

Ecumenical Theological Education
Ecumenical Institute / WCC Geneva

July 2007



"Chorale of Trinity College of Singapore "
ETE/WCC/Bossey Ecumenical Institute congratulates for the forthcoming
celebrations of ATESEA Golden Jubilee Anniversary in Singapore
Trinity Theological Seminary, November 26th-28th, 2007.



This biannual 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 Ecumenical Theological Education.

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<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/programmes/education-and-ecumenical-formation/ecumenical-theological-education.html> (For any question, please contact Dietrich.Werner@wcc-coe.org or Sylvia.Camacho@wcc-coe.org .

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LETTER FROM STAFF

This is the first issue of Ministerial Formation I have the privilege to write for an editorial. Having been asked to come to Geneva as programme consultant since beginning of October 2007, I have joined ETE Geneva as Coordinating Programme Executive. Being ordained a Lutheran pastor from the Northelbian Lutheran Church and trained as a missiologist/ecumenical historian, I bring with me some 20 years of experience in different fields of theological education both in the academic and lay education context, more than a decade of cooperation with the Commission of Theological Education in EMW Hamburg and many years with the Board of the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey. It is with a high sense of respect with regard to many well-known predecessors in this important field of the WCC's commitment to ecumenical theological education and a deep appreciation for the commitment and energy Nyambura Njoroge has put into this work that I begin my involvement with ETE.

It is not the first time that I am encountering this programme as in the year 1986-1987 I had a year of assistant work with the Programme, then called PTE which at that time had John Pobee, Ophelia Ortega and Samuel Amirtham on board – and I also participated in the Oslo World Conference on Theological Education where the regionalization of PTE/ETE was decided. It was with feelings of joy and surprise, that like providence, I had the chance of meeting Bishop Samuel Amirtham in Geneva right in the first week of my working with ETE/WCC due to an invitation enabled by Henry Wilson, present FTESEA Executive Director. What Bishop Amirtham has contributed to the understanding of theological education and doing theology in the midst of the community of all God's people¹ is of enormous relevance till today and should not be forgotten.

This issue of Ministerial Formation focuses on theological education in the societies of Asia. We owe the compilation of articles in this issue to Wati Longchar, our ETE Regional Consultant for Asia and Pacific, who has greatly contributed to the work of ETE in this region with his creativity, passion and untiring commitment. A heartfelt word of thanks to Wati Longchar for his magnificent contribution in one of our major fields of concerns!

There are two major occasions for celebration and remembrance which we ought to mention at this point:

We are celebrating the establishment of ATESEA some fifty years ago (1957 in Singapore) as the first formal regional association of theological schools in the non-western world. It now includes more than a hundred member schools in sixteen countries and with its Graduate School of Theology, SEAGST, has contributed enormously to the upgrading and contextualization of theological education in South East Asia. We accompany the forthcoming celebrations of the Golden Jubilee Anniversary of ATESEA in Singapore Trinity Theological Seminary on November 26th-28th, 2007, with many cordial wishes and heartfelt greetings of solidarity.

¹ Comp. Samuel Amirtham, John Pobee: *Theology by the People. Reflections on doing theology in community*, WCC, Geneva 1986.

Secondly, we are approaching the commemoration of the foundation of ETE as well, which as Theological Education Fund (TEF) originated fifty years ago in the IMC Ghana Assembly 1957/1958. The concern for contextual theological education is rooted clearly in the missionary movement and it is interesting to realize how much the key themes of the earlier phases in reshaping theological education are still relevant and ongoing under current themes till today.² When the marks of TEF's work were *quality*, combining intellectual rigour, spiritual maturity and commitment, *authenticity*, involving critical encounter with each cultural context in the design, content and purpose of theological education, and *creativity*, leading to new approached and deepening the churches' understanding and obedience in mission, this is still echoed in the demands for another "paradigm shift" in the guidelines for theologizing and Theological Education in Asia today which have worked out for the Jubilee Celebration of ATESEA in November this year and which are printed in this issue p. 62ff.

Relating both to each other, the jubilee celebrations of ATESEA and of ETE as a whole, one cannot but highlight some overarching basic issues given to us from our precious heritage of involvement with ecumenical theological education which are common to both and need as well to be tackled in both networks in the period ahead :

- the (financial and programmatic) *responsibility of the churches for their institutions of theological education* (sense of ownership) and the mutual interaction between theological science and the renewal of church life;
- the tension between the two poles of *contextualization* in theological education and *globalization* in theological education, i.e. the new interest in the inter-contextual networking between institutions of theological education in different areas of this shrinking world (comp. particularly the contribution of Henry Wilson on "connectivity" in theological education between Asia and America in this issue);
- the *different and un-simultaneous stages of developments and quality improvement in different regions of this world* (like Asia and Africa) with regard to functioning associations of theological schools, ecumenical networking in theological education, curriculum development and sustainability of ecumenical places of theological education;
- the relation between the *core content of theological education* referring to the apostolic traditions of the church universal and the *contextual demands* arising from the enormous pressures and needs from the different contemporary situations of ministry and pastoral services;
- the whole issue of *strategic long-term planning for the proper capacities and numbers of institutions of theological education* in relation to given regional contexts, situation of member churches, numbers of pastors and theological educators needed and the different demands in terms of church growth;
- the *role and place of church unity within theological education* and for theological institutions as a whole, or the ecumenicity of theological education facing a growing denominationalism and weakened funding to interdenominational places and institutions of theological education;
- the relation of ecumenical theological education to/and critical assessment of undercurrent *ideological perceptions and hermeneutical world views* which are at work in shaping one's own identity in doing theology and distancing it from others (what is particularly "Asian", what is particularly "Western" in doing theology and what function can these terms still play?).

The further deepening and ongoing reflection process around the "guidelines for theologizing and Theological Education in Asia" is a unique chance to continue reflection along these lines and will give some scope also to address these fundamental issues which are important not only for Asia but also for many other regions of the world. There is much to be done in the way ahead. Readers might be informed also that after the Porto Alegre Assembly a new commission on Ecumenical Education and Formation (EEF) has been established in the WCC which met for the first time from 27-30 June 2007 in Ecumenical Institute of Bossey. ETE is now part of the new P5 programme unit of WCC which combines five different components of work, the Ecumenical Institute, the Scholarship Desk, the Lay Formation Programme which will have a new executive person hopefully early next year, the WCC Library and ETE. All these have the EEF commission as their primary platform of reference and are called to collaborate for a unified and consolidated vision in their work. The EEF commission also

² Comp. Christine Lienemann-Perrin, Training for a Relevant Ministry, WCC 1981.

highlighted some important recommendations for the future of ETE's work which are documented at the end of this issue.

As part of the new positioning of ETE in the framework of P5 (Ecumenical Education and Formation) also the title of this journal will be changed. Ministerial Formation Journal will not continue in this format, instead there will be a joint Journal on Ecumenical Theological Education and Formation which will bring together concerns both of ecumenical theological education, lay formation and christian education in general from the year 2008 onwards.

I am grateful for the new opportunities which are given in this particular moment of the ecumenical itinerary and hope that the cooperation and mutual support between you and ETE will be renewed and strengthened in this new period. Do not hesitate to be in contact with us.

With best wishes

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**THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION IN THE CHANGING SOCIETIES OF ASIA:
*The Role of ATESEA and SEAGST in the Reshaping of Theological Education in Asia***

Dr. Huang Po Ho*

Introduction

Established in 1957, ATESEA has published a theological journal, provided accreditation services, operated the South East Asia Graduate School of Theology, promoted faculty development, theological renewal and contextualization, and coordinated regional planning in theological education. The Association has also run programs designed to meet the needs of theological education in the region.³

Across these fifty years ATESEA has grown from sixteen founding member schools to more than one hundred today. The growth and development of churches and their theological constructions in the region and the challenges that churches face in the changing societies of Asia today have moved and driven theological educators to rethink and reshape the nature and contents of theological education. Therefore, it is critical to ATESEA at this moment of history to engage in retrospect and prospect regarding its mission and programs.

The Nature of Theological Education

Theological education is a part of the life and mission of churches in their particular situations. It derives from God's creative and redemptive works revealed in human history and seeks to understand the significances of the Gospel in today's world. Theological education equips people, men and women, to participate the churches' mission of witness and service to people in the different contexts of the world. In other words, "theological education is an intensive and structured preparation of men and women of the church for participation in the ministry of Christ in the world."⁴

Theological education can be seen in both broad and narrow senses. In a broad sense, theological education is not limited to professionals and specialized institutions. It involves the total Christian community reflecting on its life together in worship and fellowship, on its missionary commitment in the world, and on those aspects of its Biblical and confessional heritage and tradition that guide it in action. This inextricable mixture of reflection and involvement is hinted at by the phrase "doing theology". In this broad sense, theological education is central to the life of the whole Christian community.⁵ In a narrow sense, theological education is concerned with the preparation and continued training of the professional leadership of the churches. Most of churches have established structures to enable this more formal education process to take place.⁶ With the rising of lay movements and the popularity of lay training extension programs implemented by many theological schools, no matter what the cause or the result, the concept of theological education, even that which is done inside of theological institutes, has been shifted or has widened its operation from what was previously confined to professional or clerical training to the task of equipping the whole people of God.

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³ See ATESEA website: <http://www.atesea.org/ahistory.htm>

⁴ Theological Education in North East Asia, report of the Seoul consultation, (Geneva: WCC, 1967) p. 15

⁵ Ecumenical Responses To Theological Education in Africa, Asia, Near East South Pacific, Latin America & Caribbean, (London: TEF WCC, 1976) p. 13

⁶ *ibid.*

No matter how we define theological education, it is not an end in itself. It is linked to the life and mission of the churches. Thus, it is necessary to maintain a healthy tension between theological education and the total life of the churches. A Report from a Theological Education Task Force of the WCC⁷ noted that “theological education must have sufficient autonomy to perform its prophetic task and at the same time a sufficiently close relationship with these same churches so that it does not lose its ability to communicate with and serve these churches as they move in mission.”⁸

A Journey of Fifty Years

When ATESEA was established Fifty years ago it was the first formal regional association of theological schools in the non-western world.⁹ According to the report of its executive director to the 2005 General Assembly meeting, it now includes more than a hundred member schools in sixteen countries.¹⁰ It has seven working areas to implement higher degrees of theology through its attached graduate school of theology, SEAGST. These areas include: Taiwan, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Malaysia-Singapore- Thailand, Indonesia (Indonesia area is divided into two areas – Eastern and Western areas with two area deans), and Myanmar. It is one of the most important theological education associations in the world even today. Its constitution sets its aims as follows.

1. To promote creative relationships among institutions and agencies engaged in theological education and the churches in the region.
2. To facilitate regional efforts in theological education in the service of the churches in South East Asia.
3. To set guidelines and standards of theological education and to provide accreditation services to member – institutions and to others requesting it.
4. To work for the improvement and renewal of theological education in the region in such ways it may deem appropriate.¹¹

Besides these constitutional aims which are derived from its historical commitment, ATESEA has consistently emphasized its responsibility to respond to changing needs of theological education in the region by providing facilities and opportunities for Asian theologians to construct contextual theologies:

An indication of our Association’s attempt to respond to the changing needs of theological education in our region is seen in the implementation of research and development program to assist in the intellectual and spiritual development of Asian theologians so that their Christian ministry will be enriched and be more effective. They also hope to contribute to the publication and popularization of a contextual and Asian-oriented theology by providing the facilities and opportunities for research into, and reflection upon, the Christian faith as it relates to the other religions, cultures and traditions of Asia and contemporary Asian society and its problems.¹²

Fifty years of ATESEA growth in size and ministries alongside of rapid changes in the surrounding world of churches and societies. These challenge theological constructions and education in this region. ATESEA encounters complex demands and expectations as it continues to serve as an

⁷ This task force was appointed by the commission on World Mission and Evangelism, in Basel, Feb. 1974. And the report was approved by the CWME Core Group Meeting in Le Cenacle, Geneva in 1976.

⁸ Ecumenical Responses To Theological Education in Africa, Asia, Near East South Pacific, Latin America & Caribbean, p.13

⁹Wati Longchar: Towards a common strategy and mechanism to facilitate theological education and human resource development in south Asia churches http://www.cca.org.hk/resources/papers/_/conference/ete20813p.htm

¹⁰ See Sientje Marentek Abram: Executive Director’s Report, 2005 ATESEA General Assembly, McGillvary Faculty of Theology, Payap University, Chiang Mai, Thailand. p. 3. During last two years after the Assembly meeting, there were more schools applying for membership.

¹¹ See ATESEA website: <http://www.atesea.org/aconstitution.htm>

¹² See ATESEA website: <http://www.atesea.org/ahistory.htm>

organization of striving to work with member schools for better theological education in Asia. Changes over these recent fifty years have been enormous. We can highlight some of them as follows:

1. **The challenges from the association itself:** The significant growth of membership and the diversity of theological development among member schools have produced challenges to association finances, theological integrity, personnel resources and efficiency as ATESEA seeks to carry out its mission and to respond to the needs and demands of its member schools.
2. **The challenges from the churches in Asia:** The achievement of overseas mission in third world countries, regardless the controversy of its means of evangelism, has shifted the center of the world's Christian population to the nations of the two-thirds world. Western churches remain active in church politics, able to exercise manipulative power over churches worldwide through financial control of the ecumenical organizations and of mission and theological activities done in poor regions and countries. The irruption of the third world has dramatically changed the scenario of Christian community.

Two-thirds world churches, desiring autonomy from mission agencies, have encouraged the development of indigenous and contextual theological construction. While encountering with the profundity and complexity of third world cultures and religions, traditional concepts of Christian missions and theologies that developed on the foundation of Western enlightenment philosophy have been questioned. In addition, the impact of the marginalization of churches in modern society tends to withdraw Christianity from public sphere of influence and reduce the role of religion to a private affair. The rise of charismatic movements in all denominations alerts us to the limitation of our theological status quo. Fundamentalist revival movements have taken place in all religious traditions, threatening the harmony and peace of world and human communities.

3. **The challenges from the changes of Asian World:**

a) Politically, many Asian countries have experienced struggles of the democratization process, either emerging from Western colonial rule or overcoming domestic dictatorial domination in last fifty years. An identity shaping or shifting demand has challenged Christian churches in these countries. Some countries' political changes have been driven by strong people's movements, and people's power has forced churches there into a perplexing readjustment of their roles in society.¹³ The collapse of the communist world has given capitalists a free worldwide zone for a system that has turned into economic globalization, integrating most of the whole world into one market system under the control of capital which is manipulated by the empires of the United States and China-on-the-rise, by means of military build up.

b) This change of political scenario has led to economic redistribution. The globalization process has widened the gap between rich and poor, creating a relationship of dependence of the poor countries on the rich. Poverty created by unjust distribution of world resources has encouraged and given birth to terrorist activities. Conflicts between state terrorism and fundamentalist reactions have made the world more and more insecure for human life. The Asian world is regarded as the most explosive area for war and conflict at this time. What is the role of churches in this intensive security situation? What kind of leadership of the churches and what sort of church leaders is theological education to provide in this sort of situation? (i) Globalization is not the only phenomenon making massive impact to human life in this historical moment. The concepts of post-modernity and post-colonialism are significantly influential upon human worldviews and value judgments. The modern era began in the western enlightenment movement and upheld reason as the principal guideline for knowledge and practice. The concept of "reasonable" became the fundamental criterion for differentiating between civilized and uncivilized, modern and savage, and abled and

¹³ Most churches in these situations have suffered to lose their prophetic message in a new circumstance.

disabled. Christian faith and its theologies in the so-called modern era have developed into a scientific and experimental style of religion. With the introduction of the concept of post-modernity, the modern era has been driven into history. Theologies and theological education now face a demanding paradigm shift in response to the changing needs of the post-modern character of human life. (ii) While the arguments of modern and post-modern are raised in the western world, the people of the two-thirds world, though enjoying modern products, have not been “psychologically baptized” by the enlightenment process. Discourses of post-modern concepts exist only in scholarly circles of these societies, rarely reaching the level of ordinary people. Some third world theologians argue that the concept of post-colonialism is more valid to third world people than that of post-modernity.

No matter which view we select, both post-modern and post-colonial theories have developed particular methods of hermeneutics for biblical interpretation and theological construction. Theological education in this region is challenged to respond to this historical phenomenon.

Theologies and Theological Education in the Changing Societies of Asia

The aforementioned rapid increase of member schools of ATESEA in last fifty years indicates the growth in number of the theological schools in the region. The quality of theological education in this region has also been upgraded. The South East Asia Graduate School of Theology (SEAGST) was opened in 40 years ago (1966) in cooperation with and on behalf of member schools of ATESEA to conduct programs of advanced theological studies at the masters and doctoral levels. It grants the degrees of Master of Theology (M.Theol.) and Doctor of Theology (D.Theol.).¹⁴ This theological union model of an advanced theological institute was established to develop theological workers and faculties in higher degrees because at that time most theological schools in the region were not ready to implement higher degree programs. It is however, after 50 years with the great improvement of general education in most societies in Asia, theological education is not excluded from this trend of progress. Some member schools of ATESEA have begun to confer the M. Theol. degree, and some are even ready to offer D. Theol. degree program. These phenomena indicate progress and improvement in the quality of theological education in Asia.

In response to the awakening of selfhood and the right to be human, theological construction and theological education in this region consciously take into account issues in relation to gender equality, marginalized minority, tribes (aborigines), epidemic diseases (HIV & AIDS), persons with disabilities, and issue of ecology as part of theological curriculum. Consultations and training programs related to these subjects have been provided by either ATESEA or SEAGST in collaboration with other Asian ecumenical organizations. However theological education, which was the pioneer of western style training and higher education in Asia, has been gradually marginalized in Asian societies because governmental education systems have been established and come to prevail. Most theological schools and their degrees are not recognized by governments.

The fragmentation of knowledge created by the western education system of compartmentalized pedagogy falls short of a holistic and integral view of scholarship. It is incapable of dealing with human spirituality, and has gradually been called into question regarding its relevancy in this post-modern era.

Asian theologies were considered among the most creative contextual theologies from the 70's to the early 90's of the 20th century. The profundities of cultures and religious traditions Asian people lived out in daily life have given Asian theologies deep insight into spiritual formation. The strong contextual theological movements launched in the region by organizations such as CTC-CCA, PTCA, CATS, ATC-EATWOT, and ETE-WCC/CCA joined ATESEA and SEAGST to produce insightful and enlightening theological discourses and arguments in response to the hope of liberation from the suffering and agony experienced by people in Asia. The situation rapidly changed after the 90's when the circumstances shifted. The political power maps of the world were rewritten when the Berlin wall (symbolizing the communist world) fell; when the apartheid system

¹⁴ See SEAGST website: <http://www.atesea.org/sindex.html>

collapsed; when colonies gained independence; and, most of all, since the globalization process that integrates world markets under the super power of capital has made all evil courses invisibly hiding behind the human greed and materialism. Heavy financial dependency of theological movements on western funding agencies has worsened the situation when financial crises occur. Funding agencies are no longer interested in producing theologies that are critical to the very source of the funds, so contextual theologies worldwide are weakening, and creative Asian theologies have withered.

It has been a common agreement that theological education needs radical reshaping. Numbers of theological consultations focused on theological education and curriculum revision were convened and discussions held in this regard. However, the complexity of the project has prevented implementation of the ideas. As ATESEA enters its second fifty years, the time has come for it to take the lead in this landmark-making mission.

ATESEA/SEAGST's Role in the Reshaping of Theological Education in Asia

In past fifty years ATESEA has made meaningful contributions to theological education and contextual theological construction in this region through its fraternal accreditation visits, financial support to schools in economically developing countries¹⁵, faculty development through M.theol. and D. Theol. Programs of SEAGST, publication of theological papers and sponsoring consultations on current theological issues. When we go to Singapore in November to celebrate our golden jubilee we may offer our thanksgiving to God and to those fore fathers and mothers who diligently labored to nurture ATESEA and theological movements in Asia.

However, with the rapid transformation of Asian societies, the church's role and mission in the society are severely challenged. The decline of Christian witness in the contemporary Asian world can be seen through the laments of many ecumenical organizations in the region regarding the loss of a dynamic and prophetic message and the shortage of insightful leadership that the churches provide to societies. All these have to do with theological nurture and leadership development. So ATESEA must be looking ahead and leading the way of change. I believe that reshaping theological education in Asia is the main driving force to bring change to churches and societies in this region.

I now propose some very concrete ideas based upon personal reflection and observation of theological education in Asia hoping that these suggestions will stimulate discussion.

1. Concerning Accreditation: This is the major task of accreditation associations, including ATESEA. How to conduct accreditation in a helpful and meaningful manner is an important matter. The fundamental purpose of accreditation is, of course, to assure and to promote quality education done by member schools of the association. ATESEA has strictly followed a four-year cycle of accreditation visits to its member schools. A comprehensive notation list is provided for accreditation visitors and member schools to review the conduct of theological education. Nevertheless, some room for improvement may be considered to make the accreditation more efficient and helpful to member schools:

- a. **To extend the cycle period of visit.** The four-year cycle may be reasonable during the developing stage of an association for theological schools. As ATESEA enters its second fifty years of history, many of its member schools have more than a hundred-year history. Considering the tight financial situation, we may need to design a system to separate accredited schools to two categories. Stable, established schools might extend their accreditation cycle from 4 to 8 or 10 years.¹⁶ Those schools which receive

¹⁵ By strong supports from partner funding organizations such as FTESEA and ETE WCC, etc..

¹⁶ If my information from the ATS website is correct, ATS has implemented an accreditation visit cycle either 8 or 10 years. Since Dr. Daniel Aleshire, the executive director of ATS will be with us in this consultation, we may get direct inputs from him to verify this information.

substantial notations and need major improvement may continue to be visited every 4 years, but should shoulder part of the cost of extra visits.¹⁷

- b. To organize a professional reviewers for accreditation visits.** The current practice of accreditation visitation has the advantage of “family fellowship” among member schools, and also promotes exchanges of theological educators as it grows new leaders for theological education. But if we want to make accreditation authentic and credible we may have to organize a small group of professional reviewers, who may be paid for their hard work and responsible to formulate accreditation reports that are attached to concrete follow-up proposals for actions to be taken by the association. The results of an accreditation visit must make positive impacts to improve the work of visited schools.
 - c. To aid schools offering accredited degrees to become recognized by their respective governments, societies or worldwide accreditation associations.**
- 2. Concerning the guiding principles for theological education in the region:** For thirty years both ATESEA and SEAGST have adopted the Critical Asian Principle (CAP) as the guide for theological education and theological construction. The executive committee of ATESEA resolved to revisit the CAP and assigned a discussion group to draft a new reference framework for the new stage of ministries. The group proposed a new set of guidelines that was formally adopted at the last executive committee meeting in Jakarta. It will be announced at our jubilee celebration in November. The document describing implications and implementation of the draft proposed by the discussion group states that its suggestions are made in order to allow for effective implementation of the guidelines.¹⁸

I am confident that with the common effort of many distinguished colleagues in the ATESEA family, this association will provide leadership to the Asia-wide Christian community for a renewal of Christian life and mission through continual theological reflection and the reshaping of our theological education.

- 3. Concerning Faculty Development and SEAGST:** Faculty development is a decisive key issue for reshaping theological education (or any kind of education). We owe a great deal to our predecessors for their wisdom in establishing SEAGST when theological education in this part of the world needed strengthening in many aspects. SEAGST has functioned to provide faculties to member schools of ATESEA and to consolidate contextual theological education and movements in the region. In recent years, SEAGST has opened up its capacity for non-faculty training scholars to be admitted into its D. Theol. program. This is a significant move for the contextual theological education to be extended beyond the theological community of ATESEA. However, this important research and faculty development mechanism of ATESEA also faces a crisis of losing its integrity and particular theological character that was a founding tenet of SEAGST.

- a. The problem of faculty for the faculty development:** Forty years ago when the SEAGST was founded it was supposed to be a theological institute to grow contextual Asian theological scholars and theological faculties. The first graduate of its D. Theol. program was from Taiwan, Dr. Wang Hsien-chi, who later became the academic dean of Tainan Theological College and Seminary. His dissertation is a study on the Taoist *Tao-Te Ching*. To this day our education position continues firmly advocating the contextual orientation of theologies. Yet, in reality, because SEAGST pedagogy is mainly implemented by area senates and participating schools in each area are geographically remote from each other, students become very dependent on their instructors or advisors. SEAGST does not have clear guidelines for faculty selection, leaving this function to

¹⁷ If considering the financial difficulties of some of our member schools, though we may subsidize them in other areas within their budgets, but this share of extra visit fees is paid for the sake of encouraging active action for improvement.

¹⁸For details refer to “Guidelines”.

each area senate.¹⁹ It may happen that some scholars trained in the western fashion who strongly oppose contextual theological orientation are appointed to advise SEAGST students, resulting in a threat to theological academic integrity.²⁰

- b. The problem of quality control:** the privilege of the area setup for SEAGST degree program is that it encourages theological studies carried out in one's own language. This actualizes the contextual orientation in diverse Asian contexts. However, when regional senates constituted by area deans of different areas are not able to assess the outputs and outcomes of its students, quality control becomes largely dependent on area determination.

Since the SEAGST senate has resolved to disperse operation of the M. Theol. program to local areas for operation, the method of strengthening the quality of the D. Theol. program is open for discussion. My suggestion is for the region to form a teaching faculty group who can provide a short residential teaching program enabling all D. Theol. students to gather at the beginning and the end of their programs, before they take their comprehensive examinations, for theological orientation and summing up of their achievements. Besides consolidating students' theological orientation, these occasions will provide SEAGST students a sense of community (or sense of belonging) and an identification with their *alma mater*.

- c. The problem of survival:** More important is the problem of historical status and mission of the organization. As mentioned above, when SEAGST was founded 40 years ago most theological schools in this region were not yet ready to offer advanced degree programs. The area-union arrangement of a theological institute like SEAGST was necessary and desirable. But in the light of findings of recent accreditation visits, many of ATESEA member schools appear now to be able and ready to start advanced degree programs. Some participating schools of SEAGST now offer degrees which parallel those granted through SEAGST on their own. These may be identical in teaching process and curriculum with the SEAGST program. This phenomenon wastes resources and calls into question the participation of SEAGST at those schools.

ATESEA/SEAGST must develop a plan and strategy to help each area of SEAGST and member school of ATESEA to upgrade capacities and abilities to gradually manage their own advanced degrees. In this way, SEAGST will concentrate its energies and resources to focus on the D. Theol. program. When the time comes that many ATESEA member schools are able to offer their own D. Theol. programs, an independent SEAGST campus may be needed. In that event, SEAGST will become a distinguished and experimental theological school for advanced study of Asian theologies. This transformation to a new future for SEAGST is worthy of current consideration.

4. Concerning the research and ecumenical networking: ATESEA has an important role in the shaping of Asian ecumenism and Asian contextual theologies. It was among the bodies that founded the Program for Theology and Cultures in Asia (PTCA), and the Congress for Asian Theologians (CATS). ATESEA is also a member of the World Conference for Association of Theological Institutes (WOCATI) and is closely related to the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) and the World Council of Churches (WCC). These ecumenical networks have indicated ATESEA's theological responsibility towards wider Christian communities in Asia. This association cannot be satisfied to merely provide accreditation services to member schools. It must enhance theological insights of ecumenism and mission for Christian communities in the region.

¹⁹ Since the rule of SEAGST is to have participatory school heads to be members and even area Dean of the area senates, some of these school heads are not agree with contextual theological endeavors, and the faculties appointed to advise students are very much influenced by the schools heads.

²⁰ There are cases happened in Taiwan area frequently in all three participatory schools of SEAGST in this area.

In order to: 1) continue self-renewal of its organizational operation and the methods and contents of theological education; and 2) contribute theologically to ecumenical networking with partner organizations in Asia; it is important that ATESEA include a research capacity in its programs. We may invite a group of distinguished Asian theologians to be the “think tank” of ATESEA and SEAGST ceaselessly work to:

- research, update and develop Asian theologies
- conduct studies leading to regular renewal of SEAGST curriculum
- form a mobile faculty to assist SEAGST areas’ teaching works
- regularly review and revise accreditation notations for ATESEA
- produce professionally trained accreditation experts for ATESEA’s work

Conclusion

Churches worldwide commonly confront the crises of declining membership, weakened of prophetic message in contemporary pluralist societies, lack of ecumenical leadership, and withering of contextual theologies. Some of my British friends have introduced a concept of the “post-Christian era” in British society, indicating the acceptance the passé status of Christian religion in Britain. If this were true, that would imply in certain degree the failure of theological education done in Europe. In the light of the fact that many theological schools in Asia still function as copies of European models of theological education, it’s time for us to reflect and correct our models, and to make them responsive to the needs of churches’ mission in the region.

For the past couple of decades, Asian theologies have been acknowledged as one of the most creative and profound theologies in the world. Many of our western friends are looking for exchanges and mutual enrichment for theological renewal and reconstruction from our part of world. One example is that of The United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia (UBCHEA) which has recently launched an Institute for Advanced Studies of Asian Theologies (IASACT) to collaborate with the Graduate Theological Union (GTU) in Berkeley. This enables a group of Asian theologians²¹ to provide young Christian scholars from Asia and the GTU a forum of scholarly research and writing together. Even so, as theological workers in the region we are under strong pressures due to the ossification of our theological talks.

ATESEA and SEAGST, the region’s most symbolic theological organization and its highest theological education institute, are expected to take action to stir up again the excitement of theological movement in Asia, and I believe we can. May God help us!

²¹ For the said purpose, a faculty constituted by scholars both Asia and GTU for IASACT was formed to implement and operate the program with UB officers.

REVISITING MISSION AND VISION OF ATESEA

Thu En Yu*

Historical Footnote

How time has flown since the inception of Association for Theological Education in South East Asia (ATESEA) in Singapore 50 years ago in 1957. We praise God for enabling the Association to reach this milestone in its history. In retrospect, 50 years is quite long. Under the guidance of God many committed Christian individuals, seminaries and ecumenical partners were moved to pool their expertise and resources together thereby enabling the Association to grow to its present size and influence. To reminisce with fond memories and to offer thanksgivings for God's wonderful deeds, the Association plans to celebrate its Golden Jubilee Anniversary at Singapore Trinity Theological Seminary, the birthplace of the Association, on November 26 – 28, 2007.

The fast changing societies in Asia have further prompted the Association to an even greater awareness of the urgent need for revisiting the mission and vision of the Association so as to catalyze renewal in theological education that is more relevant to the Asian context.

The Mission

The main mission of ATESEA is to nurture closer coordination amongst member schools in their response to the changing needs of theological education in Asia.

Secondly, it is to engage in the task of faculty development and theological writings with a distinctly Asia orientation on matters related to life issues and the mission of the church.

Thirdly, the South East Asia Graduate School of Theology (SEAGST), under the auspices of ATESEA, conducts graduate study programs at the master and doctoral levels in cooperation with and on behalf of member schools of the Association.

The Vision

The Association envisions implementing its mission strategy through partnership and collaborative relationships with member schools, ecumenical partners and Christian churches. The Critical Asian Principle (CAP) which was adopted in 1972 has been used as the basic perspective for establishing and operating our study programs and theological writings.

The CAP "have a history, purpose and direction" as has been rightly described by the CAP Discussion Group in their report.²² In order to let "theology speak in and through that context"²³ in the changing Asian societies, the CAP has been reviewed and revised recently. The revised CAP which is called "Guidelines" now would be to a larger extent able to "intensify Asian theological reflection and theological training"²⁴. Following the change of the word "Principle" to "Guidelines", I try to call it Guidelines for Doing Theologies in Asia (GDTA). To ensure that we will look at the new guidelines thoroughly and seriously, I am presenting the major part of the report²⁵ for further reflection.

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²² Report from the CAP Discussion Group held in Seminari Theoloji Malaysia, October 2006, p.1

²³ Kosuke Koyama, *Waterbuffalo Theology* (London:SCM,1974),p.21

²⁴ Report from the CAP Discussion Group held in Seminari Theoloji Malaysia, October 2006, p 1

²⁵ . Ibid p.5

Guidelines for Theologizing and Theological Education in Asia – Time for Another Paradigm Shift

The purpose of these guidelines is to allow a redefinition and a retargeting of the role of theological education and its methodology in Asia by addressing the actual situation of a local community and at the same time ensuring that it is “biblically based, missiologically oriented, educationally shaped, pastorally advocated and spiritually empowered.”²⁶ Theologies in Asia must be authentically Asian in its content, shape and processes. So we propose the following guidelines:

- i) Responsive engagement with the diverse Asian contexts.
- ii) Critical engagement with indigenous cultures and wisdom for the preservation and sustenance of life.
- iii) Reflective engagements with the sufferings of the Asian people in order to provide hope for the marginalized, HIV & AIDS, women, indigenous people, children, persons with disabilities and migrant workers.
- iv) Encourage the restoration of the reality of the inter-connectedness of the whole creation.
- v) Helpful to promote interfaith *dialogue* and intra-faith communion and communication for the fullness of life and the well-being of the society.
- vi) Enhance capacity building in order to serve the people experiencing disaster, conflict, disease and those people who suffer physical, emotional, and mental disabilities.
- vii) Prophetic resistance against the powers of economic imperialism.
- viii) Equipping Christians for witnessing and spreading the gospel of Jesus with loving care and service to fulfill Christian mission of evangelism.

Implication and Implementation

The following suggestions are made in order to allow for effective implementation of the guidelines.

- i) ATESEA accreditation criteria (notation) be revised to incorporate the above requirements.
- ii) ATESEA member schools and SEAGST should reflect the spirit of the above guidelines in their curriculum, ways of teaching and training programs.
- iii) Adopt an inter-disciplinary approach and avoid the departmental approach in teaching of theology in ATESEA theological schools.
- iv) Ongoing faculty development should be given due consideration in developing expertise in the concerned areas mentioned in the guidelines.
- v) Ensure proper resourcing is done in libraries to enable meaningful academic research, reflection and articulation on current and relevant issues.
- vi) AJT/ATESEA Publications should be encouraged to take the above guidelines into consideration and reflect the spirit of the same guidelines in their publications.
- vii) Efficient efforts must be undertaken so that ATESEA member schools and Asian theologians take the ideals of the guidelines seriously in theological education, reflection and construction.

I would like to make a sincere proposal that an in-depth study of the guidelines by all member schools be undertaken in order that the basic perspective is reflected and implemented both in the curriculum and in the teachings of the various schools. Subsequently, the Association’s accreditation guidelines also have to be revised to incorporate the requirements.

²⁶ Report on Rethinking Critical Asian Principle, Eastern Indonesia Area,

Strategy Forward

ATESEA is 50 years old now. We can compare ATESEA to a person who has gone through 50 years of life. The great thing about an older person is that he would have gained much wisdom through life's rich experiences and thereby likely to face the future with greater strength and confidence but with more caution. He would be more aware of the signs that warn him of the dangerous curves and bumps on the road that require him to take some precautionary measures either to walk steadily or to take a different path

I would therefore, like to highlight a few road signs that may be helpful to ATESEA and to move forward to a higher ground in the task of theological education.

A. Perspective of Theology of Mission

To take Malaysia as an example. Christianity has been in Malaysia for 496 years. Christians make up about 8 per cent of the total population. During the British colonial period, Churches served more to segregate than to congregate. Churches were predominantly identified by race and economic status. They by-passed the poor, the Malays and the tribal minorities. As a result, after independence, the legacy of segregation continued to promote racial polarization, and resulted in hostility against Christianity. Later, as more Christians participated in the process of nation building, the hostility gradually eased as racial barriers were broken down.

By inference, the Churches during the colonial era exhibited the following shortcomings:

1. *Lack of indigenization;*
2. *Lack of multiracial sensitivity; and*
3. *Lack of ecumenicity*

Similar stories are available elsewhere in other Asian countries as well. Parenthetically, Christianity has not been able to take root because it has long been regarded as the religion of the West.

In the sophisticated Asian fabric of religions, politics, cultures and history, Christianity has always been an outsider. In appearance and expression as well as in statement, Christian beliefs are still very unfamiliar to Asian eyes, ears and minds²⁷. The Asian context generally has two distinct features: first, poverty, and secondly, multi-religious traditions. Both features are closely related. In Asia, poverty has never been solely an economic problem. It is inherently associated with the life, political culture and spiritual mindsets.

Asian religious traditions are not only affairs of spiritual sphere, but also embrace the totality of the life of the people, including their struggles and sufferings. They are ever closely related to their own political aspirations and visions. Yet, evangelical campaigns of Christianity completely ignore all these facts. Thus, Christianity is seen to avoid a meaningful relation with the life and history of the Asian peoples.

As a consequence of pluralistic society and a trend of liberalization among the Governments in Asian countries, along with the continuous enlargement of the Christian professional community, Churches have begun to realize that social and cultural responsibilities cannot be denied. More and more Churches are hoping to strengthen the witness of the gospel through social and cultural resources.

If the Church ever aspires to take root in Asia and penetrate the heart of Asia, it must be able to touch the spirit of the Asian peoples. Asian Churches need to review their existing theology of mission in order to reposition themselves for new roles. These are the cures and bumps on the road of theological education ahead.

²⁷ C.S. Song, *Third Eye Theology* (New York : Maryknoll, 1979).

B. Professionalism

The greatest blind spot of Asian Churches' mission is ignorant and superficial theologies. Many theologians approach Asian problems by tackling the symptoms and do not attempt to uncover the root causes. Hence, the right remedies are not prescribed. They lack professionalism in solving complicated problems.

Poverty cannot be understood by economic analysis alone. Even though economic approaches are extremely important, it is still vital to go after the root of the problem. It is also beneficial to trace the cause, identify it and convert it to be an opportunity to work to our advantage.

Mahatma Gandhi had once pointed out that to those hungry who are struggling on the verge of death, freedom and God are only empty words; they are meaningless. He added that the deliverers of these unfortunate are those who hand out bread to them. Bishop K H Ting opines that evangelism needs not unnecessarily highlight poverty as if the gospel of Christ has only to do with those who suffer. Suffering can facilitate one to be closer to God, but it also can become a hurdle for one to know God.²⁸

In order that Christianity takes root in Asia and is recognized by the peoples, the gospel message must have significance to both the rich and the poor, the noble and the humble simultaneously. This is a serious and urgent problem which Asian Churches must address in a professional manner. The Churches must firstly overcome internal psychological barriers in relation to the established concepts of separation between the sacred and the secular as well as the religious and the non-religious. The walls, which were reinforced repeatedly through time immemorial, must be dismantled to facilitate the germination of a contextual and holistic theology of mission. Secondly, the Churches must proceed to undertake extensive theological re-construction. Reconstruction entails the search for the significance and meaning of the relation between Christ and Asian religions, living and history. This undertaking would definitely lead to a situation whereby Christianity eventually finds a home in Asia.

Buddhism had its origin in India, later it spread to China and Japan. China shed its Indian brand of Buddhism and creatively transformed it and consequently, a genuinely Chinese Chanzong or Zen Buddhism evolved. Japan also followed suit. The process of transformation demonstrated a laborious undertaking that involved profound knowledge and wisdom. The learned monks and nuns not only had to rid themselves of traditional burden but also embarked on ample meditation on the various religious doctrines in order to seek enlightenment on their relation to their own real life. Many among the monks and nuns were widely read and highly educated academicians. Their achievements were extraordinarily impressive.

Islam has been propagated in Malaysia since the Tenth Century with the arrival of Arab traders. Peninsular Malaysia was subsequently transformed with the Islamization of the Melaka Sultanate in the Fifteenth Century. Since independence, the nation has actively pursued the development of a highly indigenized form of Islam. At present, there are hundreds of scholars majoring in Islamic studies with Ph D degrees. In the bookshops along the streets, all types of Islamic books are easily and readily available. They include treatises on the relation of Islam with the society, politics, economics, comparative religions, ideologies and so on. This is certainly extraordinarily impressive. On the other hand, Malaysian Christian topical writings definitely become pale by comparison.

The lack of professionalism in Asian Churches is a consequence of the theology of mission introduced by conservative evangelicals. If a breakthrough is intended, there must be a serious reconstruction of ecclesiology and the theology of mission.

²⁸ Kwok Pui Lan, ed. *God is in the People of Asia* (Hong Kong: Chinese Christian Literature, 1993), p.104

How we see the hope and future of the Asian churches will, to a larger extent, depend on what theological model that ATESEA/SEAGST is able to provide in the coming years. Two approaches are suggested here:

(a) Theological Seminaries

The standard and quality of theological education must be uplifted. Targets for training must be focused more on university students and professionals such that more candidates of pastors and missionaries acquired commensurate standard of professionalism. Theological seminaries must specially take the unique and demanding challenge of the creation of a community of Asian theologians. The making of a genuinely Asian theologian is much more difficult than that of a Western theologian. This is because the former must be proficient with the sophisticated fabric of cultures and religions in Asia while the latter deals with more or less homogeneity. Most Asian seminarians are trained in the West or by Westerners. This is evidently showing the reason why the great majority of the theological human resources in Asian Churches are Western material or products. Eastern products with authority and fame are an extremely rare species.

Asian Christian population is small but theological seminaries are plenty. There are signs that resources are stretched to the limit. ATESEA member schools need to pool together the various limited resources and spearhead the establishment of a strong research and graduate centre which puts emphasis on innovative Asian studies.

(b) Partnership with National Churches

Asian Churches must adjust their operation and financial or economic structure to become visionary in the investment of human as well as financial resources. Amidst a professionalism era, the Churches must know they exist in a new and demanding millennium. The clergy must not be the monopoly and the exclusive reserve of theological graduates. It must extend itself and embrace professionals of other disciplines. This liberalization will then be able to gear the Churches for the next threshold of development. Such breakthrough will also lead to quality and professionalized ministries worthy of the new Third Millennium status. There is an ancient Chinese saying, “If you want a tree to be luxuriant then nurture its roots”. If theological education is to grow and bear fruit, permeating and transforming society, then both churches and seminaries need to work together to reform theological education. Seminaries and churches should work together to pioneer new approaches, in particular:

1. Strive to find the best students for theological training.
2. Strengthen lay-training so that Christians are concerned for the masses and fill their Christian calling by becoming living examples of justice, love and care in society.
3. Emphasizing the all round development of students in both spiritual growth and academic excellence so as to prepare exemplary leaders with sound Christian character.
4. Providing a stimulating environment for academic studies that develop both intellectual discernment and Christian reflection in order to face the challenges of the times.
5. Raising academic standards so as to be comparable with secular institutions.

The enhancement of the quality of training and the expansion of the scope of service require good collaborative and creative relationships with national churches and local university or other departments in the university system. Again, the Association will need to re-enforce its accreditation requirement highlighting the need for good “relationship of the school with other schools, the church and the community”.²⁹

C. Christian Solidarity with People of Other Faiths

The mission of Asian churches operates within diverse societies where problems relating to religious pluralism and poverty cannot be avoided. The various major religions in Asia influence and mould

²⁹ ATESEA Handbook, 2005-2007, p.77

the religious beliefs and cultural practices of the great majority of Asians. The theology of mission of the churches must re-explore the significance of all religions in the plan of God. Islam, Buddhism, Confucianism and Hinduism remain the major religions in Asia. These religions still prosper, closely associated with the peoples' life and culture. Their religious scriptures and classics have also nurtured the life and spirit of numerous peoples. If Christianity in the region consciously avoid these facts, ignoring the religious cultures and their life context, the Christian faith will never be relevant to the concerns and needs of these peoples.

Thus, Christians in their encounter with other faiths needs an attitude of openness and humility and a willingness to hear and respect points of view. This dialogical aspect is the ground for doing theological education in Asia. For Christians, dialogue is not an option but a necessity, a daily way of life.

Mission in a multi-faith context is to reenact the role of the prophets and our Lord Jesus Christ in guiding the people and in working for the restoration of a united people hood pleasing to God. God has already instituted a loving amnesty that encompasses both Christian and non-Christian and overcomes their estrangement from each other. People who are not alike can now be united. Christian can reach out, and a newly integrated people can evolve.

Conclusion

Asia is rapidly becoming an advanced industrialized region and there is real danger that the emphasis on material progress will disrupt racial harmony and tolerance unless there is a corresponding emphasis on religious and theological education. Without proper safeguards, industrialization is also likely to lead to environmental degradation.

Theological education should be visionary and prophetic so as to catalyze renewal in the church's concern to be partners with God in the twin role of caring for people's livelihood and stewarding God's creation.

Prerequisites for the seminary in equipping the saints with appropriate knowledge and approach are the theology in Asian cultural fabric and carefully designed programs. Pastors and leaders need to be not only deeply spiritual but also to be wise and knowledgeable. Prophet Hosea reminded us that in order for people to be liberated, they must first be taught, because "people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." (Hosea 4:6) The antidote to ignorance and prejudice, intolerance and violence is knowledge that brings about understanding, mutual appreciation and compassion. That kind of knowledge can best be achieved through theological education, which takes the various approaches seriously, including:

1. A creation of a community of Asian theologians.
2. Theological writings and research.
3. A strong graduate centre equipped with good library.
4. Strive for excellence in academic standards.
5. Good collaborative relationships with national churches, university and the community.

ATESEA envisions a higher ground in its next theological education journey; the pre-requisite is that this 50-year old person has to be aware of the road signs and to take precautionary measure. It is my greatest hope the mission and vision, enshrined in the New Guidelines will help to counteract all the dangerous curves and bumps in our strategic forward march.

CURRICULUM TRANSFORMATION FOR MINISTERIAL FORMATION:

The Re -Thinking Process in the Senate of Serampore College

Roger Gaikwad*

The Process

The Senate of Serampore College started a process of Curriculum Revision in 2006 after a long lapse of 15 years.³⁰ It began with three regional consultations in North India (at Delhi, September 4-5, 2006), East and North East India (at Kolkata, September 7-8, 2006), and South India (at Kottayam, October 5-6, 2006). These regional discussions were followed by a national consultation at Mumbai, on October 24-25, 2006. The Academic Council of the Senate further discussed the matter in its meeting at Mangalore, Karnataka State, South India on November 23-24, 2006. Concerns emerging from all these deliberations were again discussed in a Seminar of the Board of Theological Education of the Senate of Serampore College on February 7, 2007 at Shillong; Meghalaya State in North East India. This paper is a brief reflection of the process of the discussion.

The Urgent Need of Curriculum Revision

Curriculum revision is necessary in view of the changed and changing contexts of the church and the society at large. Several trends and forces are affecting the lives of people such as globalization, urbanization, politicization of religions and communalization of politics, nationalistic and militant ideologies, rigidifying of group identities, rising individualism, increasing alcoholism and drug addiction, concerns for the rights and dignity of the marginalized communities, movements for justice and peace, electronic media including worship services on the TV and sensational televangelistic programmes, etc.³¹ Therefore the curriculum which seeks to give direction and shape to academic, professional and personal/communitarian formation, with a view to promoting renewal in the church and transformation of society needs to take these changes into account. According to some observation, the present curriculum at best trains students to become “maintenance crew” who replace the older crew within the given structure without making any significant change in the latter.³² Others say that in the recent past our colleges and seminaries are not doing enough in providing professional and competent pastors.³³ So a curriculum revision is necessitated to bring in the needed ministerial and missional emphasis.

Curriculum revision is also necessitated on account of the deficiencies, difficulties, inadequacies and the un-clarity connected with the present curricula in its various aspects, specially when seen in the light of the present day needs, issues and possibilities. The Western theological education system arising from a monoglotic, cognitive, rational, and denominational theological discourse has largely influenced theological education in India.³⁴ While we have certainly benefited from it, we need to

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³⁰ O.V. Jathanna, “The Rationale for the Curriculum Revision of the Senate of Serampore College”, Paper presented at the National Consultation on Curriculum Revision, Mumbai, October 24-25, 2006, p.3.

³¹ Ibid. pp. 3-5.

³² K.P. Kuruvila, “Curriculum Revision: Regional Consultation for South India – Kottayam” Paper presented at the Regional Consultation on Curriculum Revision, Kottayam, October 5-6, 2006, p.1.

³³ Ravi Tiwari, “Curriculum Revision: Background and Purpose of Consultation”, Paper presented at the National Consultation on Curriculum Revision, Mumbai, October 24-25, 2006, p.2.

³⁴ Ibid. p.4; cf. Ravi Tiwari, “BTESSC Seminar on Curriculum Revision: Important Suggestions from Consultations”, Paper presented at the Seminar of the BTESSC, Shillong, February 7, 2007, p.1; Wati

take note that the present-day Indian/Asian context is not the same as that of the west from which we borrowed the system. So also the western system itself has shown its weaknesses in terms of building up the Christian community and equipping it for an authentic life of witness, service and fellowship in the present day challenges of urbanization, industrialization, individualism, secularism and the de-sacralized perception of reality.³⁵

A genuine desire and the quest to be relevant to the context in India/Asia have resulted in introducing new departments and new courses. This cannot be the solution in the long run because it leads to proliferation and compartmentalization of disciplines and new courses, with the end result that students tend to be overloaded with more work, and theological colleges have the burden of sustaining a large number of departments.³⁶ Besides, there is considerable overlapping between the B.Th. and B.D. programmes.³⁷ Then again one observes a confusion of course-content in the residential and external programmes; a person can even switch over from the residential programme to the external one and vice versa.³⁸ The evaluation system which is largely written-examination centered also has its limitations; moreover the nature of inter-disciplinary and integrated courses requires a different set of evaluation criteria.³⁹ At the same time theological teachers need to enhance and update their pedagogical skills.⁴⁰ Hence there is the urgent need of curriculum revision.

Objectives of the Curriculum Revision and Transformation

Four oft-repeated adjectives qualify the objectives of the curriculum revision taken on by the Senate of Serampore College: meaningful, relevant, effective and manageable.⁴¹ This is not an exercise in revision for revision sake. During the past 15 years the language of discourse and articulation has undergone change, the volume of publication of theological literature has expanded, and a cross-century generation with its complex character of rational and post-modern tendencies requires a theological curriculum and an ecclesial life, faith and witness which are meaningful. Curriculum revision should not only make knowledgeable sense, but it should also go beyond college campus academic musings and stimulation to address issues of the times, analyzing them, providing mature perspectives to handle them, and committing, equipping and empowering candidates and churches accordingly. To put it briefly the curriculum revision should ensure a wholesome balance of academic learning, ministerial orientation, missional commitment, ecumenical inclusiveness, practical training and spiritual formation (both individual and collective).⁴²

The revision that is done should also be effective; it should facilitate purposeful and constructive changes in the life and work of the theological community and the church. Since the cost of living in general and the expenses involved in theological education in particular are steadily and at times steeply rising, the planned curriculum revision should be financially viable. So also the endeavours to make theological education up to date and relevant require qualified teaching faculty, administrative personnel and infrastructure, which should be manageable. Especially when on-line education and external education are seen as viable alternatives (keeping the cost factor in mind) the curriculum for theological education involving campus training needs to be manageable and effective. Since in India the cost of campus theological training is largely borne by sponsoring

Wati Longchar, "The Need for Theological Education Curriculum Transformation in India", Draft Paper presented at the Regional Consultation at Kolkata, September 7-8, 2006, p.2.

³⁵ Jathanna, pp. 6-7.

³⁶ Ibid. p.7; cf. Ravi Tiwari, Initiating Revision of Curricula, Background Booklet (Serampore: Senate of Serampore College, 2006), p.7.

³⁷ Cf. Jathanna, p.8; B.Th. is the Bachelor of Theology Degree programme meant for Higher Secondary School level students and B.D. is the Bachelor of Divinity Degree programme meant for college graduates.

³⁸ Cf. Tiwari, "Curriculum Revision: Background and Purpose of Consultation", p.1.

³⁹ Consultations on Curriculum Revision (Regions: North, East and North-East and South): Reports of the Drafting Committees", (Serampore: Senate of Serampore College, 2006), pp.1, 7, 14.

⁴⁰ Ibid. ; Jathanna, pp.10-11; Tiwari, Initiating Revision of Curricula, pp.13-14.

⁴¹ Roger Gaikwad, "Towards a Revised Curriculum: Proposals about Methodology and Content", Paper presented at the National Consultation on Curriculum Revision, Mumbai, October 24-25, 2006, p.1

⁴² Consultations on Curriculum Revision, p.2.

churches and theological institutions any curriculum revision places a heavy responsibility on such bodies to ensure the success of the revision by providing suitable infrastructure, adequate finances, qualified faculty and efficient administration.

Methodology

In the exercise of curriculum revision, while preserving the values of the western system of theological education, issue-based multi-disciplinary or inter-disciplinary and integrated approaches should also be brought in.⁴³ At the same time the curriculum should address the contextual gospel imperatives of the sufferings and struggles of the dalits⁴⁴, the adivasis/tribals,⁴⁵ women,⁴⁶ the poor and other marginalized sections like persons with disabilities⁴⁷ of the society.

Milieu or the context of the church and ministry cannot be overlooked in preparing new curricula. The Indian/South Asian dimension is integral to all the aspects of the course. The multi-religious, multi-cultural and socio-economic milieu has to be intensely studied. Preferentially we need to concentrate our attention on the context of the poor, the marginalized, the downtrodden and the exploited masses of Dalits, women, tribals and stigmatized masses...

There is a need of a theological education that will enable the construction of theology of pain, loss and suffering, developed by living with communities undergoing such experience. Concrete

⁴³ K.C.Abraham, "Theological Education and Ministerial Formation", Paper presented at the National Consultation on Curriculum Revision, Mumbai, October 24-25, 2006, pp.3-4.

⁴⁴ While the majority of the Church members from mainland India are dalits, Busi Suneel Banu critically observes that "a majority of the Serampore affiliated institutions as well as their sponsoring churches are yet to recognise the voices of the marginalized, let alone incorporate and integrate them both into ministerial formation as well as the work and witness of the church." Busi Suneel Bhanu, "Re-Visioning of Curricula: the Place of Dalit Theology", Paper presented at the Regional Consultation on Curriculum Revision, Kolkata, September 7-8, 2006, p.1.

⁴⁵ Tribals constitute another major segment of the Church in India, particularly in North East India. So far, the perspectives and practices of non-tribal Christians have predominated theological education. The contexts, views and ways of life of the tribals need to be given due space in the curriculum revision. Ezamo Murry observes: "The tribals of the Northeast do not have access to the cultural heritage of mainland India and so are not familiar with the background in which the students of mainland India find rapport with the philosophy and thought form of Indian education. Thanks for the openness of the Senate of Serampore College that allows contextual studies to be introduced. The revision this time will hopefully give more space to the contextual needs of the North East communities." Ezamo Murry, "A Brief Presentation on the Northeast Concerns", Paper presented at the Regional Consultation on Curriculum Revision, Kolkata, September 7-8, 2006, p.3.

⁴⁶ Though the Senate of Serampore College has established Women's Studies as an independent branch in theological education, women's concerns are not adequately integrated into the theological education programme in terms of perspective content, encouragement of women students, and recruitment of women as teachers in theological institutions. Churches likewise do not do justice to women. Limatula Longkumer, "Women and Women's Studies Concerns in Curriculum Revision of The Senate of Serampore College", Paper presented at the Regional Consultation on Curriculum Revision, Kolkata, September 7-8, 2006, pp.1-2.

In curriculum revision, Ivy Singh emphasizes, "Re-fashioning of theological education replaces the pro-men theology with a theology of liberative praxis and nonhierarchical, non-privatistic in its ecumenical vision. It moves from patriarchy to partnership which recognizes the full humanity of women together with men as people of God called to work for dignity and genuine community based on love, understanding and right relationships." Draft Paper presented at the Regional Consultation on Curriculum Revision, Kolkata, September 7-8, 2006, p.2.

⁴⁷ T.K.John proposes, "The least, the last, the most deprived, the most de-priced and deformed, need to be the starting point of the focused organized effort at knowing the Indian peoples. From the effect to the cause, from the particular to the universal, has to be the journey of the learner in the Kingdom of God in India. The dalits, the tribals, the women of these sectors, and then of the other sectors, the homeless and the landless, with the immensity of their problems and poignancies of the people forced to be in such situations, should ignite the theological *jijnasa* in the hearts of the students that knock at the portals of our centres." T.K.John, "A journey in Indian Christian Theological Method and Content", Paper presented at the Regional Consultation on Curriculum Revision, Delhi, September 5-6, 2006, p.12.

Included among the marginalized sections of society are people living with HIV & AIDS, and human beings living with disabilities of various kinds whom the church and society are guilty of not providing just-care. Cf. Wati, p.4.

experiences of students and professors, engaged with the world of suffering only can bring forth a theology of life and living.⁴⁸

However a note of caution has also been sounded that the emphasis on contextual concerns is fraught with the danger of reductionism – reducing the gospel to a sociological expression - and the trap of theological exclusivism. While not denying the importance of addressing the context of economic poverty, social injustice, religious and cultural plurality, political oppression, etc., and the situation of the subalterns, it was emphasized that theological education should be rooted in Christian faith traditions.⁴⁹ A basic knowledge of the text is necessary in analyzing the context. The theological curriculum should be concerned with filling the gap between the “ought” (the ideal, the God-given vision and direction) and the “is” (the reality, the human world with its weaknesses and failures).⁵⁰

Proposing an integrative perspective, yet another recommendation was that the exercise of curriculum revision should involve a reorientation of our context and our clientele (the church) as well as a reorientation of our understanding of God in a pluralistic society. In other words, theological education should be an integration of radical openness to God (or the stirrings of the Spirit) and relevant responses to the needs and possibilities of the context. It could also be articulated as faithfulness to the gospel of Jesus Christ along with responsibility to the church, academia and the world at large. In this process the text and the context have to mutually influence theological formulation and ministerial formation.⁵¹ So also dialogical text-context dialectic would have to be cultivated. The relationship between text/theory and context/practice is always a two-way traffic. Context and practice are informed by textual hermeneutics and theoretical commitments, while the understanding of the text and the articulation of theories are influenced and enriched by contextual, practical experiences.⁵²

All courses would have to be taught paying attention to inclusive language, ecumenical openness,⁵³ pastoral concern, prophetic reform and missional commitment.

The Basic Degree in Theological Education

The participants in the Academic Council Meeting and the Board of Theological Education of the Senate of Serampore College (BTESSC) Seminar were of the opinion that a four-year B.D.

⁴⁸ Tiwari, “BTESSC Seminar on Curriculum Revision: Important Suggestions from Consultations”, p.2; Bonita Aleaz comments, “The comforts of arm-chair diagnosis and prognosis developed so far has to be replaced by a theology of engagement of real-life conflict, not to accelerate the same, but to internalize it before a theological prognosis can be attempted. Concrete experiences of war, drought, and floods have to be internalized. Only such engagements with the world of suffering and its attendant realpolitik bring forth a theology of life and living.” Bonita Aleaz, “The Person, the Society and Theological Education: A Socio-Political Critique”, Paper presented at the Regional Consultation on Curriculum Revision, Kolkata, September 7-8, 2006, p.6. Mohan Larbeer asserts, “Does our curriculum have the theological content to respond to the ‘autonomous questions of the north east’, ‘land issue of the Adivasis in Jharkhand’, ‘identity politics of the Dalits’ or ‘the struggles of the women against patriarchy?’ ...If our curriculum does not facilitate the theology which does not identify with the people’s struggles then it is useless.” Paper presented at the Regional Consultation on Curriculum Revision, Kottayam, October 5-6, 2006, p.2.

⁴⁹ Cf. “Orthodox Theological Seminary, Kottayam: Comments on the Curriculum Revision” Paper presented at the Regional Consultation on Curriculum Revision, Kottayam, October 5-6, 2006, p.3.

⁵⁰ Cf. Gaikwad, pp. 2-3.

⁵¹ Ibid. p.3.

⁵² Cf. Samson Prabhakar, “Revisioning the Theological Curriculum as if The Church Mattered”, Paper presented at the National Consultation on Curriculum Revision, Mumbai, October 24-25, 2006, p.1.

⁵³ The Senate of Serampore College has institutions from different ecclesial traditions affiliated to it ranging from the Orthodox at one end to the Pentecostals at the other. The views of all traditions should be given due space in the curriculum revision. Cf. Tiwari, “BTESSC Seminar on Curriculum Revision: Important Suggestions from Consultations”, p.1; Simon Samuel “Curriculum Revision Regional Consultation”, Paper presented at the Regional Consultation on Curriculum Revision, Delhi, September 5-6, 2006, p.3; “Orthodox Theological Seminary, Kottayam”, pp.1,4.

programme should be the basic degree programme.⁵⁴ The present B.Th. programme would have to be phased out. Colleges offering only the B.Th. programme would have to be encouraged to start a five-year Integrated B.D. programme, thereby providing an opportunity for Higher Secondary School candidates to pursue theological education.

The Structure of the Basic Degree Programme

There are several shades of suggestions made about the structure of the programme:

(1) One suggestion is that the programme be divided into three segments of Foundational Courses, Optional Courses and Ministry Oriented Courses.⁵⁵ Included within the Foundational segment could be background courses on contextual, conceptual and psychological studies, methodology, language studies and core or compulsory subjects.

(2) Since the three strands in theological education namely the Christian Faith Traditions, Contextual Concerns and Ministerial Skills need to be inter-related more meaningfully and practically, there could be three sets of courses in the structure of the curriculum with each course integrating elements of the other two.⁵⁶ An alternative version of this proposal is that the three types of courses namely core subjects, integrated perspective subjects and optional (or special) ministerial concern (or contextual action) subjects should be inter-related.⁵⁷ Such a pattern would ensure that the core subjects would be continued to be taught, forming the basis of relating to contemporary concerns, while there would be flexibility in offering different optional courses which would do justice to regional concerns, contemporary issues, students' interests and ministerial/missional commitments.

(3) Another proposal is that the programme could be divided into four stages⁵⁸: (a) Reflections on the Context: Personal, Cultural, Social and Ecclesial; (b) Studying the Church's Prime Reason for Existence (Mission); (c) Critical and Constructive Application of Theological Reflection to the Church's Calling within its context (engaging in interaction and consolidation of what has been learnt in stages one and two); and (d) Consolidation of experience and learning, and acquiring relevant methodological skills for mission and ministry.

(4) A fourth suggestion related to the third proposal is that the programme be divided into two parts.⁵⁹ The first part could be subdivided into two sections namely, Foundations of Christianity and the Context of Theological Education and Ministry. Theological Colleges could decide which section could be taught in the first year and which in the second year and accordingly relate the two sections within the larger framework of their vision and mission. The second part of the programme would focus on advanced theological reflection, contextual issues and ministerial/mission training.

In the second part students could be given the option to choose subjects they are interested in or feel committed to. A related suggestion is that the students could also be given the option of choosing clusters of subjects. If they are interested in academic reflection and research they could do so. If they are drawn to ministry they could accordingly be offered a suitable cluster of subjects. If they are challenged to engage in mission and social action they could be given an appropriate group of subjects. At the end of the programme the students could all be awarded the same graduate degree or the degree certificate could specifically mention that the candidate has done a B.D. specializing in theological reflection and research, or a graduate degree specializing in ministry, or a graduate

⁵⁴ "Summary Report on Discussion (of the Academic Council) on Curriculum Revision", Proceedings of the Theological Senate and Its Committees, January 21, 2006 to November 24, 2006 (Serampore: Senate of Serampore College, 2006), p.260.

⁵⁵ Tiwari, *Initiating Revision of Curricula*, p.10

⁵⁶ *Consultations on Curriculum Revision*, p.16.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Prabhakar, pp. 7- 9.

⁵⁹ Gaikwad, pp. 7-8.

degree specializing in mission. If acceptable these certificates could be named as B.D., B. Min. and B. Miss. respectively.⁶⁰

Content of the Basic Degree Programme

The programme would contain core subjects from all the different disciplines: O.T., N.T., Theology, Ethics, History of Christianity, Religions, Social Analysis, Practical Ministry, Mission Studies, Communication, Women's Studies, Dalit Studies, Tribal/Adivasi Studies. However, care should be taken to see that disciplines/departments do not keep on increasing in number.

Urgent contemporary concerns would also have to be addressed⁶¹: HIV/AIDS, Developmental Studies, I.T. Revolution in Communication, Computer Application, Management, Church Music, Law and Procedures of Handling Legal Matters, People living with Disabilities, Conflict Resolution and Peace Building, Revivals and Charismatic Movements, Inter-Gender Issues, Health Concerns, Philosophy of Science and Faith, Rural Ministry, etc. It is observed that separate courses should be introduced on such subjects.

Provision will also have to be made for introducing special or optional papers according to the contextual needs and challenges of colleges and churches in South Asia. For instance in North East India the church and society need to address the important concerns of Mission and Education for Peace Building, HIV & AIDS, Tribal Theology, etc.⁶² However the syllabi of all the courses would have to be approved by the Senate.

Ecclesial/Social Exposure and Practical Work

Theology should not be viewed purely as an academic subject designed to provide answers to theoretical questions. Theological education involves an on-going reflection on all of life. This implies that at every stage of education, field observation, field study and real-life studies should be undertaken.⁶³ The colleges would have to make provision for ecclesial/social exposure and practical work as they deem fit. This practical work programme needs to be meaningfully integrated with the papers taught in the curriculum. Furthermore it would become a credited programme; the marks secured would be taken into consideration for determining the final grade of the student.⁶⁴ Even theological teachers would need to be constantly engaged in the process of exposure, reflection, action, and theologizing.⁶⁵

Evaluation process

The entire system of assessment needs a re-evaluation. Examinations need to be made a part of the learning process of theological students. The emphasis on the written examination and the obsession of students with grades should undergo change. As mentioned earlier, the nature of inter-disciplinary and integrated courses requires a different set of evaluation criteria. The ratio of the Senate-examined papers to the College-examined papers needs to be properly worked out. So also the provision for internal college assessment marks in Senate-examined papers has to be carefully decided upon. The procedure of expediting the evaluation of Senate-examined answer-scripts has also to be worked on.⁶⁶

⁶⁰ Cf. Tiwari, "BTESSC Seminar on Curriculum Revision: Important Suggestions from Consultations", p.6.

⁶¹ Ibid, p.4; Consultations on Curriculum Revision pp.6, 12, 19.

⁶² Consultations on Curriculum Revision, p.12-13.

⁶³ Prabhakar, p. 5.

⁶⁴ Gaikwad, p.9.

⁶⁵ "Summary Report on Discussion (of the Academic Council) on Curriculum Revision", p.260.

⁶⁶ Jathanna, pp.9-10; Consultations on Curriculum Revision, p.10

Advanced Studies

During the consultations the focus was largely on the basic degree programme. However some suggestions were made in a few paper presentations about advanced theological studies.⁶⁷

In subsequent years candidates can go in for residential M.Th. Studies in any of the subjects provided they have the minimum required aggregate and the needed graduate level preparation for undertaking post-graduate studies in the particular discipline. However B.D. graduates who wish to do their post-graduate studies externally could register for M.Min. or M.Miss. accordingly.

Those who would pursue doctoral studies as a residential programme would be registered for D.Th. where as M.Min. and M.Miss. candidates would have to register for D. Min. and D. Miss. programmes. Only those candidates who have done a M.Th./ D.Th. would be eligible to teach in theological colleges.

The Importance of Pedagogy and Spiritual Formation

In the curriculum revision the traditional ways of teaching and learning will have to be changed. There should be the facilitation of innovative or creative ways of experience and resource sharing, mutual interaction, learning, reflection and edification, and commitment and action. Both students and teachers need to be engaged in the learning and teaching process. So also, personal spiritual formation should be taken seriously. Teachers should serve as good role models and mentors.

The pedagogical concern is much deeper and wider than the need for theological teachers to be trained in general teaching methods, which is necessary. Pedagogy at the same time also refers to the issue of making theological education holistic in forming the prospective ministers and theological teachers for the diversified ministries in terms of academic excellence, professional skills, and personal formation with an emphasis on community life, team-work, sensitivity and openness to others. It should help the candidate to become motivated and motivating agents of God's new life who are deeply committed to the vision and mission of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.⁶⁸

Focus on the Laity

The ultimate objective of theological education is the theological formation, empowerment and equipping of the laity in Christian faith, witness and service. Hence curriculum revision should have this objective in mind. The extension programmes of the Senate would also have to be strengthened. However they should not be mere imitations of the residential theological educational programmes. Opportunities should be made available for the laity to acquire meaningful and edifying training through programmes at different levels: Certificate in Christian Studies, Diploma in Christian Studies, Degree of Bachelor of Christian Studies, Master of Christian Studies, and Doctor of Christian Studies.⁶⁹

Special certificate or non-formal programmes could also be arranged on important issues such as HIV/AIDS, Persons with Disabilities, Peace Building and Conflict Resolution, Counseling, etc. A post-graduate programme in counseling, namely Master of Pastoral Psychotherapy could be introduced as a further development of the DCPC (Diploma in Clinical Pastoral Care and Counseling) programme of the Senate.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Cf. Jathanna, p. 9; Gaikwad, pp. 5-6; Richard E. A. Rodgers, "Curriculum Revision: Regional Consultation for North India", Paper presented at the Regional Consultation on Curriculum Revision, Delhi, September 4-5, 2006, p.4.

⁶⁸ Jathanna, pp.10-11

⁶⁹ Roger Gaikwad, "Reflections on Programmes conducted from the Senate Centre for Extension and Pastoral Theological Research", Paper presented at the Regional Consultation on Curriculum Revision, Kolkata, September 7-8, 2006, pp.2-3.

⁷⁰ Abraham Kuruvilla, "The Relevance of a Masters Degree in Pastoral Counseling", Paper presented at The Regional Consultation on Curriculum Revision, Kottayam, October 5-6, 2006, pp.1-2.

Relationship with churches, church related organizations and people's movements

Revision can take place only through a meaningful dialogue with churches. Churches and theological institutions could challenge and empower one another with new thinking and action on issues in theological education and ministry. So also matters such as sponsoring of students for studies, appointment of teachers, financial support, etc. could be handled responsibly when churches and theological institutions work together. It is not simply a matter of cooperation but of ownership of theological education, however without unnecessary ecclesial interference and stifling control.⁷¹ At the same time a spirit of ecumenical partnership should be cultivated and strengthened among churches and theological institutions so that resources could be effectively shared and the phenomenon of duplication of programmes and mushrooming of theological institutions with the unhealthy competition that it entails could be avoided.⁷² In the process of curriculum revision, due attention will also have to be given for networking with people's movements wherever possible, for making use of the facilities and inputs of church related organizations, and for seeking the support of the churches in theological education programmes. The responsibility of running short-term non-formal theological education programmes could be shared with the churches; the Senate need not be burdened with conducting all such programmes on its own.

Conclusion

The above-mentioned views resonate well with the Vision and Mission Statement of the Senate of Serampore College as articulated in the Constitution adopted in 2005:

“We believe that the Triune God has offered the possibility of renewal of life and hope for the entire creation in and through Jesus Christ, and that as an instrument of God, the Church is called to be involved in God's mission of liberation, reconciliation and community building among all peoples through varied forms of ministry.

Set in the midst of people of other faiths and ideologies as well as situations of life-negating forces, we are called upon to equip the whole people of God to respond to the contextual challenges critically and creatively by being faithful to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

In (the) light of this faith and self-understanding, we seek to equip ministers, leaders, scholars and the whole people of God to be committed to creative discernment of and active participation in God's liberative mission in the world at large and in South Asia in particular...”⁷³

⁷¹ Cf. Consultations on Curriculum Revision, pp.4-5, 11, 18-19.

⁷² Ibid. p.5.

⁷³ Constitution: One National Structure for Theological Education in India (Serampore: Senate of Serampore College, 2005), pp.3-4.

ENGAGING THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION IN CONTEXT: Focus on Persons with Disabilities

Wati Longchar⁷⁴

Introduction

In one of our consultations, a participant posed a question like this: “Violence, economic injustice, poverty, ecological destruction, HIV and AIDS, persons with disabilities, religious fundamentalism and migrant issues has been in the center of ecumenical discussions for some years. But, why do such ecumenical concerns so slow in permeating the life of the church? Why has it not yet been the major points of contemplation in theological colleges/seminaries?” How do the theological seminaries address ecumenical agenda? How do the ecumenical organizations promote ecumenical agenda in our ministerial formation program? If the churches and colleges are not sensitive to ecumenical agenda, we cannot point our finger at anybody. We have to blame ourselves. This paper highlights some of the problems, challenges and opportunities for transforming theological education curricula in Asian context.

Theological Orientation and Problems of Contextualization in Asia

Theological education plays a key role in ecumenical movement. Along with various theological movements such as the Program for Theology and Culture in Asia (PTCA), Congress of Asian Theologians (CATS), etc., there are several ecumenical theological education networks that facilitate and work towards strengthening and promoting theological education in Asia. Most of the theological colleges/seminaries established by the mainline churches come under the regional theological associations such as the Board of Theological Education of Senate Serampore College (BTESSC), the Association of Theological Education in South East Asia (ATESEA) and the North East Association of Theological Schools (NEATS).⁷⁵ It is encouraging to see that various theological institutions and theological movements continue to make serious attempts to respond to the changing demand of Asia by running various degree and diploma programs, workshops and consultations, and also attempt through their different initiative such as the Commission on Women, Contextual Theology, etc. to meet the contemporary challenges of the church. Conscious efforts have been made to develop new spirituality in ministerial formation, the Asian⁷⁶ theological methodologies, theological reflections from marginalized perspectives – dalit, minjung, tribal, women, and recently persons with disabilities. The initiative on new pattern of theological education, the promotion of closer relationship between the seminaries and the churches, and the empowerment of women are some of the noteworthy areas. We can see that the emphasis given to marginalized groups, women’s studies and other related fields have brought about significant changes in theological education. Though the history of formal theological education in Asia is less than 200 years old, there have been tremendous development and improvements in theological education and Asian theologies. We are grateful to our pioneers for their visions and we celebrate with them for their hard work.

The ethos of education in Asia has drastically changes and is increasingly coming under the influence of market forces. Skill oriented education is sought after. Computer technology and other market oriented types of education are most lucrative and the best brains are sold on the open market. Religious studies are slowly losing its significance. How does a theological education

⁷⁴ Dr. Wati Longchar is the Joint Consultant of Ecumenical Theological Education for Asia and Pacific of WCC and CCA.

⁷⁵ Apart from BTESSC, ATESEA, NEATS, we also have other evangelical theological associations like Asian Theological Association (ATA) and Asia Pacific Theological School (APTS) who are actively engaged in various innovative programs in training future church leaders.

⁷⁶When we say “Asian”, one should not think that there is one Asian reality. The diversity and multiplicity of the context and experiences of contemporary Asia must be recognized. Asian can never be unified nor be homogenized.

promote life affirming and holistic spirituality in the context of today's Asia? How do we broaden the scope of theologizing and integrate with secular learning? Do Asian theological seminaries adequately respond to fast changing Asian context? Theological colleges in Asia reflect a variety of mission orientations and their responses to Asian realities also differ considerably. We may put them under four categories:

a) There are several colleges and training centres in Asia sponsored by one person or family or by a single congregation. Such schools give a strong emphasis to church planting, evangelism and soul winning. They think that the college should exist solely for evangelistic purposes- train missionaries for churches. These schools give no importance to our contemporary social issues. Many such schools are not accredited or affiliated to any theological bodies.

b) There are *nondenominational seminaries* started by several evangelistic groups, revival groups or prayer groups that tend to have a curriculum that reflects a strong concern for church planting and the traditional concepts and practices of mission – i.e. to Christianize others. Such groups have even tried to take advantage of *tsunami* tragedy in South and South East Asia for conversion purposes. We have many stories how dozens of religious groups moved into Aceh, Indonesia in 2005 looking to help *tsunami* victims - and convert them. A relief worker said: 'These people need food but they also need Jesus. God is trying to awaken people and help them realize salvation is in Christ.' In recent years, some of these schools have sought accreditation from the regional theological associations.

c) There are also colleges sponsored by a particular *denomination*. A large number of colleges in Asia are denominationally oriented colleges whose curricular offerings are mandated by their denominations. Such *denominational seminaries* though open to admitting students from other denominations, emphasize on a curriculum that reflects their denominational content and focuses on church growth of the particular denomination. The majority of these schools have been accredited by regional theological associations.

d) There are ecumenical *seminaries* born out of the ecumenical movement and they constitute a minority group in Asia. Their curriculum includes a bit of ecumenism, comparative study of religions, interfaith dialogue, feminist theology, tribal/dalit theology, eco-theology, etc. However, these courses are often treated as "elective" or "optional" in many colleges. If we make a further analysis of these courses, we will discover that the urban bias towards theological education is very much emphasized.

All these mission, church or ecumenical orientated schools do not give sufficient space on socio-economic and political realities of the people. The contents and orientation are heavily loaded by western academic approach. The issue like persons with disabilities receives no attention in theological schools. The issue is still looked up as charitable concern, but not as question of justice.

Importance of Infusing Life Confronting Issues in Theological Education Program

The neglect of contemporary realities has its root in the Enlightenment and western mission movement of the nineteenth century. The content, approach and orientation are predominantly born of missionary theologies – theologies that have been shaped by European colonial expansion, western rationalistic approach, the conquest of nature and a model of development based on technology. The theological concepts developed during this period not only legitimized a religion for the one who is the master and the ruler, but also sanction to exploit and manipulate all segments of God's creation for extraction of maximum profit. There is no place for the people who have been ruled and oppressed like persons with disabilities for centuries and protection of Mother Earth. This dominant theology includes its *concept of God*. The dominant images of God that developed during the church is images such as Ruler, Lord, Master and Warrior. All patriarchal, political and military images made Christianity a religion of, and for, the ruler, elite and the upper-class. They are not capable of liberating the poor and marginalized people like persons with disabilities from unjust system and practice. Such concept of God will not be able to liberate the people and earth who have become the victims of power.

A major problem in theological education programs in Asia is that we still pursued within the traditional paradigm. One would say that it is a duplicate of the Western model of education in terms of its curriculum and teaching that is based on a hierarchy of courses and continues to follow a disciplinary approach, a legacy of the Western academia in our theological learning-thinking process. In this educative process, there is a specialization in the so-called ‘classical’ or ‘core’ courses, thereby making it difficult to add new courses and emerging issues such as globalization, religious fundamentalism, peace education, gender concerns, HIV and AIDS, disability, etc., that are more crucial in the Asian context. The basic methodology in seminary training is generally for cognitive or intellectual development at the expense of other aspects of human development. This is clearly shown through the use of lecture and debate in the classrooms: heavy reliance on books or library research; and the shunning of creative and innovative methods as being unscholarly.⁷⁷ Asian theologians are confronted by issues of poverty, religious pluralism, neo-colonialism, environmental degradation, ethnic conflicts and wars, human rights violations and the marginalization of women and they are our realities. Theologically speaking, we can say that Asian theologians have made significant contributions in response to these problems and challenges. However, in spite of the exciting and dynamic theological movements in Asia with the strong realization that Asian theologies should be relevant to the Asian contexts, we continue to teach the same old subjects with the same old patterns of pedagogy imitating our former teachers. Unfortunately, many Asian theological educators have been trained in that system and we are afraid of deviating from what we have learnt. Therefore we teach a theology or speak a language that is not familiar and relevant to the needs of the people. We hear from the churches and from our students and graduates alike protests such as: “The kind of theological training we received in colleges is not suitable for the rural context”; “Theological education is not helpful for the spiritual nurturing of the congregations”; “Theological graduates with B.D. or M.Div., M.Th. degrees cannot deliver a good sermon relevant to the people’s situation”; “Graduates are not fully equipped to deal with crisis situations such as sickness, mental break-down, family quarrels, the HIV and AIDS problem, the conflict situation and persons with disabilities”. It is true that students are not well equipped to face the ground realities in a pastoral situation. These issues raise questions such as WHAT should we teach? (Contents) and HOW should we teach? (Methodologies).

Engaging Theological Education in the Context

Education should result transformation and change. If ecumenical theological education is to play a transformative role in the human community and preserve the integrity of God’s creation, it is imperative that theological studies be done within the Asian context with Asian resources in Asian ways. With the rapid globalization of markets, media and technologies, and the counter-reaction in the form of growing fundamentalism affirming exclusive and particular national, ethnic, cultural or religious identities, poverty, gender justice, persons with disabilities, and new diseases like HIV and AIDS, etc. are our immediate contexts and they impinge on our everyday lives and relationships. Theological education will lose its significance in the wider human society if we do not address these problems. Whilst deciding to offer more courses on HIV and AIDS and theological reflections at undergraduate level study, the African theologians debated whether the colleges should give priority to traditional “core courses” or wrestle with immediate life confronting issue like HIV and AIDS that create misery within the family, the community and the social and economic life of the people. They opted to struggle with the life confronting issues and came up with the ground breaking Theological Curriculum on HIV and AIDS.⁷⁸ Are theological seminaries in Asia ready to struggle with the life confronting issues or should we be comfortable with what we have been doing and teaching?

To approach theology with Asian resources and an open mind, first, we need to have a paradigm shift, *metanoia*, ‘repentance’ from our Western, colonized theological mindset.⁷⁹ Along with our

⁷⁷ Hope S. Antone, “The State and Prospect of Theological Education in Asia” in *Ecumenical Theological Education: Hopes and Challenges*, ed. Wati Longchar (Jorhat: ETE-WCC/CCA, 2005), p. 25.

⁷⁸ See HIV/AIDS Curriculum for Theological Institutions in Africa (Geneva: WCC, 2001).

⁷⁹ David Kwang-sun Suh, “Relevant Theological Education in the Changing Context: Whose Context?” a paper presented at the Consultation at North East India Theological Association (NEITA), 10-13 November 2004, at Shillong, p. 5.

contemporary historical experiences and realities, we should be open to letting God speak to us through our religious stories, our rich cultural traditions and the value systems of Asia. We are aware that no culture or way of life is perfect. The life of every group of people is a mixture of both good and bad. Doing theology with Asian resources involves a critique of the past and also the recovery of the lost history, spirituality and tradition to enlighten us in our search for a new life in Jesus Christ. For example, the indigenous people's traditional values that were never considered worth exploring for doing theology can also provide a new paradigm for doing theology from "below". Indigenous theologians have demonstrated a new way of doing liberation theology by showing that theology which addresses humanity alone but leaves the rest of God's creation unaddressed is an incomplete theology. Without restoring justice to creation⁸⁰, the oppressed communities such as women, indigenous people, and persons with disabilities, dalit, Minjung, and AIDS victims will not be able to attain liberation and fullness of life in Christ. Doing justice to God's entire creation is the starting point of liberation.

Doing theology in an Asian way demands a methodology "from below". It means the insights gained from our commitment to the struggle of the marginalized – HIV victims, persons with disabilities dalit, Minjung, tribal, women and the rural people for their justice and human dignity. Before we talk about historical criticism, form criticism, higher criticism, lower criticism, cross textual readings of the Bible, etc., it is important that we talk about how the poor and powerless would read a given passage in the Bible. We read the Bible, our contemporary stories and our religious stories together to discover spiritual resources for peace, justice, community life, healing and wholeness of life. Theological education in Asia requires the integration of sub-altern perspectives into the academic discourse. K.C. Abraham argues that the sub-altern perspectives will necessarily bring a critique of the traditional perspectives that we unconsciously adopted in our theological education.⁸¹ It also demands reading the history of Christianity from the *receivers'* perspective, but not from the *senders'* perspective. Instead of reading the history of the early Western church, from the Roman church to the Middle Ages, the Reformation, the Enlightenment period and to the 19th century, we can read the history of Christianity from the Asian perspective: how we have received the Bible, how we have read the Bible, how we have created Christian communities, how we have challenged our own cultures and societies, and how we have transformed ourselves as a people and as a society as a whole.⁸² Reading history from the receiver's perspectives involves the deconstruction and reconstruction of history from the experience of marginalized people. Their hopes and visions of the fullness of life become crucial in the reconstruction of history and also in doing theology. When we integrate our interpretation of the Bible and our histories together, our direction and goal of how to teach Christian theology (Systematic theology) becomes clear. The goal is to bring about a transformation in our churches, in our immediate communities, in our politics, economic relations and also with God's entire creation. This is to envision the reign of God and realize it here and now.⁸³

Theological Education and Persons with Disabilities

EDAN has drawn the attention that without inclusion of the gifts of persons with disabilities, we cannot talk about the unity of the church. It is said that 10% of the human population has some deformity or other. In our society the disabled seldom receive attention and care.abled people try to avoid their company. In many societies persons with disability are treated as second-class and object-of-charity or in certain cases they are abandoned. They are subjected to prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory acts by the abled-bodied majority. Society keeps them ignorant and dependent by denying education and employment opportunity. The suffering and miseries of people with disabilities in Asia are more because of poverty and poor medical facility. It is said that malnutrition is the primary cause of disability worldwide.

⁸⁰ "Creation" does not mean "nature" outside of humanity. It is a wholistic term which includes humanity and all other God's creation.

⁸¹ K.C. Abraham, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

⁸² David Kwang-sun Suh, *op. cit.* p.6.

⁸³ *Ibid.* p. 6.

Christian theology is done by able bodied people for the abled bodied. Theology from the perspective of persons with disabilities is almost silent in Christian tradition. We have rather a negative theology towards persons with disabilities constructed by abled bodied people. Many Christians think that disability is related to sin and the work of demons. It is a curse and punishment from God. Healing is always understood as a sign of faith. People think that those who are not healed do not have strong faith. The lack of faith leads to disability.

The ideas of perfection and of beauty that are ingrained in our psyche and sanctioned by our culture tend to preclude any form of disability. There is no “beauty” in the disabled. Perfection is measured by physical and mental endowments that are rarely found in the experiences of the disabled. Any form of disability makes you less than human; and so they are not created in the image of God; persons who cannot articulate do not reflect God’s image and they cannot be considered of perfect being of God. For this reason the persons with disabilities are excluded from society and religious life. Parents are ashamed to show their disabled children in public; they kept them inside the house all through their lives. Some parents who brought their children to “Care Home Centre” do not come to see their children again. The issue of persons with disabilities raises the question of justice and so they are integral part of theological reflection.

This challenges us to rethink ministerial formation program. The concern of disabilities has not been given due attention in theological education and the ministry of the church. Cultural prejudices, exclusive or negative theological perspectives, social stigmas and taboos have often led to the exclusion and isolation of persons with disabilities. When we evaluate the syllabi of theological colleges in Asia, we will discover that virtually none of the theological schools offer a course related to persons with disabilities. When people with disabilities suffer isolation from friends and family members, when they are denied, discriminated and excluded from active involvement in spiritual, social and developmental life of the Church or when they are accused as being cursed by God, why do Christian ministers remain silent? There is no unity of the churches without acknowledging the gifts of persons with disability. All people with or without disabilities are created in the image of God and called to an inclusive community in which they are empowered to use their gifts. This inclusive community of all, the people of God, is holy in Christ irrespective of the physical state of their bodies and level of psychological functioning. However, the persons with disability are often discriminated and excluded from active involvement in spiritual, social and developmental life of the Church. To make long term impact in influencing the church in providing space for the expression of persons with disabilities in its spiritual, social and development life, it is necessary to focus on the training of the ministers. To introduce disability discourse in theological institutions is imperative and urgent.

The world will be poorer without persons with disabilities. Jesus protected, forgave, loved and cared for them. Jesus strongly disputed the connection between sin and blindness, saying “It was not that this man sin or his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him” (John 9:3). Jesus challenged the Jewish’s understanding that God punishes sinners by blinding them or their animals (Ex. 4:11). In Jewish society, a person with a defect in the body were not allowed to come near the Lord’s offering (Lev. 21:18-21). The blind and the lame were not allowed to come into the house of the Lord (2 Sam 5:9). Is our churches open to persons with disabilities?

We need to affirm that diversity is an integral part of Creation. Society—from its most basic unit (the family) to its broader forms (the church and the community)—has to be a place where everyone, regardless of gifting and ability, is genuinely welcomed, given every opportunity to participate meaningfully, and nurtured toward fulfillment. The churches will remain a disabled community without the inclusion of persons with disabilities. We need to work together more rigorously so that our common vision for the establishment of an inclusive, affirming, and empowering global society may be realized.

This poses the importance of integration or infusing the concerns of persons with disabilities within the existing curricula of Christian theology, ethics, religions and society, women’s study, pastoral care and counseling. This will make a considerable difference in creating a community of healing

and wholeness with diverse gifts. We need to recognize that infusing theological curriculum should begin with enabling the theological community to unlearn certain prejudices and misconceptions that have been infused by Christian traditions and interpretations that have been uncritically perpetuated. We have a notion that disability is something 'abnormal'. They are silently and in some case consciously marginalized in Christian theology. However, experience of disability is in no way a negligible experience that theological discourse can afford to ignore, because if it is ignored, it limits the opportunity for both reflection and presence. If theology is silent about disability, it poses barrier for people with disabilities to be partners in theological task of the believing community.⁸⁴ We need to be proactive and intentional, willing to learn from them and willing to unlearn the things that marginalize them.

Infusing concerns of disabilities in the curriculum would also mean making the infrastructures of theological colleges and seminaries more 'disability friendly'. For example, providing a ramp at the entrance of the building would create a context where people who use wheel chaired enter and interact with other.⁸⁵

This will demand a new way in our teaching-learning process. Since the concerns on persons with disabilities involve a multi-dimensional character, a disciplinary approach will not be sufficient to unravel the complexity of it. An issue-centred and interdisciplinary form of learning will be more helpful. How do we study it? One may start collecting knowledge and information about persons with disabilities with the help of a medical doctor and a social worker, make an analysis, raise the biblical and theological perspectives and conclude it with some reflection on concrete action. Provision should be provided for direct exposure to the concrete situation and struggles of persons with disabilities. Case-studies involving persons with disabilities in the teaching sessions and relevant reports and analysis of the problems will deepen our learning.

⁸⁴ Samson Prabhakar, "Infusing Curriculum of Theological Education with Concerns of Disability" in *Disability Discourse for Theological Institution*, ed. Wati Longchar (Jorhat: ETE-WCC/CCA, 2006), p. 21.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* p. 21.

PROSPECTS FOR CONNECTIVITY OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATORS IN ASIA AND NORTH AMERICA

H.S. Wilson*

Introduction

We are living in a densely wired world and multi satellites encircled globe. The urban areas of the world are getting well connected and experiencing unhindered flow of communication. As a result of this connectivity there is a greater interaction and engagements between communities around the world than ever before in human history. For example in the commercial world this has led to outsourcing of jobs from North America and Western Europe to Asia. The facilities of connectivity can be a great gift for theological education if it is utilized in the spirit of partnership in ministry and mission.

Am I proposing a form of globalization? Like other scholars, theological educators are divided on the benefits and ills of globalization. Since globalization is a multifaceted phenomenon, it certainly has a bearing on the reality of connectivity. Therefore being conscious of the negative aspects of globalization such as makertization, hegemonization and marginalization, in the utilization of connectivity and engagements with communities around the globe, theological educators should uphold the spirit of humanization of communities and promotion of communitarianism (a move from radical individualism to being responsible members of communities in each place). (Etzioni, 1996).

Since 1960s with the initiative of Theological Education Fund the ecumenical theological communities' world over has promoted contextualization in theological education and a good deal work has been done in contextualization of theological education and much is still desired to be done. (LaBute, 2006:44-47). Increasingly the churches in the western hemisphere are accepting the fact that theological articulations exported by them to around the globe with the claim of universality, are in fact shaped by their own context and are indeed contextual theologies from North similar to theologies in the Southern hemisphere. Therefore, Todd LaBute cautions that "Easterners and Westerners must come to understand that theological reflection developed exclusively from either camp in the end results in incomplete and perhaps at times incorrect formulations". (LaBute, 2006:52).

As the world of human interactions is condensing and world issues are simultaneously affecting across the nations and regions like HIV/AIDS, global warming, religious fundamentalism sometimes expressing itself in terrorism, there is a need for cross-contextual engagements for benefiting from each others accomplishments in addition cross-cultural understanding. Facilities for connectivity make it easier to accomplish it than ever before in human history.

Connectivity I would like to propose as a new missiological paradigm which enables theological educators to be responsible stewards in exercising their "mission hood" (Wilson, 2002) contextually and inter-contextually, and then opening up for cross-contextual engagement for mutual enrichment and solidarity in addressing pastoral issues that they are called to deal in their situation. Theological education in Asia is bound to gain from connectivity of theological educators. And theological educators are bound to benefit from cross-contextual engagements as there is increased demand on them to give greater attention to their immediate context in their research and teaching.

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Christianity has always emphasized on community transcending all humanly imposed geographical and socio-cultural barriers. From the Christian perspective, connectivity is not a new phenomenon. At baptism Christians around the world get connected to each other as a community in one common faith and in their common loyalty to Jesus Christ. Such a connectivity is not only limited to people who are living at present but extends to all those who are departed and all those who are yet to be part of the Christian faith. That is the vision of Christian faith. That was the vision given to John the Divine, recorded in the book of Revelation chapter 7:9: "After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands" (NRSV).

Human beings are created to live in relationships. Human life on earth continues because of this possibility of relationships. However, the various socio-economic, ethno-cultural, religious and others forces created by nature and humans are often used as barriers against communities living in relationships. All the enduring world religions have pointed to the importance of cultivating neighborly attitudes towards each other and humans organizing themselves as community of communities transcending all human created barriers.

Like people of other faiths, Christians are also divided into groups. Nevertheless, the repeatedly promoted visions of partnerships, neighborly love, companionship, solidarity have contributed in building ecumenical and interfaith relations. The connectivity created by the commercial world is bound to assist in this ecumenical endeavor.

Asia on focus

Already in the last decade of 20th century a number of economists, social scientists, futurologists and political leaders of countries in the Asia-Pacific region were giving voice to emerging Pacific Rim Era and Pacific Century. According to their projection 21st century is going to be the Pacific century in some what similar ways to the earlier Atlantic and Mediterranean regions' domination of human affairs. A few forums and programs are already in place to benefit from this trend in human history like the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation, Asia-Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions, Asia Pacific Parliamentary forum, Asia-Pacific Management Forum, Asia Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate, and Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies. In recent years some economists have begun to identify the 21st century as an Asian century. Whatever is the trend of the time, it may be too presumptuous to name the century focusing on its first decade itself.

Even though such euphoria about Pacific Century is focused on economic prosperity, accomplishing it is closely linked to a good supply of human resources/capital with high level of skills, talents, knowledge and experience. Here the facilities that each country and sub-region can muster to provide the needed education and training in various fields of knowledge is crucial. That brings the educational and research institutions to the center of the stage of Pacific Century dream. Being cognizance of this need, the educational programs and institutions have geared up to meet the challenge. Language being one of the key tools in international engagement, the countries in the Asia Pacific region that had the educational facilities in English (a vestage of colonization) benefited from it. Others are increasingly making use of English in their educational institutions. Simultaneously the immediate need of preparing adequate skilled and qualified persons is met by sponsoring the graduate level studies overseas in North America, Europe, Australia and New Zealand. This initiative goes back even before the euphoria of Pacific century caught the imagination of world leaders and will continue as educational institutions have also resorted to marketing their programs. It is estimated that in the recent years among the foreign students enrolled in the graduate programs and institutions in the USA, students from Asia make up a bit more than 50%. In the last couple of years it is common to find advertisements in newspapers and magazines in Asia for enrollment for educational programs in institutions in North America, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand as well as in joint programs of universities from these countries with the universities and colleges in Asian countries.

The set-ups like the Association of Pacific Rim Universities (APRU) formed in 1997, now a consortium of 37 research universities along the Pacific Rim are addressing this need of developing adequate human resources in Asia. Even though the efforts of association like APRU is to encourage a greater mutual exchange of faculty and student body between Asia and North America, at present the flow of such exchange is quite uneven. It has been observed that less number of students and scholars from North American enroll in Asian universities compared to the number of Asian students and scholars that enroll in North American institutions. In these revolutionary changes in higher education, the Asian scholars who have migrated to North America, Australia and New Zealand play a significant role in advancing educational opportunities in the Asia Pacific Rim.

All these collaborative educational attempts aim at developing human resources which is a crucial component of economic prosperity. As I have indicated in the introductory paragraph, conducive facilities for connectivity of ideas and programs are crucial for the aspirations of people to turn into concrete results.

Like the secular western education, theological education in most cases in Asia was introduced by western missionaries. Following political independence, as the church leadership is being assumed by local Christians there was a need for more indigenous leaders in all areas of ministry including theological education in all the countries in Asia. Theological education for leadership development is a key priority in all the Asian churches and is pursued with vigor in spite of many hurdles to raise the needed resources both human and material.

Theological Education in Asia

The following four regional levels (besides a number of national level) Associations of Theological Schools serve the Protestant and Orthodox Churches in Asia: The Board for Theological Education of the Senate of Serampore College (BTESSC), the Association for Theological Education in South East Asia (ATESEA), the North East Asia Association of Theological Schools (NEAATS) and the Asia Theological Association (ATA). These Associations consists of more than 300 theological schools, seminaries and divinity schools throughout Asia.

Theological education, rather the ministerial formation is a different kettle of fish. It is not just an education that leads to a degree in Christian leadership. It is an academic program that demands rigor of a secular graduate program. Yet the same time the purpose of theological education is to prepare leaders who are to serve the Christian communities in fulfilling their call as the disciples of Jesus Christ in the context they are located. In addition, the denomination of candidates may require subscribing to certain dogmas, doctrines, rites and rituals to enter the program of study and/or mastering them during their studies. The denominational differences (in many circumstances due to missionary legacy) make the united effort in theological education through ecumenical cooperation a demanding task resulting in a number of denominations operating their own seminaries. Regardless of being ecumenical or the denominational, most of the seminaries constantly seek for resources within their countries and beyond in order to offer the best program of study to their graduates.

In a number of countries in Asia, the Christian churches and communities have to struggle hard to provide the needed human and material resources that are needed for ministerial formation in their respective countries because of their socio-economic situation. Samuel Ngun Ling articulated the challenges in Myanmar as follows: “Lack of theological resources such as library and human resources including other technical materials is one of the major setbacks in promoting quality theological education in Myanmar.” (Ling, 2006: 37). About challenges in Indonesia Zakaria Ngelow states that, “Financial problems speak for themselves. Poor facilities and limited library holdings, and insufficient number of full-time faculty are common to theological schools. Underpayment of theological faculties averted them from developing more seriously their teaching quality, such as research and writing.” (Ngelow, 2006:10). Ngelow also points out that, “Theological education in this era of information and sophisticated technologies such as internet is giving possibilities for communicating and sharing activities and materials in theological

education.” (Ngelow, 2006:14). The communication technologies are a boon but securing them also demands resources.

So solicitation of resources from external sources has been a common pattern of supporting theological education program for long even though such dependence has reduced through years. Meanwhile the traditional support from founding mainline denominations and the mission agencies from the West has been reduced as the income of these denominations and agencies have been in decline and/or the demand from the same sources are increased through years as the programs of ministerial formation have diversified and multiplied in many parts of Asia.

I have spent most of my working years involved in theological education, both in teaching and administrating. Part of that was in the service of the Board for Theological Education of the Senate of Serampore College (BTESSC), (an association of theological schools and programs in South Asia). With BTESSC, one of my prime responsibilities was to raise resources for faculty development especially for the doctoral program in theology to ensure the continued supply of qualified teachers for theological schools and programs in South Asia. At present ministering with the Foundation for Theological Education in South East Asia (www.ftesea.org), I oversee providing limited support to theological schools and programs in China and South East Asia towards developing adequate faculty and library resources.

Through the years the demand for external resources from Asian theological schools has been considerably reduced in some quarters and increased in others. On the whole, the demand for resources has been carefully specified and bulk of it is channeled to schools in the economically weaker and developing nations in Asia. As the flow of resources from the traditional overseas mission partners are steadily in decrease, tapping resources from Asians in Diaspora is a new stewardship approach for resource sharing within the community of Christians.

Theological Education a community enterprise

Theological education is a communitarian enterprise. Even if such an education is taking place in a remote locality with the use of local language and method; the knowledge and expertise that is transmitted come from generations of Christians as Christianity is a historical faith (and history is valued very highly in Christian tradition), and from contemporary scholars from around the world who do their theological reflection steeped in their own context. Theological educators in teaching and learning borrow ideas and insights from others and in turn contribute to pool of knowledge and expertise through their own research and writings. Thus Christian theological reflection, teaching and learning has been a community enterprise from its origin.

A library of any theological school is in fact a slice of depository of collective wisdom of world Christian community. The persons whose theological reflections are found in books, periodicals and other preserved sources in the libraries may be residing in another part of the world or scholars who are no more alive. Nevertheless many of their theological insights may still be the dominating insights among faculty members and students in various theological schools around the globe.

Thus, as the historical (contextual) theologies and contemporary (contextual) theologies make their entry into a community engaged in theological studies, a process of inter-contextual and cross-contextual theological discourse takes place in theological education.

I used to teach courses related to history of Christianities at United Theological College, Bangalore in late 70s and 80s and most of the books that I used were from the West. I now teach Reformation History and Ecumenical Movement at Karnataka Theological College using the local language, Kannada. But the books that I use are predominantly written by western scholars for western audiences, a few of them are translated into Kannada. So in much of my teaching I make use of sources from community of Christian scholars from various parts of the world Christian fellowship but utilize them contextually.

Even my B.D. (Bachelor of Divinity) studies at United Theological College, Bangalore in 60s was done with professors' majority of who were from Western Europe and North America including a number of them who came for a very short duration. They naturally equipped us in a theological formation which they themselves were familiar, the western scholarship and method. While there is a value in such a type of cross-cultural input, if the teacher is not conscious of the context where the theological articulation has originated as well as sensitive to the contextual realities of the locale where she/he is teaching, one runs the risk of imposing a contextual reflection on the other. In turn such pedagogy will run the risk of alienating students from their immediate context. I do not put all the blame on missionary teachers. A number of them strived hard to be more contextual than some of the indigenous professors. Even today there are Asian professors who are strongly committed to teaching Christianity from the western perspective (exegesis, theologies, histories and pastoral practices) as an authentic expression of faith, as against attempting indigenous and contextual expressions. Asian theological educators in diaspora in the West will be good dialogical partners to help to understand the contextual ingredients that shape the theological formations in the west even though often universal claims were made for such formulations.

External Resources

The search for economic means, beyond the local sources has been a common practice with communities and countries around the globe. Besides the bilateral aid received from various funds and programs, and loans from institutions like the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, countries and communities have benefited from receiving resources from their own people who have migrated or on a work assignment in foreign countries and regularly remit funds and resources back to their home countries.

It is a common practice that immigrant communities do send money back to their families and such remittances of resources have been a matter of study and debate. A point of contention is while an economically weaker country may benefit from the immigration remittance, in comparison, the potential cost of emigration often off sets such a benefit. Brain drain may end up as a greater economic loss to developing countries than what is remitted back from a foreign nation.

Persons migrate for various reasons. That has been the pattern of human history and will continue in a greater intensity at least in the near future as the present imbalances in socio-economic and political situation continue to exist in various parts of the world. Even though tighter border control is being exercised by affluent countries, people find a way to migrate to escape poverty or lack of opportunities at home, to enhance their economic prosperity or simply to indulge in a spirit of adventure of moving to a new territory. This can happen within a country and region as well. People constantly move from rural to urban and from smaller urban environment to mega-polis. It is a common occurrence in many developing countries.

The revolutionary progress in communication and transport has opened up new possibilities of maintaining relationship between communities at home countries and communities in diaspora. Even in the field of education, contacts are no more restricted to physical locations like classrooms or conference halls. People can be connected online and carry on the normal engagement be it teaching and learning; conducting a committee meeting and engaging in a debate. Further, these events can be recorded and reviewed later or shared with concerned persons. Thus, if people are convinced and are interested they can create community from wherever they are located. People can be in constant touch and relationship even though physically they live across the continents. This has been already going on for couple of years and is being utilized fully by the business world. "E" (electronic) is a magic formula today, e-mail, e-teaching, e-learning, e-business, e-news, e-entertainment, e-church, e-college, e-university, e-hospital and e-ticket. People and their activities are connected through electronic means without moving them from their respective geographical location. Peoples wish to associate with any particular activity is left to their choice. As far as staying connected, the distance between people are not measured in terms of geographical distance but the mode of electronic communication they would choose use.

Recently I was going through a recent issue of *The Journal of Theologies and Cultures in Asia* (JTCA 2006) and was impressed to notice that out of six members of the Editorial Advisory Board, three were Asian theologians in Diaspora. In fact the publishing organ of JTCA, The Programme for Theology and Cultures in Asia (PTCA) founded in 1983, was inspired by an Asian in diaspora, Professor Choan-seng Song (C.S.Song) from Taiwan teaching at Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley in USA. Dr. Song gave leadership as PTCA's first Dean. One of the stated goals of PTCA is "facilitating active theological interactions within Asia and between Asia and other parts of the world."

The Congress of Asian Theologians (CATS) is another initiative closely related to Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) that has opened up to Asians in diaspora as a potential source for doing theology in Asia. In the Introduction to the Proceedings of the first Congress of Asian Theologians from May 25 to June 1, 1997, the then CCA General Secretary Dr. Feliciano Carino stated that Asian "diaspora" were invited to participate because, "When we laid down the policy of participation . . . we did so in a manner that would reflect the conviction that as we faced the 21st century, the increasingly 'borderless' world that is emerging in our time demanded of us to expand the borders of our theological world. While Asia was our focus, we recognized that its boundaries have expanded. As a result, not only must its theological concerns expand; so must its theological network." (Carino, 1997: 5).

I am not suggesting that immigration of our theological educators should be encouraged. I am simply pointing to the fact that the Asian theologians and theological educators in diaspora are a potential resource for theological education in Asia. Earlier in this section I referred to remittance by immigrants. People make remittance to their countries because they care for their families and the communities back at home, and are concerned about the welfare of their countries. There is also sense of paying back for what the immigrant person has received from his family, community and country. However, it is not meant to be one way traffic.

Keeping in constant touch with the home community also works out as a continuous schooling in ones culture and protecting integrity of ones identity. While the first generation may look back to its community for the sake of historical link, the generation that follows may do it for the sake of dealing with their new identity as Asian and North Americans as well as for challenging their home communities to recognize the concerns of their peoples in diaspora.

Asian-North American Community

North America especially USA had a long history with the Asian immigration dating back to mid 1880s when thousands of Chinese migrated to California in connection with California gold rush. In the following decades as Asian immigrants made their home in the USA, they had to face many restrictive laws, exclusion from citizenship, and placement of Japanese in internment camps during World War II and exposure to occasional violence like hate to crimes.

In their continued struggle for a fare deal, Immigration and Nationality Act 1965 was a significant watershed in Asian-American history in the USA. This Act abolished the restrictive national origins system which was in place from 1924 and made provision for "family reunification". The provision of the 1965 ACT allowed a large number of Asian to migrate to USA and soon the impact of the Asian community was felt in different areas of life including in the educational field. Asians and Asian-Americans have been categorized as devoted scholars and students. There are hardly any university and college of repute in the USA and Canada which does not have the presence of Asian American students, researchers and professors. In this pool of educationists and scholars one can count a considerable number of religious scholars, Christian theologians and theological educators.

With the demographic changes that the immigration has brought to the US society, there is a greater recognition of communities from Asia and other regions outside of Europe. Many schools and colleges are already offering courses on cross-cultural, multi-cultural studies, world religions and world civilizations. Within theological seminaries, courses on world Christianity, gospel and cultures, theologies from non-western world, world religions, and dialogue with people of other

living faiths are being offered regularly. A considerable number of Asian and Asian North Americans have been invited to teach these courses, organize student visits to Asia and expose seminary students to the Asian communities within USA.

There is also greater interest among churches and theological faculties in North America to organize bi-lateral relationship with churches and theological seminaries overseas including Asia. In the North American theological schools till recently it were missionaries who were teaching courses on world mission, world Christianity and cross cultural studies. But now the theological schools are preferring scholars from the immigrant communities to meet these needs.

I have been part of this Asian diaspora in an indirect way as that journey started with an ecumenical ministry with the World Alliance of Reformed Churches at Geneva and then a move to USA for family reasons, ending up teaching in three different seminaries in the last eight years: United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio, Wartburg Theological Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa and the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia. So my reflection is shaped by these eight years in the USA as I experienced the reality of Asian American theologians and church leaders and their journeys as Asians and yet the same time as North Americans.

Psychologists have noted that humans share with other animals a sense of territoriality. That is, people with whom they feel comfortable and secure. So they will vigorously protect their territory and resent encroachment, just as animals do. This sense of territoriality also gets extended to professional guilds and associations. Outsiders are not easily entertained till their loyalties are tested and they are inducted through a proper process. Theological educators are not an exception to this tradition. They are a privileged community. Teachers are always held in high esteem in the Christian tradition. In many denominations it is required that the theological teachers are ordained persons with considerable years of pastoral experience.

There do exist a strong bias against theologians and church leaders who immigrate to other countries. The matter becomes rather controversial if people migrate when the home Christian community and/or the home country was going through a struggle, political, economic or social. The issue of patriotism, loyalty, solidarity and comradeship becomes a major concern. Among Christians the matter of faithfulness becomes an issue especially during the time of persecution, dissensions and controversies on matters of belief. Each Christian community has to resolve this issue even though historical precedence can be of some guide.

Conclusion

Historically theological education programs in Asia were initiated to meet the pastoral needs of indigenous Christian communities as well as for creating leadership for the pastoral and missional task of the church. As mentioned above the overseas missionaries and mission boards were able to provide the needed resources for theological institutions. The situation altered drastically with the end of colonial rules in Asia as well as the end of the era of European and North American direct mission engagements in Asia.

Today Asian Christian communities being minorities (except in the Philippines where Protestant Christians are in a similar situation) are faced with the challenge of organizing the theological education with the resources that are available to them locally and that can be solicited from outside without compromising the integrity of their programs. As far as local resources are concerned relating and linking up with public educational institutions is an option, as secular educational institutions have access for resources especially that is offered through the State and the general public. That may require churches organizing programs for acquiring pastoral skills as it is done in Germany for graduates in theology who get their academic training in the state universities or some other means of ministerial formation.

The present challenge for the Asian theological educators is not just raising more and more local resources but also accessing resources in the world in a non exploratory way. As far as resources from outside, the Asians in diaspora have been a source of support. In the contemporary world, the

geographical and spatial limitations are not a hindering factor if members of any community wish to be in relationship. The contemporary world permits persons in diaspora the possibility of maintaining continued relationship with their home communities and making contributions not only monetarily but also in all other fields of knowledge and skills as a result of the facilities of connectivity.

Frontiers of theologies keep changing as per the change in the socio-political and economic situations of communities. Given the reality in Asia, Asian Christians are deeply engaged with the poor and marginalized, plurality of cultures and religions. However due to impact of globalization, Asian Christians are confronting a new frontiers for ministry and mission. In the contemporary world the territorial boundaries have blurred and neighborhoods have shifted. In the context of globalization, Asian Christians are drawn into engaging in such global issues that have local implications. The Christian theologians in diaspora will be of assistance in this process as they are located in different parts of the world and are in a better position to assess at close proximity some of the world issues of concern for Asians and make that contribution to theological education in Asia. The outcome of any pastoral and missional engagement is also gets shaped by the partners in such engagements. Like other fields of knowledge and expertise the areas of theological education are vast, multidimensional, multicultural and pluralistic. It needs many partners to collaborate. Among various partners in theological education I would like to underscore that Asian North American theological educators are significant new partners and the Asian theologians in Diaspora are a source and catalysts for Asian theologies.

In the increased globalized situation the social realities of communities are expanding into global citizenry reality especially for those who are engaged in the area of education and research. Like other professionals, those who are involved in education and research have to be cognizant of developments in their areas of expertise at the world level and to be alert to implications of them in their locale. In such a changed world scenario, the Asians in diaspora are no more aliens rather they are a new community of disciples. Even though they may be geographically at a distance yet in the task of theological education they can continue to be close collaborative partners.

Presence of sizeable number of Asians has made the North Americans to give serious attention to cultures of Asian people. It is seen in the movies, fast food outlets, engaging in religious and spiritual practices of Buddhism, Hinduism and Taoism. It has also resulted in Asians adapting to the prevailing North American context and developing an ethos of hybridization, an Asian American ethos.

In the interaction between Asian and Asian North American theological educators this new reality of hybridization ethos which shapes the theology and pastoral practices of Asian North Americans plays an important role. This hybridization reality moves beyond the traditional demarcation of Asian and Western sources for theology. According to Wong Wai Ching, the reality of hybridization is “a new site of politics for ‘doing’ theology in Asia. Rather than a strict demarcation of Asian and Western sources of doing theology in Asia, or a heavy investment in defining and hence confining one ‘collective’ Asian identity as the victim-hero/heroine opposed to the West, we might build on the rich and creative resources as produced in the reality of ‘hybridisation’ among Asian societies”. . . Rather, we might exercise our greatest freedom to explore all possible resources available in our present communities in thinking and practicing our understanding of the Divine, whether they are national, regional, or global. (Wong, 1997: 38-39).

Some form of hybridity has been always taking place in Asia especially among Christians who have embraced Western Christianity and had to simultaneously deal with western and Asian indigenous resources in shaping their Christian faith in Asia. Some such hybridization has taken place through the process of enculturation, inculturation, indigenization and recently contextualization. But with new pedagogical theories and methodologies that are in vogue in the academia like feminist, post-colonial and subaltern, there is much to be gained by cooperation between Asian and Asian North American theological educators. The Asian theological educators can benefit from scholarship in Northern America (contributed by wide variety of scholars) like, socio-historical background studies

of biblical narrations, biblical languages, biblical and early church archeology, biblical commentaries and theological writings by feminist and minorities in USA like the Hispanics, African Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans. In the pastoral areas, the Christian education materials covering new pastoral concerns like HIV/AIDS victims care towards environment, promotion of multicultural society, multi faith engagements, inclusive approach to gender, race and ethnicity, engaging with persons with disabilities. In the area of pastoral counseling, advances made by using the techniques developed by the psychologists and psychiatrists. Much can be also learned from new perspectives on western church history from feminine and minority scholars, experiments in contemporary worship and liturgy. The availability of human and material resources in North America enables them to make this contribution more readily than Christians in Asia.

There are a number of bilateral relationships that exist in Asia, facilitating the utilization of resources from Asians in diaspora. As mentioned above, in the theological circles the bi-annual Conference of Asian Theologians (CATS) initiated by Christian Conference of Asia is a forum which has made possibility of Asian diaspora to make the contribution. Within North America, several initiatives like the Institute for the Study of Asian American Christianity (ISAAC), Institute for Pacific and Asian North American Religion (PANA), Centre for Asian American Ministries in Chicago, Centre for Asian Theology in Toronto and the Asian/Asian North American consultations under the auspicious of the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) are promoting the Asian North American ministries and theological education as well as exploring possible avenues of cooperation and collaboration with Asian theological educators.

The existing *koinonia* (formal and informal) of theological educators of Asia and Asians in Diaspora need to be recognized as a new resource for theological education in Asia. Such *koinonia* has to be utilized not only for the sake of strengthening theological education in Asia, but also for sharing the Asian insights and experiences with all the partners overseas. One can benefit from some of the secular examples of such networking.

India has been reaching out to Non Resident Indians or Indian Diaspora to get support in the economic development of the country by investing resources and sharing technologies. In the last couple years there has been a gathering of overseas Indians called *Pravasi Bharatiya Divas* (PBD). It is primarily a gathering of Non Resident Indian (NRI) professionals and industrialists for a discourse with the political leadership of the country on what the NRIs can do for India and how India can open up for such contributions. The purpose of the 2007 gathering is explained as follows: “Pravasi Bharatiya Divas aims at bringing the expertise and knowledge of the Indian overseas community to India and integrating it into India's development process. Pravasi Bharatiya Divas is focused to highlight networking opportunities and collaborating them to confer a mutual developing platform. Generating this synergy to excel together towards a bright India along with the Indian overseas community is what Pravasi Bharatiya Divas 2007 proclaims with its head held high”. (<http://www.pbd2007.org/>). Such forums for reaching out and welcoming the contribution of Indians in diaspora are producing good results. Some considerable resources have been channeled through this initiative. Similar initiatives are in place in other countries in Asia.

In the caldron of humanity, the ethos of connectivity is brewing new possibilities for human interaction. We are familiar with some of the technologies that are getting linked to the caldron and were able to benefit from some of the outcomes. But what will eventually emerge of it is not easy to predict. We may have several guesses and apprehensions about the direction it will take in the future. For the present a good option is to critically engage with the possibilities offered by the ethos of connectivity and not to ignore them in the academia and theological education. Innovations have always been vital to surge forward in the ministry of theological education. The contemporary reality of connectivity offers a possibility for innovatively utilizing it for mobilizing resources for theological education from among Asians in diaspora.

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READING PRACTICE: BIBLICAL STUDIES AND MINISTERIAL PREPARATION

Tat-Siong Benny Liew*

Introduction

Before I pursued graduate studies in the New Testament and then became a theological educator, I was involved in planting a Chinese-speaking congregation in Toronto, Canada for four years. In fact I recently met up with a friend, who is English-speaking and white, but who was instrumental in helping us with the Chinese-speaking congregation. We had a rather interesting conversation over dinner. She was telling me about her brother, who had decided to leave Toronto, where he was born and reared, and had raised his own family. I was very surprised by this news as I considered him to be one of the city's most loyal and patriotic citizens. He knew the place inside out, and had always spoken enthusiastically about all the wonderful things Toronto had to offer. I just could not picture George living anywhere else. When I asked what on earth had prompted this decision, a funny expression came over my friend's face that told me she was debating whether or not to tell me the reason. Jokingly, because I knew this family to be relatively in tune with issues of racial and cultural diversity, I asked, "Too many Chinese?" She diplomatically listed things like harried pace, hustle and bustle, crazy traffic; but I could tell she was holding back. I asked again, "Too many Chinese?"

She said, "Well, not exactly, but he did tell me that the straw that broke the camel's back was the Chinese practice of hanging chickens in trees, then painting them with something or other." My mind spun past images of poultry Christmas ornaments and hooded chickens with their wings tied behind their backs awaiting execution. "I don't think I know of this tradition," I said.

She went on to explain that his next door neighbor, who was Chinese by the way, would suspend a chicken on a hook from a branch of a tree in his backyard. He would pour water over it, and then periodically brush it with some sweet-smelling liquid, drawing flies from every direction. Suddenly, it occurred to me that she was describing the process of Chinese roasted chicken. Apparently the neighbor had decided it was easier to do in the backyard than to dirty his kitchen. It was his own version of a backyard barbecue. I assured her that most Chinese families did not have chickens hanging in the yard. This was simply one person's improvisation, and it probably had not even occurred to him that he was attracting flies and bees. He was just cooking chicken.

I tell this little story because I think it emphasizes the importance of dialogue with people who are different from us. It is only through a respectful exchange of ideas and information that we glean understanding that would have otherwise evaded our limited perspective. I am aware, of course, of the Gadamer-Habermas debate over hermeneutics over three decades ago, when Habermas helpfully, among other things, pointed out that Gadamer's rhetoric of "fusion" or conversation might have overlooked the power differential and political dynamics that pervade every human interaction.⁸⁶ What I am suggesting should not therefore be misunderstood as an "apolitical"—if there can be such a thing—or a politically naïve idea. Instead, my focus on dialogue is an attempt to move away from a politics of hostility and fear into one of openness and engagement.

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⁸⁶ See Jürgen Habermas, "A Review of *Truth and Method*," *The Hermeneutic Tradition: From Ast to Ricoeur*, ed. Gayle L. Ormiston and Alan D. Schrift (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990) 213-44; and Han-Georg Gadamer, "Reply to My Critics," *The Hermeneutic Tradition: From Ast to Ricoeur*, ed. Gayle L. Ormiston and Alan D. Schrift (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990) 273-97.

In what follows, I would like to talk about how responsible dialogue, as typified by a particular way of practicing and teaching biblical studies, may also play a vital role in both contemporary church ministry and theological education within my North American context. I must be honest here: I do not and cannot think or speak without my context, and my context is undoubtedly different from the contexts of Asia. Nevertheless, as I hope to show below, I do think that reading and learning about a different context may provide a form of distanciation that will be helpful for one's reflection on one's own context. It is also important to keep in mind, of course that different contexts do not necessarily exist in isolation, but that they may overlap in particular aspects and/or converge in specific ways.

While the most popular North American approach to church ministry consists of recruiting "outsiders" and providing care for "insiders," I would like to suggest that church ministry should be partnership in God's continual creation and redemption of this world. I would go so far as to say that the church's mission is no less than the building of a world in which disputes are resolved peacefully, resources are distributed evenly, and respect is the basis of each and every interaction. I say this because we, the church, are too often content with developing our internal programs as opposed to assuming our role as caretakers of the world God has given us. It seems to me a betrayal of God's love for this world as demonstrated through Jesus' incarnation if we do not actively participate in the social and ethical issues of our day.

This "world-building" requires a joint effort amongst peoples of various racial/ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds, especially as our world community becomes increasingly interconnected. My experience is that more people, even among Christian progressives, are willing and able to accept racial/ethnic and cultural diversity than the diversity of religious traditions.⁸⁷ After all, the Christian church has such a long history of seeing other religions as rivals, which are at best inferior, or at worse "pagan." I am convinced, however, that the church cannot succeed in its essential purpose without respectful and honest dialogue with other religious traditions to define itself within the larger religious community.

Please note that as I lay out this daunting task facing the church, I have said "church," and not "church leaders." I make this distinction because the task of tackling contemporary issues and participating in inter-religious dialogue will require that local congregations be biblically and theologically equipped. In order for that to happen, church leaders, both professional and lay, must go against the grain of the predominant North American understanding that sees them primarily as "managers" and "therapists." Instead, they must understand their role to be that of facilitators, whose fundamental responsibility is to engage local church members in critical theological dialogue, and in the process, enable them to integrate Christian reflection and practice for the betterment of this world. This means that every member of a congregation must become a conversation partner, providing a multitude of voices and a diversity of opinions to ensure reflective and constructive discussions.

Mark R. Schwehn, in *Exiles from Eden*, suggests that a "learning community" must consist of four virtues if it is to live up to its name.⁸⁸ The first is humility, or the willingness to learn from other people. The second is faith, or the trust that what others present to us is reliable and out of good intention. The third is self-denial, or the capacity to give up our old ideas once we are convinced of their errors. The fourth is charity, or the respectful attitude that characterizes our speech and hearing.

Karl Barth, that famous "neo-orthodox" theologian of another generation has also given a fourfold definition or characterization of a genuine human community, or what he calls "the basic form of

⁸⁷ For R. S. Sugirtharajah, for example, what separates liberation hermeneutics from postcolonial readings of the Bible has much to do with the former's insistence on and/or assumption of biblical authority and Christian monopoly. See Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Criticism and Biblical Interpretation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002) 103-126.

⁸⁸ Mark R. Schwehn, *Exiles from Eden: Religion and the Academic Vocation in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) 22-43.

humanity.”⁸⁹ They are: one, eye-to-eye relationship; two, mutual speech and hearing; three, mutual assistance; and four, joy and gladness.

In addition to sharing a fourfold format, these two people are making a similar point: that respectful and responsible dialogue is an indispensable, if not the single most important ingredient of community. This is not just a white male viewpoint. Gish Jen, a wonderful Asian American female writer and novelist, reminds us that “relationships count so heavily that to say something *has no relationship* in Chinese—*mei guanxi*—is to mean, often as not, *it doesn’t matter*” (1991).⁹⁰ Another Asian American female writer, Maxine Hong Kingston, shows with her writings that “talking stories” is not only a Chinese (American) cultural convention, but also a key to the building of Chinese (American) communities, even or especially if these communities span over different generations.⁹¹

If dialogue and conversation are keys to building community, each member of a community will need to understand that he or she has not only the right but also the *obligation* to speak. Just as an individual has the right to speak in a community, the community also has the right to hear him or her speak. The silence of any single member will inevitably impair the wellbeing of a community.

II

Since I have suggested a rethinking of the role of church leaders, I should also outline how I, as a theological educator who teaches the New Testament, sees my own role in the preparation of church leaders. Current developments in biblical studies, in my view, have led to a different potential impact on ministerial preparation. Instead of being just a tool to prepare students for biblical preaching or a documentary of their Christian heritage, it has become a model of critical dialogue, and as such can transform students into active participants in the dialogue.

It was once widely understood that biblical critics were to perform faithful exegesis (often narrowly defined as the recovery of what a text originally meant), leaving hermeneutics (the discovery of what a text may mean today) to the theologians, current biblical scholarship is abandoning this sharp division of labor. With the postmodern emphasis on competing truth claims and power dynamics, biblical scholars have now become more conscious, self-critical, and self-reflexive, particularly about the limits of understanding biblical scholarship in terms of only antiquarian interests, and the undeniable, undesirable even if unintended effects of promoting and/or claiming “academic or objectivity.” As more and more biblical scholars foreground the socio-ethical implications of their readings of the Bible, more and more are engaging ethical and socio-political concerns explicitly *as* their exegetical, hermeneutical, and theological research, and thus making connections with contemporary issues such as capitalism, colonialism, imperialism, racism, sexism, and heterosexism. Such studies, at the very least, may serve to sensitize our ministerial students to certain concerns, stretch their intellectual stamina, and hopefully, draw them into discussion.

Biblical studies these days have also been characterized by both a diversity of approaches and a diversity of cultures and perspectives. Today, the Bible is being studied from a historical, sociological, or a literary/rhetorical point of view, as well as being scrutinized as an ideological product and production by so-called “minority scholars” (I am using “minority” here in terms of gender, race/ethnicity, and/or sexuality). This “dual diversity,” along with the postmodern notion that an interpreter's perspectives are invariably woven into his or her interpretation, has led to the general realization that multiple interpretations of the same biblical text are both possible and desirable. This is, however, not an excuse to indulge in some kind of mindless relativism in which “anything goes,” but rather an honest admission that no individual has a claim on all truths. As a result, these multiple readings are to be engaged in critical dialogue, each being evaluated in terms of its integrity to the text, integrity to the method(s) chosen, integrity to contemporary experiences, and implications to society.

⁸⁹ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*. III/2 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1960) 222-84.

⁹⁰ Gish Jen, *Typical American* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1991) 177-78; emphasis in original.

⁹¹ See, for example, Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood among Ghosts* (New York: Knopf, 1976); and Maxine Hong Kingston, *China Men* (New York: Vintage, 1989).

Let me be clear also, however, that not everyone in the field of biblical studies is wholeheartedly embracing the changes I have outlined above. Some give these changes but a passing nod, others resist, condemn, and/or lament them as “subjective,” “anachronistic,” “presentist,” or a reflection and/or result of “quality loss.”

Despite the backlash, there is no denying that biblical scholarship has changed. I hope the significance of contemporary biblical scholarship to the preparation of church leaders is also becoming evident. To develop into effective dialogue facilitators and theological integrators of their congregations, they themselves must first be exposed to and immersed in the process of dialogue and discussion. The Bible is particularly good for this purpose not only because of its canonical status but also because it is a collection of texts that was first written by the colonized but then has become instrumental for colonization. Put differently, the Bible is a fascinating library of texts that poses issues and raises questions concerning multiple and interlocking differential relations of power; the “good book” is therefore particularly good to “think with.” Biblical scholarship as I have described it, as a result, is doubly or particularly suitable to become an excellent reflection of—and connection to—this process of engaging socio-ethical issues through dialogue and discussion. Our challenge here then is to provide that exposure and allow for that participation in our classroom.

III

To maximize the potential for critical dialogue, I think biblical studies can best be carried out in the context of a multi-racial/ethnic and multicultural, and ideally, multi-religious faculty and student body. In lieu of this ideal mix, courses should make a point to incorporate the reading and discussion of interpretations done by “minority” scholars (again, “minority” here is understood in terms of gender, race/ethnicity, and sexuality). Students should also be required to read studies with which the teacher does not necessarily agree and about which the teacher does not intend to lecture.

The point is, of course, to expose students to difference; but helping students to realize that there are different opinions on a subject is not enough, we must also become very intentional in enabling students to start formulating their own opinions. To do so, a teacher should avoid giving the impression that he or she is always the final authority on a subject. If current biblical scholarship, following the postmodern notion we mentioned earlier, no longer sees meaning as something bolted up somewhere out there that only a professional properly equipped with the secret combination can unlock, then students may also contribute to the production of meaning as they read from their own perspectives. Again, that is not to say that we buy into the “anything goes” mentality or that there is no longer any distance between teacher and student; but the goal is to enable students to think for themselves, and elevate them eventually to the teacher’s level. If biblical scholars teach this dynamic theory of reading, and also model it in the classroom by giving up the “bank-deposit” model of teaching (one in which teachers “own” all the knowledge, and attempt to “deposit” their knowledge into students’ brains through uninterrupted lectures), we may have accomplished more for the empowerment and democratization of the church than we will ever know.

To prepare students to become dialogue facilitators and theological integrators of local churches, the diverse understandings contained within different books of the Bible should be clarified and emphasized. For example, within the Hebrew Bible, there are—as evidenced by Leviticus and Ruth—different and conflicting stances on the issue of purity. Neither do Paul and the author of Revelation agree within the New Testament on what Christ-followers should think and do about eating food that has been offered to idols. Scripture, in other words, is not “a monolithic entity in which all of its statements point in one direction.”⁹² The same emphasis on diversity should be made regarding the question of “biblical origin(s).” The biblical corpus is entirely a product of multicultural and multi-religious influence. Within the New Testament, for instance, one may detect elements of Persian, Jewish, Hellenistic, and other *Asian* traditions. Suggesting that similar thought structure exists between Buddhism and both the Gospel of Matthew and of John, R. S. Sugirtharajah

⁹² Klyne Snodgrass, “Matthew and the Law,” *Treasures New and Old: Contributions to Matthean Studies*, ed. David R. Bauer and Mark Allan Powell (Atlanta: Scholars, 1996) 118.

argues that contributions to the conception of Christianity in general and the composition of the Gospels in particular must move beyond the Mediterranean milieu or the Greco-Judaean traditions to consider Asian religions and literature.⁹³ In other words, rather than seeing all other religious traditions as incompatible rivals, people may learn from studying the Bible the important lesson that God is actively creating and redeeming everywhere, and that religious insights are often the outcome of pluralistic exchange.

There is one more issue that I think biblical scholars must help address in the process of ministerial preparation. As Christians of the twenty-first century study these stories and theological reflections done by our spiritual ancestors, we must not forget that these spiritual ancestors of ours existed in a different time, belonged to a different culture, spoke a different language, lived in a different geographical region, and functioned under a different political system. Like all of us, the biblical writers did not—in fact, could not—transcend their own socio-cultural limitations and their own historical moment as they penned the various books within the Bible. Similarly, like the contemporary church, the early church was also made up of communities of fallible believers in need of repentance. As biblical scholars become more self-conscious about the ethical implications of their work and their responsibility to contemporary concerns, we must also be more honest in admitting that we perceive some serious problems in the Bible that, in spite of our hermeneutical ingenuity, are not applicable to our own context. For example, what do we do with the patriarchal understanding that seems to permeate most if not the entire New Testament, or the frightening celebrations of violence within the book of Revelation? “Thinking with” the Bible means not only that the Bible in no way determines or dictates one’s thought, but also that the Bible itself remains open because of the points of departure that it provides for its readers. If I may adopt what Stuart Hall says about another text, the Bible in this sense becomes “an *open text*, and hence a text we are obliged to go on working *on*, working *with*.”⁹⁴

In light of the Bible’s “double legacy” in legitimizing oppression and inspiring liberation, I think biblical scholars must take the time to work together with future church leaders to reevaluate the role of the Bible in contemporary Christian life and thought. Only honest wrestling with this fundamental issue can make our future church leaders effective for their generation.

IV

If, in both our seminaries and our churches, we can teach and learn biblical studies to tease out how various relations of power differential operate and even at times originated, biblical studies may serve as a form of creative distanciation from which we may refresh, reevaluate, and renew our thoughts on contemporary power relations and issues, including the possibility of thinking through or understanding the origins of, the reasons for, and/or the processes or machinations of various subjugations. Again, the Bible does not have to be some kind of message from heaven that tells us necessarily how to act. Its narratives and discourses, however, may make us aware of complex relations, help us discern our evaluative positions and dispositions, and enable us to become more self-conscious agents in the world.⁹⁵

Given the infiltration of the capitalist emphasis on “*immediate* returns” in both the academy and the church (if only in disguised forms or language of “relevant outcomes” or “practical use”)—and hence the predominant understanding of ministry as “therapy” and/or “management” that I mentioned earlier—let me spend some time affirming why this type of *academic* biblical studies is as indispensable for ministerial preparation as skills in pastoral care and church administration. Ministerial students and practitioners who are committed to change the world for God should take

⁹³ R. S. Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Reconfigurations: An Alternative Way of Reading the Bible and Doing Theology* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2003) 27-31 (see also 107-109).

⁹⁴ Stuart Hall, “The After-Life of Frantz Fanon: Why Fanon? Why Now? Why Black Skin, White Masks,” *The Fact of Blackness: Frantz Fanon and Visual Representation*, ed. Alan Read (Seattle: Bay, 1996) 34; emphasis in original.

⁹⁵ See also Jonathan Culler, “The Literary in Theory,” *What’s Left of Theory? New Work on the Politics of Literary Theory*, ed. Judith Butler, John Guillory, and Kendall Thomas (New York: Routledge, 2000) 280-82.

notice that there is a consistent current among many revolutionary intellectuals that recommends slowing down, particularly slow reading of canonical texts, even or especially in times of great political urgency. While Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Homi K. Bhabha, though writing separately, converge on identifying slow and careful reading as a major lesson that we must learn from Derridean deconstruction,⁹⁶ the most memorable model arguably belongs to Friedrich Nietzsche, when he suggests that humans should learn how to read and ruminate from a cow that chews and rechews her cud.⁹⁷ After all, the importance of slow and careful reading is not lost on the same Karl Marx who has famously stated in his Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach that “philosophers have only ever interpreted the world, the point however is to change it.”⁹⁸ As Thomas Keenan explains in his commentary on *Capital*, “Against the eagerness of a reading that wants to skip over the interpretation to get to the change, that wants to know how to relate general principles to immediate questions, Marx advises that articulation takes patience.”⁹⁹

Conclusion

The success of our church ministry requires that we join together with other religious traditions in the critical dialogue concerning contemporary issues. Current biblical scholarship, with its engagement not only of many competing voices but also with different socio-ethical concerns, may be used to enable future church leaders to participate in critical dialogue and integrate their understanding of Christian identity and practice, so that they will in turn be able to help their churches do the same. Without critical dialogue, all that is left would be a single, authoritative voice, the effect of which may be illustrated from a paragraph by the Chinese American writer, Amy Tan:¹⁰⁰

I used to believe everything my mother said, even when I didn't know what she meant. Once when I was little, she told me she knew it would rain because lost ghosts were circling near our windows, calling “Woo-woo” to be let in. She said doors would unlock themselves in the middle of the night unless we checked twice. She said a mirror could see only my face, but she could see me inside out even when I was not in the room. And all these things seemed true to me. The power of her words was that strong.... According to my mother, Old Mr. Chou was the guardian of a door that opened into dreams. “Are you ready to go see Old Mr. Chou...?” And every night I would shake my head. “Old Mr. Chou takes me to bad places,” I cried.... I remember one time I dreamt of falling through a hole in Old Mr. Chou's floor. I found myself in a nighttime garden and Old Mr. Chou was shouting, “Who's in my backyard?”... As I tried to run away, Old Mr. Chou chased me, shouting, “See what happens when you don't listen to your mother!” And I became paralyzed, too scared to move in any direction.

This is, of course, a worst case scenario of a single, authoritative voice, in which the voice was intentionally misleading, and results in fear, guilt, nightmares, and paralysis. We will do well, however, if we remember, whether we are studying the Bible or ministering in a church—or using the New Testament to minister in a church—that we must not be so convinced or blinded by our own truths that we fail to see others. To prevent that from happening, we must learn to remain open to and appreciative of various convictions that are being held with as much passion as we hold onto our own. In other words, we really do need others or differences to see more and to see better. One of these others that can help us in the process is the difference—both between the Bible and its

⁹⁶ See, for example, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Touched by Deconstruction,” *Grey Room* 20 (2005) 95-104; and Homi K. Bhabha, “Adagio,” *Critical Inquiry* 31 (2005): 371-80.

⁹⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage, 1967) 23.

⁹⁸ Karl Marx, *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, ed. David McLellan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977) 158.

⁹⁹ Thomas Keenan, *Fables of Responsibility: Aberrations and Predicaments in Ethics and Politics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997) 102.

¹⁰⁰ Amy Tan, *The Joy Luck Club* (New York: Putnam's, 1989) 206-208.

contemporary reader as well as within the biblical corpus itself—that is presented in and through the Bible. Of course, in order to address properly the connection between biblical studies and ministerial preparation and practice, we must remember that it takes personal commitment as well as institutional—meaning both church and seminary—rearrangement. The gap between the two, which is too obvious and occurs too often, cannot be filled by only individual practice.

MINISTERIAL AND MISSIONARY FORMATION: FROM EUROPEAN TO INDIGENOUS IN EARLY 19TH CENTURY MAOHI (TAHITIAN) CONTEXT

Marama TAUIRA*

Introduction

This paper briefly analyses the way both ministerial and missionary formation was carried out by the European missionaries from the London Missionary Society (LMS) who represented the first Protestant missionary enterprise in the Pacific, beginning at Tahiti in 1797. Tahiti, the biggest island from the whole area known today as French Polynesia has in the past welcomed many voyagers from various backgrounds and with different roles such as the explorers, traders, beachcombers, government officials from the middle of the 18th century¹⁰¹. These various visitors came into contact with the local population. As a result, drastic changes occurred into the lives of the indigenous people. The arrival, on the other hand of the LMS missionaries by the end of the eighteenth century represented another stream of contact and had different purposes as compared to their European counterparts. This was seen in the way they carried out their mission to civilize and Christianize Pacific islanders. Many long and painful years were to pass (a little over than twenty years since their arrival in 1797) before the LMS missionaries harvested the fruits of their hard labor in their attempt of planting Christianity in this part of the Pacific and to expanding the new religion to other places with the support of the indigenous agents.

Early *Maohi* Converts and Teachers¹⁰²

The indigenous missionary activity in the Pacific, even before it was formally instituted, began with the travel and movements of *Maohi* Christians to other islands of Polynesia where they spontaneously undertook missionary work. John Williams, one of the most famous LMS missionaries in the ‘South Seas,’ who arrived in Tahiti in 1817, formalized the use of indigenous *Maohi* to promote the spread of Christianity.¹⁰³ The churches which were erected in Polynesia as well as the people who were converted into the new faith remembered the work of these *Maohi* missionaries who played an important part in introducing Christianity in the Pacific during the first

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¹⁰¹ *Atlas of the South Pacific*, Wellington, Government Printing Office, ‘French Polynesia,’ Plate 18, 1986, pp.36-7; see also Robert F. Kay, *Tahiti and French Polynesia-A Survival Kit*, Australia, Canberra, Lonely Planet Publications, 1988, p.7. Tahiti covers 1042 sq. km of the whole island. The term ‘French Polynesia’ became officially known in 1945 when the French Government officially granted French citizenship to all people of Tahiti and the outer islands which also strengthened its presence in the region; B. Saura, ‘The Tahitian Churches and the Problem of the French Presence in 1991,’ *The Journal of Pacific History*, vol. 26, No 2, 1991, p.3.

¹⁰² The term *Maohi*, although of modern usage is an inclusive term which refers to the indigenous population of the whole area of French Polynesia. It is used in preference of the term ‘Tahitian’ which is an exclusive term and concerns the population of the main island of Tahiti; for an authority, see Turo Raapoto, ‘*Maohi*: On Being Tahitian,’ in *French Polynesia*, Nancy J. Pollock and Ron Crocombe (eds.), Suva, Institutes of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 1988, pp.3-7.

¹⁰³ The missionaries from the London Missionary Society have referred the area of their mission in the Pacific as the ‘South Seas.’ This was the term they often used in their records; O.H.K Spate, ‘South Sea to Pacific Ocean: A Note of Nomenclature,’ *The Journal of Pacific History*, vol. 12, 1977, pp.205-11; see also N. Gunson, *Messengers of Grace: Evangelical Missionaries in the South Seas, 1797-1860*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1978, p.12. Niel Gunson was one of the well-known historians who carried out extensive studies on the history of Polynesia. He was a research scholar at the Australian National University (ANU), Canberra, Australia and is now enjoying his retirement.

half of the nineteenth century. The work of the indigenous missionaries was recognized as the founding influence in Polynesia of the *Lotu Taiti*, the Tahitian Church.¹⁰⁴

The use of *Maohi* converts for missionary work was due to the shortage of European personnel as well as of funds to cover the wide spread area of the Pacific.¹⁰⁵ As a result, the LMS missionaries, in particular the second generation missionaries among them John Williams turned to the new *Maohi* converts to assist them in their missionary work. They established their mission station at Opoa, Raiatea in the Leeward Islands (Society group) in 1818 which became their point of influence and built a school for training the local *Maohi*. It was from there that the expansion for Protestant missionary activity took place.¹⁰⁶

Many of the *Maohi* who became ‘formal teachers’ after they received their religious training at the Opoa school, had the ‘advantages’ of holding high status in the local society and had belonged to the *Arioi* group.¹⁰⁷ Niel Gunson classifies these *Maohi* teachers as ‘sacred chiefs and warrior chiefs’ who ‘were formerly the most licentious and abandoned of the natives.’ He also notes that ‘a large proportion of *Arioi* society members who, on transferring their allegiance became some of the best native teachers in the Society Islands.’¹⁰⁸ In the description of the *Arioi* and the role they played in *Maohi* society, Peter Buck, an anthropologist who also carried out studies on Polynesian early societies, including the *Maori* attributed the wisdom of the *Arioi* in the learning process to the fact that ‘the *Arioi* society was founded on the ground of a profound knowledge of the psychological interpretation.’¹⁰⁹ For Buck, the *Arioi* were skillful people because of their ability to explain historical situation and significant events like the coming of the Europeans in the islands.¹¹⁰ These *Arioi* were to become ‘some of the notable early Christians and helpers in the mission.’¹¹¹

The first *Maohi* teachers sent to other Polynesian communities not only held high status in terms of the *mana* or power they hold as sacred qualities. They were initially, as noted by William Ellis, ‘people who without any missionary teaching to teach them had agreed to refrain from worshipping

¹⁰⁴ The term *Lotu Taiti* is used mainly in the western part of the Pacific, that is in Tonga and Samoa to refer to the foundation work of the early *Maohi* missionaries who introduced the Christian Gospel among the people of these areas; W. Halapua, *Tradition, Lotu and Militarism in Fiji*, Suva, Institutes of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 2003, p.69.

¹⁰⁵ Gunson, *Messengers of Grace*, p.111. Gunson pointed out that although full accounts were received from the mission field, missionary propaganda directed at obtaining funds and recruits drew upon the South Seas mission were dispelled.

¹⁰⁶ J. Davies, *The History of the Tahitian Mission, 1799-1830-* Written by John Davies missionary to the South Seas Islands with Supplementary Papers from the Correspondence of the Missionaries. Edited by C.W. Newbury, Cambridge: Hakkluyt Society, 1961, pp.303-308. John Davies was one of the longest serving LMS missionaries in Tahiti, with Henry Nott, the main translator of the Tahitian Bible. He arrived in the island in 1801. He witnessed the conversion of the *Maohi* people into the new religion and worked among them until his death in 1855. His original manuscript is kept in the LMS archives, held now in the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) under the reference, LMS South Seas Odds, John Davies, *History of the Tahitian Mission*, Box 6, 1830.

¹⁰⁷ The *Arioi* was a group of *Maohi* local priests connected with the *Oro* cult, the god of war who practiced abortion or infanticide that is the killing of a new-born male baby in order to please god *Oro*. These practices were strongly condemned by the missionaries and were seen as ‘evil;’ see *Gunson, Messengers of Grace*, p.182.

¹⁰⁸ Gunson, *Messengers of Grace*, p.196; see also as an authority, Douglas Oliver, *Ancient Tahitian Society*, section on ‘*Oro* and the *Arioi*,’ Honolulu, The University Press, 1974, vol. III, pp.759-65 and 890-913.

¹⁰⁹ Peter Buck, *Les Migrations des Polynésiens-Les Vikings du Soleil Levant*, Paris, Editions Payot, 1952, p.89.

¹¹⁰ Buck, *Les Migrations des Polynésiens*, p.89.

¹¹¹ William Ellis, *Polynesian Researches During a Residence of Nearly Six Years in the South Sea Islands and Sandwich Islands*, London, Henry G. Bohn, 1831, vol. II, p.245. William Ellis was one among the second generation LMS missionaries in the South Seas. He arrived in Tahiti in 1816 with a much needed printing press to helping printing materials for the education of the *Maohi* converts. He was trained as a printer and had attended the seminary at Gosport, in England where he studied under David Bogue, one of the founding fathers of the LMS.

the local idols.’¹¹² Ellis was referring to the early *Maohi* converts who were the first *bure atua*, or praying people, ‘who had for a long time lived with the early LMS missionaries’ and that ‘their permanent contact with these missionaries was a decisive factor in their acceptance of Christianity as their new religion and their willingness to be teachers among their own people.’¹¹³ The conduct of these early *Maohi* converts described as, ‘informal teachers’ and the influence of their character have attracted more and more *Maohi* to turn towards Christianity.

The religious teaching and training offered to the natives *Maohi*, although conducted in a school for a short period of time (one or two years) or sometimes on the grass or under the shade of a tree and even by the side of a stream was mainly done under the supervision of a European missionary. The LMS missionaries believed that this was part of the natural process to train and form people so that they may take the Gospel ‘far beyond their own reef.’¹¹⁴ Sharing the Christian faith with others as Christ recommended to His disciples (Mat.28/19) was a strong dimension of the Evangelical theology and practice in the eighteenth century.

As such, the instruction the *Maohi* received consisted of worship, of reading from materials already translated in the vernacular such as catechism books, prayer books or reciting some parts of the gospel or reading an application of the local alphabet as well as of writing skills using materials from the first LMS generation missionaries for the school at Papetoai, Moorea.¹¹⁵ In doing so, the missionaries believed that ‘a religious instruction not only produced a Christian man but that, it opened all the doorways to civilization.’¹¹⁶

However, the LMS missionaries had themselves some difficulties in determining how accurately and how well their religious instruction has been understood by the people, in particular those who were sent out.¹¹⁷ Their expectation was that the *Maohi* would be able to understand and grasp the meaning and the essence of the new religion and were sent to evangelize their own people so that they too could gain the benefits of the new religion. In other words, the *Maohi* were trained to become ‘formal teachers’ among their own people and at the same time was interpreted as a way of acknowledgement by the missionaries of their potential as ‘native agents.’¹¹⁸

This state of uncertainty and difficulty encountered by the missionaries was seen, for instance in the way the local people were taught about Sunday that, no work was to be done during the Sunday. To work on a Sunday was a sin. For the *Maohi*, it was not clear what the concept of ‘work’ was involved. In pre-contact days, work like gardening, planting, fishing, hunting was carried out in everyday life of the year. In the new Christian era, the local people would still be doing some

¹¹² Ellis, *Polynesian Researches*, vol. II, p.245.

¹¹³ Ellis, *Polynesian Researches*, vol. II, p.200.

¹¹⁴ John Williams devoted his practical skills by helping and teaching the natives how to build better houses for themselves and also to the construction of a boat. His colleague, Threlkeld was assiduous in supervising the religious instruction of the natives. Both had acquired a good knowledge of the local language which helped them in the mission; LMS South Seas Incoming Letters, Box 3, 1818-1820, SOAS, London; see also Davies, *The History of the Tahitian Mission*, p.306 and John Williams, LMS South Seas Letters, 8June 1821, Box 3, Folder 6, SOAS.

¹¹⁵ See the article by Niel Gunson, ‘John Williams and His Ship: the Bourgeois Aspiration of a Missionary Family,’ in D.P. Crook (ed.), *Questioning the Past: A Selection of Papers and Government*, St Lucia, Queensland, 1972, pp.73-95. The school built at Papetoai, Moorea, an island close to Tahiti in 1813 by the first generation missionaries among them Henry Nott, John Davies was aimed at teaching the children of the LMS missionaries and the *Maohi* adults how to read and write. These *Maohi* adults were known as *Haapii Parau*, Learners of the Word.

¹¹⁶ Gunson, *Messengers of Grace*, p.247.

¹¹⁷ This feeling was expressed by John Orsmond, another of LMS missionaries in Tahiti when he observed the attitude of the local people and the missionaries as well. Orsmond described in one instance how ‘the natives hear and scoff (ridicule). The Devil gaze and smile to see how Christian ministers in arms and missionaries act like swarms of serpents swollen with guile;’ J. Orsmond, LMS South Seas Letters, 8 March 1829, SOAS.

¹¹⁸ The local teachers became the core group of converts in the Pacific for what the LMS missionaries described as ‘native agency,’ that is Polynesian men and women who were indoctrinated by the missionaries in the basic teaching of Christianity and whose task was to spread the Gospel elsewhere; see J. Davies, *Welsh Letters of the Rev. J. Davies*, p.284.

planting or go out fishing for their own benefits but at the same time, they were also willing to share some of the produce or catch with the missionaries as a way to justify their behavior and their good intention as Christians. This attitude of the *Maohi* was described by the missionaries, at one instance as ‘good as the missionaries.’¹¹⁹

However, the religious instruction given to the natives was not limited to teaching only. It also included practical skills such as house or boat building and the use of new agricultural methods.¹²⁰ The people were taught how to frame and built houses which were usually of wood and the walls of wattle covered with coral lime plaster. The roof was thatched with raw materials such as coconut leaves or *pandanus*. This was part of the LMS policy of introducing European civilization to the islanders so that they may lived in good and healthy conditions.

Church building was another aspect of religious instruction. The building of a Church was done collectively by men and women as they joined their efforts to complete the work. As such, the Church became the new meeting place between Christian converts for worship, discussion with one another or with the chief. Feasting was often involved in bringing men and women together in new ways. This practice of men and women of being together and eating at a common place was forbidden during pre-missionary days but has changed when Christianity was introduced in the island.

Building a church was an outcome of the missionary teaching and reflected the model of church erected in England. The missionaries taught the *Maohi* the techniques of building a church which consisted of making walls with coral lime taken from the ocean and plaster obtained from burnt coral lime mixed up with sand.¹²¹ The late Sione Latukefu, former Principal of the Pacific Theological College, Suva, Fiji notes that the missionary activity of the Pacific islanders included ‘not only Bible reading, biblical studies or moral concepts but also infrastructure buildings such as church, houses and schools.’¹²²

With the building of a church, the *Maohi* were also exposed to a new form of worship to be offered to the new God. This was mainly comprised of ‘reading a portion of the Scriptures, prayers and an address or sermon.’¹²³ Alongside, hymns were also introduced and sung in worship using those well-known to the missionaries in England but translated in indigenous words.¹²⁴ The Welsh were great singers and it was not surprising to see that the very first hymns used for worship in Polynesia were composed and translated in 1813 into the vernacular by a Welshman, John Davies. The *Maohi* were described by William Ellis during singing as ‘remarkably fond of singing and were always ready to learn as they loved singing with clear and neat voices.’¹²⁵

¹¹⁹ This was a reflection made by one of the LMS missionaries in Tahiti, Mc Kean Thomas Smith, LMS South Seas Letters, 3 September 1843, as quoted by Gunson, *Messengers of Grace*, p.304. As for the strict observance of the Sunday, this has become one of the clauses within the Tahitian Code promulgated publicly on 12 May 1819; see Ellis, *Polynesian Researches*, vol. III, p.136. This Code is given in full with a French translation in L. J. Bougue, ‘Première Législation Tahitienne- Le Code Pomare de 1819-Historique et Traduction,’ *Journal de la Société des Océaniennes*, VIII, Paris, pp.5-26.

¹²⁰ See for example the activities of two of the *Maohi* teachers in the island of Rurutu, in the Austral group as recorded in the LMS journal, LMS South Seas Journals, 1796-1860, SOAS.

¹²¹ The missionaries, in particular John Williams and Lancelot Threlkeld taught the local people in Raiatea their techniques when they built the first church in the district of Opoa in 1821. This was recorded by John Williams in his journal; LMS South Seas Journal, 1821-1823, Box 4, SOAS.

¹²² Sione Latukefu, ‘Pacific Islander Missionaries,’ in *The Covenant Makers-Islander Missionaries in the Pacific*, Doug Munro and Andrew Thornley (eds.), Suva, Pacific Theological College and the Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 1996, p.18.

¹²³ Description given by John Williams during one of his visits in the island of Rurutu in 1823 where he attended church service conducted by the native teacher Puna; Prout Ebenezer, *Memoirs of the Life of the Rev. John Williams, Missionary to Polynesia*, London, John Snow, 1843, p.190. It was not until 1813, on October that the missionaries introduced hymns for worship in Polynesia.

¹²⁴ Davies, *The History of the Tahitian Mission*, p. 168.

¹²⁵ Ellis, *Polynesian Researches*, vol. I, p. 493.

The pattern of worship was very close to that conducted in Scotland and in non-conformist places of worship in England in which preaching was a dominant element and a regular exercise. The Lord's Supper was also part of a special service for which people were to be properly prepared.¹²⁶

The role of the missionaries of teaching and giving religious instruction to the local teachers was also directed towards the creation of a 'local missionary society' in order to sustain the work of the mission.¹²⁷ In this way, they encouraged the *Maohi* teachers to take a great deal as they move from place to place by giving to the new converts an opportunity towards contributing to missionary work as a sign of their conversion. The first local missionary society was founded in the island of Moorea on May 1818 and the contribution of the people was seen in terms of local produce from the land or from the ocean. As a result, local missionary auxiliaries known as *Oro'a Mê* were founded and have remained since then as an important religious activity strongly practiced in the *Maohi* Protestant Church today.¹²⁸

The formation of local missionary auxiliary was often connected with the promulgation of a law codes.¹²⁹ The need for a code of law to govern the new society was also taught to the teachers and was adopted with the support of the local chiefs. The code replaced the customary laws which were breaking down with the advance of Christian teaching advocated by the *Maohi* teachers.

The pattern of religious training which the *Maohi* teachers received from the LMS missionaries can be seen in the way they were trained. Most were married, there were few single and they spent a very short period in a school. Their training is questionable. It consisted of reading and writing skills, building churches with the introduction of new form of worship, the foundation of a local missionary auxiliary to contribute to the life of the mission as a sign of their conversion and the promulgation of a code of laws to 'control' the behavior of the new converts. In addition, they also introduced civilization as part of their missionary work. Yet, the LMS missionaries valued these energetic local converts as teachers and evangelists and appreciated the initiatives they took in their own context as they shared the same culture with the people they lived and worked amongst.

***Maohi* as Missionaries**

John Williams was a type of person always 'dissatisfied with his sphere of labor and was longing after a larger field.'¹³⁰ He believed, on the other hand that he has the potential, the energy and the earnest desire, with the support of the native teachers to take the Christian Gospel in 'larger field' so that he might be 'extensively useful for the cause of the common Redeemer.'¹³¹ The images that Williams has popularized is still powerful in Pacific Protestantism history in which he described the 'Tahitian Mission as a fountain from whence the streams of salvation flows across the ocean of

¹²⁶ The LMS understanding of worship and of the Lord's Supper was restricted to those who were formally trained and ordained to the priesthood. The *Maohi* were not given that status by the LMS missionaries as most were not formally trained in a formal school like in England. So, they were unable to administer the Communion because they were not ordained. The ordination of the first *Maohi* as pastor took place during the time of the French Protestant missionaries from the Paris Missionary Society who arrived in Tahiti in 1863 to replace the LMS missionaries who left in 1850s; see C. Vernier, 'Remarques sur les Difficultés Rencontrées par la Société Missionnaire de Londres d'après *The History of the Tahitian Mission* of the Rev. J. Davies,' *Journal de la Société des Océanistes*, No 17, Dec. 1961, pp.1-25.

¹²⁷ For a record of the formation of local auxiliary missionary in Polynesia, see LMS South Seas Incoming Correspondence, Box 3, 1819-1822, SOAS.

¹²⁸ This important event which occurred in the Protestant Church today is celebrated on May each year where all parishes would make donations in cash and constitute the budget of the Church.

¹²⁹ See for example Niel Gunson, 'Pomare of Tahiti and Polynesian Imperialism,' *Journal of Pacific History*, vol. 4, 1969, pp.65-82.

¹³⁰ Williams to LMS Directors, 7 June 1820, LMS South Seas Incoming Letters, 1796-1840, Box 3, Folder No 6, SOAS; also cited by Richard Lovett, *The History of the London Missionary Society, 1795-1895*, vol. I, London, Henry Frowde, 1899, p.249 and also by Gavan Daws, *A Dream of Islands- Voyage of Self-Discovery in the South Seas*, New York, Norton, 1980, p.36.

¹³¹ Recorded by Prout, *Memoirs of the Life of the Rev. John Williams*, p.122.

many islands' and compared Tahiti as 'a bright speck in the midst of the ocean, whence the light of salvation was to diverge in all directions over that mighty mass of waters.'¹³²

By early 1820s, *Maohi* teachers, under the leadership of their British mentors were sent to various parts of the Polynesian islands and beyond with limited training and resources: in the island of Aitutaki (1821) and Rarotonga (1823), in the Cook Islands, in Vava'u (1822), in the Tongan group and Hawaii in the same period (1822), in Samoa and Fiji (1830).¹³³ They were sent out, using the language of the day, 'to do some good to these numerous islands which, up to now, are very wretched so that the gods of the heathen taken in this bloodless war can be won by the Power of the Prince of Peace.' In other words, the *Maohi* teachers were sent to break down the traditional religious system and to replace it with Christianity. But, this was by no means an indication that they had acquired a real and clear understanding of what they had been taught by the missionaries.

The *Maohi* teachers were also seen by the European missionaries as consolidating the mission as well as to contributing to the expansionist policy of the LMS throughout the Polynesian islands. The mission authorities recognized the work of the native teachers as advantageous in many situations in which 'a local teacher could present the Gospel more effectively or could find paths to acceptance that were impossible for expatriates.'¹³⁴ The effectiveness of the *Maohi* teachers in the mission was also contributed by their ability to speak the languages of the Polynesian peoples. Hugh Cumming, one of the LMS missionaries to the island in 1827 reflected that 'the language of the islanders without doubt had the same origin with the Society Islands from the length of time without intercourse.'¹³⁵

In addition, the local teachers communicated to the people the knowledge of Christianity they received from the missionaries with the use of their local culture known as their *Hiro'a Tumu Maohi*. They adopted, for instance the practice of memorizing words taught to them by the missionaries during instruction. This reflected the influence of their former way of learning in pre-literate period which consisted of transmitting words or speeches by memory. On that note, Ellis noted that this behavior of the people was well rooted in their *Maohi* culture in which, 'all their knowledge, traditions, songs were preserved...in which great things were to be remembered.'¹³⁶

Although the transmission of words or speeches by memory was no innovation in the *Maohi* culture and was not specific to *Maohi*, the description given of local public speakers as the 'craft of orator' reflected the art of speaking using memory.¹³⁷ This was honored in the oral tradition of the *Maohi* society and was taken up by the teachers as they moved from place to place. Moreover, the *Maohi* understanding of the new religion in which they wanted to share with their own people arose from a combination of the missionaries' theological views of Christianity which can be labeled as the LMS *Fa'amissionary*, LMS missionary culture and the *Maohi* parallels from the pre-Christian religious beliefs, the *Hiro'a Tumu Maohi* or the *Fa'aMaohi*, *Maohi* culture.¹³⁸ Their understanding of Christianity, of the concept of 'Church,' and all its doctrines, as well as their attitudes towards the people they lived with was determined by the fusion of ideas, events and their comprehension of concepts from two distinct cultural backgrounds.

¹³² Prout, *Memoirs of the Life of the Rev. John Williams*, pp.609-10.

¹³³ I have provided a full list of the *Maohi* teachers involved in missionary activity from 1820s in the appendix of my PhD Thesis, 'The *Maohi* missionaries and the London Missionary Society, 1820-1855,' Auckland University, 2006.

¹³⁴ B. Thorogood, 'After 200Years- The LMS Legacy,' *Pacific Journal of Theology*, vol. 14, 1995, p.9.

¹³⁵ H. Cumming, 'Journal of a Voyage from Valparaiso to the Society Islands and the Adjacent Islands,' LMS South Seas Journal, 1827-1828, A 1336, Mitchell Library, Sydney, Australia.

¹³⁶ Ellis, *Polynesian Researches*, vol. 1, P.493.

¹³⁷ Patrick O'Reilly, 'Bibliographie de Tahiti et de la Polynésie Française,' Dossier No 14, Paris, Société Des Océanistes, 1967, p.89.

¹³⁸ The *Fa'aMissionary*, Missionary culture and the *Fa'aMaohi*, *Maohi* culture are two concepts used by the author of this paper to describe the combination of the two different cultural backgrounds which played an important role in the establishment of Christianity and the conversion of the people in Polynesia.

The notion of reciprocity was therefore a fundamental element of the way *Maohi* understood their old religious beliefs. It was in essence the guiding principle of the inter-relationship between themselves and their ancestral gods where some religious practices were to be performed in order to please their local gods or to get some success. Ellis noted that there was a ‘religious’ rite connected with almost every act of life where ‘a prayer was offered before the people ate their food, when they tilled their ground, planted their gardens, built their houses, launched their canoes, cast their nets and commenced or concluded a journey.’¹³⁹

Moreover, this reciprocity had an important influence on the way *Maohi* interpreted Christian teaching and Christian values. It influenced not only their expression of Christian faith but also their own view of the new religious community in which they worked and lived with and they acknowledged at the same time ‘what the Gospel has done for Polynesia.’¹⁴⁰ This came about because there were already existing parallels between certain features of Christianity and the former religion of the *Maohi*.

The Fruits of the *Maohi* Labor

The effect of what the *Maohi* taught to the indigenous people was significant. The natives were taught about the superiority of the new Christian God.¹⁴¹ Just as Taaroa, the god of Creation had searching eyes the people were told that the God Jehovah was able to see in the dark.¹⁴² And just as Taaroa was believed to be great, the *Maohi* were told that the new God was far superior. The sinfulness of earthly life and a fear for God’s wrath was part of the native teachings. In addition, the *Maohi* were taught that prayer was a new form of personal communication with the Christian God and that God’s words were revealed through the prophets from generation to generation, to the missionaries and then to the native teachers. All those servants were described to be as ‘brands plucked out of the burning.’¹⁴³

The impact of the introduction of Christianity in Polynesia, alongside the flow of European ideas and their material wealth and the teaching of the *Maohi* were, among other factors all significant elements which contributed to the conversion of the people to the new religion. As a result, many of the old religious traditions and practices such as human sacrifices or infanticide were extinguished. Some of these practices changed or survived in a modified form. The local god Taaroa, the *Maohi* god of Creation became the God Jehova in the new religion. The *marae*, the traditional place of worship of the indigenous people was abandoned to give space to the church building.¹⁴⁴ The Oro cult, the traditional worship of the god Oro, the god of war which the *Arioi* or the local priests took from place to place was replaced by the Gospel which the *Maohi* teachers took to different places. Human sacrifices were abolished as Christ was the new sacrifice and the new symbol of life offered once and for all. The traditional values of the *Hiro’a Tumu Maohi* or *Maohi* culture were replaced by a belief in an all-seeing powerful God who, despite of punishing those who disobeyed His Commands was also understood as a ‘God of Love.’¹⁴⁵

While the European missionaries settled away from the local people and took decisions on the placement of the local teachers on a given island by choosing ‘the best of the candidates,’ the ‘success’ of the *Maohi* teachers can be understood by the way they lived and worked among the

¹³⁹ Ellis, *Polynesian Researches*, vol. II, p.216, quoted by Douglas Oliver, *Ancient Tahitian Society*, Honolulu, The University Press of Hawaii, 1974, vol. 1, p.84.

¹⁴⁰ Ellis, *Polynesian Researches*, vol. 1, p.288; see also Lovett, *The History of the London Missionary Society*, 1795-1895, vol. 1, p.474.

¹⁴¹ Davies, *The History of the Tahitian Mission*, p.138.

¹⁴² Oliver, *Ancient Tahitian Society*, vol. III, p.1342; see Chapter, ‘Jehova versus Oro.’

¹⁴³ Montgomery James (ed.), *Journal of Voyages and Travels by the Rev. Daniel Tyerman and George Bennet, Esq., Deputed from the London Missionary Society to Visit their Various Stations in the South Sea Islands, Australia, China, India, Madagascar and South Africa, Between the Years 1821 and 1829, Compiled from Original Documents*, 2 vols., London, p.95.

¹⁴⁴ Oliver, *Ancient Tahitian Society*, vol. 1, p.315; see Chapter 10.

¹⁴⁵ This was the message preached for the first time by the LMS missionaries on their arrival at Tahiti on 5 March, 1797 by the *Duff* based on the reading of 1 John 4/8.

people. By responding to the missionaries request to extend the Gospel to new areas, the teachers undertook missionary activity among their own people so that ‘all their evil customs would be cast out.’¹⁴⁶ Their teaching and preaching as well as their pastoral work and skills were all carried out in the local language which facilitated mutual understanding and dialogue as they shared a common culture and a same way of life.

Apart from the political and economic motives associated with the presence of the LMS missionaries in Polynesia, the main concern however, confronting the *Maohi* was the extent to which Christianity influenced their old beliefs and practices which formed their *Hiro’a Tumu*, local culture. The *Maohi* did not simply choose between two sets of religion. In accepting Christianity, they acknowledged the correlation they perceived between two systems, not denying the fact that their former religion was irrelevant. Confronted with such complexities, the *Maohi* appeared to select those aspects which were of benefits to them and eliminated those which were not.¹⁴⁷ They adjusted their lives to the elements of the new religion that they chose to accept and strove to understand Christianity in terms of their local culture. This shaped the way they established the *Lotu Taiti*, the Tahitian Church. The *Etaretia Porotetani Maohi*, *Maohi* Protestant Church inherited from the legacy of the LMS and the *Maohi* teachers as well. This can be seen today, for instance in the form of Church building with its huge walls and beautifully erected, the celebration of the *Oro’a Mê*, the May Feast or collection issued from the local missionary auxiliary and the continuing policy of providing ministerial formation to its members in a much challenging society.

Conclusion- A Moving Church

The *Maohi* teachers, together with their British mentors, were closely associated with the foundation of Protestant Christianity in the Pacific from the first half of the nineteenth century. After they received formal training, the teachers were sent to places not only ‘to do good to others’ but also to demonstrate the values and the transforming power of a new God and to promote European civilization.

Missionary work commenced when the *Maohi* teachers were sent to the Eastern Polynesian islands in 1821. In this way, they opened up a mission between *Maohi* and *Maohi*. Although the teachers had limited training and resources, they introduced basic education and helped improve the material well-being of the people by building neat houses and introduced new agricultural techniques among other things.

The native teachers imitated what had been taught to them by the missionaries and they transplanted their influence upon the local communities in which they lived. They were not much innovators in their missionary activities. Their work however, contributed to the establishment of the Polynesian islands as a ‘Christian Kingdom’ in which the local chiefs played a key role in leading people as Christians.

The ‘success’ of the mission was contributed too by the fact that the teachers shared some cultural and linguistic similarities with their Polynesian counterparts which enabled them to communicate, with some success the benefit of the new religion. Conversion was also aided by the ability of the teachers to win the support of the local chiefs. This was crucial in a chiefly system society because it allowed them to carry out their mission without real opposition.

¹⁴⁶ Williams, LMS South Seas Letters, 6 July 1823, SOAS.

¹⁴⁷ The choice the *Maohi* made in accepting Christianity and rejecting those elements which were seen to be counter-Christian such as human sacrifice, infanticide, worship of the ancestral gods can be described as an ‘expurgation’ that is, getting rid of those parts of the local culture and adding to the culture new dimensions through for instance, the building of churches, hymns for worship, reading the Bible. Alan Tippet describes this process as a ‘direct face-to-face encounter between paganism and a single form of Christianity.’ Alan Tippet, *People Movements in Southern Polynesia: Studies in the Dynamics of Church Planting and Growth in Tahiti, New Zealand, Tonga and Samoa*, Chicago, Moody Press, 1971, p.140.

Mission work however, was not always initially successful. This was due to the hostile attitudes of some of the local leaders who were afraid of the threat the new religion may caused to their political authority. The *Maohi* were placed in areas where there was little or no influence from a European missionary. They were, moreover people always on the move. By offering religious education to the indigenous communities, the teachers contributed to ministerial formation leading up, for some to be ‘activism,’ that is, to be involved in expanding the work of Christ elsewhere. Others became deacons and pastors to serve the community of Christian believers and to take up the challenge the words Jesus repeated three times to Peter: ‘Feed my flock, take care of my sheep.’ (John 21/15-19) May it be a task and a challenge for the Church to be a moving Church in this modern period!

APPENDIXES



Doing Theology from Disability Perspective

GUIDELINES FOR DOING THEOLOGIES IN ASIA¹⁴⁸:

“Revisiting the Critical Asian Principle”

Preamble

The Critical Asian Principle (CAP) has a history, purpose and direction. Since its formulation and implementation about thirty years, we believe it has achieved its purpose reasonably well in assisting the process of doing theology and teaching theology in Asia. However in today’s context, given its peculiarities and changing needs, we realize there is a need to review the CAP in order to intensify Asian theological reflection and theological training. Hence the need to revisit and rethink the CAP was suggested at the Taipei 2004 meeting by the ATESEA Executive Committee. Member schools, colleges and seminaries were requested to facilitate and participate in the *re-assessment* process. The *process* was to focus on relevancy, sufficiency and adequacy of CAP for today’s Asia.

The Critical Asian Principle has been the framework applied by ATESEA and SEAGST in theological education. In 1972 at the Senate meeting in Bangkok, the CAP formulation was introduced by Emerito P. Nacpil and officially adopted to provide basis for theological construction and education in Asia.’. The primary concerns behind the implementation of the CAP were twofold:

- To promote an Asian orientation in theological education in Southeast Asian region,
- To seek and identify what is “distinctly Asian and use such distinctiveness as a critical principle of judgment on matters dealing with the life and mission of the Christian community, theology, and theological education in Asia.”¹⁴⁹

Hence the CAP took into account the common spiritual and socio-economic context of Southeast Asian countries as the point of reference for biblical reflection and theologizing. Four broadly described principles were thus proposed:

- the situational principle
- the hermeneutical principle
- the missiological principle
- the educational principle.

Each of these principles had general objectives to meet; namely:

- Help Asian Churches develop a theology of their own and be fully liberated from the Western framework.
- Help Churches evolve an attitude which would seek to think Asian and act Asian in order to create a scope for living theology.
- Help redress the situation whereby Asian Christianity continues to remain Western and religion of the colonial masters.¹⁵⁰

Why Revisit and Rethink CAP?

As mentioned in the preamble, the need to revisit and rethink CAP has been made necessary by the constantly evolving Asian context. Many things have since changed and would require different approaches and modus operandi in theologizing and teaching of theology in Asia. The revisiting and rethinking should rightly raise critical questions in relation to the adequacy, relevancy and

¹⁴⁸This guideline was drafted by discussion group in Seminari Thologi Malaysia, Seramban, Malaysia in Oct. 6-7, 2006 and approved with comments by Ex.com of ATESEA in Jakarta on 18th November, 2006. This guideline will be adopted during the ATESEA Golden Jubilee celebration in November in Singapore.

¹⁴⁹ Report on Rethinking the Critical Asian Principle, ATESEA Members Schools Myanmar, 2005/2006.

¹⁵⁰ Philippine Area Committee’ Report. Revisiting the Critical Asian Principle, Philippines.

sufficiency of CAP in current Asian situations. The following comments are findings compiled through the various regional discussions.

- i) The four principles of CAP are too general and do not specifically address modern day challenges.
- ii) Usage of the term ‘Critical’ in the context of CAP does not seem critical enough as the four expressed principles are common basic hermeneutic principles.
- iii) CAP merely offers a general framework, without saying anything specific on the principles or application methodology. Hence it is seen to be descriptive and lacking in clear theological perspective.
- iv) Since the principles are general in nature, it lacks clear direction for doing theology and teaching theology in Asia.
- v) The original CAP is inadequate to provide interaction with the contemporary issues such as globalization, global empire building, ecological and gender justice issues.
- vi) Lack is also noted in the area of Pastoral, Ministerial and Spiritual formation.

From Bangkok to Singapore – A Long Journey of Changes

As noted in the keynote paper ‘Covenant with the Churches in Asia’ presented at the ATESEA General Assembly 2005, the Asian world has changed rapidly in all aspects of economic, political and social development. Christian Churches in Asia continue to struggle to witness the message of the gospel and the promise of the reign of God to be actualized among the people of Asia.”¹⁵¹ Since the ‘changing context’ is the key factor which induced the reassessment of the effectiveness, functionality and suitability of CAP, we need to identify what features color the changed context of today’s Asia and what paradigm shift has taken place between Bangkok (then) and Singapore (now). The following are some propositions:

- i) **Religious Fundamentalisms** – The escalation of tensions between the Muslim world and the West, as well as terrorist activities sponsored by religious sectarian groups in Asia continue to challenge us in the way we think and act as Christians in Asia. The revival of many sects, with a fundamentalist tendency within the living religions of Asia, stand witness to rising religious fundamentalism. Living in a pluralistic community leaves limited alternatives for Asians: either we build bridges or walls.
- ii) **Gender Justice Issues** – The rising cases of violence against women and children, as well as issues aimed directly at marginalizing women from main stream activities and promoting erosion of women’s rights has become a growing concern for Asia. This women issue must be seen as a humanitarian issue as well as within the context of the image of God in humanity. Women are created in the image of God.
- iii) **Ecological Problems, Disease and Disasters** – These ecological and health problems have become common in Asia today. The recent Tsunami, flash floods and earthquakes have taken away thousands of lives and left the living devastated. The outbreak of Avian Flu and the resurgence of diseases (like Tuberculosis, Dengue and Malaria) once thought to have been eradicated in Southeast Asia, have once again resurfaced in epidemic proportions. HIV and AIDS are affecting families, communities and nations and challenge us to reexamine our ministerial formation program. Furthermore, uncontrolled and one-sided exploitative economic development projects have brought with them various ecological crises. “Ecological concerns have often been neglected or conveniently sidelined.”¹⁵² The rape of Mother Earth manifest in uncontrolled logging, indiscriminate use of chemicals in agriculture, inconsiderate disposal of non-biodegradable waste, and human beings’ many other ecocidal acts due to negligence,

¹⁵¹ Huang Po Ho: Covenant with the Churches in Asia – Retargeting Theological Education in Responding to the Life and Death Struggles of the People of Asia – ATESEA General Assembly Meeting, Chiang Mai, Thailand, 2005.

¹⁵² Wilfred J Samuel, Review of the Critical Asian Principle –Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore Region, 2006.

ignorance or greed destroy the ecosystem.

- iv) **Globalization and Global Empire Building** – Much of Asia has moved from colonial contexts to a variety of post-colonial and neocolonial situations where the global empire and the neoliberal economic scheme of globalization play symbiotic relationships. The greed of the Empire and the neoliberal globalization threatens and destroys all life, especially the poor and marginalized people and Mother Earth. Thus, economic globalization and the rise of a global empire is a serious concern for Asia today. Such “new realities within the Asian contexts are posing new challenges to our theologizing today. . .”¹⁵³
- v) **Colonization** – Most Asian countries have a colonial experience. Asia’s post colonial realities and emerging neocolonial attitudes are matters that should be given a renewed emphasis in combating abuse, imperialism and exploitation. “Neo-colonialism is now disguised in the form of economic domination.”¹⁵⁴ Neocolonialism also employs cultural hegemony in both subtle and glaring ways. The principle of ‘decolonization’ must be implemented in making people “aware of the colonizing command and dominance that is around us and in us. We need to engage consciously and continuously in decolonizing all alienating and imposing influences.”¹⁵⁵
- vi) **Spirituality** – With the increasing influence and impact of materialism, secularism, and liberalism in the postmodern era, Asian countries continue to experience challenges and stagnation in spirituality. These include loss of focus in discipleship and spiritual formation, loss of indigenous wisdom, character and values, and infiltration of western culture and ideology through the neo-Pentecostal and new religious movements influences.
- vii) **Identity and Power Struggle** - Most communities in Asian countries have experienced identity crisis through history. In the process of post-colonial impact, some experienced a ‘hybrid’ identity.¹⁵⁶ Similar to this is the question of “what kind of world order is theology going to project that is consistent with its hope for the kingdom of God, as the people of Asia rise to claim their basic rights and rightful place in the world?”¹⁵⁷
- viii) **People Movements and Ecumenism** – In a Christian minority and multi-denominational context enhancing ecumenical unity and cooperation is vital. In seeking to fulfill the Great Commission and the Great Commandment, the Asian Churches need to transcend denominational boundaries and constantly seek to promote wider cooperation. Some Asians see denominationalism as a legacy of Western mission agencies that promotes a particular brand of Christianity. Learning from the past history ecumenism must not be just seen in functional terms but as a dynamic unity (‘that they may be one’)¹⁵⁸ Ecumenism is about a vision of God’s household where the members seek to listen to the variety of Asian theological voices, and to practice intrafaith and interfaith dialog in order to promote peace, healing and reconciliation.
- ix) **Information and Technological Change and Challenges** – “Globalized capitalized economic activities act not only to widen the gap between the rich and the poor, but also weaken the sovereignty of individual nation states by interruption of capital power. Its operation is backed by the information technology and military power, and has led to

¹⁵³ Taiwan Area’s Critical Response to the Critical Asian Principle (CAP) of ATESEA/SEAGST, Taiwan, 2006.

¹⁵⁴ Emanuel G Singgih. *Critical Asian Principal: A Contextual Theological Evaluation*, Indonesia, 2005.

¹⁵⁵ Taiwan Area’s Critical Response to the Critical Asian Principle (CAP) of ATESEA/SEAGST, Taiwan, 2006.

¹⁵⁶ Simon SM Kwan. *A Hong Kong Reflection on the Critical Asian Principle*, CAP Continual Discussion Group Report – 2006. A “meeting place identity” is used to describe this floating nature of identity.

¹⁵⁷ Philippine Area Committee Report, *Revisiting the Critical Asian Principle*.

¹⁵⁸ Wilfred J Samuel, *Review of the Critical Asian Principle –Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore Region*, 2006.

- x) the decline of the weaker cultures, discrimination against minorities such as aborigines, and exploitation of women and children.”¹⁵⁹
- xi) **Social Challenges** – The expression of sin in terms of greed for power and wealth experienced by the peoples of Asia has had a tremendous effect on the community, especially the poor and marginalized. Ethical problems such as corruption, abuse of power, and prostitution; poverty realities such as indentured child labor and population explosion; communal problems such as ethnic conflicts, racial tensions and breakdown of family structures and continued marginalization of women, children, and persons with disabilities continue to rise.
- xii) **Reclaiming Indigenous Identity and Minority Rights** – Loss of identity, *dignity*, and loss of good cultural values have resulted from lack of dialogue with the indigenous peoples. Dialogue with them has been hindered by our prejudices and stereotyped views about them that were influenced by western theology and culture. The indigenous has often been equated with being ‘backward’, ‘primitive’ and ‘irrational.’ For these reasons, local cultures and their wisdom has been systematically suppressed and marginalized. However, indigenous wisdom has a valuable character that needs to be rediscovered.

¹⁵⁹ Huang Po Ho: Covenant with the Churches in Asia – Retargeting Theological Education in Responding to the Life and Death Struggles of the People of Asia – ATESEA General Assembly Meeting, Chiang Mai, Thailand, 2005.

Guidelines for Theologizing and Theological Education in Asia – Time for Another Paradigm Shift

The purpose of these guidelines is to allow a redefinition and a retargeting of the role of theological education and its methodology in Asia by addressing the actual situation of a local community and at the same time ensuring it is “biblically based, missiologically oriented, educationally shaped, pastorally advocated and spiritually empowered.”¹⁶⁰ Theologies in Asia must be authentically Asian in its content, shape and processes. So we propose the following guidelines:

- ix) Responsive engagement with the diverse Asian contexts.
- x) Critical engagement with indigenous cultures and wisdom for the preservation and sustenance of life.
- xi) Reflective engagements with the sufferings of the Asian people in order to provide hope for the marginalized, women, indigenous people, children, the differently able people and migrant workers.
- xii) Encourage to restore the reality of the inter-connectedness of the whole creation.
- xiii) Helpful to promote interfaith dialogue and intrafaith communion and communication for the fullness of life and the well-being of the society.
- xiv) Enhance capacity building in order to serve the people experiencing disaster, conflict, disease and those people who suffer physical, emotional, and mental disabilities.
- xv) Prophetic resistance against the powers of economic imperialism.
- xvi) Equipping Christians for witnessing and spreading the gospel of Jesus with loving care and service to fulfill Christian mission of evangelism.

Implication and Implementation

The following suggestions are made in order to allow for effective implementation of the guidelines.

- viii) ATESEA accreditation criteria (notation) be revised to incorporate the above requirements.
- ix) AESEA member schools and SEAGST should reflect the spirit of the above guidelines in their curriculum, ways of teaching and training programs.
- x) Adopt an inter-disciplinary approach and avoid the departmental approach in teaching of theology in ATESEA theological schools.
- xi) Ongoing faculty development should be given due consideration in developing expertise in the concerned areas mentioned in the guidelines,
- xii) Ensure proper resourcing is done in libraries to enable meaningful academic research, reflection and articulation on current and relevant issues.
- xiii) AJT/ATESEA Publications should be encouraged to take the above guidelines into consideration and reflect the spirit of the same guidelines in their publications.
- xiv) Efficient efforts must be undertaken so that ATESEA member schools and Asian theologians take the ideals of the guidelines seriously in theological education, reflection and construction.

¹⁶⁰ Report on Rethinking Critical Asian Principle, Eastern Indonesia Area,

CURRICULUM ON DISABILITY DISCOURSE¹⁶¹

(A) A Special Course on Disability for B.D. Degree Programme

Title of the Course: INTRODUCING DISABILITY DISCOURSE FOR THEOLOGICAL AND MINISTERIAL FORMATION

Description

This course explores new ways of embracing an inclusive understanding of the body of Christ by incorporating the experiences of disability and to introduce disability discourses in theological and ministerial formation in students and to equip them for wholistic ministry. The course will particularly focus on biblical, theological, cultural, socio-economic and practical issues involved in the ministry to, with and by the people with disabilities.

Objectives

To introduce disability discourse in theological and ministerial formation in students to equip them for wholistic ministry.

Critically analyze existing traditional values, prejudices, considerations and practices towards a reconstruction of the socio-cultural construction of the disability issues and formulate appropriate theological, pastoral and practical responses.

Explore and integrate theological, practical and pastoral issues with special references to disability concerns and directly engage in active advocacy actions in their community (addressing legal, ethical human rights, spiritual issues, etc.)

Engage in critical reflection on congregational issues through bible studies, accessibility assessment, liturgical worship, sermons, training and advocacy of leadership and full inclusion of persons with disabilities.

Critically assess the traditional understanding of God and particularly explore what it means to be in the image and likeness of God and yet having a disability.

Duration: 50 class hours (4 Credit)

Suggested Methodology

Field trips, mentoring, verbatim in field work, lectures by resource persons, learning by living with persons with disabilities, case studies, role-playing, class discussions, audio-video aids. Emphasis will be given to the role and place of persons with disabilities in the church and the community at large for the realization of genuine inclusiveness.

Course Outline

The course will be divided into five parts including an introduction, four major sections, and a practical dimensions or a project.

1. Introduction to Disability Discourse

Introduction to disability concerns: definitions of terms, clarification of concepts, appropriate language, types of disability, practical difficulties, hermeneutics, miracles, healing and wholeness, etc.

¹⁶¹ The participants of the International Workshop on “Disability Discourse for Theological Colleges” held from May 22-28, 2006 at Bangalore developed these two courses on Disability for the colleges and seminaries under the Senate of Serampore College (University).

Attitudes towards persons with disabilities in the Indian society
History of the disability movements

2. Disability: Theological Considerations

Critique of existing theologies from the perspective of persons with disabilities

Reinterpretation of traditional metaphors and concepts of God.

The doctrine of creation; the sovereign and perfect God and the imperfect creation; commonality and differences; made in the image and likeness of God; God and justice.

Biblical (with special reference to Jesus' teaching) and Theological views of disability; sin and suffering; body and soul; disability and wholeness.

Belonging and the body of Christ; death, resurrection and eschatology.

3. Disability: Pastoral and Ministerial Considerations

People with disabilities as members of the family of God; their gifts and role/place.

Exploring biblical and cultural views of healing, hospitality and integration.

Contemporary responses to the person living with disability in the church ministry.

Building awareness among congregations.

Role of the church in making appropriate facilities available to persons with disabilities.

Pastoral ministry and responsibility to persons with disabilities and their family members in congregational life, ministry and practice.

Persons with disabilities and positive insights from cultural practices.

4. Disability: Human Rights, Legal and Ethical Considerations

United Nations and rights of persons with disabilities

Constitutional provisions and rights of persons with disabilities.

Affirmative actions: opportunities and empowerment.

Participation (active involvement) and inclusiveness.

Disability and issues of poverty and empowerment.

Resources and services for persons with disabilities; church and society.

5. Projects: Practical Dimension on Human Experience of Disability

Projects based on the direct encounter, experience or narrative of persons with disabilities: NGO working with persons with disabilities.

Evaluation/Assessment: Exams, Internal assessment/project

Resources

Primary resource: persons with disabilities, members of disability advocacy groups/institutions, lawyers and activists.

Secondary resources: Recommended books in the bibliography, films, magazines, journals, etc.

(B) An Interdisciplinary Course on Disability (Team Teaching) for B.D. Degree Programme.

1. Title of the Course: INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY: DISABILITY PERSPECTIVES

2. Description

The course explores new ways of embracing an inclusive understanding of community in the contemporary pluralistic context incorporating the experiences of disability. The course will particularly focus on Biblical, theological, socio-cultural, religious and practical issues involved in the ministry to, with and by the persons with disabilities.

3. Purpose

To create awareness of and sensitivity to the issues of disability.

To explore religio-cultural resources to build an inclusive community.

To equip students for responsible engagement towards an inclusive community.

4. Duration: 50 class hours (4 credits)

5. Methodology

Biblical, theological, multi-religious, social analysis and ministerial approaches. Emphasis will be given to the role and place of persons with disabilities in the church and the society at large for the realization of genuine inclusiveness.

6. Methods

Field trips, mentoring, lectures by resource persons from different disciplines and experts, live-in experience, case studies, class discussions, films, videos, etc.

7. Learning outcomes

By the end of the course the student should be able to

Critically analyze existing traditional values, prejudices and practices in the society.

Explore and integrate Biblical, theological, socio-cultural, religious and ministerial resources with special reference to disability concerns.

Evolve a theology that is all inclusive in a pluralistic society.

Directly engage in active advocacy actions in the churches and society.

Engage the congregation on disability concerns through bible studies, accessibility assessment, liturgical worship, sermons, training and advocacy for leadership and full inclusion of persons with disabilities.

8. Course Outline

I. Introduction

A. Definition of terms: `inclusive society` and `disability`

B. Persons with disabilities in Indian Society

1. Historical Insights

a. Disability and caste

b. Disability and gender

c. Disability and poverty

d. Disability and war

e. Disability and globalization

f. Disability and religious fundamentalism and communalism

2. Identifying the Problems: Stigma and discrimination, taboos,

reincarnation, karma-samsara (rebirth), psychological issues, attitudes, sexuality, isolation, etc.

3. Church and Persons with disabilities

4. Services to the persons with disabilities: Education, employment, health, infrastructure, etc.

5. Legislations on Disability

6. Disability Rights Movements

II. Disability in the global context – A Brief Survey

UNO and Human Rights

Disability Movements:

International Disability Alliance (IDA), World Blind Union (WBU), Disabled Peoples International (DPI), International Federation of the Deaf (IFD), World Network of Psychiatric Users and Survivors (WNPU & S), World Union of Deaf and Blind (WUDB), Inclusion International (II)

NGOs: Rehabilitation International (RI), Christoffel Blinden Mission (CBM)

Ecumenical Initiatives (WCC, CCA, NCCs)

III. Contextual Experiences: Practical Dimension I

(Students are expected to engage in practical research in any of the following. All reports will be presented and discussed in the class).

Individual Case Studies

Local Churches and Disability

Social/Government Organizations and Disability

IV. Disability and Inclusive Community: Biblical and Theological Reflections

A. Hermeneutics:

Traditional understanding of persons with disabilities

Re-reading of the Bible from the perspective of persons with disabilities

B. God and Creation

The doctrine of creation; the sovereign and perfect God and the imperfect creation; commonalities and differences; implications of “being made in the image and likeness of God”; God and justice

C. Sin and Salvation

Biblical and theological views of disability; pre-destination and disability; sin and suffering; body and soul; disability and wholeness; healing and curing.

D. Ecclesiology

Belonging to the Body of Christ; a church of all and for all

E. Reinterpreting Eschatology

Death, resurrection and eternal life

V. Disability and Inclusive Community: Pastoral and Ministerial Considerations

A. Recognizing persons with disabilities as members of the family of God and full participant members of the church; respecting and utilizing their gifts; giving expressions to practical implications of healing, hospitality and integration.

B. The role of the church in making appropriate infrastructure accessible.

C. Expressing solidarity by supporting the families of persons with disabilities.

D. Engage the church in building inclusive community in the society.

VI. Action Plans Toward Inclusive Community: Practical Dimension II

Students need to be encouraged to develop ministerial commitment in relation to persons with disabilities and to plan programmes and strategies for building inclusive communities. They should be encouraged to try out their programmes and strategies practically. This segment of the curriculum may be integrated with the field education programme of theological institutions.

VII. Evaluation/Assessment

Assignments, fieldwork, and examination

RESOURCES

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DECLARATION
Of the International Consultation on
“Doing Theology from Disability Perspective”
Manila, 22-27 May, 2007

We, the participants in the International Consultation on “Doing Theology from Disability Perspective”—composed of women and men, clergy and laity, persons with disabilities and people with no apparent disability, family members, as well as representatives of ETE-CCA/WCC, EDAN-WCC, AFUB, and ATESEA¹⁶²—have gathered in Manila, Philippines, on May 22-27, 2007, to heed the call of God to greater participation of persons with disabilities in the life of God’s community, to continue our celebration of our diversity as God’s creation in which every human person is created in the image of God, to share our experiences as God’s workers in our respective contexts, and to offer our reflections on how to make our world more consistent with how God has always intended it to be—a place that teems with justice and grace and love.

We thank ETE-CCA/WCC, EDAN and ATESEA for their common commitment to make a long-term impact on the life of church and society, as well as their continuing sponsorship of a series of consultations on Doing Theology from Disability Perspective, which began in Limuru, Kenya (2004) and followed by similar events in Bangalore, India (2006) and Suva, Fiji (2006). We join in solidarity with ETE-CCA/WCC, EDAN and ATESEA in their common quest to develop a resource book on the theology of disability for theological students and church leaders worldwide, more specifically from Asian perspective.

We affirm our common identity as children of God. We find fulfillment in our continued connectedness to our Creator and to everyone in this creation. We celebrate the many gifts with which God has endowed us and confess that we have not always used those gifts to nurture each other, build communities, restore shattered relationships, and heal hurting lives.

We celebrate the many concrete measures taken by the international community, certain governments, the church, non-governmental organizations, theological institutions, communities, and individuals in Asia which promote the dignity and rights of people with disabilities. We affirm the United Nations’ *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, adopted by the General Assembly in 2006.

We loudly lament the failure of the church to provide meaningful involvement of persons with disabilities in its various manifestations. We strongly deplore the marked indifference with which certain governments, community, and church groups continue to respond to the plight of PWDs.

We recognize that our work as persons with disabilities, caregivers, educators, community animators, church workers and ministers, theologians, advocates, and concerned citizens is not finished; on the contrary, it should intensify towards the establishment of an inclusive, affirming, and empowering global society. Toward this end, we call upon:

Churches

To use the WCC’s interim theological statement, “A Church of All and For All” for discussion, education, and reflection;

¹⁶² For the meaning of acronyms used in this document, please turn to the last page.

To carry out a program of pastoral care and counseling that helps those who seek care to address systems that disempower and victimize; and

To proactively involve PWDs in all aspects of church life.

Ecumenical Coalitions (WCC, EDAN, CCA, AENPWD, and ATESEA, and Other Theological Networks and National Councils of Churches)

To continue facilitating the holding of local, regional, and international dialogues, conferences, and consultations that address the many issues affecting PWDs.

ATESEA and Theological Institutions

To adopt and implement policies towards full accessibility of their learning environments;

To enhance opportunities for participatory learning;

To ensure the acquisition of practical ministerial skills for all and their students;

To sharpen the missiological focus of theological education from disability perspective; and

To revisit employment policies and practices for faculty and staff as well as admission policies and practices for students to ensure that no one is discriminated on the basis of disability.

PWDs and Their Organizations

To intensify their initiatives in the development of high-quality resources for self-learning, self motivation and public education;

To continue developing networks and partnerships that will strengthen their advocacy agenda; and

To continue chronicling their positive experiences and best practice models.

Governments

To sign and ratify the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, as well as promulgate local legislation and policies to implement the provisions of the Convention.

To include in the basic curricula of their educational institutions at least a module on the positive image of PWDs as well as the challenges of empowering PWDs. We further enjoin government, business and industry to intensify efforts to provide meaningful employment for persons with disabilities; and

It is our unequivocal position that in all our plans and actions, PWDs should play a critical leadership role.

In all, and through all, these endeavors, may God be praised and lifted up!

ACRONYMS

AFUB	African Union of the Blind
ATESEA	Association for Theological Education in Southeast Asia
EDAN	Ecumenical Disability Advocacy Network
ETE-CCA/WCC	Ecumenical Theological Education-Conferences of Churches in Asia and World Council of Churches
AENPWD	Asia Ecumenical Network of Persons with Disabilities

**EEF – COMMISSION 27TH-30TH JUNE 2007
RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING ETE**

Excerpt from the Report of the EEF Commission Meeting regarding priorities for the future of ETE/WCC

“10 Ecumenical Theological Education

10.1 The Commission noted the ETE programme’s long history, 2008 being its Golden Jubilee; ETE’s fundamental and strategic importance for the ecumenical movement should not be neglected. Therefore it made the following recommendations to the General Secretary:

- a) Renew or continue the appointment and/or joint working contract for the three regional consultants, namely Latin American/Caribbean, Asia/Pacific and Central/Eastern Europe;
- b) Appoint consultants for Africa and Middle East.

10.2 In the same spirit the Commission recommended to the Director:

- a) To cooperate with experts in regions of North America and Western Europe where no regional consultants had so far been appointed but appropriate people could easily be identified in existing networks and institutions of theological education.
- b) To prioritise the growth of lay theological education, with special focus on youth and women.

10.3 More generally the Commission identified the need for staff to be aware of the following:

a) General Objectives

- to continue support for faculty development programmes and to facilitate accreditation mechanism regionally and worldwide;
- to continue and broaden library development programmes regionally and worldwide;
- to deepen, inspire and nurture contextualization of theological education, theological curricula and theologies;
- to explore and to promote international fundraising for theological education regionally and globally;
- to strengthen ecumenical networks and ecumenically owned institutions of theological education;
- to organize interregional exchanges between theological students, educators and professors;
- to facilitate inter-contextual exchanges between various associations of theological schools and research networks in missiology, ecumenism and antireligious dialogue;
- to continue schemes of empowerment for women, indigenous people and people with disabilities in theological education; and
- to strengthen the ecumenical theological education of the laity.

b) Key Themes

- to explore possible common grounds and build living bridges with leading networks from evangelical and Pentecostal/charismatic institutions of theological education worldwide;
- to maintain HIV/AIDS and persons with disabilities curriculum as key components for theological educators and for curriculum revision worldwide;
- to include peace education as a key component for theological formation (in the light of the Churches Peace Convocation 2011);
- to promote hope-generating engagement with marginalized women, indigenous people, children, persons with disabilities, migrant workers, etc.;

- to generate new theological thinking on the issues of poverty, wealth creation, adverse effects of economic globalisation, environmental sustainability, migrant issues, etc.;
 - to focus on international aspects for the future of fundraising for theological education and financial viability for theological institutions worldwide;
 - re-rooting theological education in a broad and ecumenical understanding of the mission of the church (as part of the Edinburgh 2010 process);
 - exploring and deepening new models of theological education (TEE, distant learning courses, internet-based systems of theological training and education, open university-systems);
 - deepening strategic partnerships with existing ecumenical theology networks (like IAMS, networks of religious educators);
 - exploring more deeply the interconnection between theological formation schemes, lay formation and religious education;
 - developing new pedagogy and a holistic approach to theological education, including arts, music, drama and visual symbols;
 - developing an interregional, inter-religious, inter-cultural exchange of models for spiritual formation and nurturing of future ministers;
 - bringing together key models of theological education on interfaith issues from different contexts, particularly on Christian-Muslim relations worldwide.
- c) Project suggestions
- compiling concise analytical surveys on the actual situation, contemporary challenges, shortcomings and major trends in ecumenical theological education for the six different world regions to be presented as part of the Edinburgh 2010 process (to be worked out based on the insights of regional consultants and additional experts);
 - to initiate and to be part of the Edinburgh 2010 process by contributing to number six area/theme on the list of proposed major study processes leading towards Edinburgh 2010 (the future of ecumenical theological education worldwide);
 - to work out a major new reference document on the understanding of ecumenical theological education in the 21st century (Charta Oecumenica on Theological Education in the 21st century) to be made available for the Edinburgh 2010 process as well as beyond for the forthcoming world missions conference;
 - to highlight the 50th anniversary of the founding of TEF, the predecessor of ETE, in the year 2008 and to mark it by a major conference and/or publication;
 - to look again at the common understanding and implications of ecumenical theological education between the Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, and the WCC (reference to the former common document);
 - to gather and disseminate the promising examples for a successful integration Pentecostal traditions and themes into ecumenical settings of theological education;
 - to explore new models of transparent and accountable (not one-sided) partnership between institutions of theological education in different contexts.”



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Geneva, 15 May 2007

An Invitation To Theological Schools and Seminaries

Glory to God and Peace on Earth

International Ecumenical Peace Convocation

WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES



May 4-11 2011

Dear Colleagues,

You may be familiar with the decision of the General Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Porto Alegre (2006) to organize an *International Ecumenical Peace Convocation* (IEPC) that would mark the closing of the Decade to Overcome Violence and initiate further work in this field. According to our present plans this Convocation will take place in the early months of 2011.

The Porto Alegre Assembly also decided to elaborate an *Ecumenical Declaration on Just Peace* to be agreed upon by the Peace Convocation.

As we begin our work for such a Peace Declaration we are determined to involve Christian people at all levels of the Churches' life. Therefore, we have the pleasure of inviting you to join us in this process by organizing a seminar with your students on the following question:

IF WE WERE TO WRITE AN ECUMENICAL DECLARATION ON JUST PEACE, WHAT WOULD WE PUT INTO IT?

This question opens up a variety of productive options:

1. It would enable students to gain some clarity about their own concepts of peace as it relates to justice, reconciliation, or healing, to study the relevant Biblical texts and influential concepts in the Christian tradition. It would challenge them to identify practical approaches and consequences.
2. While you and your students would approach this theme from specific angles, you would at the same time be engaged in an effort of formulating a joint statement and to deal with the specific difficulties that are part of such an effort. But this would give them an impression of the hermeneutical problems that present themselves in ecumenical settings.
3. Although such a seminar would be a relevant academic project in its own right it would provide you and your student group with the opportunity of becoming part of a world-wide ecumenical network. We would provide a website to facilitate exchange between all the student groups involved. If we can get the financial resources we plan to organize an international conference to which you and some of your students would be invited in order to deepen and expand the discussions.

4. There are many approaches you may suggest for such a seminar—from theoretical analysis to discussing the practical implications of a Peace Declaration:

- As a **Biblical scholar** you may lead your students in researching the scriptural sources and their theological problems.
- As a **systematic theologian or ethicist** you may invite your students to study christological problems or to enter into the debates on just war and just peace, the heritage of peace churches, the legacy of non-violence, to mention but a few examples.
- As an **instructor of pastoral counseling** you may ask your students to explore the question in light of real-life problems of violence confronted by a congregation e.g., family breakdown, abuse, youth gangs, violence in entertainment etc.
- As a **teacher of specialized ministries**, you may challenge your students to devise Bible studies, training manuals or propose peace-building action plans for use on the mission field.

All these results would contribute to the preparation of an

Ecumenical Declaration on Just Peace.

5. It would help us if you could schedule such a course or seminar during the time from fall of 2007 to summer of 2008. This would make it possible for your input to be included in the first draft of the Declaration and to coordinate an international conference of professors and students during the remainder of 2008 or early 2009. However, this time frame should not refrain you from entering into this process at a later stage if this was more convenient for your academic working schedule.

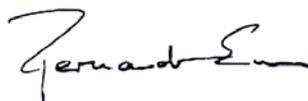
Please let us know at your earliest possible convenience if you can be part of this exciting endeavor by contacting Reverend Dr. Geiko Müller-Fahrenholz by email: gmf@wcc-coe.org (with copy to : dov@wcc-coe.org or by phone: +41 22 791 6106.

We are looking forward to hearing from you soon!

With sincere greetings,



Reverend Dr. Samuel Kobia
General Secretary



Prof. Dr. Fernando Enns,
Moderator of DOV
Reference Group



Reverend Dr. Geiko
Müller-Fahrenholz,
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