

# WOCATI NEWS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE WORLD CONFERENCE OF ASSOCIATIONS OF THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTIONS

## PURPOSES OF WOCATI

### The Conference is organized for the following purposes, but not limited to them:

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 among the member associations, 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, roles, 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 cooperation and coordination 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.

## WOCATI CONGRESS 1996

27 JUNE TO 3 JULY 1996

METHODIST GUEST HOUSE  
NAIROBI, KENYA



Each member association  
is entitled to send two voting delegates  
(one man and one woman)  
to the CONGRESS.

## PLEASE NOTE

This issue of *WOCATI NEWS* is devoted to the **draft** of one of the papers for study and consideration at CONGRESS 96. The paper on **theological scholarship and research** is summarized in English, Spanish, French, and Chinese, followed by the full English text.

WOCATI members are encouraged to copy this issue of the newsletter to facilitate wide discussion of the draft paper among their associations. If the paper is photocopied, proper credit should be given to WOCATI.

Member associations are also welcome to translate this and subsequent papers. If a translation is made, please send a copy to the Pittsburgh, PA, USA, office of WOCATI to facilitate its distribution and use in other parts of the world.

Delegates to CONGRESS 96 are asked to bring responses to the papers from their respective associations.

In discussion of the draft paper in this issue, please consider the following two questions:

1. **In what ways does this paper relate to your present situation?**
2. **What challenges does this paper bring to the future of theological education?**

## ABSTRACT: THEOLOGICAL SCHOLARSHIP AND RESEARCH

Theological education is being carried out all over the world. However, as theological education has become more global there is growing concern that standards for theological scholarship and research are being overly influenced by Western/Northern academic traditions which are heavily organized into specialized disciplines.

This paper examines the usefulness of the term “globalization.” Within North America, globalization rightly challenges particular theologies and methods that claim to be universal. However, the paper insists that globalization and contextualization should not be placed in opposition to each other. The paper suggests that theological scholarship and research need to seek “a coherent, ecumenical, global perspective.” Coherence is important in that it expresses the authenticity and distinctiveness of different contextual theologies, as well as the need to bring these contextual theologies into interrelationship with others. The concept of dialogue is explored and the question of where the locus of Christian faith resides is also addressed.

### Excellence of Theological Scholarship

The first section of the paper examines understandings of excellence in theological scholarship, using Robert Schreiter’s suggestion that there are four forms of theological expression throughout the world: theology as variations on a sacred text, theology as wisdom, theology as sure knowledge, and theology as *praxis*. Contextualization enables theology to open church tradition to local realities. Globalization enables theology to explore existing unities.

The paper suggests that scholarship involves various methodologies beyond those normally associated with writing and research completed within a university context. It argues that greater attention must be given to critical inquiry, especially as theological scholarship draws upon traditional partner disciplines of philosophy, history, and literary and textual studies, and more recent fields of psychology, sociology, and hermeneutics. It also suggests that the disciplines of political science and economics are increasingly important.

Excellence in the theological scholarship must also explore new partnerships with the whole people of God. This means recognition that Christian theology is influenced by people of other faiths and by peoples who have been forgotten and ignored by dominant cultures.

### Essential Components in Contemporary Theological Scholarship and Research

Building upon an understanding that theological scholarship and research must come from a coherent, ecumenical, global perspective, the paper outlines four essential components for quality theological scholarship and research:

Quality theological scholarship and research is deeply connected to particular cultural contexts. The starting point of theological scholarship and research is no longer the common Christian core of doctrine but the experience of the people of God in a given context. For this reason it needs to be carried out in the indigenous languages of the people, and great care must be taken when indigenous languages are translated into Western languages.

Quality theological scholarship and research requires that dialogue be an essential component, exploring the relationship between dialogue and contextualization, dialogue and theological education, and dialogue and contextual theologies. It is hoped that WOCATI will provide an important forum enabling theological scholarship and research to go beyond what is held in common to encourage new dynamic forms of interaction for our mutual enrichment.

Quality theological scholarship and research must move beyond understandings of unity that perpetuate forms of domination that endanger the autonomy of various contextual theologies, while at the same time centering on the unity of the church received as a gift from God.

Quality theological scholarship and research will use critical inquiry to sustain excellence; evaluating sources, remaining accountable to contexts, and using dialogue effectively to expand critical inquiry beyond the rational and historical forms that dominate most Northern theologies. It will recognize that there are ways of knowing that are outside of the commonly accepted forms of critical understanding (intuitive, artistic, and emotive). This awareness leads to a *scholarship of praxis*, incorporating the nonrational elements of understanding, and the goal of personal and social transformation which is at the heart of the Christian message.

### The Emerging Relationship between Theological Scholarship and Ministerial Formation: Ongoing Questions

Is ministerial formation a by-product of the theological scholarship and research, or do our efforts to shape ministry define excellence in theological scholarship?

How does liturgy overcome the break-down between scholarship and the church caused by the fragmentation of theology into autonomous disciplines?

If contextual theology requires active engagement with concrete situations in particular societies, should this lead to a greater involvement of ministerial students in the socio-political life of their society?

### Emerging Issues to be Addressed by Theological Scholarship and Research

Human rights, especially the rights of women.

Economies of countries *vis-a-vis* the Divine economy, with special consideration to levels of international debt.

The growth of materialism and the consequent marginalization of religious values.

Increasing ethnic and religious conflict.

AIDS epidemic.

The spread of arms and the incidence of war.

Issues associated with the fullness and the future of human life and human communities.

The use of technology for the enhancement of theological scholarship and research especially in regard to libraries.

**English abstract by Barbara Brown Zikmund, president of Hartford Seminary, Hartford, Connecticut, USA, and Secretary-Treasurer of WOCATI.**

## ABSTRACT: EDUCACION E INVESTIGACION TEOLOGICA

La educación teológica se ha esparcido alrededor de todo el mundo. Con todo, a medida que la educación teológica se globaliza ha aumentado la preocupación porque los estándares de educación e investigación teológica resulten influenciados principalmente por la tradición académica del Norte-Occidente, la cual está organizada, en gran medida, en torno a disciplinas especializadas.

Este trabajo examina la conveniencia del término "globalización," considerando la certeza de que en Norteamérica la globalización resulta un desafío para teologías y métodos que se aclaman universales. Sin embargo, el presente ensayo insiste en que la globalización y la contextualización no deben situarse una en oposición a la otra. Se sugiere que la educación y la investigación teológica necesitan buscar "una perspectiva coherente global ecuménica." La coherencia es importante porque expresa la autenticidad y la especificidad de contextos teológicos distintos, así como la necesidad de llevar estos contextos teológicos a interrelacionarse con otros. Se explora también el concepto de diálogo y se plantea la pregunta de en dónde reside el *locus* de la fe cristiana.

### Excelencia en educación teológica

La primera sección del trabajo examina presupuestos para el entendimiento de la excelencia en educación teológica. Se emplea para ello la propuesta de Robert Schreiter, la cual identifican cuatro formas de expresión teológica en el mundo: la teología como variación de un texto sagrado, la teología como sabiduría la teología como conocimiento cierto, y la teología como *praxis*. La contextualización teológica permite a la iglesia abrirse hacia las realidades locales. La globalización permite a la teología explorar los grupos existentes.

El trabajo sugiere que la educación teológica debe incluir una metodología cuyo alcance vaya más allá de los métodos normalmente relacionados con la conclusión de la escritura y la investigación dentro del contexto universitario. Se propone la necesidad de otorgar mayor atención a las inquisiciones críticas, especialmente, debido a que la educación teológica se deriva del modelo de las disciplinas compañeras de la filosofía, la historia, la literatura y los estudios textuales, y más recientemente, de la psicología, la sociología y la hermenéutica. Se sugiere también que las ciencias políticas y económicas aumentan cada vez en importancia.

La excelencia en educación teológica debe también explorar nuevas relaciones con todo el pueblo de Dios. Esto significa reconocer que la teología cristiana recibe la influencia de la gente de otra fe y de la gente que ha sido olvidada o ignorada por las culturas dominantes.

### Componentes esenciales de la educación y la investigación teológica contemporánea

Basándose en el entendimiento de que la educación y la investigación teológica debe provenir de una perspectiva coherente, ecuménica y global, el trabajo subraya cuatro elementos esenciales para la calidad de la educación y la investigación teológica.

La calidad de la educación y la investigación teológica está profundamente ligada a contextos culturales particulares. El punto de partida de la educación y la investigación teológica no lo constituye más un núcleo común de doctrina, sino la experiencia del pueblo de Dios en un contexto dado. Por esta razón se debe llevar a cabo en las lenguas indígenas de la gente y debe depositarse mucha atención cuando las lenguas indígenas se traducen a las lenguas occidentales.

La calidad de la educación y la investigación teológica requiere

del diálogo como componente esencial; explorando la relación entre diálogo y contextualización, diálogo y educación teológica, y diálogo y las teologías en su contexto. Se espera que el WOCATI proporcione un foro importante que posibilite a la educación y la investigación teológica ir más allá de lo compartido en común y se alienten nuevas formas dinámicas de interacción para nuestro mutuo enriquecimiento.

La calidad de la educación y la investigación teológica deben ir más allá del entendimiento de la unidad dentro de las formas perpetuas de dominación que ponen en peligro la autonomía de las teologías en sus diversos contextos, y al mismo tiempo, deben centrarse en la unidad de la iglesia recibida como un don de Dios.

La calidad de la educación y la investigación teológica deben valerse de la inquisición crítica en busca de su excelencia; evaluando las fuentes, responsabilizándose de los contextos y usando el diálogo efectivamente. Deben expandirse las inquisiciones críticas más allá de las formas racionales e históricas dominantes en la mayoría de las teologías del Norte. Esta educación debe reconocer las formas de conocimiento (intuitivas, artísticas y emotivas) que permanecen fuera de las formas comúnmente aceptadas por el entendimiento crítico. Esta toma de conciencia conduce a la *educación en la praxis*, incorporando los elementos de entendimiento no racionales al propósito de transformación personal y social, la cual es el alma del mensaje cristiano.

### La relación emergente entre educación teológica y formación ministerial: preguntas en progreso

¿Es la formación ministerial el resultado del doble producto de educación teológica e investigación? ¿O es nuestro esfuerzo por dar forma al ministerio el cual define la excelencia en la educación teológica?

¿De qué manera se sobrepone la liturgia a la ruptura entre iglesia en educación causada por la fragmentación de la teología en disciplinas autónomas?

Si la teología contextual requiere del compromiso activo con situaciones concretas en sociedades particulares, ¿deberá esto conducir a un compromiso mayor de los estudiantes de ministerio con la vida socio-política de su sociedad?

### Problemas emergentes a los que debe dirigirse la educación y la investigación teológica

Los derechos humanos, especialmente los de la mujer.

La economía de los países *vis a vis* la economía divina, con especial consideración en los niveles de la deuda externa.

El incremento del materialismo y la subsecuente marginalización de los valores religiosos.

El aumento de los conflictos étnicos y religiosos.

La epidemia del SIDA.

El armamentismo y la incidencia de la guerra.

Los problemas asociados con los satisfactores de la vida humana y las comunidades humana en el futuro.

Las perspectivas del uso de la tecnología para realzar la educación e investigación teológica, especialmente, en lo concerniente a bibliotecas.

**Spanish translation of English abstract by Diana Patricia Valencia, Graduate Fellow in Spanish, Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut, USA.**

## ABSTRACT: LE SAVOIR ET LA RECHERCHE THEOLOGIQUES

L'éducation théologique se poursuit à travers le monde entier. Cependant, l'expansion globale de l'éducation théologique s'accompagne d'un souci croissant vis-à-vis des étalons du savoir et de la recherche théologiques, qui subissent trop l'influence des traditions académiques occidentales et septentrionales, lesquelles ont fortement tendance à se répartir en disciplines spécialisées.

Cet article examine la pertinence de la notion de "globalisation." Au sein de l'Amérique du Nord, la globalisation met en cause, à juste titre, des théologies et des méthodes particulières qui revendiquent l'universalité. En insistant sur la nécessité d'éviter de mettre en opposition la globalisation et la contextualisation, nous suggérons que le savoir et la recherche théologiques doivent chercher "une perspective cohérente, oecuménique, et globale."

L'importance de la cohérence réside dans le fait qu'elle exprime l'authenticité et le caractère distinctif de diverses théologies contextuelles ainsi que la nécessité d'établir des liens réciproques entre celles-ci. L'article considère aussi bien la notion de dialogue que la question de savoir où se situe le vrai lieu de la foi chrétienne.

### L'excellence dans le savoir théologique

Dans un premier temps l'article examine des façons de concevoir l'excellence en savoir théologique, en s'appuyant sur la suggestion de Robert Schreiter selon laquelle il existe dans le monde quatre formes d'expression théologique: la théologie comme variations sur un texte sacré, la théologie comme sagesse, la théologie comme savoir certain, et la théologie comme *praxis*. La contextualisation permet à la théologie d'ouvrir la tradition ecclésiastique aux réalités sociales; la globalisation permet à la théologie d'explorer les formes d'unité existantes.

Nous suggérons que le savoir implique certaines méthodologies qui se situent au-delà de celles qui s'associent généralement à l'écriture et à la recherche pratiquées dans le cadre universitaire. L'article soutient qu'il faut s'attacher davantage à des enquêtes profondément critiques, d'autant plus que le savoir théologique puise de plus en plus dans des disciplines conjointes telles que la philosophie, l'histoire et les études littéraires et textuelles, ainsi que dans les domaines plus récemment établies de la psychologie, la sociologie et l'herméneutique. De plus, l'importance croissante des sciences politiques et économiques est à remarquer.

Un souci d'excellence dans le savoir théologique doit également s'appliquer à l'exploration de nouvelles collaborations avec tout le peuple de Dieu, ce qui exige une reconnaissance de l'influence sur la théologie chrétienne d'autres croyances et de peuples oubliés ou méconnus par les cultures dominantes.

### Les éléments essentiels du savoir et de la recherche théologiques de nos Jours

En partant de la notion que le savoir et la recherche théologiques doivent émaner d'une perspective cohérente, oecuménique, et globale, l'article esquisse quatre éléments essentiels du savoir et des recherches de haute qualité dans ce domaine:

Le savoir et la recherche théologiques de haute qualité sont profondément liés à des contextes culturels particuliers. Le point de départ du savoir et de la recherche n'est plus un noyau commun de doctrine chrétienne mais plutôt l'expérience du peuple de Dieu dans un contexte donné. C'est pourquoi il faut mener ces études dans les langues indigènes du peuple; de même, il faut exercer le plus grand soin en traduisant celles-là en langues occidentales.

Le savoir et la recherche théologiques de haute qualité exigent comme élément essentiel le dialogue, en examinant le rapport entre dialogue et contextualisation, entre dialogue et éducation théologique, entre dialogue et théologies contextuelles. On espère que le WOCATI pourra servir de tribune qui permette au savoir et à la recherche théologiques de dépasser le fonds commun pour favoriser une nouvelle dynamique d'interaction au bénéfice de tous.

Le savoir et la recherche théologiques de haute qualité doivent dépasser des conceptions d'unité favorisant des formes de domination qui menacent l'autonomie de diverses théologies contextuelles, et ils doivent en même temps se concentrer autour de l'unité de l'église reconnue comme don de Dieu.

Le savoir et la recherche théologiques de haute qualité auront recours à des enquêtes critiques pour maintenir un niveau d'excellence: en évaluant les sources, en assumant la responsabilité des contextes, en utilisant le dialogue de façon efficace pour étendre la critique jusqu'au-delà des formes rationnelles et historiques qui dominent la plupart des théologies septentrionales. Il faudra reconnaître des approches du savoir qui ne se bornent pas aux formes communément reconnues de la compréhension critique (approches intuitives, artistiques, émotionnelles). Cette conscience peut entraîner un *savoir de praxis* qui incorpore à la fois les éléments non-rationnels de la compréhension et l'objectif de transformation personnelle et sociale qui est au coeur du message chrétien.

### Le rapport émergent entre le savoir théologique et la formation du saint ministère: Questions à approfondir

La formation du saint ministère n'est-elle qu'un effet secondaire du savoir et de la recherche théologiques, ou bien est-ce que nos tentatives de définir le ministère déterminent ce que c'est que l'excellence en savoir théologique?

Comment la liturgie peut-elle surmonter la brèche ouverte entre le savoir et l'église par la fragmentation de la théologie en disciplines autonomes?

Si la théologie contextuelle exige un engagement actif dans des situations concrètes au sein de sociétés données, est-ce que les étudiants en ministère devraient par conséquent s'engager davantage dans la vie socio-politique de leurs sociétés respectives?

### Questions émergentes à étudier par le savoir et la recherche théologiques

Les "droits de l'homme," particulièrement en ce qui concerne la femme.

L'économie des nations vis-à-vis de l'économie divine, avec une attention particulière à la dette internationale.

Le matérialisme croissant et la marginalisation des valeurs religieuses qu'il entraîne.

L'intensification des conflits ethniques et religieuses.

L'épidémie du SIDA.

La prolifération des armes et l'incidence de la guerre.

Questions portant sur la plénitude et l'avenir de la vie et des communautés humaines.

Les possibilités d'appliquer la technologie, notamment dans le domaine des bibliothèques, pour mettre en valeur le savoir et la recherche théologiques.

**French translation of English abstract by Jennifer Gage, a professional translator in Providence, Rhode Island, USA.**

## 神學學術及研究

神學教員及三合文界各大書院及書院,然而當神學教員每及三合文書院,逐漸不願遵照神學學術與研究的標準,大多標準性但被由外,以才的專門課程學術傳統所影響。

為了進行「全球化」一詞的用途,全球化正挑戰三次基督福音與多哥及化的神學思想及方法,然而又強調與全球化及多式化不必處於相對的立場,又建議神學學術及研究應尋求多國與多文化,融合各學派及全球性的觀念,發音性並不重要且已表達過不同形式的複雜性和獨特性,又更表明有需要維護多國及化的神學觀念,又建議維護多國與多文化的觀念,並證明基督教信仰的決心所正。

### • 傳教的神學學術

文章的第一部份探討了傳教的神學學術,並以羅拔魯斯時及路·金及多哥及化神學的方式:神學是聖典的預見,神學是智慧,神學是預言的知識,及神學是恩賜,多式化能使神學打開福音傳統的門,並引進大量的資訊,全球化能使神學每探討現實的合一性。

又建議學術應採用多種不同的方法,以多方法不應局限於大學學位及研員才學,它強調應留意關鍵的序章,特別因為神學學術已牽涉到傳統百學歷史及文學界的研究,並當代心理學,社會學及聖經學的範圍,又更建議政治學及經濟學的影響越趨重要。

傳教的神學學術也表達了與神國多民新的關係,這表示這承認基督教神學對不信仰的人,以及那些被傳教文化所違反及是親的人的影響。

### • 后時代的神學學術及研究的重要成份

又建議這有百系神學學術及研究的四項重要成份:

百系神學學術及研究與各類文化環境與語言的的關係,因此,神學學術及研究來自神國多民的經歷,並非單靠信仰教心的教員,所以學術及研究必須發源於本二語言及文化。

會通必須成為神學學術及研究重要的一元,這會通應探討以下三方面的關係:多式化,神學教員及多式化神學,並希望 WOCATI 能提供研討會及發展神學學術及研究。

質素神學學術及研究必須超越合一的禮堂，因為此等合一的禮堂會限制多元化的神學獨立性，更應同時認定教會的合一，是神所賦予的恩賜。

質素神學學術及研究採用關鍵的考索來維持優秀的質素，方法包括評估資料的來源，不更改實際情況，有效的用會通來作關鍵的考索，這就可避免局限於理性及歷史性的方式。

• 神學學術與教牧人才或二元關係：一連串的問題

教牧教牧人才是否神學學術及研究的副產品，或是我們致力於組成傳道工作時定義了優秀的神學學術？

學教禮儀是結託及報國神學分成各類獨立的神學與學區學術與教會的合一？

如果多元化神學是不主動及實質地投入各社會，教牧學員是否應參與當地的社區政治活動？

• 神學學術及研究應解決以下的問題

- 人權，特別是女性的權利
- 國家經濟即是神國經濟，特別應注意到國際的負債程度
- 物質主義的拜三，與宗教價值的相對降低
- 倫理與宗教衝突的加強
- 愛滋病的漫延
- 置禱的漫延與戰爭的爆發
- 對有關社會及人類前途及生活素質的問題
- 利用科技來增強發展神學學術及研究的前景，特別在圖書館而言。

Chinese translation of English abstract by Patrick Nip of the Chinese Baptist Church of Greater Hartford, Connecticut, USA.

Chinese translation of English abstract by Patrick Nip of the Chinese Baptist Church of Greater Hartford, Connecticut, USA.

## THEOLOGICAL SCHOLARSHIP AND RESEARCH ENTIRE DRAFT DOCUMENT

### 1. Introduction

This paper is one of three submitted by the Executive Committee of WOCATI to member associations in preparation for the next WOCATI CONGRESS to be held in Nairobi, Kenya, in 1996. In 1992, the Executive Committee endorsed the terms of reference of this particular paper as being a study of:

ways in which theological scholarship and research are being developed according to different methods and criteria of excellence.

A working group of five was appointed, and during 1993 two drafts of the paper were prepared. Then in April 1994, the members of the working group met, together with members of the other three working groups and the Executive Committee, and completed this draft. This will form the basis of discussion on the theme of theological scholarship and research at the 1996 CONGRESS.

### 2. Background

From its beginning, WOCATI has expressed a commitment to excellence of theological scholarship. In its constitution, adopted in June 1989 at its inaugural meeting in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, one of the main purposes of WOCATI is affirmed as follows:

To identify and advocate excellence in theological scholarship and ministerial practice and to encourage full compliance with the standards and purposes as established by member associations. (Section 8)

At the first WOCATI CONGRESS held in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA in June 1992, this issue of excellence of theological scholarship and research was one of the central themes to emerge in discussions. It was linked with discussions on the global nature of theological education, and the unease felt by many delegates about the manner in which globalization had been emphasised within certain Northern contexts. It was felt that much of the emphasis upon globalization within seminaries in the North, commendable as it is, was placed within a framework of theological education that was grounded upon certain criteria of excellence. These criteria were very much shaped by the canons of excellence influential within the Western/Northern academic tradition, with a heavy emphasis upon theological scholarship and education being pursued within discrete disciplines.

This in turn has given rise to a growth in specialization to such a degree that many have pointed to the deleterious effects of fragmentation within theological scholarship. However, many of these critiques have tended to assume criteria of

excellence in theological scholarship dependent upon the Western intellectual tradition. Thus when theological educators from all regions of the globe came together, as they did in Pittsburgh for the WOCATI CONGRESS, globalization in theological education took on some new perspectives.

#### 2.1 Globalization

A reconsideration of the term “globalization” is seen as necessary. It is recognized that it is a legitimate and important concern for North American theological educators, and the significance of their work is acknowledged. Globalization can challenge all particular theologies and theological methods from claiming to be one authentic, universal theology. However, the working group was aware of serious reservations being expressed about the term, and the way it could be used as another form of imposition upon developing theologies in other contexts. It would be unfortunate if globalization and contextualization were placed in opposition to each other, as both are necessary perspectives in contemporary theological scholarship and research.

The working group sought for another term that could better express the importance contained within the search for a global awareness of the theological task. One suggestion that is offered is: a coherent, ecumenical, global perspective. The force of the adjectives, “ecumenical” and “global” are self-evident. Coherence is important in that it expresses the authenticity and distinctiveness of different contextual theologies, as well as the need to bring these contextual theologies into interrelationship with others. There is also a form of inner coherence required for contextual theological scholarship, in that those engaged in this exercise need to search for coherence between their particular cultural identity and their identity as Christians, as members of the one Body of Christ, the “one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.” Thus the working group concentrated on how this coherent, ecumenical, global perspective to theological scholarship and research could be achieved. Central to the group’s considerations was the concept of dialogue and also of the need to answer the question of where does the locus of Christian faith reside. This paper outlines the responses to these questions.

### 3. Excellence of Theological Scholarship

The interrelationship between contextualization and the search for a coherent, ecumenical, global perspective gives rise to a re-examination of what constitutes excellence of theological scholarship. Criteria of excellence of theological scholarship must include serious consideration of the sources, methods, and purposes of such scholarship.

The working group recognized considerable value in

Robert Schreiter's outline of four forms of theological expression that he has identified throughout the world:

- Theology as Variations on a Sacred Text
- Theology as Wisdom
- Theology as Sure Knowledge
- Theology as Praxis.<sup>1</sup>

Schreiter's twofold purpose in identifying these different expressions of theological inquiry and scholarship corresponds to the two basic points of focus examined in this paper. One is the recognition of the importance of contextualization. Schreiter states that one of his purposes was to show how theology is:

to open church tradition in a different way, by seeing it as a series of local theologies, closely wedded to and responding to different cultural conditions.<sup>2</sup>

The second is related to the purpose of searching for unity within theological scholarship. Schreiter believes that a recognition of the various forms of theology allow local cultural and religious expressions of theology to converse more easily with the church tradition, "thereby offering a better chance of maintaining a genuine catholicity in a local church's expression of its faith".<sup>3</sup> Thus the criteria of excellence of theological scholarship must take serious account of the interplay between these two points of focus of the basic purpose of theological scholarship.

### 3.1 Scholarship

Two other issues related to excellence of theological scholarship are important to be recognized at this point. One is the understanding one has of scholarship. There can be the tendency to identify authentic scholarship only with a limited number of theological methods. It is commonly used in relation to writing and research completed within a university context, and/or published in scholarly and professional journals and books. To limit the understanding of scholarship to these forms can be an undue restriction and a serious disservice to other ways in which theological scholarship can be undertaken and expressed. For example, in addition to the forms of scholarship directed to the search for new information and understanding, and integrating these findings into new perspectives, there is also the importance of the scholarship of *praxis*. In this form of scholarship recognition is given to how learnings can both arise from the life of communities and how these learnings can be applied to address human problems.

### 3.2 Critical Inquiry

By broadening and deepening one's understanding of both the theological task and of the meaning of scholarship in the ways suggested above, further attention is required to be given to the importance of critical inquiry. These forms of critical inquiry, as with all criteria for excellence of theological scholarship, must be congruent with the nature and purpose of

any particular theology and the method it follows.

One fruitful way of exploring further the issues involved in bringing critical inquiry to bear upon one's theological scholarship and research is an examination of the role played by one's partners. Partners have a twofold meaning. They represent the other disciplines necessary to assist theology to explicate the meaning and truth of Christian revelation. Within the Northern tradition of theological scholarship, the disciplines of philosophy, history, and literary and textual inquiry have been prominent and influential partners. More recently, the disciplines of psychology, sociology, and hermeneutics have become of greater importance. This has meant that much of the bases and direction of critical inquiry within theological scholarship have been shaped by the insights arising from these disciplines.

However, other forms or expressions of theology, especially many from within the southern world, have utilized the insights of different partners and/or appropriated the insights of the traditional partners in different ways. Thus we have seen the emergence of the disciplines of political science and economics as partners to theological scholarship, as well as a different appropriation of such disciplines as history and sociology being followed. The impact of this is to make one aware of the different forms of critical inquiry that will arise from the influence of one's partners in theological scholarship.

Secondly, partners also mean the people to whom theology and theological education is addressed. If theology is to be addressed to the whole people of God, then there needs to be an expansion of one's awareness of the influence of some partners previously overlooked in much of theological scholarship. Increasingly, Christian theology is evolving in contexts that are heavily influenced by the presence of people of other faiths. Also, recent developments in liberation and political theology have been influenced by the recognition of the partnership of the "forgotten" people, or the "non-people"—those crushed by the forces of the dominant culture. When theological scholarship and education accept the presence of these people as partners in the theological enterprise, new forms of critical inquiry are needed.

## 4. Essential Components in Contemporary Theological Scholarship and Research

In the light of its reflections upon theological scholarship and research from a coherent, ecumenical, global perspective, the working group identified four essential components in such contemporary scholarship.

### 4.1 Contextualization

There is an increasing recognition that contextualization is a *sine qua non* of contemporary theological scholarship. Reference has been made to Schreiter's observation that theology, as a series of local theologies, is "closely wedded to and responding to different cultural conditions." Thus theologians

are faced with a twofold task of establishing criteria of excellence which are congruent with both the historic Christian tradition/s and, at the same time, appropriate for their particular cultural contexts.

It is to be noted that for many the starting point of theological scholarship and research is no longer the common Christian core of doctrine but the experience of the people of God in a given context.<sup>4</sup> Such scholarship includes a profound recognition of the importance of the experience of the poor and marginalized in their society, whether that be due to social, economic, political, or religious reasons.

Furthermore, theological scholarship developing from such a contextual basis can only be expressed in particular culturally conditioned forms. Thus the cross-cultural theological task becomes important; “cultural” in signifying the specificity and non-repeatability of the particular features and dynamics of each cultural setting; “cross” indicating the desire and necessity of reaching beyond the particular and demonstrating its ecumenical perspective.

#### **4.1.(a) Contextualization and indigenous languages**

In discussions at the WOCATI CONGRESS in 1992 and continued in the working group, the crucial importance of the need for theological scholarship and research to be carried out in the indigenous languages of the people was emphasised. Contextualization goes hand in hand with the use of indigenous languages. The reasons for this are many and compelling. In many societies throughout the world the oral transmission of theology is more important than written texts. Allowing people to use indigenous languages makes it easier to recognize the importance of the theologies of the people that are emerging from their experience.

Translation of indigenous languages into English or German, and vice-versa, is never a neutral process and can distort the particularities of many important cultural insights and expressions. The majority of Christian communities throughout the world do not use English or German for their worship and community life activities, nor in their witness and service in their societies. Of particular pertinence to theological scholarship is that many of the canons of excellence and critique developed within theological scholarship have been formulated in Northern languages. This can lead to alien criteria of excellence and of critical methodologies being applied to theological scholarship and education expressed in indigenous languages, especially in their oral form.

In our discussions, we recognized the complexity of the issue. Some African countries have many languages. For example, in Zambia there are 72, of which eight are official. Also languages are not confined to the colonial boundaries imposed upon Africa. However, it is heartening to note that some member associations of WOCATI are addressing this issue, and have taken initiatives to encourage the writing and transmission of theology in indigenous languages. In Appen-

dix A, reference is made to two projects that have been initiated by The Association for Theological Education in South East Asia (ATESEA).

#### **4.2 Dialogue**

The working group became convinced of the importance of dialogue as an essential component in contemporary theological scholarship, not simply as peripheral to, or as a consequence of such scholarship, but as central to its methodology, content, and goal. The content of theological scholarship is grounded upon the divine revelation, centered upon God’s self-disclosure in the incarnation. This can be understood as God’s dialogue with the people within certain historical settings. The theological significance of dialogue has been emphasised in recent times by several writers, especially by Wesley Ariarajah. Not only does Ariarajah maintain that, in the light of God as Creator, dialogue affirms that this world is God’s world, but also that dialogue is at the heart of the cross. He expands his conviction that the incarnation is God’s dialogue with the world in this way:

Here the biblical message is unambiguously dialogical. For it insists on the “previousness” of grace, and of God’s acceptance of us before our acceptance of God . . . . It is this belief that the other person is as much a child of God as I am that should form the basis of our relationship with our neighbours. That attitude is at the heart of being in dialogue.<sup>5</sup>

Thus it is not only from the perspective of God as Creator that brings us to the necessity of dialogue, thereby establishing the basis of interreligious dialogue. The central events of Christian revelation, focused in the incarnation, also point to the necessity of dialogue. Here is the focus of God’s communication with the people and the revelation of God’s nature and character as love. Dialogue can be practised as a process of seeking the truth of reality, of penetrating further into the truth of God’s revelation, and also leading to a redemptive experience for the people engaged in dialogue.

#### **4.2.(a) Dialogue and contextualization**

The theological importance of dialogue is strengthened within contextual theologies. For here, the theologians are engaged in a fundamental form of dialogue between their identity as Christians and their identity as people of a particular culture and society. Mention has been made of the important role partners play in the theological task. Here, we are suggesting that dialogue, the respectful but not uncritical listening and talking with other people, constitutes one essential component of theological scholarship. The importance of dialogue is intensified when we acknowledge as Christian theologians that we, too, are partners on a journey towards appropriating the fullness of God’s grace and truth. Thus we must be open to the way our partial insights are to be challenged and enriched

through our willingness to enter into genuine dialogue, not only with fellow Christians, but also with people of other faiths and others with whom we live and work.

#### 4.2.(b) Dialogue and theological education

Theological education has shared a common concern with many other forms of education in disclosing reality to people and equipping them to respond in such a way to live fully and creatively in the present and into their future. However, theological education has a particular goal of enabling people to mature in Christian faith and practice, and to be partners with God in God's mission of redemptive love to the world.

Contextual theologies have given attention to the dialogical method of education. Many have been influenced by the insights of Paulo Freire.<sup>6</sup> In his critique of the traditional forms of pedagogy, (the "banking" concept of education), Freire maintains that this not only tends to prevent the free development of students, but has another, often unrecognized, effect. The "banking" system can be a powerful agent in preserving the *status quo*, which many experience as oppressive and dehumanizing. This tendency has been noted by many educators in the Southern world. It is significant to note that Freire suggests a form of education, the "problem-posing" concept, which is dialogical in nature, whereby both teacher and student become partners on the journey of searching for the truth. The importance to theological scholarship and education of this dialogical approach to education is that it not only promises an atmosphere of creativity, but is also a way of leading oppressed people to liberation.

#### 4.2.(c) Dialogue and contextual theologies

Dialogue is also essential to the way the various contextual theologies are to interact with each other. The unity we share in Christ does not mean the acceptance of any one particular theological expression as being universally definitive, nor does it mean a disregard of one another's witness and theology. Therefore, the dialogical process should concentrate not only on the one gospel, but also the ways its truth is being expressed in different contexts and with a range of cultural resources. WOCATI could provide one important forum, not simply allowing us to search for what we hold in common, but also encouraging a dynamic interaction between theologians to the mutual enrichment of the global theological enterprise.

### 4.3 Unity

After affirming the contextual nature of theology, and taking account of the indispensable nature of dialogue to the theological task, the working group faced the inescapable question: Wherein does the unity of Christian theology reside? It has been mentioned that the term globalization can imply another form of domination that would endanger the autonomy of the various contextual theologies.

However, for theology to seek for a coherent, ecumenical,

global perspective requires the recognition that Christian theology, no matter how many and varied be its expressions, must have a common point of reference, a unifying element within all forms of theological scholarship and research. The working group focused upon the issue of unity in both general terms and in the specific ecclesiological use of the term as the ongoing search to restore the given unity of the church. This included consideration of the unifying and saving nature of the Christ event, continually re-enacted through his Body, the Church, in the life-giving and communion-restoring Holy Spirit. It was noted that the first sentence in the preamble to the constitution of WOCATI states, "Theological education is a worldwide enterprise fundamental to the mission of the church."

Thus theology, both as the conscience of the living community and one of the fundamental tasks of the community, is inextricably related to the church. By understanding the church, not in institutional terms but as *koinonia*, as the people of God called to witness to God's restoring presence, then the nature of the theological enterprise needs to be restructured. In particular, theological scholarship and research should be directed in such a way as to educate not only church leaders but the entire people of God. The prime purpose of theological education is not to educate pastors, priests, or missionaries in order that they may preserve and propagate certain Christian truths and ethical norms, but to build authentic Christian communities, proleptic manifestations of the kingdom of God. In this way, theological scholarship is conditioned by the nature of the church with its unity given as gift and demand by God.

This given unity of the church, which does not necessarily mean a strict unified structure, is given expression in an adherence to a broad understanding of Christian tradition. Such an understanding affirms not only the centrality of Christology, but also the constitutive nature of pneumatology, i.e., the normative nature of a Trinitarian understanding of Christian revelation.<sup>7</sup> This Trinitarian understanding affirms the ultimate goal of the divine economy in terms of Christ becoming all in all, not only in a soteriological, but also in a cosmological way.

The communion God seeks and initiates is not only with the church in the conventional sense, but with the whole cosmos. Thus the unity of divine revelation, as represented in the broad understanding of Christian tradition, is for the entire created world, not only for believers. This understanding of unity is important to keep in mind as it challenges a potential distortion wherein unity is identified with the maintenance of denominational loyalty, which in turn can be an exercise of oppression, excluding suffering people from the community of the people of God.

This understanding of unity in theological scholarship informs and challenges all expressions of contextual theology. It does not locate the unity inherent within Christian theology with any ecclesiastical or doctrinal system, and recognizes the varied forms of human and social existence. In this way, it is

congruent with the methodologies and goals of contextual theology. However, it also challenges these theologies in pointing out the indispensability of an adherence to a broad understanding and acceptance of Christian tradition as that which gives expression to the given unity of the church.

#### 4.4 The search for a common understanding of excellence in theological scholarship

After identifying the above three necessary components of contemporary theological scholarship, the working group discussed the impact of these upon the methods of scholarly research. In particular, the question was addressed: Are there common levels or approaches that transcend the diverse contexts in which such scholarship occurs? It was recognized that one standard approach has been that of the critical method, with its varied modes of analysis, critique, evaluation, and historical reference. It was acknowledged that critical inquiry is a necessary dimension of searching for excellence in theological scholarship.

It constitutes the rigorous evaluation of the sources of theology and of the ways they have been transmitted within the variety of historical contexts. It also involves being critically aware of the forces—intellectual, social, cultural, political and religious—that shape the nature of one's perspectives and presuppositions by which one interprets the received tradition. It is important for this critical inquiry to incorporate the subtle nuances of context within its approach and methodology. Critical inquiry must be accountable to the context and thereby assist in enriching one's experience and understanding of the context. This in turn requires such critical inquiry to be conducted in a dialogical manner, incorporating a partnership with one's community and carried out in concert with many disciplines.

This approach recognizes many forms of critical inquiry. The effects of contextualization and dialogue mean the expansion of critical inquiry beyond the rational, historical forms dominant in most Northern theologies. For there are ways of knowing that are outside the commonly accepted forms of critical understanding. These include the importance of intuitive, artistic, and emotive sources of theological understanding. While these forms must discover means of critical or communal accountability, excellence in theological scholarship must seriously consider such meanings as admissible, indeed desirable.

Thus the importance of the *scholarship of praxis* comes to the fore. As mentioned before, this scholarship of praxis not only incorporates the theoretical issues of theology into its method, but also those "texts" of church practice and the impact of the material conditions of the particular context. A scholarship of praxis embraces both an integrative approach to theological work by incorporating the nonrational elements of understanding, and the goal of personal and social transforma-

tion which is at the heart of the Christian message. The liturgical dimension of the Orthodox Church is an important element for consideration. This form of integration of theological method and its responsiveness to the context can contribute to a new unity of theological scholarship and research. It can forge new directions in understanding how the redemptive work of God is inextricably linked to the witness of the church, to the ultimate goal of the communion of the whole cosmos in the Triune God.

#### 5. The Emerging Relationship between Theological Scholarship and Ministerial Formation

The changes suggested above in theological scholarship and research will have considerable impact upon ministerial formation. Many member associations are giving attention to this issue and a significant amount of literature is available in many regions of the world. In particular, note was taken of the project of Ecumenical Theological Education of the World Council of Churches on "The Viability of Ministerial Formation," involving a number of regional consultations on the theme.

A number of questions were raised in the discussions of the working group. These included: Is ministerial formation a by-product of theological scholarship and research? Or, does the goal of ministerial formation play a significant role in defining excellence of theological scholarship and education? The emphases made in this paper on the purpose of theological education being for the whole people of God and upon the scholarship of praxis allow ministerial formation to contribute to excellence of theological scholarship. However, these emphases also challenge any restriction of theological education to any one group within the church.

The importance of spiritual formation in both ministerial formation and in theological education was noted. Recognition is to be given to the crucial importance of the liturgy in some Christian traditions. In these traditions, the liturgy provides a significant means of overcoming the break-down in confidence between scholarship and the church which has been caused, to a large degree, by the fragmentation of theology into autonomous disciplines. The liturgy can provide a means of ensuring a holistic soteriological and ecclesiological understanding of theological education and scholarship.

The nature of contextual theology, with its focus upon the concrete situations of the particular society means that ministerial formation cannot be pursued without those involved in such formation being in a significant and interactive relationship with their society. This could entail a greater involvement by ministerial students in the socio-political life of their society.

## 6. Emerging Issues to be Addressed by Theological Scholarship and Research

In the light of the approaches to theological scholarship and research outlined above, a number of issues were identified as those that demand attention. These issues, which are global in their impact, also impinge upon most particular societies and are of central importance to contemporary theological scholarship and research.

- Human rights, especially the rights of women
- Economies of countries *vis-a-vis* the Divine economy, with special consideration to levels of international debt
- The growth of materialism and the consequent marginalization of religious values
- Increasing ethnic and religious conflict
- AIDS epidemic
- The spread of arms and the incidence of war
- Issues associated with the fullness and future of human life and human communities
- Prospects for the use of technology for the enhancement of theological scholarship and research, especially in regard to libraries.

WOCATI can provide an environment to foster ways in which theologians can pursue the import of these issues, both by developing coherent, ecumenical, global perspectives on the significance of these issues to theology, and by being informed and challenged by theologians from other contexts.

### ENDNOTES

1. Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (London: SCM Press, 1985).
2. *Ibid.*, 93.
3. *Ibid.*, 94.
4. J. Meyendorff, "Theological Education in the Patristic and Byzantine Eras and Its Lessons for Today," *Anophora* 111, (Geneva: 1989), 401-414.
5. Wesley Ariarajah, *The Bible and People of Other Faiths* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, No. 26, Risk Book Series, 1985), 32.
6. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, translated by Myra Bergman Ramos, (New York: Herder & Herder, 1971).
7. John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion* (London: Darton Longmann and Todd Ltd., 1985).

## APPENDIX Uses of Indigenous Languages in Theological Scholarship and Research

Two projects initiated by The Association for Theological Education in South East Asia (ATESEA) illustrate many of the positive and necessary steps that can be taken to encourage theological scholarship and research to be expressed in indigenous languages.

### 1. Chinese Theological Education Series (CTES)

This project commenced in 1962 with the purpose of translating a number of theological "classics" from English to Chinese. Support was given by the former Theological Education Fund of the World Council of Churches. Two regional committees were formed in Hong Kong and Taiwan. Qualified translators originally translated approximately 50 books, and these books have contributed greatly to Chinese theological education in the last three decades. A more recent policy has been introduced of publishing indigenous theological writings. Another significant decision recently made is that taken by the South East Asia Graduate School of Theology in adopting the policy of encouraging its Th.D. candidates to write their dissertations in their own languages. The present director and general editor of CTES is Dr. Yeow Choo Lak, and the two regional editors are Dr. Daniel Chow in Hong Kong and Dr. Huang Po Ho in Taiwan.

### 2. Bahasa Indonesia Theological Education Series (BITES)

This was launched in the 1980s and makes theological material available in Bahasa Indonesia. It is estimated that there are eight million Christians who would not have access to contextual theological literature unless it was available in Bahasa Indonesia. This project is run in conjunction with the Indonesian Association of Theological Schools. It fulfills its purpose by designating persons, especially those involved in theological education, to translate theological books, and then coordinates the publishing and distribution of these books. The coordinator of BITES, Dr. Meno Soebagio, works with a team of three other persons. Each member is responsible for translating one-third of each book, and Dr. Soebagio edits the final draft for publication.

## WOCATI NEWS

is published by

The World Conference of Associations  
of Theological Institutions  
10 Summit Park Drive  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15275-1103, USA

## WOCATI OFFICERS

President	Yeow Choo-Lak, Singapore
Vice President	Jaci Maraschin, Brazil
Secretary-Treasurer	Barbara Brown Zikmund, USA