

WOCATI NEWS

The Newsletter of the World Conference of Associations of Theological Institutions

WOCATI PREAMBLE

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

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

WOCATI PURPOSES



Executive Committee members are (from left) Jaci Maraschin (ASTE, Brazil), Teresia Hinga (ATIEA, Kenya), Barbara Brown Zikmund (ATS, USA), Yeow Choo-Lak (ATESEA, Singapore), Diane Jagdeo (CATS, West Indies), and Ian Williams (ANZATS, Australia). Missing from the photo is Heather Walton (ACATE, UK).

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

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

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

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

By cultivating a broad and informed understanding of theological education;

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

By interacting with other appropriate agencies and groups;

To provide services to member associations in the following ways:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



A business friend loves to say: “Success is never ending and failure never final. Getting it wrong is part of getting it right.” Smart guy, that one. His maxim may be true in the corporate world, but I personally believe that in the world of theology we have less room for mistake(s). To his words of wisdom, I would like to add: “Why get it wrong in the first place?”

Getting it right from the very beginning will avoid a disaster that can be expressed in: “Our greatest progress is in the field of backwardness and the true enemy is our incompetence.” —John leCarre

In our work, it does not hurt us to avoid the *tidak apa* (can’t care less) attitude where little sense of urgency and none of

responsibility prevails. Among other things, the *tidak apa* attitude causes us to have hope in our face and nothing in our heart. It may even make us call our cowardice duty and our weakness sacrifice, a tendency Christians do well to avoid like a plague.

I firmly believe that doing theology in all its grandeur and excitement comes about when we avoid bottle-necking in both our management and thinking. Good management creates space for innovative thinking. Further to the above and pursuant to it and consequent upon it, clear thinking has unexpected resources of creativity which sound management is able to turn on like a flood when they are needed. In brief, in our work it is our joy and challenge to develop, strengthen, and enhance the capacity of people to realise their full potentiality. Let this work continue uninterrupted!

*Yeow Choo-Lak, WOCATI President
Singapore*



Twenty-six delegates from sixteen member associations gathered for the first World Congress in June 1992.

REPORT OF THE FIRST WORLD CONGRESS

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

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

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

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

(c) The contributions of women to theological education. Congress acknowledged that theological education must take far more seriously the contributions and perspectives of women.

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

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

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

The Congress elected a new executive committee with Dr. Yeow Choo Lak as President. It charged the executive committee with the responsibility of furthering the aims and purposes of WOCATI in a number of ways, as outlined elsewhere in this newsletter. It also resolved that the next World Congress would be held in 1996.

*Ian S. Williams
Australia*

LITANY OF FELLOWSHIP

This litany opened the first World Congress of WOCATI at our meeting in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania as a convenantal statement which the representatives affirmed in unison.

By our presence this fifteenth day of June 1992, we affirm: and confirmation of God's Spirit. Amen.

That we have been called as theological educators not to a life of privilege but of service;

That we serve by our study, our reflection, and our scholarship that the faith and witness of the church may be informed, nurtured, and sustained;

That in our teaching, we live that others may be endowed and enabled to minister in God's kingdom throughout the world;

That we who are charged with the high offices and guardians of institutions that in faithfulness are instruments of God's grace and work by which their earthly natures are transformed;

That in our learning and teaching we are accountable to the written and living Word of God and to the teachings by which the Church of Jesus Christ is nurtured from generation to generation;

That faithfulness to our calling binds us to one another to preserve fully the witness of the past and to recapitulate this sacred heritage by addressing the world as we encounter it in our individual ways, circumstances, traditions, and language;

That in our diversity we are led to seek with our colleagues of differing tongues and traditions the unity of faith, shared convictions, guiding purposes, and informed insights in order that our learning may be increased, our teaching empowered, and our witness confirmed;

That in concert with our colleagues throughout the world, we will strive to discover new ways to raise up future generations whom God calls to lead people of faith throughout the world, to minister to the world by word and deed, to be stewards of the earth, sky, and sea, and to be heralds of reconciliation, peace, and justice throughout all God's creation;

That we acknowledge that this fellowship of mutual endeavor, respect, and common calling is itself a mission that claims us, a challenge that inspires us, and a hope that guides us;

That we gather in this place and at this time to broaden our horizons, increase our understanding, and be confirmed in our vocation as we embrace brothers and sisters from throughout the world as joint heirs of our calling and co-workers in a shared vineyard, and in so doing seek constantly the guidance

RECORD OF MEMBERSHIP DUES AS OF DECEMBER 31, 1992

| Association Name | Year Paid Up To | Year(s) Outstanding |
|------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| 1. ATS | 1992 | 1993 |
| 2. ATIEA | - | 1991-1993 |
| 3. ANZATS | 1992 | 1993 |
| 4. ATESEA | 1993 | - |
| 5. ACATE | 1992 | 1993 |
| 6. BTESSC | - | 1991-1993 |
| 7. NEAATS | - | 1991-1993 |
| 8. PTCA | 1993 | - |
| 9. ASIT | - | 1991-1993 |
| 10. ATISCA | 1991 | 1992-1993 |
| 11. ASTHEOLO- | | 1991-1993 |
| 12. CATI | - | 1991-1993 |
| 13. CATS | 1991 | 1992-1993 |
| 14. SPATS | - | 1991-1993 |
| 15. ASTE | - | 1991-1993 |
| 16. ATIME | - | 1991-1993 |
| 17. PERSETIA | - | 1991-1993 |
| 18. MATS | 1992 | 1993 |
| 19. WAATI | - | 1991-1993 |

Explanation of membership fees as stated in the WOCATI Bylaws: "The full membership fee shall consist of a sustaining fee of 100 US dollars plus an amount equivalent to one per cent of the operating budget of the association up to a maximum of 5,000 US dollars annually. The affiliate membership fee shall be 1,000 US dollars annually." Dues payments should be mailed to: WOCATI, 10 Summit Park Drive, Pittsburgh, PA 15275-1103, USA, Attention: Esther Brown.

CONTEXTUALIZATION FROM A WORLD PERSPECTIVE

By Robert J. Schreiter

Professor, Catholic Theological Union, Chicago, Illinois, USA

A speech was delivered by Robert J. Schreiter on the occasion of the 38th Biennial Meeting of The Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada (ATS) and the Congress of the World Conference of Associations of Theological Institutions (WOCATI). Lack of space does not allow us to print the entire address. What follows presents the main points in the first two thirds of the address, combined with the complete text of the last sections of the address.

Summary

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

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

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

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

4. Contextualization is coming about more slowly than globalization. Why? Because the legacy of colonialism is still very strong. The power of the global media culture is pervasive. The North resists contextualization because it is felt to be a rejection of Northern values. The North resists contextualization because it simply does not like to do things differently.

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

Globalization: The Long View

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

results were a new definition of globalization as ecumenical cooperation, interreligious dialogue, and the struggle for justice.

These were all couched in the optimistic universality of the 1960's that the world's problems could be overcome. The tension between mission and these latter three went largely unresolved, and for many there was a clear divide between mission, on the one hand, and ecumenism, dialogue and justice on the other. Many, however, struggled to create a new synthesis. Globalization came to embrace all four by the 1980's.

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

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

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

Its mode of *universality* is the new *global culture*, characterized by American cola drinks, athletic and casual clothing, and American movie and television entertainment. It is a culture sent virtually everywhere, but received in considerably different fashions. For example, "Dynasty" is watched differently in Lagos than in Los Angeles; studies have shown that Canadians see the resolutions of disputes in "All in the Family" differently from the Dutch (Archie tends to be the winner in Canada, while Edith, Gloria and Meathead triumph in the Netherlands). The universality is both real and unreal at the same time. It is real inasmuch as it is found everywhere; it is unreal in that what it signifies means different things in the reception of the local culture.

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

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

Globalization in this third phase, then, becomes a quest for the bridges between the global and the local. The global has changed; its economic face appears to be even less benign than in the recent past. This has prompted new expressions of the local—the eruptions in Central Asia and in Eastern Europe, the resurgence of native pride in the Americas, but also the rootlessness of much of affluent North America and Western Europe. How shall the global and the local be configured to one another, within communities and across continents? How shall prophetic challenge be maintained? If the hypothesis about the yoking together of the global and the local suggested above is correct, this could well be the shape that globalization will take in the ensuing period, even as we struggle to integrate the understandings of the first and second phase.

Implications for Theological Education

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

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

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

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

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

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

Certain biblical images have often undergirded, at least implicitly, our understandings of globalization. In the first phase, it was undoubtedly the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19-20. In the second phase, Luke may have

provided the key: Luke 4:16-20, in the call to solidarity and justice; Luke 24:13-15, in the call to accompaniment.

The Scripture for this third phase may well be Ephesians 2:12-14; “[r]emember you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in this world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us.”

Notes

[1] See the collection by Wade Clark Roof, *World Order and Religion* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1991).

[2] Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the World-Capitalist Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (New York: Academic Press, 1974) 2 vols.

[3] For a good history of this development of understandings of the “other” encountered, see Bernard McGrane, *Beyond Anthropology: Society and the Other* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989).

[4] For a general description of this new form of global capitalism, see Robert B. Reich, *The Work of Nations: Preparing Ourselves for 21st Century Capitalism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991); for a critique of the relation between the liberal-industrial and global capitalism, see David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989).

[5] I have explored these themes of reconciliation more fully in *Reconciliation: Mission and Ministry in a Changing Social Order* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992).

WOCATI News

is published by

The World Conference of Associations
of Theological Institutions

10 Summit Park Drive
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15275-1103, USA

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WOMEN IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

by Maryanne Confoy, Yarra Theological Union, Victoria, Australia
 Australian New Zealand Association of Theological Schools (ANZATS)

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

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

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

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

While men describe the spiritual life in terms of the “quest for the Grail,” with all the individuality of such a personal quest as a consequence, women are meeting in groups, such as that of the African women, addressing issues related to bonding in

community. The relational aspects of the faith experience are of greater significance to women than the achievements of the individual. The group is the focus of consideration rather than one's own personalised efforts and accomplishments. Women are listening with attentiveness to each other, and the bonding goes beyond boundaries and ideological differences to deeper areas of woman's consciousness.

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

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

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

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

As women and men become more sensitised to their attitudes to those who are “other” they become more fully human. Women have been “other” in a male-normative culture which has been oppressive to women as other, but also to those men who did not fit the norm as prescribed by their culture. The gift of women to the endeavour to become more fully human, more fully “alive in Christ” is in raising people’s awareness to inner prejudices and bias for whatever cause: sex, race, age, social status, or lifestyle. A Christian theology which arises out of this heightened sensitivity will be more authentically incarnational. The reduction of theology to a system of thought which maintains an oppressive status quo has hindered the Christian churches for far too long. Exclusiveness and elitism within Christianity are always an aberration.

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

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

PRAYER FOR WOMEN OFFERED AT CONGRESS 1992

Good and gracious God, we offer thanksgiving for women in the life and tradition of the churches.

We remember the women at the foot of the cross and at the Easter tomb.

We are thankful that they did not flee with the other disciples, that they came to care for Jesus without knowing who would roll the stone away.

We remember the women in the early church who spoke up when it was not expected of women.

We are thankful that they refused to remain silent, that they reminded the young church that there is neither slave nor free, male nor female—but that all are one in Christ Jesus.

We remember the women who founded religious orders to enable women to serve and pray in the church unlimited by male powers and rules.

We are thankful that they found their way to teach and heal the young and the poor in need of your grace. We will never know all that they have done—but we rest in the fact that your wisdom guides and sustains faithful living.

We remember the women who have challenged authorities and principalities in the name of your Holy Spirit.

We are thankful for their courage even when they were burned at the stake, tortured as witches and otherwise discounted by those who feared their wisdom.

We remember the women who enroll in formal educational programs where they are not welcomed.

We are thankful that these women call us to
 redefine theological education
 to expand old patterns with the rich stories
 of women
 to change past practices with the methods
 of women
 to explore the possibility that you, our
 God, *are* doing a new thing.

Thank you God

-open us to grow and lead your institutions and associations in new paths
 -remind us that we dare not rest until all of your servants, your young men and your young women, can see visions and prophesy in your name.

Praise be to you our God. Amen.

Barbara Brown Zikmund, USA

NEW WOCATI EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETS IN SWITZERLAND

The newly elected Executive Committee met November 27-29, 1992 at Chateau de Bossey, Switzerland. The members present were: Yeow Choo-Lak, President (Singapore); Jaci Maraschin, Vice President (Brazil); Barbara Brown Zikmund, Secretary-Treasurer (USA); and at large members Teresia Hinga (Kenya), Diane Jagdeo (Trinidad), Ian Williams (Australia). Heather Walton (UK) was unable to attend. Consultants from the WCC unit on Ecumenical Theological Education (Jacques Nicole and John Pobee) were present for some sessions.

The Committee evaluated the CONGRESS 1992 (Pittsburgh), clarifying the use of the words "conference" and "congress." The organization WOCATI is called a "conference." It is an association of associations. However, when WOCATI convenes representatives of the associations in a meeting every four years, that gathering is called a "congress."

CONGRESS 1996

The Committee has determined that CONGRESS 1996 will be held in Nairobi, Kenya. Efforts will be made to prepare and circulate working papers to all member associations well before CONGRESS 1996 so that delegates will be able to come to CONGRESS 1996 representing the opinions, concerns and decisions of their associations.

Limited funds will make it difficult for all of the proposed committees of WOCATI to meet before 1996. Therefore, it was agreed that the Executive Committee will play a very direct role in the preparation of four "working papers" dealing with issues originally assigned to committees. The schedule and assignments are as follows:

1. Nov 1992 - January 1994 Preparation

| | |
|-----------|---|
| Maraschin | Academic credentials |
| Hinga | Women in theological education |
| Jagdeo | Influence of cultures on theological education |
| Williams | Scholarship and research in theological education |

Different methods may be used:

- having one or two people develop papers, or write parts of a larger paper.
- asking one or two associations to work on the issue (this might involve visiting the association in person).
- using the contact with other associations to promote membership and ownership of WOCATI.

- involving coordination with ETE and its consultations/work.
 - taking a particular case and writing it up to illustrate the issue.
2. December 1993
Draft documents sent to the secretary-treasurer
 3. April 1994 an expanded Executive Committee meets for a week with working groups:
 - to refine/rewrite the papers with representatives from member associations (approx. 8-10 additional people).
 - to do preliminary planning for the CONGRESS 1996 decide on how formal invitations will be extended and request that member associations select delegates to participate in the discussion process.

Not all associations will have representatives on the working groups, but all associations will be contacted in the process. All associations will be invited to contribute ideas through the newsletter. During the plenary sessions in April 1994 all members of the working groups will have opportunity to comment on all of the papers, not merely on the one on which s/he is working. If all of the suggested persons participate in the April 1994 meeting there will be 9 women (including the secretary-treasurer who does not serve on any particular group) and 11 men (assuming that the unnamed representatives are male). Working group members were selected from the nominations sent in by associations. Associations which did not submit names are not as well represented on the working groups.

4. June - July 1994 final preparation of all four papers and printing of the "discussion document."
5. August 1994 - June 1996 the "discussion document" is circulated to the member associations. Delegates anticipating attending CONGRESS 1996 collect responses from individuals, institutions and associations.
6. June/July 1995 Executive Committee meets for three days to do more detailed planning of CONGRESS 1996.
7. June 29 - July 4, 1996 CONGRESS 1996 meets in Nairobi, Kenya with the theme "Partnership in Theological Education."

WOCATI Administration

The Executive Committee discussed the administration of WOCATI and its relationship to ATS. It was concluded that there is no immediate need for an Executive Secretary, or for special office space in Pittsburgh. The elected secretary-treasurer, who is from ATS, can get needed support through ATS office staff and volunteers. It was agreed, however, that because of this important relationship to ATS, Jim Waits, Executive Director of ATS, should attend WOCATI Executive Committee meetings as an Advisor.

It was agreed that the Executive Committee meetings will involve:

- Three officers and four members at large.
- Three representative “consultants”
 - 1) from WCC - Ecumenical Theological Education.
 - 2) from the Vatican/Roman Catholic theological education office.
 - 3) from ICAA.
- Two “advisors”
 - 1) James Waits (to assist WOCATI in relation to financial resources).
 - 2) Petros Vassiliadis (to assist WOCATI in its relationships to Orthodox theological education).

It is understood that WOCATI will pay the expenses for the attendance of the ICAA representative and the Orthodox advisor. All others will come to the meetings at their own expense, unless arrangements for expenses are negotiated with the secretary-treasurer before the meeting. Members of the working groups asked to come to the April 1994 meetings will have their expenses covered by WOCATI.

It was agreed that only the names of the Executive Committee will appear on the stationery. The official mailing address of WOCATI will be the home association of the secretary-treasurer. In this case it will be 10 Summit Drive, Pittsburgh, PA 15275-1103 USA.

Finances

The Executive Committee recognizes that the future of WOCATI can never be self-supporting through dues. The Executive Committee further recognizes that more diversified funding sources (beyond the USA) need to be found to ensure the existence of WOCATI after CONGRESS 1996. Therefore a small Financial Resources Committee was created to oversee the development of funding for WOCATI. Two types of funding will be sought: (1) ongoing WOCATI maintenance funding, and (2) special travel funding to get specific individu-

als or association representatives to meetings. Strategic planning will be done to approach the appropriate sources for both types of funding. At present grants to WOCATI from the Lilly Endowment Inc., the Luce Foundation and The Pew Charitable Trusts provide adequate funding through 1996.

It was agreed that WOCATI will open a Citibank account in New York, NY (USA). Many major banks throughout the world can transfer funds into and out of such accounts. This account will serve as a clearinghouse for WOCATI, receiving dues and paying reimbursements. The business officer of ATS will continue to handle daily accounts and keep the records.

WOCATI News

WOCATI will publish a newsletter once or twice a year. The editor will be the secretary-treasurer and it will be called the *WOCATI NEWS*. ATS will assist in the design, production and mailing of *WOCATI NEWS* as an in-kind contribution. WOCATI will cover direct costs (printing and mailing).

The newsletter will list the names of member associations, showing which associations have paid dues “at the time of printing.” This practice will apply subtle pressure on associations to pay dues. Where there are real currency/exchange problems, however, member associations will not be embarrassed. The entire newsletter will be printed in English. Although printing some articles in other languages might be convenient to some of the membership, it is impossible to do that without offending others. It is more equitable to print all of the newsletter in English.

The best distribution system is to mail the newsletter directly to all institutions which belong to member associations. If an association supplies WOCATI with addresses for member institutions the newsletter will be mailed directly. Otherwise bulk mail packets of 20-25 copies will be mailed to each member association for distribution regionally.

Barbara Brown Zikmund, Secretary-Treasurer, USA

NOTICE TO ASSOCIATIONS

We will be happy to mail copies of *WOCATI News* directly to each of your member institutions if you will send the addresses to: *WOCATI News*, 10 Summit Park Drive, Pittsburgh, PA 15275-1103, USA.