vida da Igreja, incluindo, claro, a teologia e o ecumenismo. Sendo assim, a contextualização da prática (*praxis*) teológica e ecumênica, é *a priori* uma tarefa obrigatória, indispensável e inadiável por parte da Igreja e de todas as comunidades eclesiais, sobretudo na época actual em que acabamos de iniciar o terceiro milénio pois, do contrário, estas estariam condenadas a um autêntico e perpétuo fracasso.

O período de análise são os últimos 50 anos, quando, por exemplo, em Moçambique, a maioria das Igrejas passaram a ter uma maior inserção na sociedade, bem como alcançar auto-determinação, ‘emancipação’ ou ‘independência’, isto é, deixaram de ser ‘Igrejas missionárias’ e passaram a ser, verdadeiramente, ‘Igrejas autónomas’ de moçambicanos e dirigidas por líderes moçambicanos em nível local e nacional.

Então, ao iniciarmos a nova caminhada já em pleno Século XXI, de facto, achamos ser este um momento oportuno para a realização deste exercício. Daí ser justo fazer-se algumas perguntas tais como as que seguem: como é que é feita a nossa educação teológica, formação ministerial e ecumênica? Que tipo de recursos e metodologia temos usado até aqui no treinamento do nosso corpo pastoral? Com base no passado, qual deve ser o modelo para a educação teológica e formação ministerial e ecumênica no século XXI? Quais foram os principais erros cometidos no passado? O que foi feito até aqui de bom e de positivo? Como podemos operar as transformações na vida e missão da Igreja e nas instituições eclesiais no continente africano em geral e, particularmente, em Moçambique?

Ora, para responder estas perguntas optamos por não adotar uma metodologia de pergunta e resposta, mas por tomar casos de Igrejas e instituições que se dedicam à educação teológica e descrever o que foi o seu passado e como é o seu presente. Para completar algumas lacunas deixadas pelas nossas fontes bibliográficas, entrevistamos algumas lideranças de instituições eclesiais que se dedicam ao ensino teológico. Claro, o tema não está esgotado, pois ainda existe muito por explorar. Daí considerarmos este trabalho como algo inicial e, por que não, provocativo para os nossos educadores teológicos, historiadores, bispos, pastores, evangelistas, leigos, etc.

¹ Gosbert T. M. Byamungu, citando M. Kilaini, “Construing newer ‘windows’: a catholic perspective”, em “The Ecumenical Review” (Transforming ecumenism in Africa in the 21st century), Volume 53, N.3, July 2001, Geneva, p.343.

Acreditamos que através deste processo, a Igreja bem como a comunidade eclesial poderão encontrar respostas positivas aos actuais e futuros desafios que a sociedade como um todo enfrenta, visto que a educação teológica, a formação ministerial e o treinamento vocacional podem ser elementos muito importantes e preponderantes no processo de cura e renovação, bem como de reconciliação, desenvolvimento e unidade da Igreja e de todo o povo de Deus no mundo.

A Educação Teológica em Moçambique

Em Moçambique, a educação teológica e a formação ministerial do clero e dos obreiros leigos não iniciou ‘ex-nihilo’, isto é, de um vazio, do nada. Pelo contrário, ela se originou da necessidade sentida pelas Igrejas, missões e comunidades eclesiais, a partir de um determinado momento, como resultado do trabalho que estavam a realizar, no âmbito do cumprimento da ordem do Mestre em Mateus 28: 19-20: “Ide, portanto, e fazei que todas as nações se tornem discípulos, baptizando-as em nome do Pai, do Filho e do Espírito Santo e ensinando-as a observar tudo quanto vos ordenei. E eis que eu estou convosco todos os dias, até a consumação dos séculos”.

Aliás, o teólogo moçambicano, Rev. Dr. Simão Chamango, a esse respeito recorda-nos o resultado do trabalho que estava sendo realizado pelos missionários nacionais e estrangeiros, ainda durante a época missionária em Moçambique (na fase do estabelecimento das chamadas ‘Igrejas Históricas’), ao citar o jornal “O Comércio de Lourenço Marques”, de 24 de Novembro de 1892, o qual a dado passo escreveu: “É curioso ver aos Domingos a quantidade insignificante que visita a nossa Igreja Católica e a multidão enorme que sai da protestante. À Igreja Católica Romana vão alguns europeus e bem poucos indígenas, uns 50 talvez; e na protestante faz-se a prédica por turnos tal é a afluência de ouvintes...”²

Foi, portanto, para dar uma assistência pastoral a este povo de Deus que as Igrejas, quer no nível denominacional quer interdenominacional ou melhor, associadas em projectos ecumênicos, se enveredaram no estabelecimento de centros, escolas e seminários bíblicos assim como teológicos, tendo como ponto central a formação e o treinamento dos seus obreiros nacionais, mas não só, já que o processo também envolve todo o povo de Deus. No entanto, o estabelecimento dessas instituições de educação e formação bíblica, teológica, pastoral e ecumênica em Moçambique foi um processo que acompanhou a fase da implantação das Igrejas de origem católico-romana, protestantes e as chamadas ‘evangélicas’, e, mais tarde, também na fase de sua consolidação, expansão e desenvolvimento. De uma forma geral, encontramos dois modelos, a saber: denominacional e interdenominacional ou ecumênico. Para sermos mais objectivos na nossa compulsão, escolhemos os casos das Igrejas de origem protestante, pelo facto de serem-nos familiares e por serem estas Igrejas as que melhor apresentam programas de educação teológica e ecumênica no país. O exemplo da Igreja Católica Romana não foge à regra, e também é apresentado aqui, mesmo que de forma breve.

O modelo denominacional

Embora na área da educação teológica e formação vocacional ou ministerial a Igreja Católica Romana em Moçambique não esteja engajada em projectos ecumênicos no âmbito do movimento ecumênico nacional, sabe-se que sua articulação e cooperação é forte e dinâmica. Como exemplo, poderíamos citar o intercâmbio entre o Seminário Unido de Ricatla e o Seminário Maior Pio X. No entanto, vejamos o que o catolicismo nos reserva.

Na sua célebre obra, “500 Anos de Evangelização em Moçambique”, os Padres Jesuítas José Augusto Alves de Sousa e Francisco Augusto da Cruz Correia, da Igreja Católica Romana, escrevem

² Simão Chamango, *A Chegada do Evangelho em Moçambique*, II Edição, Maputo, 1994, p.28.

o seguinte: “Desde a implantação das missões, conhecemos na maior parte delas, a existência de escolas de artes e ofícios e de outras escolas, a dedicação à obra de caridade, a promoção da mulher, o desenvolvimento da agricultura e da pecuária”.³ Esta mesma postura também foi assumida pelas Igrejas de origem protestante.

Para a Igreja Católica Romana em Moçambique, desde o tempo do estabelecimento da sua missão no país há mais de 500 anos atrás, isto é, a partir dos finais do Século XV até a primeira metade do Século XX, o seu corpo sacerdotal era formado de sacerdotes e missionários estrangeiros. Mas, depois da assinatura da Concordata e Acordo Missionário entre a Santa Sé (Vaticano) e a República Portuguesa em 1940, a altura em que começou a haver “uma verdadeira preocupação pela constituição de um verdadeiro clero nativo. Tal preocupação traduziu-se, na prática, num esforço especial pela promoção das vocações e por criar espaços onde acolhê-las”.⁴

Assim, entre 1941 até 1967, a Igreja Católica Romana fundou em Moçambique 7 Seminários Menores e 2 Seminários Maiores, a saber:

a) Seminários Menores:

- Magude (1941)
- Unango (1943)
- Zóbue (1949)
- Mariri (1957)
- Marrere (1949)
- Nicoadala (1961)
- Nova Freixo – Cuamba (1967)

b) Seminários Maiores:

- Namaacha (1949); este seminário, em 1964, foi transferido para Malhangalene, na Cidade de Maputo (ex-Lourenço Marques). Já em 1968, o seminário passou a funcionar em novas instalações na Polana, com o novo nome de Seminário Maior Pio X.
- Mariri (1960).⁵

Em 1975, no ano em que o país proclamou a independência nacional de Portugal, depois de 10 anos de luta armada liderada pela Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (FRELIMO), a Igreja Católica Romana tinha 14 Seminários Menores, com um total de 990 alunos, em Maputo, Xai-Xai, Inhambane, Beira, Tete, Quelimane, Lichinga e Pemba. Por outro lado, funcionavam 2 Seminários Médios em Maputo e Beira, com cerca de 100 alunos. Quanto aos Seminários Maiores, a Igreja manteve os 2 Seminários Maiores em Maputo e Pemba, os quais tinham, na época, 53 alunos.⁶

Ainda segundo os Padres José Augusto Alves de Sousa e Francisco Augusto da Cruz Correia, o quadro do clero nativo e de religiosos da Igreja Católica Romana, a 25 de Junho de 1975, resultante da formação e promoção das vocações levadas a cabo nos diferentes seminários e institutos religiosos masculinos e femininos era o seguinte:

“2 bispos moçambicanos
35 sacerdotes moçambicanos
27 irmãos religiosos moçambicanos
205 irmãs religiosas moçambicanas”.⁷

³ José Augusto Alves de Sousa e Francisco Augusto da Cruz Correia, *500 Anos de Evangelização em Moçambique*, Edição Paulistas, Maputo, p.86.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.86.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.90.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.91.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p.91.

Hoje, a Igreja Católica Romana possui as seguintes instituições de educação teológica e formação ecumênica: Seminários Menores e Seminários Maiores, Institutos Superiores e a Universidade Católica em Moçambique. Nestes locais são treinados diferentes líderes, entre outros, para diversos ministérios da pastoral da Igreja.

Entretanto, no que diz respeito as Igrejas Protestantes, sobretudo ao grupo das chamadas 'Igrejas estabelecidas' ou 'Igrejas históricas' (as quais são resultados do trabalho missionário do Século XIX e princípios do Século XX), aferimos anteriormente que foi sua filosofia e prática estabelecer instituições de ensino bíblico-teológico e treinamento vocacional ou ministerial e ecumênica, com o objectivo final de formar obreiros, quer clérigos quer leigos, na sua maioria para ambos os sexos. Ao mesmo tempo, dava-se também maior atenção para a juventude.

Assim, por exemplo, a Igreja Metodista Unida em Moçambique estabeleceu, em 1927, a Escola Bíblica de Cambine, na localidade de Cambine, Distrito de Murrombene, Província de Inhamabne, a qual nos primeiros anos começou por receber alunos da Igreja Metodista Unida mas, no decorrer dos tempos, também abriu espaço para membros de outras denominações, como da Igreja Congregacional Unida, Igreja Presbiteriana, Igreja Metodista Livre, Igreja Metodista Wesleyana, Igreja Luz Episcopal, Igreja de Cristo Unida, entre outros. Aliás, neste momento serão formados naquele estabelecimento de ensino bíblico e teológico, também estudantes da Igreja Metodista Unida em Angola.⁸

De acordo com o Revmo. João Somane, Bispo Residente da Igreja Metodista Unida em Moçambique, de 1927 até a década 40, a Escola Bíblica de Cambine observava duas ênfases ou terminalidades. A primeira dedicava-se à formação de evangelistas. Este curso tinha a duração de 3 anos. Os estudantes que dele participavam também tinham a oportunidade de frequentar, além dos estudos bíblicos, o ensino primário, já que tinham aprendido a ler e escrever nas minas de Rand da África do Sul. Após este período, os finalistas que passavam com boas e altas marcas (notas) eram encaminhados para o curso de teologia, que era a segunda ênfase ou terminalidade. O curso de teologia tinha a duração de 4 anos. Isto quer dizer que formação para o ministério pastoral durava no mínimo 7 anos. Depois deste período, revelou Bispo Machado, os recém-formados eram enviados para a "seara do Senhor" por um período de 3 anos. Só depois disto é que recebiam a consagração como diáconos. Mas, em 1975, esta filosofia mudou. A escola começou a exigir que os novos ingressos deveriam pelo menos ter chegado até a 4ª Classe do ensino primário, o que também veio a mudar em 1982, quando foi exigida a 6ª Classe. Hoje, exige-se a 10ª Classe para os candidatos a Certificado e a 12ª Classe para o Diploma.

A Igreja Metodista Unida em Moçambique, tem cursos de Exortadores e Pregadores. Os cursos são leccionados no nível paroquial e distrital. Por outro lado, na década 90, foi introduzido o curso de Educação Teológica por Extensão, o qual é coordenado a partir da sede da Igreja, na Cidade de Maputo. Esta Igreja também continua a formar os seus obreiros no Seminário Unido de Ricatla (do qual falaremos mais tarde), assim como no exterior, entre outros, em Zimbabue, Brasil, Estados Unidos da América, entre outros.

O Rev. Arão Litsuri, actual líder da Igreja Congregacional Unida em Moçambique, afirmou que a sua Igreja possui, há cerca de 15 anos, um estabelecimento que forma os seus pastores denominado Escola Bíblica Zaqueu Likumbi, em Balaza, Distrito de Maxixi, Província de Inhamabane.⁹ O curso tem a duração de 4 anos e os graduados saem com níveis de Certificado e Diploma. Embora

⁸ Revmo. Bispo João Somane Machado, Entrevista para este trabalho, 2002.

⁹ Rev. Arão Litsuri, Entrevista para este trabalho, 2002.

a escola bíblica seja denominacional, o timoneiro da Igreja Congregacional Unida em Moçambique revelou que estudantes de outras Igrejas têm recebido a sua formação naquele estabelecimento. Ainda de acordo com Arão Litsuri, a Igreja Congregacional Unida em Moçambique tem estado a treinar ou formar os seus obreiros, sobretudo os leigos, ao nível das paróquias, onde são leccionados os cursos de pregadores. Outrossim, esta denominação eclesiástica também forma os seus obreiros no Seminário Unido de Ricatla.

A Igreja Presbiteriana de Moçambique (IPM), por sua vez, possui actualmente a Escola Bíblica e Teológica de Khovo, na Cidade de Maputo. De acordo com o Presidente do Conselho Sinodal da IPM, Rev. Mário Nhamucho, o curso - que se lecciona no período noturno - tem a duração de 4 anos, e os graduados recebem Certificados.¹⁰ Os graduados que desejam abraçar o pastorado têm, de acordo com Mário Nhamucho, a obrigação de continuar os seus estudos, desta feita no Seminário Unido de Ricatla, por um período de cerca de 2 anos. Além disso, a Igreja Presbiteriana também forma os seus obreiros no exterior.

A Igreja do Nazareno fundou, nos últimos anos do século passado, o seu Seminário para a formação teológica dos seus obreiros em Laulane, arredores da Cidade de Maputo, Província de Maputo. O curso tem a duração de 4 anos. Apesar de o estabelecimento pertencer aos nazarenos, também estão no local estudantes de outras denominações eclesiásticas cristãs para receber a sua formação teológica.

A Igreja Anglicana - Diocese dos Limbombos, por seu turno, possui seu seminário de formação teológica na Cidade de Maputo, Província de Maputo, onde tem estado a treinar os seus futuros obreiros. O curso tem a duração de 4 anos e, até ao presente momento, somente se dedica à formação de obreiros do sexo masculino. Para além de estudantes moçambicanos, o seminário também tem estado a formar estudantes da Igreja Anglicana de Angola. Uma outra particularidade da Igreja Anglicana - Diocese dos Libombos é o facto de ela não enviar estudantes ao Seminário Unido de Ricatla, assim como não recebe estudantes de outras denominações eclesiásticas, embora estar presente em outros projectos de natureza ecumênica ao nível nacional. Para o teólogo moçambicano, Rev. Bispo João Somane Machado, este posicionamento da Igreja Anglicana - Diocese dos Libombos mina o espírito do ecumenismo nacional, visto que, em outros países da África Austral e nas outras regiões do mundo, a Igreja Anglicana participa de forma activa em projectos conjuntos de educação teológica e formação ministerial de homens e mulheres.

O modelo ecumênico

Uma das maiores expressões do movimento ecumênico nacional, em particular na área de educação teológica em Moçambique, é o Centro Ecumênico de Ricatla, situado no Distrito de Marracuene, Província de Maputo, cerca de 25 km da capital do país, a Cidade de Maputo. Embora o Conselho Cristão de Moçambique – a maior expressão do movimento ecumênico nacional - possuir um Departamento de Formação, este não está directamente envolvido neste projecto de formação ecumênica. Mesmo o Departamento de Serviços Ecumênicos do CCM, o qual é dirigido por um teólogo, não tem relações fortes com o SUR até aqui. Na nossa óptica, um relacionamento directo e forte entre estes órgãos seria algo muito salutar e impulsionador ao ecumenismo moçambicano, o que num talvez pudesse resultar, no futuro, no estabelecimento de um centro ecumênico de pesquisa.

Estabelecido há cerca de 44 anos (1958), o Seminário Unido de Ricatla (SUR), de acordo com o seu Reitor Rev. Jonas R. Ngomane, dedicou-se à formação teológica e pastoral, observando uma abordagem teológico-ecumênica.¹¹ O curso de teologia no SUR tem a duração de 4 anos.

¹⁰ Rev. Mário Nhamucho, Entrevista para este trabalho, 2002.

¹¹ Rev. Jonas R. Ngomane, Entrevista para este trabalho, 2002.

Findo este período, dependendo das suas habilitações académicas e do programa curricular, os finalistas são graduados com níveis de Certificado, Diploma, ou Bacharelato em Teologia. O Reitor do SUR revelou que, há cerca de 2 anos, o Seminário submeteu um pedido, solicitando o reconhecimento oficial junto às autoridades governamentais, através do Ministério de Educação, mas que até ao presente momento ainda não recebeu resposta. Embora não tenha avançado quaisquer razões, Ngomane disse que “não é fácil em Moçambique ter reconhecimento oficial dos programas”.

Entretanto, o teólogo moçambicano, Revmo. Bispo João Somane Machado, afirma que, embora as autoridades governamentais ainda não reconheçam oficialmente os currículos dos programas de educação teológica em nível nacional, algumas instituições de nível superior no exterior são reconhecidas, como no Brasil, Estados Unidos de América e na África do Sul. “Temos alguns finalistas que, depois de concluírem os seus estudos internamente, são aceites a continuarem com os seus estudos no exterior, para os níveis de licenciatura, mestrado e doutorado. Hoje, estes figuram nas listas de melhores estudantes, graças ao ensino teológico que realizamos quer em Cambine quer em Ricatla”.¹²

Ainda segundo o Rev. Jonas Ngomane, o SUR preocupa-se bastante com o seu currículo, facto que o leva a exercer uma pesquisa contínua para garantir uma melhor contextualização, tomando sempre em conta as demandas da realidade actual. Como exemplo, o Reitor do SUR apontou que nos últimos anos foi introduzido no currículo do seminário a abordagem de temas como o do HIV/SIDA e da globalização, assim como a re-leitura da Bíblia e uma hermenéutica holística destes fenómenos, visto serem estes alguns dos desafios do século XXI. Rev. Ngomane apontou que, em Moçambique, a literatura e as publicações cristãs e teológicas são muito poucas, sobretudo aquelas que se produzem no nível nacional. Das poucas que existem, a maioria são importadas do Brasil. Ele disse que, neste campo, “há muito trabalho por desenvolver, pois a necessidade existe”.

Daquilo que podemos observar até ao presente momento, podemos dizer que aos nossos teólogos, pastores e leigos, incluindo os que estão na liderança, não obstante possuírem muitas experiências e, é claro, conhecimentos, ainda falta-lhes a cultura literária. Creio que se as Igrejas e outras instituições eclesíásticas puderem realizar seminários de literatura cristã, direccionados aos bispos, pastores, padres, leigos e a todo o povo de Deus, num futuro não muito distante poder-se-à solucionar o problema da falta de literatura e de outras publicações cristãs na praça. Instituições como os seminários e escolas teológicas, assim como o Conselho Cristão, deveriam tomar a dianteira nesta área, estabelecendo, por exemplo, centros cristãos e/ou teológicos de pesquisa, pois este terreno é rico, vasto e virgem.

Neste momento, o Seminário Unido de Ricatla conta com 8 membros efectivos e um associado, a saber: Igreja Metodista Unida em Moçambique, Igreja Metodista Wesleyana de Moçambique, Igreja Presbiteriana de Moçambique, Igreja Congregacional Unida de Moçambique, Igreja de Cristo Unida - “ex-American Board”, Igreja de Cristo da Zambézia, Igreja de Cristo de Nampula, Igreja Evangélica Luterana de Moçambique e a Igreja Metodista Livre de Moçambique (membro associado). Todas estas Igrejas são membros do Conselho Cristão de Moçambique (CCM), a maior expressão do movimento ecumênico moçambicano, instituição que conta actualmente com 23 Igrejas e organizações cristãs membros. Ainda segundo Jonas Ngomane, o SUR tem estado a receber estudantes de Igrejas não membros do seminário, desde que elas manifestem a vontade de treinar os seus líderes e obreiros naquele centro ecumênico. Outrossim, nas últimas duas décadas, estudantes de Angola, Brasil e África do Sul também têm recebido a sua formação ou parte dela no Seminário Unido de Ricatla.¹³

¹² Revmo. João Somane Machado, Entrevista para este trabalho, 2002.

¹³ Elias Massicame, “Ecumenism in Mozambique”, em *The Ecumenical Review (Transforming ecumenism in Africa in the 21st century)*, Volume 53, N.3, July 2001, Geneva, p. 412.

São as respectivas Igrejas que atribuem as bolsas de estudo a seus estudantes, sendo o critério de atribuição da responsabilidade de cada denominação. Segundo o Reitor do SUR, o baixo número de estudantes no seminário revela quão pobres são as Igrejas económica e financeiramente. Aliás, nas palavras de Ngomane, “temos em Moçambique alguns teólogos e pastores que trabalham fora das denominações e instituições eclesiais por uma razão simples – salários e boas condições. As instituições de educação teológica não garantem um salário condigno aos teólogos ou formadores e, como resultado, estes às vezes dão a sua contribuição aos seminários ou escolas teológicas como professoras e professores de tempo parcial (*part-time*)”. Estas mesmas palavras foram corroboradas pelo Rev. Arão Litsuri e Bispo João Somane Machado, os quais acrescentaram que muitos desses são teólogos e pastores com boas qualidades profissionais.

Além do curso de teologia, o Centro Ecumênico de Ricatla ministra outros dois cursos, ou seja, o curso de Educação Cristã e Economia Doméstica, dirigido especialmente para as esposas dos cursantes de teologia, e o Curso de Instrutores da Juventude. Este último, com a duração de um ano, abrange jovens de ambos sexos. Na nossa óptica, o papel que o Centro Ecumênico de Ricatla vem desempenhando ao longo da sua história, em particular na formação de obreiros clérigos e leigos de ambos sexos para as diferentes áreas de atuação pastoral da Igreja e também para serviços à sociedade em geral, no nível nacional e internacional, leva-nos a denominá-lo de um autêntico “laboratório ecumênico”.¹⁴

Conclusão

De uma forma muito generalizada podemos dizer que a educação teológica e a formação ecumênica moçambicana surgiu de uma necessidade da própria Igreja no sentido de preparar os seus obreiros, sobretudo o seu quadro clerical, não obstante tenha incluído neste processo, em menor escala, também o laicado. Aliás, o treinamento dos leigos em Moçambique está assentado na formação bíblica e educação cristã. Para a implementação destes programas curriculares, as Igrejas e instituições de ensino teológico e bíblico têm enfrentado diversas dificuldades em termos de material didático, pois a produção literária teológica e de outras publicações cristãs é, na fase actual, quase inexistente em nível nacional.

O Centro Ecumênico de Ricatla, o Seminário Unido de Ricatla e o Conselho Cristão de Moçambique, juntamente com as diferentes denominações religiosas cristãs moçambicanas deveriam enveredarse no estabelecimento de um projecto de pesquisa para ultrapassar estas dificuldades, pois, como aferimos anteriormente, o terreno é muito vasto, rico e virgem. Para isso, dever-se-ia encorajar encontros periódicos envolvendo todos os estabelecimentos de ensino teológico e de formação ecumênica ministerial, sobretudo por parte do CCM, que é a maior expressão do movimento ecumênico nacional, através dos Departamentos de Serviços Ecumênicos e de Formação e Desenvolvimento.

Embora existam algumas bibliotecas junto às escolas e aos seminários teológicos e bíblicos, a maior parte de obras ali existentes abordam outras realidades, sendo poucas as que falam da nossa realidade. Queremos acreditar que, se as Igrejas e as instituições de educação teológica apostarem no uso de tecnologias modernas de comunicação e informação, o ensino teológico para o clérigo e o laicado poderá vir a ganhar mais qualidade do que a actual, visto que estas permitem espaço para investigações e contactos com outras realidades e regiões. Claro, dever-se-ia encorajar também licenças sabáticas a pastores e teólogos, para que estes pudessem dedicar mais tempo para a pesquisa e a produção de obras literárias e outras publicações, por que experiências e conhecimentos existem em grande quantidade.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.411-412.

***A GLIMPSE OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION
IN MOZAMBIQUE¹***

Elias Zacarias Massicame

Introduction

“In order to succeed in transforming Africa through education, young Africans must remain genuine Africans and not become white skinned Europeans alienated from their own society and country. (...) Do not commit the unpardonable error of educating African children as though they were French. I forbid you to let them sleep in French beds; I forbid you to feed them with French food; I forbid you to teach them how to read and write in French”.² (M. Kilaini)

The “winds of change” that from time to time blow and make themselves felt in many areas of human life, including social, political, cultural and economic life to name but a few, also affect the activities and scope of the life of the Church, including, of course, theology and ecumenism. The contextualisation of theological and ecumenical practise (*praxis*) is, therefore, *a priori*, an obligatory, indispensable and pressing task for the Church and all ecclesiastical communities, especially in the period just begun, that is, the third millennium. If they do not do this, they are condemned to a very real and perpetual failure.

In this article, the period under review is the last 50 years, a period in which time most Churches in Mozambique managed to become more integrated into the society and achieve self-determination, “emancipation” and “independence”, that is, they ceased to be “missionary churches” and became truly “autonomous churches” led by Mozambicans at local and national levels.

So as to move forward into the 21st century, I think this is a good time to carry out this exercise and to ask some questions, for example: how do we organise our theological, ministerial and ecumenical formation? What kind of resources and methodologies have we been using to train our pastoral workers? Building on the past, what should be the model for theological, ministerial and ecumenical formation in the 21st century? What were the main errors that we committed in the past? What good and positive things have been done? How can we make changes in the life and mission of the church and ecclesiastical institutions in Africa in general, and in Mozambique in particular?

To reply to these questions, I decided against using a question and answer method and instead took specific examples of churches and institutions that work in the field of theological education and describe their past and present. To cover some gaps left by our bibliographical sources, I interviewed leaders of theological education institutions. Of course, I have not exhausted the issue. There and there is still a lot of research to be done, so I consider this work to be no more than a beginning and a challenge to our theology teachers, historians, bishops, pastors, evangelists and lay members, etc.

I believe that, through this process, the church and the ecclesiastical community will be able to make a positive response to the present and future challenges that society as a whole faces, given that theological education and ministerial and vocational formation can be very important and preponderant elements in the healing, renovation, reconciliation, development and unity of the church and of the whole of God’s people in the world.

¹ Translated from Portuguese by WCC Language Service.

² Gosbert T. M. Byamungu, quoting M. Kilaini, “Construing newer ‘windows’: a catholic perspective”, in “The Ecumenical Review” (Transforming ecumenism in Africa in the 21st century), Volume 53, N.3, July 2001, Geneva, p.343.

Theological education in Mozambique

Theological education and ministerial formation of both lay and ordained ministers in Mozambique started for a good reason. They originated in the need felt by the churches, missions and church communities, at a given moment, in the course of the work they were doing, to fulfil God's will as stated in Matthew 28: 19-20: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded them. And remember, I am with you always, until the end of the age".

With reference to the above, the Mozambican theologian, Rev. Dr. Simão Chamango, reminds us of the work carried out by national and foreign missionaries during the missionary period in Mozambique (in the phase when the so-called "historic churches" were established), by quoting the newspaper "O Comércio de Lourenço Marques", of 24 November 1892, which, at one point, states: "It is curious to see how very small is the number of people who come to our Catholic Church on Sundays and the enormous multitude that attend Protestant services. The Roman Catholic Church is attended by only a few Europeans and very few local people, perhaps only 50, while the Protestant Churches have to have a shift system in order to be able to fit in all those who want to attend...".³

It was, therefore, to provide pastoral assistance to the people of God that the Churches, at a denominational and inter-denominational level or through joint ecumenical projects, established Bible study and theological centres, schools and seminaries to train its workers and not only them, because this process also involves all the people of God. The creation of these Bible study, theology, pastoral and ecumenical educational and training institutions in Mozambique accompanied the establishment, consolidation, expansion and development of Catholic, Protestant and Evangelical Churches. Generally speaking, we find two models: denominational or inter-denominational / ecumenical. In order to be more objective, I looked at particular examples within the Protestant Churches, firstly, because they were familiar to me and, secondly, because they provided the best illustrations of theology and ecumenical education programmes. I also present a brief description of the Roman Catholic Church's work in this area.

The denominational model

Although the Catholic Church in Mozambique does not participate in the national ecumenical movement's theological education and ministerial and vocational formation work, it has strong and dynamic links with other initiatives. For example, there is the exchange between the United Seminary of Ricatla (USR) and the Pio X Seminary. However, let us see what Catholicism's experience has been.

In their celebrated work "500 Anos de Evangelização em Mozambique" ("500 Years of Evangelisation in Mozambique), the Catholic priests (S.J.) José Augusto Alves de Sousa and Francisco Augusto da Cruz Correia, wrote: "We know that most of the missions had schools for arts, crafts and other subjects ever since they were created, and that they did charitable works, promoted women and developed agriculture and animal husbandry."⁴ Protestant Churches also present the same picture.

³ Simao Chamango, *A Chegada do Evangelho em Moçambique*, II Edition, Maputo, 1994, p.28.

⁴ José Augusto Alves de Sousa e Francisco Augusto da Cruz Correia, *500 Anos de Evangelização em Moçambique*, Paulistas, Maputo, p.86.

Since its establishment in the country more than 500 years ago, that is at the end of the 15th century, and up until the first half of the 20th century, the priests and missionaries of the Catholic Church in Mozambique were all foreigners. After the Concordat and Missionary Agreement signed between the Vatican and Portugal in 1950, the Church began to show “a real concern to ordain local people. In practical terms, this concern was translated into a special effort to promote vocational formation and include Mozambicans”.⁵

Between 1941 and 1967, the Catholic Church founded seven Minor Seminaries and 2 Major Seminaries in Mozambique:

a) Minor Seminaries:

- Magude (1941)
- Unango (1943)
- Zóbue (1949)
- Mariri (1957)
- Marrere (1949)
- Nicoadala (1961)
- Nova Freixo – Cuamba (1967)

b) Major Seminaries:

- Namaacha (1949); in 1964, this seminary was transferred to Malhangalene, in the city of Maputo (ex-Lourenço Marques). By 1968, it had moved to new premises in Polana, under the new name of Major Seminary Pio X.
- Mariri (1960).⁶

In 1975, when the country proclaimed its independence from Portugal, after ten years of armed struggle led by the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO), the Catholic Church had 14 Minor Seminaries with 990 students in Maputo, Xai-Xai, Inhambane, Beira, Tete, Quelimane, Lichinga and Pemba; two Medium Seminaries with approximately 100 students in Maputo and Beira; and two Major Seminaries, with 53 students, in Maputo and Pemba.⁷

Fathers José Augusto Alves de Sousa and Francisco Augusto da Cruz Correia wrote that the native clerical and religious personnel produced by the Catholic Church’s training and vocational programmes and seminars at its various male and female seminaries and religious institutes, as of 25 June 1975, was as follows:

“2 Mozambican bishops
35 Mozambican priests
27 Mozambican monks
205 Mozambican nuns”.⁸

Today, the Catholic Church’s theological education and ecumenical formation institutions include Minor and Major Seminaries, Higher Institutes and the Catholic University in Mozambique, where leaders are trained for Church pastoral work and other duties.

As for the Protestant Churches, especially the group of “Established Churches” or “Historic Churches” (resulting from the missionary work conducted in the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century), we have already stated that their philosophy and practice was to establish Bible study and theological education institutions or vocational, ministerial and ecumenical formation

⁵ *Ibid*, p.86.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.90.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p.91.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p.91.

institutions, with the objective of training ordained and lay members, mostly from both sexes, while at the same time paying special attention to young people.

So, for example, the United Methodist Church in Mozambique established a Bible Studies School at Cambine in the District of Murrombene, Inhamabne Province. At first, it only admitted members of the United Methodist Church but it later opened its doors to members of other denominations, such as the United Congregational Church, the Presbyterian Church, the Free Methodist Church, the Wesleyan Methodist Church, the Luz Episcopal Church, the United Church of Christ and other Christian ecclesiastical denominations. In addition, students of the United Methodist Church of Angola are currently being trained at the School.⁹

According to the very Rev. João Somane, Resident Bishop of the United Methodist Church in Mozambique, the Cambine Bible Studies School had two focuses between 1927 and the 1940s: first, it offered a three year course on evangelisation. In addition to Bible studies, most students also had the opportunity to go to primary school as they had already learned to read and write in the mines of the South African Rand. At the end of this period, students that achieved high marks went on to take a four year theology course. So it took a minimum of seven years to train a pastor. After this period, revealed Bishop Machado, graduates were sent out to serve the Lord for three years and it was only after this that they were consecrated as deacons. But in 1975, the school changed its policy. The school began to require applicants to have studied up until at least 4th grade at primary school. This was changed again in 1982 to 6th grade. Today, 10th grade is required for candidates to the Certificate and 12th Grade for the Diploma.

The United Methodist Church of Mozambique has courses for Exhorters and Preachers, which are taught at parish and district levels. In the 1990s, an extension course in Theological education was introduced, which is co-ordinated by the Church headquarters in Maputo. This Church also continues to train its workers at the United Seminary of Ricatla (which I will come back to) and abroad in countries such as Zimbabwe, Brazil and the United States.

The Rev. Arão Litsuri, head of the United Congregational Church in Mozambique, told me that his Church trains its pastors at Zaqueu Likumbi Bible Studies School, in Balaza, Maxixi District, Inhamabane Province.¹⁰ The Church established the school 15 years ago. It offers a four year course at Certificate and Diploma levels. Although the School is denominational, the head of the United Congregational Church in Mozambique revealed that students from other churches have studied there. According to Arão Litsuri, the United Congregational Church in Mozambique has focused its training and education programme at parish level, where courses for preachers are given. This ecclesiastical denomination also trains its workers at the United Seminary of Ricatla.

The Presbyterian Church of Mozambique currently has a Bible Studies and Theological School at Khovo, in Maputo. According to the President of the IPM's Synodal Council, the Rev. Mário Nhamucho, it offers a four year evening course leading to a Certificate.¹¹ Graduates wanting to enter the pastorate have to continue their studies at the United Seminary of Ricatla for a further two years. The Presbyterian Church also trains its own personnel at the United Seminary of Ricatla and abroad.

Towards the end of the 19th century, the Church of Nazarene founded a Seminary for theological education in Laulane, near Maputo. The Seminary offers a four year course. Although the Seminary belongs to the Nazarenes, it also caters for students from other Christian ecclesiastical denominations.

⁹ Very Rev. Bishop João Somane Machado, Interviewed for this essay, 2002.

¹⁰ Rev. Arão Litsuri, , Interviewed for this essay, 2002.

¹¹ Rev. Mário Nhamucho, Interviewed for this essay, 2002.

Theological education seminary of the Anglican Church (Diocese dos Limbombos), is located in Maputo. The seminary offers a four year course, which has so far only been open to male students. In addition to Mozambican students, the Seminary also trains students from the Anglican Church of Angola. Another particular characteristic of this church is that it does not send its students to the United Seminary of Ricatla. Neither does it offer courses to students from other denominations, although it participates in ecumenical projects at a national level. The Mozambican theologian, Rev. Bishop João Somane Machado, says that the Anglican Church's position undermines the spirit of national ecumenism. In other countries in Southern Africa and the rest of the world, the Anglican Church participates actively in joint theological education and ministerial formation projects, and includes both men and women.

The ecumenical model

One of the most important expressions of the national ecumenical movement in Mozambique, particularly in the area of theological education, is the Ecumenical Centre at Ricatla, in the district of Marracuene, Maputo Province, some 25 Km from Maputo, the country's capital. Unfortunately, although the Christian Council of Mozambique (CCM) – the most important expression of the national ecumenical movement – has a Training Department, this is not directly involved in the Ricatla ecumenical formation project. Even the CCM's Department of Ecumenical Services, which is headed by a theologian, has not so far had strong relations with Ricatla. A direct and strong relationship between these two organisations would be very healthy and stimulating for Mozambican ecumenism, and could, in the future, result in the establishment of an ecumenical research centre.

The United Seminary of Ricatla (USR) was founded in 1958. Its Rector, the Rev. Jonas R. Ngomane, told me that it had dedicated itself to theology and pastoral formation and had taken an ecumenical approach.¹² The seminary offers a four year course and graduates receive a Certificate, Diploma or Degree in Theology, depending on their level of attainment and the curriculum. USR's rector said that the seminary requested official recognition from the Ministry of Education two years ago, but has so far not received a reply. Although he offered no reasons for this, Ngomane said that "it is not easy to get official recognition of programmes in Mozambique".

However, the Mozambican theologian, the very Rev. Bishop João Somane Machado, affirmed that although the government has not officially recognised the curricula of the theological education programmes at the national level, some higher education institutions in other countries, including Brazil, the United States and South Africa do recognise them. "We have some final year students who will go on to continue their studies for degrees, master degrees or doctorates abroad once they have completed their studies here. These days, we produce some of the best students, thanks to the theological education that we provide in both Cambine and Ricatla".¹³

The Rev. Jonas Ngomane went on to say that the USR pays great attention to curriculum development and carries out continuous research in order to make sure courses continue to be relevant to what is going on in the world. As an example, he pointed out that, in recent years, the issues of HIV/SIDA and globalisation have been introduced into the seminary's curriculum, as well as a rereading of the Bible and the development of a holistic hermeneutics of these phenomena, as they are among the challenges we face in the 21st century. The Rev. Ngomane observed that, in Mozambique, Christian and theological literature and publications are scarce, especially at a national level. Most of the few that exist are imported from Brazil. He said that in this field, "there is much work to be done to respond to the real need that exists".

¹² Rev. Jonas R. Ngomane, Interviewed for this essay, 2002.

¹³ Very Rev. João Somane Machado, Interviewed for this essay, 2002.

From what I have so far observed, I think that our theologians, pastors and lay members, including those in leadership positions, do not have a literary culture even though they have a lot of experience and knowledge. I think that if the Churches and other ecclesiastical institutions could organise seminars on Christian literature, especially directed at bishops, pastors, priests, lay members and all the people of God, the problem of the lack of literature would be overcome in the not too distant future. Institutions such as the theological seminaries and schools, as well as the Christian Council, should take the initiative in this matter and, for example, establish Christian and/or theological research centres, for there is a rich, vast and virgin field of work here.

At the moment, the USR has eight full members and one associate member, namely: the United Methodist Church of Mozambique; the Wesleyan Methodist Church of Mozambique; the Presbyterian Church of Mozambique; the United Congregational Church of Mozambique; the Church of Christ United – “Ex-American Board”; the Church of Christ of the Zambezi; the Church of Christ of Nampula; the Lutheran Evangelical Church of Mozambique; and the Free Methodist Church of Mozambique (associate member). All these Churches are members of the Christian Council of Mozambique (CCM), the most important expression of the country’s ecumenical movement. The CCM currently has 23 member Churches and organisations. Jonas Nogomane told me that the USR admits students from non-member Churches, if they express a desire to train their leaders and workers at the centre. In addition, students from Angola, Brazil and South Africa have also received at least part of their training at the USR during the last two decades.¹⁴

It is the responsibility of each Church to provide educational grants to their own students. The USR’s Rector said that the low number of students at the seminary shows just how poor the Churches are. Ngomane also notes that “in Mozambique, some theologians and pastors find work outside the Church for one simple reason – **Good wages and working conditions**. Theological education institutions do not guarantee an appropriate salary to theologians and trainers and, as a result, they are sometimes only able to teach part time at the seminaries and theological schools. These words were backed up by the Rev. Arão Litsuri and Bishop João Somane Machado, who added that many of these theologians and pastors are good professionals.

In addition to the theology course, the Ricatla Ecumenical Centre offers two other courses. A course on Christian Education and the Household Economy is especially aimed at the wives of theology students. There is also a one year course for male and female Youth Instructors. In my opinion, the role played by the Ricatla Ecumenical Centre throughout its existence, especially the formation of ordained and lay workers of both sexes for the different fields of church pastoral work and other services to society in general, at national and international levels, allows me to describe it as a veritable “ecumenical laboratory”.¹⁵

Conclusion

In general terms, we can say that theological education and ecumenical formation in Mozambique emerged in response to the church’s need to prepare its workers (mainly ordained ministers but also, on a smaller scale, lay members) for their tasks. The formation of lay members in Mozambique has been based on Bible studies and Christian education. The Churches and institutions teaching theology and Bible studies have faced various problems in implementing their curricular programmes, including a lack of educational materials: the production of theological literature and other Christian publications is at present almost non-existent at the national level.

¹⁴ Elias Massicame, “Ecumenism in Mozambique”, in *The Ecumenical Review* (*Transforming ecumenism in Africa in the 21st century*), Volume 53, N.3, July 2001, Geneva, p. 412.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.411-412.

The Ricatla Ecumenical Centre, the United Seminary of Ricatla and the Christian Council of Mozambique should work towards establishing a research project in order to overcome these problems because, as we said earlier, it is a vast, rich and virgin field of work. For this to occur, all theological education and ecumenical and ministerial formation organisations, especially the CCM (the most important expression of the national ecumenical movement), through its Ecumenical Services and Training and Development departments, should call regular meetings to discuss these issues.

Although there are some libraries at the theological and biblical studies schools and seminaries, most of the books there focus on other realities and there are only a few that are relevant to our situation. I would like to believe that, if the Churches and theological education institutions invest in the use of modern communications and information technologies, the quality of theological education for both ordained and lay members would improve. These technologies provide scope for research and contact with other realities and regions. Of course, sabbatical leave for pastors and theologians should also be encouraged. These periods should be used more for research and writing literature and other publications, because we certainly have a lot of experience and knowledge to draw on.

LAY TRAINING CENTRES IN AFRICA: INSTRUMENTS OF SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

Jonah M. Katoneene

Introduction

Lay training centres in Africa like in other parts of the world have different names. Sometimes they are referred to as 'lay centres', 'ecumenical institutes', 'ecumenical centres', 'retreat centres', 'church centres', or simply 'conference and training centres'. These lay training centres were set-up for different purposes and operations. Their programs and activities reflect the purpose for which they were set-up. However whatever name is used or whatever the purpose for which these centres were setup, these are places of study and reflections on various issues and challenges in a given community. They provide space for leadership and ecumenical learning. A WCC draft document on study and lay training centres vividly shows that at lay centres,

short evening, weekend and vacation courses are offered where dialogue with each other, and with non-Christians, laity, are trained to bring the world of their everyday life into worship, to be grounded and rooted in the Christian faith, to be able to articulate their faith in relevant terms and to see how to make their vocation in the world effective as a Christian ministry.¹

This is in line with the vision of the Association of Christian Lay Centres in Africa (ACLCA) – a regional ecumenical network of Africa Christian lay centres. From its inception in 1970, at Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation, the ACLCA has seen and understood its mission as God's instrument of social change. ACLCA sees lay centres as God's instruments of church renewal, justice, peace and the development of Africa.

To this end, ACLCA's main agenda has been to organise courses for leadership in lay training (CLLTs). We can therefore say that in the last thirty years ACLCA has been organising CLLTs centered on social change or learning for transformation. To coincide with the celebration of its 30th anniversary in 2000, the ACLCA published a training manual entitled: *Equipping the Laity for Social Transformation: A Resource Manual for course on Leadership in Lay Training*. This training manual reflects the efforts of ACLCA in engaging the christian lay centres in Africa to equip the laity in building a new and humane society. The results of the various CLLTs conducted in the past were used as the main resources in the production of this manual.

The issues addressed by the CLLTs include economic injustice such as the debt crisis. This is central to the concerns of the ACLCA, because Structural Adjustments Programmes (SAP) have continued to take a dramatic toll among the rural and urban people's alike, resulting in declining national economies, growing ethnic tension, continued rural-urban migration, and a strain on families as a result of the reduced purchasing power of the family incomes.

Other issues addressed by the CLLTs include the question of ecology and environment, peace building and conflict resolution, HIV/AIDS, Inter-faith dialogue, Youth & Women concerns as well as equipping participants of these CLLTs with tools of social analysis.

¹ WCC draft document on Study and Lay Training Centres (1964: 9 – 10)

The CLLTs emphasize the need for the Christian lay centres in Africa to be engaged in a search for renewal and hope, raising the question of how lay centres could be places of hope and renewal in this environment. The environment has of necessity been a challenge to the lay centres in Africa. It has continuously reminded us to see and understand our mission as instruments of change, renewal and hope, working towards the building of a new society and a better humanity, seeing ourselves as part of the woven Communities of Hope in the bleeding continent of Africa. It is this challenge that requires lay centres today more than ever before, to take seriously the issues of civil society democracy, and human rights in the search for the common good. The CLLTs are an attempt to address these issues. The CLLTs provide opportunity for participants from centres to:

- learn about the different contexts they work in by sharing their experiences through encounter;
- learn about the work of different centres in Africa;
- engage in biblical reflections and bible studies within the context of ecumenical learning;
- develop a deeper awareness of the role of lay centres as agents of social transformation;
- be trained in Leadership skills and innovative methods of work;
- strengthen bonds of network among the lay centres and other networks.

The main emphasis of these CLLTs is the three 'Ls' – namely *Ecumenical Learning, Laity Formation and Leadership Training*.

The emphasis on **ecumenical learning** provides opportunity of participants to understand the global, interdenominational, interfaith and intercultural struggle for a just and humane society. **Laity Formation** provides opportunity for participants to explore possibilities of strengthening bonds between women groups, youth groups, environmental network groups, justice and peace groups, fraternal organisations, networks and movements of social concern; while **leadership training** provides opportunity for participants to recognize the importance of creating a new generation of future ecumenical leaders with commitment to the vision of the ecumenical movement.

The question that can be asked is to what extent has ACLCA's vision of equipping the laity for social transformation been realized or reflected in the work of Christian lay centres in Africa. Can the lay centres controlled by the church hierarchy, or a very repressive political system, engage in any meaningful programme of bringing about social transformation in such a situation?

The WCC call for engaging in an interactive process, has provided us with an opportunity for a critical self-assessment and evaluation of the work of Christian lay centres in Africa. In this regard the ACLCA member centres were invited to engage in this interactive process. We are using some of the reflections in this interactive process to make a critical self-assessment and evaluation of our work. We then look at the challenges and the opportunities for the Christian lay centres in Africa in their struggle to be instruments of social transformation.

Different kinds of Laity Training Centres 2

i. Historical Perspective

The history behind the formation of any lay centre has a direct relationship with the way it views and approaches contemporary social issues. This also, in good measure, accounts for some of the fundamental difficulties the Centres face or encounter today both in their programming, administration and relationships. If the root causes are going to be dealt with, it will require a self-assessment and evaluation of our history and background. A point for self-assessment and evaluation will be the consideration of the history of ecumenical formations in Africa. That is a look at the circumstances, reasons and how ecumenical associations came about. Often the reasons for ecumenical formation arise from factors outside of the churches themselves. In these instances ecumenism is not born out of theological understanding and convictions of the churches.

Some of these factors outside of, rather than from within, the churches are:

- (a) an action of government, especially when they potent direct adverse impact or consequence for the churches. Examples include; government take over of missionary establishments (schools, hospitals, etc.); adoption of a governing system which views Christianity negatively; government favoring another religion either in funding, appointments or approval of required facilities like land allocation.
- (b) a perceived threat by another faith usually if Christianity is in the minority or its dominant position is being challenged by the growth of other religions.
- (c) we have seen the merging of similar institutions or projects, previously owned and run by churches individually, due to financial difficulties.

A consideration of these factors reveals a protectionist and reactionist outlook rather an outgoing or outreaching one. The churches and the ecumenical bodies resulting from such reactions tend therefore to be inward looking and self-serving instead of people or community focused.

What do we do with our history and backgrounds? While we cannot change our history and the past we need to check what kind of path they have laid for us, where it has led us and the type of future this defines. The theological understanding and conviction of denominational churches in respect of the mind and mission of God concerning ecumenism in our divided and segregated world needs re-education, redefinition and reformation! Underlining perspectives and attitudes can be changed. The future can also be redefined.

ii. Ownership perspective

The other consideration has to do with who started, owns and runs the ecumenical outfit.

Denominationally owned Training Centres. These are centres owned by individual Christian denominations. They were established primarily:

- (a) to ensure the commitment of members to their church/denomination and in some instances provide welfare services like skill acquisition and health service to either assist their members or win new ones.

2 As part of the interactive process of critical self-assessment and evolution, Ejike Okoro, director of Institute of Church and Society, Arochukwu, examines the ministry of the different centres in Africa from different perspectives.

- (b) to train lay workers to either help with aspects of ministry like (catechists, sub-pastors or evangelists) or social workers for the organization of women, youth and the care of children.
- (c) as conference/retreat centres for the meetings and spiritual meditation of the church members.
- (d) as conference facilities open to members of the public for income generation.

For some much have not really changed in terms of the above activities except that they are now being given social transformation interpretations! The control and beliefs of the denomination make flexibility, initiatives, innovations, change and adaptability to new approaches difficult. However, denominational centres have greater survival potentials since their churches fund them.

Ecumenically owned Centres. These centres are owned by ecumenical bodies like national christian councils. They came into being either for social engagement and/or as guesthouses. While such ecumenical formation has greater freedom member churches of the council often poorly support them. Ecumenically owned centres are in a sense like the sheep belonging to the whole community but goes hungry because it is cared for by none! They largely depend on their ability to raise funds especially from foreign partners. Their survival and priorities therefore depend on and are influenced by external donors.

Centres owned by individuals or group of people. These centres are owned by individuals or a group of persons. Often these are individuals who have worked in other denominational/ ecumenical centres who later start their own centres. What may need to be checked will be the survival and continuity of these centres when their founders are no longer there. The enthusiasm of these centres seems to be sustained by the possibilities they have for international funding!

iii. The Perception of the Centres themselves

Some centres see themselves as social service centres. The challenge for them will be how to provide good services, facilities, environment and food..Other centres see their work as organization of conferences, seminars, workshops and training events. This is considered as a contribution to contemporary issues and in a hope that some social change will take place. The challenge then is to hold as many of these activities as possible. At their best they are at a limited level of facilitation. Then there are those centres which are project focused more or less. They believe that through these community or group based projects the quality of life of the participants will be improved. Often the projects have limited life in terms of the engagement of the initiating centres. There is a hope that the projects will be self-sustaining, expand or multiply on their own.

Perhaps very few centres consider themselves as having the vision of a new society, (the actualization transformation), as having the capacity to act as an intervening body, mobilize and facilitate actions for change. Few centres think that they can really enable significant changes in the life of the churches, religious beliefs and values of the local people or sociopolitical arena of their nation and communities around them. This dimension of operation will have a number of implications in the way centres are run and programming/project approaches. It will mean for example a shift to working with and mobilizing formal and informal groups/organizations in the villages and towns.

iv. The perspective of Centre Personnel

Some centre staff see their placement at centres as: job opportunity or means of livelihood church posting or transfer international exposure outlet “**Networks and Association of Laity**” **Training Centres ACLCA**. The ACLCA has through its several programs and training events acted as an intervening organization in assisting, equipping, reorienting and facilitating laity training centres in taking on social transformation issues.

Challenges have remained in the areas of resource materials, training manuals and tools, equipment, sufficient and qualified personnel, instability of trained staff (transfers, new jobs and long term studies e.t.c.). These have had impact on the effectiveness and continuity of lay training centres in Africa.

There is also the challenge of the churches understanding of its role in community life, societal and national events, and global trends. This has to do with the dilemma between a missionary outlook and direct social involvement. In both denominational and ecumenical theological institutions the curricula does not sufficiently prepare theological students and ministers to adequately interpret social issues and therefore ill-equip them to be engaged in them. Interestingly, products of theological schools often head lay centres! Apart from the efforts of ACLCA and similar bodies, other forms of training and education are necessary for the effective management, programming and capacities of lay centres’ personnel. Some of the areas will include community development, administration and management, and technical skills.

Social transformation will need to be moved from a concept of some sort of pass time or conscience soothing activity for both the churches and centre personnel, to a well-defined mission, a calling of the church with well equipped and in fact professional staff. It should be considered that the pivotal positioning of lay centres and theological institutions needs strategic approaches to their work. One of such strategic methods will be the development of lay centres from conference/seminar forum to capacities for interventions, mobilization, conscientization and work with formal and informal organized civil society. These include groups in the villages, traditional rulers, town unions in the cities, professional organizations, women/youth/men fellowships in the churches, and so on. It is the engagement of and ability to access these groups by lay training centres that can bring about radical transformation both within the churches and society. In other words, we should begin to see lay centres as intervening, mobilizing and capacity building institutions.

Holistic Mission and Ecumenism 3

A very famous Petroleum Drilling Company once heard that there was oil gushing out everywhere, in the fields, and in the streets, in the Middle East. The Company mobilized all her resources and went to the Middle East. When the Managing Director and his colleagues arrived at the airport, one of the underground pipes used to convey the aircraft fuel had just broken. The A1 Jet fuel was ‘gushing’ out of the ground with full force.

The MD ordered his men to call for Ocean tankers, load and sail back home. The crews of the tankers carried the hallmark on their ship “OIL WITHOUT LABOUR.”

This is unlike the parable of the “Hidden Treasure” Jesus tells us in Matt. 14:44-46.

3 In this reflection Musa J. Jambawi, of the Methodist Training Centre, Segbwena, Seirra-Leone, describes in a creative way how lay centres can be instruments of Holistic mission and Ecumenism. He illustrates this by telling the story about the drilling of petroleum and what we can learn from that story:

It is very easy for theological educators and their institutions to teach that the commission to go into the mission fields is found only Matt. 28:18-20. and out of this passage a series of dichotomous relationships could be built:

- * God commissioned only Christians. (Did he not work through King Nebuchadnezzar to discipline Israel; King Artaxerxes to rebuild Jerusalem?)
- * God commissioned only the clergy. (Were Peter and others clergymen before they were called and sent?)
- * God commissioned only the men. (Who were the first missionaries on Easter Sunday that carried the good news, that the Lord is risen, from the tomb to the disciples in Jerusalem?)
- * God commissioned only the Whiteman and whitewomen from Europe and America. (Was Simeon the Niger not among the prophets of the early Church at Antioch?)
- * God commissioned only the jungles of Africa to be the mission fields. (But Matt 28:20 recommends “all nations.”)

There is always the tendency to create too many dichotomies when Christians see mission as commissioned only in the New Testament. When we run out of stock in setting millions of dichotomies between the spiritual and the secular issues in the Bible, we start setting one denomination against the other. This is the HIV of ecumenism, we better call it EIV (Ecumenism Immuno-deficiency Virus)

Biblical Christianity is based upon a holistic approach of the Bible.

God did not commission only the clergy to go into the mission fields. He did not commission a particular race to go into the jungles of Africa as “the” mission field but to “all nations” and “to the end of the ages.” That means, if it does not end in the streets and cities, then it must begin there. Matt. 28:20 also says, “I am with you always.” Implying that mission is to be a continuous process. God commissioned all women and men, through all ages, to go into the mission fields, everywhere and everyday.

Is this type of ecumenism possible in Africa today? Do we all have to come to the “Methodist Training Centre” in Sierra Leone to wait for Ecumenism to start?

Yes, this type of ecumenism is possible in Africa today, among the laity training centres and beyond. It can even become better, now that we have so much technological resources to equip our centres with. Ephesians 4: 4-5 says:

“.... One body and one Spirit, just as there is one hope to which God has called you. one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all mankind ...”

ACLCA is one of the organs in that “One Body” Jesus Christ. In ACLCA as an organ, there are many parts namely, the member laity training centres. It is amazing to know the multiplicity of people and the diversity of the backgrounds of those who attend the ACLCA training events. At one CLLT that was held at Ibadan, Nigeria, up to ten different denominations, from seven different nations, were represented, including the Roman Catholic Church. At that CLLT in Ibadan, life was like what is described in Acts 2 :44, “All the believers continued together in close fellowship and sharing their belongings with one another.” We shared our knowledge, skills, culture, prayers, etc. with one another.

How transforming are these activities of the centres and ACLCA as a whole, especially to the community? Well, if all others fail, ACLCA will successfully transform the staff of her member centres into ecumenical tourists. How sad, if anyone stays only at this level! It is too shallow, too narrow, and too risky.

I am always glad to testify that the Methodist Training Centre stood unique and prominent in my academic and professional life even before I thought of working there.

The Methodist Training Centre is the only formal institution that my mother attended. It transformed my mother from an illiterate housewife to a housewife that was able to read and write in Mende, her mother-tongue. She also acquired other skill from there, which made her motherhood 80% successful. (She had ten children and eight of us attained adulthood.)

My mother was one of those who transformed me from purely English-literate to Mende-literate as well. On one of her visits to the Methodist Training Centre, she bought a copy of the Mende version of the "Pilgrim' Progress" by John Bunyan. After reading it she gave it to me, and it was the first book I read on my own. To encourage it to read it, she often asked me to tell her the stories as I made progress. And she would listen to me as if she had never read the book before. This gave literacy life as well as spiritual life to my childhood education.

This is the ultimate goal of the activities of the ACLCA member Centres. We train the laity, especially the women and youths, for them to go back to their homes to train their own children and others, for future leadership positions in their local communities.

Challenges and opportunities

The above reflections by Ejike Okoro (Institute of church & society – representing an ecumenical centre) and Musa Jambawi (Methodist Training centre, Segbwana, representing a denominational centre) illustrate the challenge and opportunities for the christian lay centres in Africa. From these reflection it can be seen that African christian lay centres face challenges of engaging the churches to see social transformation as part of Christ's mission in the world. A number of centres as part of their survival have reduced the ministry of their centres to that of providing facilities for other groups and no longer run programmes of their own. In other words they have become like Motels. A number of lay centres especially denominational centres continue to be engaged in traditional educational courses – which do not raise issues of social transformation. Others do not have qualified staff committed to issues of social transformation; while others are not clear what programmes should be run at the centres, their rationale or educational methodologies, that can be used as tools for transforming their centres to be centres of social transformation. Many centres are facing funding difficulties and are merely struggling to survive.

However, from these reflections, it can also be seen that a number of staff that have gone through ACLCA's courses for leadership in lay training (CLLTs) are making a conscious effort in spite of whatever limitations, to see and understand the mission of christian lay centres as instruments of church renewal, justice, peace, reconciliation and healing. To this end we can identify a number of African lay centres that represent this deliberate effort to be instruments of transformation.

The Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation (MEF), in Kitwe, Zambia is a case in point. Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation, founded in 1958, was established with the support of the WCC to be a centre of study, worship and consultations, to meet the needs of the church and community, in the area of training for leadership, research, consultation, and conferences. The contribution of conferences, research, and consultations, made Mindolo to be a 'Think Tank' for generating ideas some of which were translated into social action, especially in the period during the struggle for Zambia's Independence. It was a place that provided space where people regardless of race, religion, or political background, could meet, hence promoting dignity, freedom self-determination and reconciliation.

Currently Mindolo offers a Pan-African & Certificate and Diploma Course in Peace Building & Conflict Transformation. Mindolo believes that peace education rooted in the African experience, and undertaken in the context of the conflicts, provides more solid analysis and reflective action in the pursuit of a culture of peace. Above all, Africa needs to evolve her own models, approaches, processes and frameworks that are culturally sensitive and historically minded. Africans themselves can best undertake this task.

Given its rich social change history, Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation's ultimate goal is to become a leading study centre for Conflict Studies and Peace Building, and help restore the rights of the child, especially orphans and vulnerable children. The World Council of Churches and the United Nations system in Zambia have also identified Mindolo as a potential empowerment service-provider for capacity building.

Wilgespruit Fellowship Centre

The Wilgespruit Fellowship centre (WFC) illustrates the role of lay centres as instruments of promoting the spirit of reconciliation. Wilgespruit Fellowship Centre, Founded in 1948, played a crucial role as an inter-racial centre, challenging apartheid South Africa, and creating an environment where people regardless of race – black or white could live together (dwell, eat, work, study and worship as one group) – based on the principle of love and respect for one another. Such a place existed nowhere in South Africa on a permanent basis. WFC filled this gap. In post apartheid South Africa, WFC set up a peace centre in 1995, inaugurated by none other than Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Nelson Mandela, and F.W. de Klerk, a true symbolic demonstration of forgiveness, peace and reconciliation.

Conclusion

In conclusion therefore it can be said that lay training centres have a unique role in promoting the spirit of peace, reconciliation and healing within the framework of social transformation. They are organs of churches in promoting peace and reconciliation in the world. They can use their space to create an environment of healing, forgiveness, and pastoral care.

With this conviction and commitment to work for alternative Models of development, ACLCA has continued through its lay leadership courses (CLLTs) to engage the centres to confront issues of justice and peace as part of their Christian witness in the world in which we live: Lay centres are challenged to constantly review and redefine their role – as educational centres, by continually looking at the curriculum as well as the methodology of learning, raising the question of education as a tool for liberation or domination. ACLCA has also encouraged the centres to open their doors to the community by identifying with them, sharing their joy and sorrow, listening to them, hence being instruments of community empowerment.

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THEOLOGICAL LIBRARIES TOOLS OF EVANGELISM AND ECUMENISM

Catherine Maina Ouma

“Until the church invests – truly invests, with funds that show some realistic correlation between a vision of meaningful theological education and the resources needed to carry out that vision - then pronouncements about how important well-trained church leaders, clergy and lay, are to the church remain but empty words.”
(The Anitepam bulletin May-August 2001)

Introduction

The All African Conference of Churches is a fellowship of Christian churches in Africa. To date 168 member churches and National Christian Councils spread out in 39 African countries comprise the AACC constituency. The AACC Documentation Centre is an ecumenical research library collecting and collating information on African theological issues. As an outreach service to the member churches, the centre acquires materials beyond our immediate needs with a wide readership in mind. In a continent where our public libraries are poorly developed, churches and church based institutions should be encouraged to gather resources for their own local use by their church leaders and parishioners. Presence of centres of information is a milestone in the establishment of institutions of learning by churches. They form a nerve centre for the academic life of the institution by providing research and study materials for the success of the institutions' academic programmes and for advancement of life-long education.

Early Church Leadership Training

In Africa, early formation of church leadership was mostly done in the West. The Africanisation of the Christian church created the need for well-trained church leaders to respond to the numerical growth of the church. Scholarship programmes were set up. Students were enrolled in western colleges for diploma, graduate and post-graduate studies. The students utilized study and research materials obtainable from the well-developed libraries in these Western academic institutions. Upon their return, they comprised our first batch of well-trained indigenous African church leaders who have today stirred our churches and church based organizations to great heights.

The foreign study and research programmes were however not without shortcomings. Beneficiaries relied on foreign literature resources. These are materials written by western research fraternity within their own contexts. Our students relied on these to provide them with knowledge and skills in fulfillment of their academic programmes. Their lecturers and tutors as well probably knew little of their students' backgrounds. The western environment denied students the opportunity for contextual learning.

In a continent ravaged by violence and armed conflicts, HIV/Aids, corruption, cultism, divisions and other social-economic woes, home-grown solutions are needed for the numerous problems afflicting our churches and society at large. Contextual learning challenges and inspires the mind and is an aid to problem solving.

Fortunately in Africa today, development and equipment of our own institutions has lessened the need to train our church leaders abroad. Many churches, both mainline and African instituted, have embarked on different modules of theological formation ranging from full-time, part-time to Theological Education by Extension programmes. To offer these training, churches have established institutions of learning ranging from colleges to universities. In Kenya for example, such institutions are in no short supply: Methodist University, Catholic University, Nazarene Univer-

sity, St. Paul's United Theological College, Daystar University, Nairobi Evangelical School of Theology, Pastoral Institute Kikuyu, proposed Presbyterian University ... the list is endless.

Availability and accessibility to relevant literature is a major milestone in provision of theological education and for development of church leadership of the youth, women and men. However the reality is that African Theological Institutions and programmes of training are plagued by paucity of relevant literature for study and research. The onus is upon us to provide relevant literature for our knowledge programmes and break the chain of reliance on foreign literature and ideologies therein. To address this paucity, stakeholders - churches, publishers and foreign partners, must work together to develop libraries and information centres in our efforts in providing relevant literature for study and research by our students. A truly African theological thought can be hatched and nurtured from own local literature - oral or written.

Many church leaders I have come into contact with in the course of my work have greatly appreciated the role of the AACC Ecumenical Resource Centre in providing African Christian literature and information. The leaders often lament the absence, in their own churches and colleges, of relevant and accessible literature to continuously refresh and update their knowledge in the Christian ministry and keep abreast of emerging social concerns.

Numerous factors have contributed to the paucity of African theological literature for both academic programmes and for life long (continuing) education. Research reports, theses and dissertations generated by African students trained abroad remain on the library shelves and are property of the host institutions of learning. How can we ensure that these research reports of past, current and future students abroad are channeled back to inform our generation and posterity? These materials, if made available through publishing would help to challenge and stimulate thoughts of our own students to articulate, formulate and advance an authentic African Christian thought and help to shape and direct the ever changing mission of the church. The church, like any other social institution is called to change with time in order to face challenges such as that of globalization.

The above scenario is true for documented experiences of early missionaries activities, church planting and evangelization, which remained their property and in most cases they took them back home when time to wind up their missions came. African theological libraries should be empowered to at least repossess copies of these vital documents for students' research and study into church history and missionary activities. Unfortunately, archiving has not been given priority in most of our institutions and even where archiving work is going on, staff and readers are frustrated by lack of documents. The AACC has been interested in African Missionary archives held by the Inter Documentation Company (IDC). IDC, an international publishing company based in Leiden, The Netherlands, has put on microfiche a rich and varied collection of missionary archives. Unfortunately, AACC plans to acquire relevant documents for research on African Church have not come to fruition owing to the cost of acquiring the microform documents. Even after their acquisition, we will need the accompanying technology of microfiche readers to access information therein raising their cost even higher! The absence of relevant documents has hampered African students to research as available research grants are too small for the beneficiaries to use for travel abroad.

The publishing industry in Africa, especially Christian publishing, is riddled with multiplicity of problems, greatest of them all being lack of funds, which makes financing of their publishing activities difficult. As a result they cannot meet the challenge to publish a lot of worthy manuscripts by African writers on theological topics. This does not encourage African writers and researchers into African theological issues as many manuscripts are left to gather dust on the publisher's shelves. If these are published and made accessible for readers through libraries, formation of church leaders will be greatly enhanced. Parishioners and church ministers will keep their knowledge of social economic and cultural developments up to date. Libraries provide an alternative source of information to our society. They must be accorded a central place in our

learning institutions, failure of which we risk producing church leaders who cannot identify themselves with the social economic situations of their times.

Libraries and ICT

Non-print sources of information such as the Internet and compact discs are modern and relatively cheap sources of information. 'Relative' because though the start-up cost is high (hardware) it presents a lot other opportunities to access a whole world of information. African theological libraries should be empowered to keep abreast and embrace new information communication technologies for provision of information and move away from reliance on only printed sources of information. Modernization is fast catching up with Africans. Before we can move from our largely oral society to a print society we are already leaping to the non-print society.

AACC is working with churches to sensitize and empower them through training of information managers for capacity building in the area of information management. Addressing one such training course, the AACC General Secretary, Rev. Clement Janda called on churches in Africa to ensure the presence of functional documentation centres as an integral part of their work. He called on church libraries to make use of new information technology to make information available to consumers in the shortest time and most efficient manner possible.

Networking and Information Sharing

The existing international, regional and local ecumenical structures provide ready framework within which libraries can establish information sharing networks. This would give readers an opportunity to access more information materials located far and wide. It is a fact that no single library can gather under one roof all the information materials produced in the world. Cooperation for information sharing will profit readers who will benefit from access to information held elsewhere in Africa at minimum cost. Our institutions must be sensitized on the need for information sharing and move away from compartmentalization mentality.

Library cooperation and networking is an existing reality especially among the big well-established libraries. However church based institutional libraries have not been enabled to exploit this opportunity due to lack of modern facilities, not to mention the lack of skilled library human power. More librarians in Africa must come together and explore ways and means of sharing their information resources making use of networking technologies for the benefit of study and research programmes of their institutions.

Today many organizations in the west are investing a lot of resources in development of theological programmes with all sorts of assistance in cash and kind for the same. Libraries, as service providers, rarely have programmes that can attract donor funding. Unfortunately, a library is a costly endeavor. Building and developing a collection of information materials requires financial commitment. Subscription for journals, a recurrent expenditure, is important for readers to keep abreast of changes in order to remain relevant and up to date. Many librarians supplement scarcity of funds through other collection development strategies. For example at the AACC we have in place library exchange programmes and library cooperation to supplement our own purchased resources. In recognition of the central role played by a library in advancing African theological thought and in fulfillment of our academic pursuits, our institutions need to be more committed financially to the well-fare and well-being of our libraries.

Libraries are tools of evangelism and ecumenism. The accelerated growth of academic programmes, to cope with increasing need for well-trained church leaders and the vibrant quest for knowledge by clergy and laity, present a challenge and an excellent growth opportunity for our libraries. We are confident that stakeholders will commit more resources for libraries to cope with this challenge.

WHAT THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION FOR AFRICA TODAY?'

Kenneth R. Ross

Great Expectations

Not long after I started teaching at the University of Malawi in Zomba in 1988, I was in the University Library one day when I became aware of a commotion taking place in one corner of the otherwise silent reading room. On investigation I discovered that a heated discussion was taking place among some of the junior staff who were supposed to be returning books to their places on the shelves. What was it all about? Quickly I gathered that the question at the center of their debate was how it could be possible for Jesus Christ to be, at the same time, both divine and human. Not a question that would surprise you in a systematic theology classroom but here it was as a point of pressing and urgent concern to some of the most junior members of the support staff. I thought back to the situation in the UK – if you encountered a group of ordinary people, blue-collar workers, in a heated debate what are the chances they would be discussing the hypostatic union of divine and human in the person of Jesus Christ? Not very high! This chance encounter brought home to me what an entirely different context I had entered in regard to the provenance of the theological endeavour. Here was a world much more like that of the early church when it was said that in Constantinople you could not buy a loaf of bread without the baker asking you what you thought about the question of the person of Christ!

Later I read this comment of Harold Turner:

Theology as a science depends upon access to its appropriate data in their most authentic and vital forms. If we regard the data of theology as being the revelations and acts of the Divine, the post-biblical and contemporary manifestations of these data will occur less vividly in a dispirited Western Church with declining numbers and morale. On the other hand, the data will be more evident and accessible in unsophisticated churches where the living God is taken seriously as present in the healing and conquering power of the Spirit, with a gospel-generated growth and a spiritual creativity and confidence. Here at the growing edges of Christianity in its most dynamic forms, the theologian is encouraged to do scientific theology again, because he [or she] has a whole living range of contemporary data on which to work. It is not that these dynamic areas of the Christian world are free from imperfection; but being full of old and new heresies they need theology and offer it an important task.²

This was the reality which I had sensed in my early encounter with the junior library staff and over eleven years of participation in the theological task in Africa, my sense of its excitement, dynamism, privilege and responsibility grew ever wider and deeper. I believe it is important to begin here because there is no doubt that in a meeting like this one it will be necessary to focus on the deficiencies, weaknesses and shortcomings of African theological institutions and theologians. That is a necessary function of a forum like this one. But please do not lose sight of this great underlying reality – that there is a field in Africa for theological investigation, analysis, hypothesis and construction which offers to the whole world the prospect of a great refreshment and renewal

¹ Paper presented at the African Forum Consultation, Churches Commission on Mission (CCOM) of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, 16-18 April 2002. The theme was “What Theological Education for Today”. The paper is used with permission of the author.

² Harold W. Turner, “The Contribution of Studies on Religion in Africa to Western Religious Studies”, in Mark Glasswell and Edward Fashole-Luke ed., *New Testament Christianity for Africa and the World*, London: SPCK, 1974, pp. 177-78.

of our understanding of Christian faith that may be key to its prospects in the 21st century. There are enviable strengths here which have already begun to be exploited to the benefit of the whole *oecumene*.

“Authentic theological scholarship,” writes Andrew Walls, “must arise out of Christian mission and, therefore, from the principal theatres of mission. Theology is about making Christian decisions in critical situations, and it is in the southern continents that those decisions will be most pressing, and the key theological developments are accordingly to be looked for.”³

In this sense we turn to the theological task in Africa with a sense both of reverence and of excitement, fuelled by the expectation that here is a journey which leads to the rediscovery of Jesus Christ for our time.

Expectation and Reality

We have to admit, however, that this sense of creativity and discovery is not always immediately apparent in the average African theological institution. Even today, when we are quite far into the postcolonial period, you can still find many a seminary which, both in content and in method, has done little more than transplant a traditional Western curriculum on to the soil of Africa. Students laboriously fulfil the demands of an alien system for which they feel no ownership and which bears little relation either to their earlier life or to their future service. Even when a course on African theology is added to the inherited curriculum it is often framed within the parameters already laid down rather than opening up new ways of doing theology. In the words of Benezet Bujo: “African theology is a reaction.”⁴ This has meant that even impressive efforts at theological reconstruction have tended to remain in the abstract, unconnected with the vibrant religious life which ought to form their natural source and context. This has been recognised even by some of the foremost exponents of such theology. Charles Nyamiti has written that: “none of the existing African Christologies has had any appreciable influence in the life of the African churches.”⁵

This detachment of the theological enterprise from the life and faith of the community is manifest not only in the construction of theology but equally in the institutions of theological education. The institutional development of theological education in Africa has tended to have somehow a life of its own and to remain detached from the reality with which it is supposedly engaged - the spread of the gospel and the call to discipleship within African societies and cultures. As Kwame Bediako trenchantly remarks:

“... these forms of theological training in themselves constitute a crisis for Africa, in that they appear not to connect with the redeeming, transforming activity of the Living God in the African setting, and so are ineffectual in equipping God’s people for mission and for the transformation of African society.”⁶

³ Andrew F. Walls, “Christian Scholarship in Africa in the Twenty-First Century”, *Journal of African Christian Thought*, Vol. 4/2 (December 2001), p. 47.

⁴ Benezet Bujo, *African Theology in its Social Context*, New York: Orbis, 1992, p. 75.

⁵ Charles Nyamiti, “African Christologies Today” in R.J. Schreiter ed., *Faces of Jesus in Africa*, London: SCM, 1992, p. 18. In the same vein Aylward Shorter described African theology as “a notional theology ... not couched ... in the grammar of real assent – the imaginative expression of popular faith. Aylward Shorter, “Folk Christianity and Functional Christology”, *AFER*, vol. 24 no. 3 (June 1982), p. 135.

⁶ Kwame Bediako, “The African Renaissance and Theological Reconstruction: the Challenge of the Twenty-first Century”, *Journal of African Christian Thought* Vol. 4/2 (December 2001), p. 29.

It seems to me that there is need for a reorientation of theology so that it springs naturally from the dynamism of popular faith and from the struggles of the believing community. The need and the opportunity in the African situation today is for a theology which is much more adventurous and original. As in earlier periods of renewal and reformation there is the possibility of rethinking Christianity in new thought forms, in response to new challenges and by drawing on resources never before utilised in the exposition of the faith. Here lies the ground for confidence on the part of those concerned for theological education in Africa. In front of us stands the possibility of a theology which, in the words of Kwame Bediako, is founded upon “new ventures of faith, new initiatives of intellectual and spiritual formation and new practical obedience to the call of the Living God in engagement with the world”.⁷

In calling for confidence and for an adventurous approach I am immediately conscious that conditions in most of Africa are not such as to encourage a sense of adventure. Quite the reverse – with desperate food shortages, the onset of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the crumbling of social institutions, the meltdown of political structures and sometimes even the outbreak of civil war, it is not an environment with much luxury for dilettante intellectual adventures. Comfortable and often bored Westerners go off on adventure holidays to break out of the stifling security and tedium of their lives. In most African situations today there is no need to manufacture dangers and risks – they press in from every side. This makes it hard to think of doing anything other than to think of safety first and sustaining inherited patterns and securing your own position often looks like the safe thing to do. We who come from the outside to share in some small measure in the theological task in Africa need to remember that we have the luxury of coming and going. It is easy for us to have an adventurous spirit when it is not our very life and whole future which is at stake. It is quite a different perspective you have when you have nowhere else to go and you face an environment which bristles with threats and dangers. Caution and conservatism are quite natural reactions.

Yet is there not in the call of Christ a call to adventure whatever our circumstances? Is there not a sense in which it is against all the odds that God calls us to show what our faith is made of? Is it not ours to walk in the way of Abraham who “against all hope ... in hope believed ... who faced the fact that his body was as good as dead ... and that Sarah’s womb was also dead. Yet ... did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God”?⁸ It is in the most impossible of situations that faith ventures forth and shows what it is worth. It is from this perspective that I dare to suggest that there are some adventurous steps which might be taken by theological education in Africa.

I would like to suggest three areas which call for theological adventure and then three areas of tension which need to be explored. The first three are more to do with setting the theological agenda while the second three are more to do with the institutional shape of theological education.

Engaging with History

As I pondered the problem of the apparent detachment of theology and theological education from the concrete reality of the peoples of Africa, one thing which impressed itself upon me was the lack of attention to *history* in the theological discussion. Culture has been the primary dialogue partner for theology and indeed a very serious conversation about faith and culture has been much needed since Christianity was so often introduced in a way which was insensitive to cultural realities. The problem I find with the discourse is that it has been a timeless, a historical understanding of culture which has tended to prevail. Theology is essentially a dialogue between the biblical text and the vernacular world in Africa. Certainly this is a rich and dynamic field and will continue to be necessary and rewarding. However, it is one where little attention tends to be paid to the

⁷ Kwame Bediako, “The African Renaissance and Theological Reconstruction”, p. 29.

⁸ Romans 8:18-20.

concrete circumstances of the believing community within which this dialogue occurs. A 'faith and culture' approach tends to posit an engagement between a static religious entity and a timeless sphere of culture.⁹

What is missed here is the fact that the community in which the meeting between Christian faith and traditional culture takes place is a community moving through a particular history. This offers a source for doing theology which I believe has been insufficiently tapped: the history of the Christian communities in Africa as they have responded to the times through which they have lived. It is precisely within the dynamic history of the encounter of African peoples with Christian faith, amidst social change, that African cultural identity can be properly understood in theological terms.

Such attention to history is proper to Christian faith. The people of Israel in Old Testament times were distinguished by this – that in contrast to the other peoples round about them, they found the matrix of their religious life not by reference to nature but rather by reference to a particular history. This concentration on history as the primary locus of divine revelation is intensified in the New Testament where we find the faith of the first Christians so firmly centred on the history connected with Jesus Christ that very little is said about other forms of revelation. This fundamental concentration on the particular history of Jesus Christ leads also to an appreciation of the significance of every moment of history. The coming of Christ to a particular time and place does not act to render every other time and place of no account. Quite the reverse – it serves to charge every location and every moment with the capacity to be the time and the place where we meet with the God who comes near to us in Jesus Christ. It also means that we know God not by separating ourselves from what is happening in the history of our time but rather by engaging with it and discerning where Jesus Christ is in it and what it means to follow him in that particular context.

The particular history through which a church passes is, I want to suggest, a crucible within which a viable theology can be formed. As the attempt is made to ground Christian faith in the vernacular life of the communities in which it is making its home, the referent is not only the indigenous language and culture of the Christian community but also its indigenous history. The particular history through which it has passed, the crises it has met and the response it has offered have acted to form a robust and well-defined identity. Theology rising from this history will not lack roots in real experience.

Perhaps the hesitation of African theologians to draw on history as a source for theological construction stems from a sense that the churches have been formed by "someone else's history", and that therefore it is a foreign and alienating point of reference. Yet, by now, many African church movements have themselves passed through a rich and challenging history. This offers to the theologian material that is wholly indigenous, deeply rooted in the life of the people, and calling for the discernment of the work of the Spirit of God. It avoids the trap of inculturating the gospel into the culture of a bygone age and attempts an authentic indigenisation through constant reference to the concrete experience of the believing community. The turning to Christ of a particular community is examined in the context of social change and crisis, which ensures that the resultant theology is true to the experience of the local community.

To lay the foundation for theology to engage with history, it is necessary first for the history to be put in place. That means research to unfold the history of particular churches and to discern the key issues around which their identity has taken shape. In Africa this means putting a focus on

⁹ This characterisation was suggested by Adrian Hastings when he commented that African theology became early "something of a dialogue between the African Christian scholar and the perennial religions and spiritualities of Africa". Adrian Hastings, *African Christianity: An Essay in Interpretation*, London & Dublin: Geoffrey Chapman, 1976, p. 51.

the areas which aroused most concern among African communities when they were considering the challenge of the Christian gospel: issues such as traditional marriage systems, kinship loyalties, rites of passage, social clubs, traditional medicine, oracles and festivals. It places the Christian community in the wider context of the economic, social and political currents, which were shaping the times. It has to enter a highly contested field where the ambiguous and sometimes damaging effects of Christianity in Africa have to be taken seriously into account.¹⁰ It is when all this is worked through at the local level that the materials begin to emerge for the making of a theology, which answers to the empirical reality in which people live their lives.

The importance of earthing theology in the concrete histories of particular communities is that it is then so much better able to take account of today's history. When a time of crisis comes or particular local issues have to be addressed there is no huge unbridgeable gulf between the theological discourse of the church and the empirical reality with which people are faced. Equally it is equipped to generate the theological resources needed to address great historical movements such as those of globalisation or militarisation which we face today; or such great contemporary African issues as nation-building, governance, food security and economic development. Already theology has been engaged with such matters as they have arisen in the historical experience of particular people. Thus it is poised to engender the prophetic word which brings transformation when a fresh crisis has to be faced.¹¹

Engaging with the Other

Another problem I detect in much of the theological discourse is its rather self-enclosed character. There are many fine exceptions to this but I have the impression that quite a lot of theological writing and teaching has not arisen out of an in-depth engagement with others – with those who come with the tools of other disciplines or who stand quite outside the Christian community. Rather than an open, transparent and broadly engaged discourse, it has sometimes struck me that the process of theological education is more akin to initiation into a mystery religion. Knowledge is understood as power and progress is a matter of entering ever deeper into an esoteric discourse which has ever less connection with the wider context but bestows power to the holder within the particular community of the church. Have we forgotten that the gospel is, in Lesslie Newbigin's words, an "*open secret*"?¹² Have we rather used knowledge acquired through theological education as a means of securing and maintaining power – power, for example, of men over women, or clergy over laity, or the elderly over the youth? These may be painful questions but they have to be faced.

If theology is to be open to all then it means that the construction of theology has to be undertaken with a wide range of participants and dialogue partners. Let other disciplines bring their questions and offer their insights. Insist on the voices of women and young people being heard in the conversation. Listen to the others who stand outside of Christian faith yet share in the context and in the struggles of the community. In particular, draw into the conversation that other great faith community whose adherents span the continent. As Leonard Barlotti has written: "Islam represents the challenge of the Other, the Samaritan who is theologically near and far, both open and closed."¹³ An open and contextualised African Christian theology is going to be characterised by engagement at a deep level with the challenge of Islam.

¹⁰ See further Tinyiko S. Maluleke, "Christianity in a Distressed Africa: A Time to Own and to Own Up", *Missionalia*, Vol. 26/3 (November 1998), pp. 324-340.

¹¹ See further Kenneth R. Ross, "Doing Theology with a New Historiography", *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, No. 99 (November 1997), pp. 94-98.

¹² Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: Sketches for a Missionary Theology*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978, my italics.

¹³ Leonard N. Barlotti, "Open Access in Closed Societies: Theological Education in Muslim Contexts", *Transformation*, Vol. 18/2 (April 2001), p. 99.

Here it is worth heeding the words of John Pobee who observes that:

“For a healthy perspective on religious pluralism, we must learn to encounter the religions not as rival institutions and doctrines, but as attracting human persons also created by the same God but who nevertheless have different faith commitments, and engaging them and their insights with humility and respect. The notion of the humanity of the other must never be lost.”¹⁴

This is actually what happens on the ground in the concrete experience of many African communities but it has somehow often failed to be reflected in the formal theological discourse. The shared life and common discourse which is apparent in many an African village where both Christianity and Islam are present needs to be taken up and reflected into formal theological education. This is necessary for the sake of a socially responsible theology for these two great sections of the African community have to find ways to forge common understanding and initiate united action for justice, peace and the integrity of creation. It also gives an opportunity for the renewal of theology because it gives it a new addressee. As Alexander Malik of Pakistan points out: “Confessing of Christ in an Islamic context means our Christology – indeed, every element of theology – ought to be developed within an Islamic religio-socio-cultural situation and addressed to it.”¹⁵ Taking theology to that missionary frontier will be good for it. It also opens up a possibility for a new kind of engagement between Christianity and Islam, one which is no longer haunted by the crusades and the tensions between western Europe and the Ottoman Empire.¹⁶ “It is in Africa,” suggests Kwame Bediako, “that Christianity and Islam meet each other on something approaching an equal footing, and where each has been shaped, to varying degrees, by the primal religions and by the primal imagination.”¹⁷ There is space in Africa for Christian-Muslim encounter which recognises in a new way the commonality and kinship of the two faiths as well as the points of mutual critique and challenge. Certainly, one of the adventures that beckons for Christian theology is a much closer engagement with Islam, the “other who is both near and far”.

Engaging with the HIV/AIDS Epidemic

There is no need in a forum like this one to explain the impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the African situation today. It is cutting short the lives of children and young adults on an unprecedented scale – the statistics do not have to be repeated. These losses to the community – each one loved, each one precious – have inevitably had a traumatic effect on the whole community. The Mulanje Mission Hospital medical director Bram Sizoo spoke recently of Malawi as being on the verge of “social chaos and total breakdown”.¹⁸ Tinyiko Maluleke has stated in a recent article: “HIV/AIDS is not just a virus that afflicts individual human bodies. It is a condition of life – a condition in which millions of Africans find themselves whether their individual bodies are HIV positive or not. In this condition, people live in fear, suspicion and great insecurity.”¹⁹ Taking account of this context, we have to reckon with Maluleke’s question: “How can theological

¹⁴ John S. Pobee, “Ecumenical Formation in the Service of a Renewed Church”, *The Ecumenical Review*, Vol. 53 No. 3 (2001), p. 326.

¹⁵ Alexander J. Malik, “Confessing Christ in the Islamic Context”, in R.S. Sugirtharajah ed., *Asian Faces of Jesus*, New York: Orbis, 1993, p. 79.

¹⁶ David Kerr hints at what this might involve when he writes: “The future of Christian-Muslim relations requires a decolonization of the mind, and the creation of a new mental map in which Islam and Christianity increasingly co-exist in shared geographical, cultural, social and political space.” David A. Kerr, “Islamic *Da’wa* and Christian Mission: Towards a Comparative Analysis”, *International Review of Mission*, Vol. LXXXIX No. 353 (April 2000), p. 164.

¹⁷ Kwame Bediako, “A Half Century of African Christian Thought: Pointers to Theology and Theological Education in the Next Half Century”, *Journal of African Christian Thought*, Vol. 3/1 (June 2000), p. 10.

¹⁸ Church of Scotland, *Reports to the General Assembly 2002*.

education in Africa be conducted in a ‘business-as-usual’ manner when thousands and millions of Africans are dying of HIV/AIDS?”²⁰ The fact that so little progress has been made in developing curriculum that takes the epidemic fully into account, suggests that theologians and theological institutions have shared in the “denial” with which both people and politicians have often initially responded to the onset of large-scale incidence of HIV/AIDS. However, we are by now aware that attempting to ignore the disease is one of the factors which allows it to spread most rapidly.

In his important book *God in AIDS*, Ronald Nicolson observes that “every now and then something comes along which changes the way we think about everything” and suggests that the AIDS pandemic is in this category.²¹ This means that the encounter with the impact of the epidemic is a formative moment for Christian theology. Here in Africa is an opportunity for Christian theology to go somewhere it has never been before, to engage with questions of theodicy, of mortality, of sexuality which have never before been focussed in this particular way. Let me give just a couple of examples of areas of theology, which are cast in a new light through this encounter.

The epidemic challenges the Christian understanding of creation and redemption. There is a theological journey to be made to reassert the Christian conviction that every human being, without exception, is created in the image of God and is loved by God so much that he sent the Son into the world. There is a need to address those who are stigmatised on account of their HIV-positive status with the good news of a Saviour who has taken away our stigma by taking it on himself. There is need to hold out the strong hope that none of the ravages of AIDS can ever cancel out the image of God in the sufferers nor do they ever go beyond the reach of God’s love. In the last stages of their illness AIDS sufferers may be blind, incontinent and demented yet the love of God, Creator and Redeemer, is strong enough to be with them in that dark valley. Even in torment and abandonment we can find comfort and hope through the crucified Christ who “loved us and gave himself for us”. The church has a special calling to teach and to live this message amidst the catastrophe.

To think of what the church is in the context of the epidemic is to remember that to belong to the church of Jesus Christ, is to be part of a body where “if one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it.” What a source of strength this is in time of need! At the same time, it lays upon each of us a responsibility “not to look only to our own interests but also to the interests of others”. In the context of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, it means that no member of the church can be unaffected as so many brothers and sisters are infected with the virus. If one has AIDS, we all have AIDS. The virus has infected our body. It is a crisis which involves the whole membership of the church. “Bear one another’s burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ.”

The onslaught of the epidemic has also revealed gaps in the church’s theology. It has to be acknowledged that the church has usually found it very difficult to name the issues raised by HIV/AIDS. In particular, the whole area of sexual health and fulfilment is one which has often been excluded from the worship and teaching of the church. Participants at a Global Consultation on the Ecumenical Response to the Challenge of HIV/AIDS in Africa held in Nairobi in November 2001 observed that:

¹⁹ Tinyiko S. Maluleke, “The Challenge of HIV/AIDS for Theological Education in Africa: Towards an HIV/AIDS Sensitive Curriculum”, *Missionalia* Vol. 29/2 (August 2001), p. 138.

²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 129.

²¹ Ronald Nicolson, *God in AIDS*, London: SCM, 1996, p.1.

As the pandemic has unfolded, it has exposed fault lines that reach to the heart of our theology, our ethics, our liturgy and our practice of ministry. Today, churches are being obliged to acknowledge that we have – however unwittingly – contributed actively and passively to the spread of the virus. Our difficulty in addressing issues of sex and sexuality has often made it painful for us to engage, in any honest and realistic way, with issues of sex education and HIV prevention. Our tendency to exclude others, our interpretation of the scriptures and our theology of sin have all combined to promote the stigmatisation, exclusion and suffering of people with HIV or AIDS. This has undermined the effectiveness of care, education and prevention efforts and inflicted additional suffering on those already affected by the HIV. Given the extreme urgency of the situation, and the conviction that the churches do have a distinctive role to play in the response to the epidemic, what is needed is a rethinking of our mission, and the transformation of our structures and ways of working.²²

Rethinking is the task of theology and here is a challenge that cannot be shirked if African theological institutions are to offer Africa today the service it requires. Just as HIV/AIDS is eating at the heart of every community in the highly affected areas, so the issues it raises must be brought to the heart of the theological curriculum. This is not a matter of an additional course or a new section in the pastoral theology programme. No, it is a matter of teaching biblical studies and systematic theology and church history that these disciplines are brought to bear on the question which day and night fills the minds of students and teachers alike: how to cope with the onset of the HIV/AIDS epidemic? To do less will be to fail in our responsibility to the community. But to accept this challenge and engage with it is to open up the possibility of a significant renewal of Christian theology for it has to face very sharp questions which, though painful at first, may render in the end a more mature and balanced and faithful understanding of that which is given to us in Jesus Christ.

I turn now to three areas of tension, which call for creative development.

Indigenization and Catholicity

A perennial tension in the Christian faith is that between the local and the global. For Christianity has a built-in drive to become truly rooted in the local situation wherever it goes – that is the logic of the incarnation. Yet no Christian community can ever allow itself to be entirely absorbed by the local for it is ever aware that, ultimately, it is the citizen of another country and that as it journeys to that promised land it travels with an ecumenical accountability which connects it with a wider global community. This tension has been particularly marked in Africa since cultural alienation was such a marked feature of the reception of the gospel. Hence always pushing to the top of the theological agenda has been the question of indigenization – how to bring together African identity and Christian identity so that Africans can have integrity and wholeness in their profession of the faith. Yet at the same time it has been part of the appeal of Christianity in Africa that it enables Africans to come with all their gifts into a global community of faith.

How then is African Christian theology to relate to the wider discourse of the world-wide church? Or, to put the question institutionally, how can the seminaries and theological colleges of Africa be related in a healthy way to the Christian communion in the wider world? Here I turn to David Clement Scott, a Scottish missionary who was active in southern Malawi just over 100 years ago and who developed an approach which seems to me still to have value in meeting the challenge of indigeneity and catholicity. His fundamental approach to mission in Africa comes through in the following lines, written in 1895: “We must beware of woodenness in our development of African

²² “Plan of Action: The Ecumenical Response to HIV/AIDS in Africa”, World Council of Churches Global Consultation on the Ecumenical Response to the Challenge of HIV/AIDS in Africa”, Nairobi, Kenya, 25-28 November 2001, p. 2.

Life. To attempt to force on Africa the details of Church life and organisation at home is we believe fatal to true growth. African life must be met in its own way, and it will grow on its own lines.... We have said it again and again, and we repeat *ad nauseam* that the African has got his own gift of Life and Work to present to the Catholic Church.”²³ This powerful vision of an African Christianity, which would enrich the world, was balanced, however, by a realisation that nothing less than the fullness of the catholic tradition was the proper inheritance of the African church as it forged its identity. As Andrew Ross remarks in his study of Scott: “[He] firmly believed that the task of the mission was to produce a Church that would be African. This could only be if the whole wealth of the Christian past was brought before the African people, from which they then could select the materials for their own building.”²⁴ I think Scott would have appreciated the recent comment of Kwame Bediako that “the African Christian story is necessarily part of the unfolding of Christian history as a whole and may not be made exotic so that it appears to have no analogues anywhere else”.²⁵

After 100 years, and in greatly altered circumstances and conditions, I suggest that this perspective still reveals the proper role of outside agencies and partners in the theological task in Africa. Of course, they have their limitations and by now it is clear to all that the task of theological construction in Africa will be taken forward by African theologians. But they will do this most effectively in an ecumenical context when they have the opportunity to test their findings against the experience of the church in other times and places. In concrete terms this means that there remains a place for overseas partners in African theological institutions – so long as they have the modesty and sensitivity to recognise where their proper role lies. And there remains a place for churches and agencies which have a commitment to journey with the African church as it coins the theological language and constructs the epistemological and dogmatic frameworks within which it will express its faith in Jesus Christ.

One point at which the tension between indigenization and catholicity finds expression is in the difficulties of research and publication in the African situation. Besides the general pressures of lack of resources and heavy demands on able people, the strength of oral culture is also a factor. Whereas ecumenical accountability calls for publication in a widely accessible language, indigenization calls for a deep engagement with the community in the vernacular at the local level. Only a very few theologians have managed to be true to both sides of this calling. Many have simply been absorbed by their own local context, perhaps doing wonderful work there but not able to make it accessible to a wider community. Others have entered fully into the Western academy and have been prolific in writing and publishing but at the cost of becoming ever more distanced from their roots in Africa. It is important that structures be evolved to enable theological educators to be true to both sides of this calling – to be organic intellectuals intimately involved in the life and the struggles of their particular community yet participating in the global theological conversation. Ensuring that this is not an “either ... or” but rather a “both ... and” is a challenge to be faced by any concerned with the structuring of theological education and the formation of theological educators. In this context the creation of opportunities for research, writing and publishing will be one of the key planks in the platform on which viable theological education can be built.

Concentration and Diffusion

Another key area of tension in the development of African theological education is that between depth and width. Do you concentrate energy on educating a few people to a very high level or a large number of people to a much more limited level? Do you aim to create an elite corps of

²³ *Life and Work in British Central Africa*, September 1895.

²⁴ Andrew C. Ross, *Blantyre Mission and the Making of Modern Malawi*, Blantyre: CLAIM, 1996, p. 146.

²⁵ Bediako, “The African Renaissance”, p. 30.

theological leaders or a mass movement of people's theologians? Up until now we have tended to lean in the former direction. The development of seminaries, which will train the elite leaders, has been the project to which the lion's share of resources has been devoted. While the importance of extension programmes has often been acknowledged, more often than not these have remained cinderella organisations – ill-resourced, not fully owned by the churches and struggling to attract and retain talented staff. Here I would add my voice to those of many others who have pointed out how heavily the African church on the ground depends on its local lay leadership and what a difference to the quality of worship and discipleship can be made by equipping such leaders with even a very minimal theological education. It is somewhat ironic that Protestant denominations with their theology of the priesthood of all believers are sometimes the most enthusiastic in dedicating all efforts in theological education to the creation of a priestly caste, ignoring the potential of the great majority of church leaders who will never be ordained into the clergy.

It is also necessary to observe that, by and large, the seminaries have been preserves of male power and even today the admission of women is often grudging and limited. Yet go to the church in any village and you can be almost sure that it will be women who are at the heart of the task of nurturing the community of faith. Of course, ordination of women is a crucial battlefield yet this must not be divorced from the wider question of creating a structure of theological education which is geared to equipping for service the vast army of gifted women who are the mainstay of the church in the parish. Nor should we forget another vast neglected constituency – the young people who form such a large proportion of any African community. How often they have been given the impression that theological education is something beyond their reach – they have to wait until they are married and have at least a few grey hairs before they could even contemplate entering the portals of theological education. How different would the structure of theological education look if it was geared to ensure that every young person growing up in the life of the church would have opportunity to participate in, and contribute to, the theological task? What strength might there be in the African church if every one of its young members had begun to think of a steady growth in theological understanding as being part of their vocation as a Christian? Added to all the other reasons for promoting the participation of women and young people in theological education is now the imperative of addressing the HIV/AIDS epidemic – from that challenge we exclude women and youth only to our peril.²⁶

So there is a need to open out the whole process of theological education and enable it to be repossessed by the whole people of God as its rightful heritage. At the same time history cautions us against committing to diffusion to the exclusion of any concentration of resources and expertise. Whenever the Christian movement has entered upon a time of renewal and reconstruction, strategic centres have emerged which gave a lead to the whole. To bring together some of the finest minds and to gather an abundance of resources in certain key centres, perhaps one or two in each region, can provide an engine of creative thought which energises and informs the whole movement. It may be that equipping the whole people of God and the cultivation of strategically placed centres of excellence are not incompatible objectives but that the one could serve the other. However, for this to be achieved the centres of excellence must understand themselves not as exclusive power bases to serve a chosen constituency nor as bastions of denominational prestige but rather as servants called to stimulate, enable and equip the whole people of God for its life and witness.

²⁶ Willem Saayman, a pioneer AIDS theologian in South Africa, has stated that: "if we South African Christians do not allow and indeed facilitate women Christians to take the lead in the campaign against the HIV/AIDS pandemic, our dream of a shalomatic victory over this powerful idol of death, which so terribly diminishes the humanity of us all, will be in vain." Willem Saayman, "AIDS – Still Posing An Unanswered Question", *Missionalia*, Vol. 27/2 (August 1999), p. 218.

Academic Integrity and Ministerial Formation

It is important for theological education in Africa to have academic integrity. Without sound academic standards and strong research capacity, theological institutions will flounder as they seek to meet the challenges of innovation and reconstruction. There is a need for centres of documentation, the patient, enduring effort that is needed to cultivate original research, the rigorous thought that comes from determined scholarly formation, and the elegant writing which communicates with maximum precision and to the greatest possible effect. These are all elements of the toolkit, which equips African theology for its task. Yet it is necessary to remember that the primary accountability of African theology is not to the criteria of a Western-oriented academy. I was reminded recently that many years ago the Dutch missiologist Johannes Verkuyl remarked that African theology is “not primarily an intra-ecclesiastical exercise, but a discipline whose practitioners keep one question central: How can we best do our theology so that the gospel will touch Africans most deeply?”²⁷ Perhaps that is a question which needs to be revisited in the light of the realities of today’s Africa – the increasing poverty, the breakdown of social order, the crisis in governance, the ravages of the HIV/AIDS epidemic and the salience of Christian-Muslim encounter. It is in equipping the church to minister in face of these realities that theological education finds its deepest accountability. As it does so, it may well discover a deeper academic integrity which in turn will challenge the Western Universities with their individualism, excessive specialisation and dangerous alliance with the corporate world.

It is time for innovation - for rediscovering old ways and opening up new paths in the structure, content and method of theological education. Kwame Bediako recalls the ancient African vision and model of theological training, as espoused by the likes of Antony in the Egyptian desert or Origen in the catechetical school at Alexandria: “the model of theological education was the quest for holiness and moral transformation within the student, who would then also become a model for others seeking their own liberation.”²⁸ Nyambura Njoroge shows the importance of “everyday God-talk” and, in the context of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, “calls on the village to fashion its own theological discourse, which will motivate everyone to articulate life-affirming words, words that speak healing and wholeness to all who are afflicted and condemned to death”.²⁹ Andrew Walls conjures up the Indian model of the ashram: “where seekers after truth came together to live a simple common life of study and meditation. . . . It is the scholarship of the Christian ashram, not of the ivory tower, that will have to keep theological scholarship alive in the twenty-first century.”³⁰ All of these are suggestive images and all are underlining the need to think in new ways and to renew the inherited structures in order to fashion theological education which will meet its primary responsibility to ministerial formation and at the same time have all the qualities of true scholarship.

What theological education for Africa today? I am looking for theological education which crosses new frontiers through engagement with history, with “the other” and with the impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic and which works its way through the tensions between indigenization and catholicity, between concentration and diffusion, and between academic integrity and ministerial formation. The more that these are evident, the more Africa will have the theological education which she deserves and the more able she will be to bring her distinctive contribution to the whole church’s understanding of who Jesus Christ is and what it means to follow him.

²⁷ Johannes Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978, p.277.

²⁸ Bediako, “The African Renaissance and Theological Reconstruction”, p. 32.

²⁹ Nyambura J. Ngoroje, “Come Now, Let Us Reason Together”, *Missionalia* Vol. 29/2 (August 2001), p. 254.

³⁰ Andrew F. Walls, “Of Ivory Towers and Ashrams: Some Reflections on Theological Scholarship in Africa”, *Journal of African Christian Thought*, Vol. 3/1 (June 2000), p. 4.

CATI POLICY STATEMENT

The Conference of African Theological Institutions (CATI) having met with representatives of Theological Education by Extension (TEE) at a consultation held from 26th February to 1st March 2002 at Kenya College of Communications Technology (KCCT) Mbagathi, Nairobi-Kenya acknowledges the role of TEE in the strengthening of the church and its witness in Africa. CATI seeks in addition to its other activities to provide policy guidelines on Theological Education by Extension that may be of assistance to the churches, theological institutions and other educational institutions in Africa.

We salute the effort of women and men that have tirelessly endeavored to promote TEE as an effective method of equipping the whole people of God for the whole ministry of Christ through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Issues and recommendations emerging from the consultation were:

I. Mission and Purpose of TEE

1. To provide study opportunities for those who cannot be full-time students in residential institutions. These opportunities should be made at all educational levels.
2. TEE is suitable for informal, non-formal and formal education systems.
3. It is suitable for theological education of the laity as well as those seeking ministerial formation.
4. It facilitates the training of God's people in a variety of church leadership roles and ministries.

II. Methodology

1. TEE is a proven method of education that comprises self-instructional material, face-to-face discussion under the guidance of a facilitator who is trained in TEE methodology and practical application of learning in ministry activities in church and community.
2. With the introduction of Information Technology (I.T.) good use can be made of telephone conferencing, video conferencing, computer – based learning (CD-ROM), and interactive web sites on the Internet.
3. Efforts should be made to expand the use of information technology in rural and urban areas.

III. Approaches to TEE

1. Ownership
 - a) Churches, theological institutions and departments of religious studies of institutions of higher learning are custodians.
 - b) Therefore the church leaders are called to affirm their commitment to and ownership of TEE.
 - c) This will involve them in resourcing and sustaining TEE programs.
 - d) The adoption and implementation of the TEE method of education may affect institutional culture and may call for adjustment to new approaches to teaching and learning.
 - e) Good policy decisions related to TEE by church leaders will make progress in TEE possible. This includes making policies on recruiting, training and retaining appropriate TEE personnel to ensure continuity of the program.
 - f) TEE has been used in various levels from literacy (learning to read and write) to undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate level.

IV. Curriculum, Content and Development

- 1) Content and Context
 - a) We should not underrate our ability to develop appropriate contextualised materials.
 - b) It is helpful to develop distance-learning materials based on existing courses that are taught in residential institutions.
 - c) All theological curricula must be relevant to their context and needs of the students and ought to be reviewed from time to time.
 - d) All theological curricula including that of the TEE should intentionally address the burning issues affecting African people such as: Poverty, Diseases especially HIV-AIDS, Environment, gender, justice, human rights, reconciliation, conflict resolution and peacemaking.
 - e) Curricula ought to be approved by the stakeholders.
- 2) Production of study materials
 - a) Recruitment of writers
 - i. Churches should be involved in the recruitment of capable, committed subjects specialist as TEE course writers.
 - ii. These writers should work under the guidance of a person(s) who is qualified in theology and Distance Education.
 - iii. Study material should be written in a language appropriate to target group where possible the mother tongue.
 - iv. Context determines the nature and level of TEE programs therefore we should not expect uniformity in TEE programs continent wide.
 - b) Study materials should be tested with subject specialists and student groups before printing.
 - c) The up-front cost of producing distance-learning materials is expensive. Churches and institutions should therefore count the cost at the planning stage. Costs will include planning the curriculum, recruiting and training of writers, drafting the materials, stationery, office expenses, proof reading, editing, secretarial support, transport, printing and distribution.
 - d) In designing a curriculum it reduces costs to use existing study materials produced by other TEE programs.
 - e) It is not automatic that any highly qualified theological tutor can write TEE materials without successfully undergoing thorough training in Distance Education.
 - f) Writing requires sacrifice and commitment, so writers should be reasonably remunerated for their hard work.

V. Networking and Collaboration

- 1) There is need to identify areas of collaboration at national, regional and continental levels.
- 2) Therefore ecumenical bodies such as AACCC, CATI and regional associations of TEE could facilitate this collaboration effectively.
- 3) It is salutary that much progress has been achieved in TEE at denominational level, however we encourage broader involvement at ecumenical levels.

VI. Evaluation and Accreditation

- 1) There is need for accreditation and certification for TEE programs.
 - a) Therefore, TEE programs should seek affiliations with established accrediting agencies and existing accredited academic institutions. This could be done through the member institutions of CATI.

VI. Conclusion

In gratitude to God for enabling us through this process, we pray that these policy guidelines will contribute significantly in making Theological Education by Extension to be more effective, viable and relevant to the African context. We therefore commend them to churches and theological institutions wishing to enhance their TEE programs.