

World Council of Churches
Education and Ecumenical Formation

April 2002



*The International Feminist Doctor of Ministry Class (D. Min), January 2002
Institute of Women in Religion and Culture, Legon, Accra, Ghana*



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

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LETTER FROM STAFF

Dear friend and colleague,

Transforming Theological Education: Woman and Leadership was the theme of a seminar offered at the Ecumenical Institute Bossey, Céligny, Switzerland, 4-10 June 2001. The seminar brought together fifty-five women faculty and chief administrators of theological institutions from many Christian faith traditions and all the continents. This was the first time such a group gathered to engage in conversation on their experiences, perspectives, and the challenges they face in their leadership. The group also explored how women faculty and administrators can facilitate the renewal and transformation of theological institutions so that they are instruments for the empowerment of women in the church and ecumenical ministry.

During the seminar it was agreed that the April 2002 issue of *Ministerial Formation* will focus on the theme of this seminar and how gender studies and women's theologies are helping in the transformation of theological education and church ministry. The majority of the papers (including the report on the International Feminist Doctor of Ministry Program) are written by participants of the seminar. We are grateful to Susan E. Davies, the former academic dean and now faculty member at Bangor Theological Seminary, Maine, USA, for volunteering to edit the papers. We also say thank you very much to all the contributors. We want to assure all those who contribute to *MF* articles that we do not take your commitment for granted but see it as a way of your faithfulness to the ministry of WCC and the global church and in particular to Ecumenical Theological Education and Ministerial Formation.

We also wish to congratulate the Association of Theological Education of South East Asia (ATESEA) for appointing the first woman executive director Dr. Sientje Merentek-Abram of Sulawesi Utara, Indonesia, who has replaced Dr. Yeow Choo Lak who retires this month, after twenty years of faithful service. To both Sientje Merentek-Abram and Yeow Choo Lak, we pray that God will guide and bless you in your new ministry and life.

We rejoice and salute all those who support and pray for the life and mission of the World Council of Churches and the ecumenical movement.

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WOMEN FORMING WOMEN IN MINISTRY

Susan E. Davies

Introduction

This article grows out of the “Transforming theological Education: Woman and Leadership” gathering at Ecumenical Institute Bossey in June 2001. It looks at some ways women in leadership can support one another, and help other women be formed in ministry. I write as a Euro-American woman who spent thirteen years in parish ministry before moving to Bangor Theological Seminary, where I have spent the last twenty years as a faculty member and Academic Dean. I begin with a description of the context in which I live and work, because that context has given primary shape to my understandings of women in ministry and in theological leadership. I then draw on the insights of the women at the Bossey conference to develop ways women in theological leadership can support one another, and finally I turn to ways those women can assist women students as they form their ministerial identity.

I. *Background and Context*

Bangor Theological Seminary was founded in 1814 by Congregationalists in order to provide a learned ministry in northern New England. The school has always been small and almost entirely white, never having more than 200 students; the faculty has ranged in number from two to ten, including the President and Librarian. Two of the present teaching faculty and the Librarian are women.

As is the case with most seminaries in the U.S., our students are largely commuters, with only a handful in residence at the Bangor campus of the school. Our student body is ecumenical by intent and default. As the only accredited theological school in northern New England, we are the only game in town for those who cannot afford or do not wish to leave the region for theological education. Reflecting our population base, we have very few students who are African American, Hispanic, or Asian, although we regularly have students with Native American backgrounds.

Northern New England, and Maine in particular, has a two-thirds world economic structure. More than half the land in Maine is owned by international paper companies, and our economy is largely agricultural and extractive. Our people make their livings fishing, lobstering, logging, and farming. The manufacturing base, textiles and shoe making, has long since moved to the southern part of the U.S., and thence out of the country. The paper mills which once supported many communities are closing. Tourism and a service and consumer economy have replaced the earlier production focus. The growth of the Internet has permitted global connections for those who previously were isolated in rural areas, and some are developing Web-based businesses. In both Maine and New Hampshire, the southern quarter of the states is oriented out of state toward Boston. It is there that most of the population resides, and most of the wealth. The primary campus of the Seminary is located in Bangor, in the northern region of the state. We have a second campus in Portland, Maine’s economic capital, where one of our faculty lives full time.

Northern New England’s peoples include Franco-Americans, the First Nations of Penobscots, Passamaquoddies and Micmacs, African American communities more than 100 years old, Anglo and Russian and Finnish and Asian and Middle Eastern and Hispanic and Caribbean and African communities. Almost all the religions of the world are here in our midst. More than 80 languages are spoken in Maine and New Hampshire and Vermont. We are a mixture

of wealth, poverty, religion, and ethnicity, of well-schooled knowledge and unschooled wisdom, of snowmobiles and cell phones and e-commerce. That complexity has been here for generations, even if most of our churches and the Seminary do not reflect it.

Christians are the dominant religious group, the majority of whom are very conservative both theologically and socially. Roman Catholics comprise the single largest Christian body. The churches served by Bangor Theological Seminary are those historically known as the mainline churches in the U.S. Those churches have lost their dominant role in national politics and culture, and for the last thirty years have been losing numbers and financial support. In northern New England, many congregations have long counted it a wonderful Sunday when fifty people gather for worship.

The small churches of our region have created the particular gift Bangor Seminary offers those who plan to enter ordained or lay leadership in the churches. We have nearly two hundred years experience in preparing people to lead small churches. These congregations continue to function out of the model of Christendom in which they began. In a largely rural area, local churches have historically served as community gathering places, as the agent of the town for Christmas and Thanksgiving baskets, for social service support, for the food cupboard and the community suppers and the back-up source of financial assistance to the indigent. When I served a small coastal congregation in Maine, the minister was expected to call the school to find out which students needed special attention and gifts at Christmas. Such an intimate connection between church and state would not be permitted in more urban areas.

II. Supporting Women in Leadership

The gathering in Bossey in June 2001 which prompts this issue of *Ministerial Formation* was composed largely of women who are senior administrators and faculty. We were deeply concerned with how we could support one another and encourage other women as they made their way through the often tangled hierarchies of theological education. As we listened and talked, we made some very important observations.

We said we needed *to teach women to be accountable to other women, not simply to men.*¹ That is, we should *teach women to consult with, seek the opinion of, the assistance and approval of other women, rather than simply the approval of men.* Such a shift in accountability attitudes is very difficult for many women, especially those who have made their way into academic structures with the support and encouragement of men, who were often the only available mentors.

In our region, the president of one of the state universities has formed a group of women administrators of private and public academic institutions which meets twice a year for mutual encouragement and support. The group has created a program for women employed by the various schools which offers them collegial support and training in order to encourage them to seek advancement in academic administration. The group fosters networking among women and thus creates the context for developing accountability to women as well as to men. Many regional and international women's theological groups, such as Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (www-thecircle-cawt.org) and the Asian Women's Resource Centre for Culture and Theology, offer similar functions for nurturing women theologians and administrators.

Along with accountability, we need to *develop solidarity among women, even when we disagree. When we lecture, we should quote women and other marginalized groups. We should recommend other women for follow-up activities, suggest women students for extra*

¹ Italicized material is derived from notes from the Bossey gathering.

projects. We should stay in any process to the end, and then offer support to the person involved. We should use whatever power we have to build a critical mass of women in our institution.

The women gathered at Bossey said we needed to *use our structural power to change the institution's constitution, so that lay women, lay men and students are represented on the board. We need to train women for board membership or other positions of institutional authority.* It comes as no surprise to women in any leadership role to discover that we are often the first or the only in many contexts. Much has been written about the pitfalls of such a position, as well as the gifts. When we are isolated, it is very difficult to retain both our vision and our confidence. It is crucial that we form connections with other women in similar positions, whether or not they are in theological education. We can learn much from one another.

Here I would also note the seductive nature of the structures in which women work. As one who has experienced the loss of her own critical voice during her time as an academic administrator, I point again to the importance of a feminist/womanist/ *mujerista/minjung* community of accountability and support. A judicatory leader recently told me that her sermons in the early 80s – as a pastor – were much stronger and prophetic than her sermons as a middle judicatory leader in the 90s. It is all too easy to lose one's own voice in the need to support the institution, to cope with financial realities, to deal (in her case) with increasing numbers of clergy malpractice situations. How, where, and when do we as women in solidarity with one another speak with clear voices? When women become chairs of boards or presidents of institutions, how do we retain our critical and feminist stances? Our institutional contexts do not support such voices.

Are there feminist ways to organize a board? To make investment decisions? To construct hiring practices and disciplinary proceedings? To recruit students? To create new curricula? Yes, of course there are, but they are not the default systems which currently exist. In the U.S. we have inherited a patriarchal and capitalist institutional life which moves forward by its own momentum. Women leaders who try to subvert that momentum, to shift it to a more Christ-centered approach, to shift the structures so that the margins have places at the table, must do so carefully and wisely, lest they lose their credibility and their position. It is precisely in such situations that we need the support of others in similar roles and with similar commitments to liberatory praxis.

My experience in northern Maine has been one of surprising isolation. Despite the presence of feminists at the local university, the theological questions so important to me are not those of regional faculty women. It has become very important to make and keep connections with other women outside the state, to attend regional and national gatherings, to travel to other countries in order to maintain and develop the dialogue. I have been fortunate to have the financial support of my institution and church for these travels. Others are not necessarily so situated. One of the responsibilities of women in my situation, isolated but with some financial support, is to organize financial support systems for our sisters who do not have institutional resources. Those who have access to the Internet are increasingly finding it a significant method of connecting with others.

When we are in positions to plan meetings, or to participate in them, *we should hold pre-meetings for women at large academic or church gatherings, in which women are instructed about the rules of the meetings. They need simple logistics such as not sitting at the corner of a table, coming carefully prepared, and consulting with one another before raising issues so that vocal support will be heard for questions raised or suggestions made. Women in large meetings often are assisted when they receive help to analyze what is going on at the meeting.* If we have an insider perspective, we need to share it with other women. They need to

experience the reality of women as leaders. It is often helpful to *hold meetings of women during the larger meeting*, so as to continue the instruction and mutual support.

And we need to cultivate positive relationships with the men who hold power in our institutions. We need to work in partnership with them. We need to offer, and be seen to offer, fair play to both women and men. In most theological institutions, men retain the power, whether or not women are in significant leadership positions. A woman serving as president or principal may nevertheless have a man as board chair and a board with a majority of men. A woman serving as Dean may be working with a largely male faculty and a male president. As a Euro-American woman, I have learned a great deal from African Americans, Hispanic Americans and Asian Americans who have formed professional societies and support groups within theological education. Whenever possible in professional gatherings, I “hang out” with others who are on the margins of power, in part to network with one another, in part to develop joint strategies for surviving and succeeding in what remains largely a white male world in the U.S.

The women at Bossey said that women in theological education should hold themselves *accountable to the women in the churches, in local congregations*, as well as to those in the theological education hierarchy. *We should never forget where we came from and who helped form us.* It is very easy to be seduced by the academic and theological worlds into forgetting why we do the work we do. The pressure in the U.S., and I believe in other places, is immense to climb the academic ladder in our respective guilds, to become more and more abstruse until we can talk only with one another at regional, national or international gatherings. An academic career in theological education has the same “publish or perish” pressure found in secular higher education. What we publish and for whom, the conversation partners we hold important, can significantly affect that next job offer, or lack thereof. If our writing and our lecturing seek primarily to be in conversation with those in congregations or primarily with women, we are in danger of having lesser status in the academic guilds.

The women who met in Bossey also insisted that we *take specific contexts seriously*. I teach in the pastoral studies department, which means that I am constantly engaged in the hermeneutical task of translating theological and biblical understandings into specific contexts. It is perhaps more tempting for those teaching in theology or Bible to see their work as divorced from contextual issues, but in my work it is simply not possible. Rural Maine is different from rural Iowa, although we have many things in common. The history of white church establishment here has shaped the religious culture in ways that the white frontier experience of Iowa did not.

Those of us at Bossey also insisted that *all forms of ministry have validity*. The received Christendom model of Christianity has developed a clerical focus which is particularly difficult to change in a theological school. Most of our students come to be prepared for ordained ministry. They want that leadership role, and often think it will give them a social status that is no longer a reality in the U.S. How, in such a context, do we uphold the varieties of lay and ordained ministries within and outside the church?

One way is to *recognize the varieties of intelligences rather than simply the one or two which have been the focus of western-style education*. The students at Bangor come to us from a variety of backgrounds. Those who have been plumbers or construction contractors can often imagine the whole without its physical presence, but are not necessarily good at abstract thinking. Lawyers and physicians are usually those who have done well in traditional academic settings, and need to expand their appreciation for kinesthetic, musical, spatial, interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences. In our region, most of the people in the pews are concrete learners, people who do not learn through abstractly conceptualizing but by engaging in action and then reflecting upon it. Over the last 12 years, I have found that most

of our students also learn best through concrete experience or active experimentation. Yet most of our faculty have reached their present positions by excelling in abstract concepts or reflective observation. This clash of teaching and learning styles is often particularly obvious when a white male academic is teaching theology to white women. Thus, another way for women leaders in theological schools to support women students is to help them identify their learning style and their various intelligences. Knowing how one knows and learns can be a wonderfully affirming and freeing experience.

III. *Forming Women for Ministry*

When we form women for pastoral ministry, we must be very honest about the pitfalls they face. In churches in the U.S. and elsewhere, both congregations and church leadership often carry direct or hidden hostility to women in pastoral leadership positions. Here I offer some suggestions for assisting women in their ministerial formation.

First, and perhaps most importantly, we need to be able to see clearly the structures which will oppose us. The church as we have received it is the theological, ecclesiastical and social construction of men who have occupied positions of power for centuries. Born in the Middle East, child of Judaism and Hellenism, with an original egalitarianism so ably unearthed by Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza and others, the church has in almost every case become trapped by the patriarchal cultures in which it lives. Women entering ministry need to be able to see those structures because we cannot change what we cannot see. We need to have the best possible *critical introduction to social and anthropological analysis* so that very little will surprise us as we make our way through the systems into the service of Christ's people. As Barbara Brown Zikmund *et al* note in *Clergy Women: An Uphill Calling*, "Without a major retooling and rethinking of the assumptions and symbols surrounding ordained ministry, ecclesiastical cultures will continue to track women into second-class leadership options. Women dare not be naïve and overly optimistic about what it takes to redeem entrenched habits from the past."²

We need to know who is likely to support us, and in which circumstances those same people will have a difficult time standing up for us. For instance, a woman who is a judicatory official may be able to support a pastor privately in her struggles with the church structures. That same judicatory leader may find herself so pressured within her own position that she may not be able, or willing, to speak clearly in the pastor's support within the system. If that same woman is also a closeted lesbian in a church which disapproves or rejects such women, or from a different social class, or a different racial or ethnic or tribal group, she may find her voice challenged consistently by her peers. The woman pastor needs to know what sort of support she can realistically expect, and from whom.

If a woman is from a different ethnic, tribal or racial group than the dominant one in her church, she will need the support of her particular people, and should be helped to establish a network in her community before she enters the authorization and ordination process. In many instances, women in theological education are the first in their family to move toward ministry. In such cases, the extended family or home congregation may have little or no experience in supporting women who take this path. They may even oppose her intentions. Many of our women (and men) students are in mid-life career changes. They have been secretaries or lawyers or social workers or homemakers or nurses or teachers or writers or corporate executives. Some are divorced or widowed. Some have left more conservative traditions and are finding their way into a more compatible theological stance. Many are not supported financially or emotionally by their families. Some have husbands who oppose their

² Barbara Brown Zikmund, Adair T. Lummis, Patricia Mei Yin Chang. *Clergy Women: An Uphill Calling*. (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1998).

calling to ministry. In such cases women need tender support from those at the seminary, helping them to find appropriate connections with others.

We need to be able to decode the racial, ethnic, tribal, gender, class, and educational structures of our society and church, so that when we violate an unwritten rule we will at least know that we are doing it. If long unbound hair is a statement of sexual availability in our culture, even though it might never be so articulated, we need to know that by wearing our hair down while leading worship, we are non-verbally “bringing sex into the pulpit.” In the years when I wore my long, I always wore it bound when I led worship. Once, after I had announced my departure for another position, and at the request of the youth group, I wore my hair down for Sunday service. One of the men asked me afterward (I had been the pastor there for nearly six years), “Sue, were you trying to tell us you’re a woman today?”

Women going into pastoral ministry often need to give particular attention to learning about the financial and administrative responsibilities they will carry. Too often, in many cultures, women are kept ignorant of how to run meetings, how to organize an institution, how to pay bills and deal with financial institutions. If a woman moves into leadership in a congregation without any knowledge in these areas, she will be unnecessarily undercutting her own credibility and leadership capacity. Most of the men in leadership in congregations take finances and the church’s physical plant very seriously. If their pastor cannot engage them in decision-making around these issues, they will often discredit her opinions and efforts in other areas as well. Academic advisors should urge women students to take at least one course in church administration and stewardship.

Women in preparation for ministry also need to give careful attention to their relationships and/or marriages. Some cultures will not accept a woman in leadership unless she is married; others will accept only single women. Those that insist upon marriage also often insist upon motherhood as a qualification, because they believe a woman who is not a mother is not fully a woman. A married mother intending to go into ordained pastoral ministry is a woman taking on two more-than-full-time jobs. It can be done, and is done regularly, but not without very careful planning and a good support network.

Women being formed for pastoral ministry must know how to deal with sexually aggressive church members, whether male or female. When I first began serving a congregation as an assistant, I had no clerical robes, so I wore dresses to participate in the worship. The first Sunday after my new robe had arrived, a married man thirty years my senior spoke to me in the line following service. “Sue,” he said, “I don’t like not being able to see your legs during the service. Still, when the sun shines through the windows behind you, I can see through the robe, so I guess I’ll be able to handle it.” The first time such a thing happens, a woman unprepared may regard herself as the cause of such commentary. We need to know that it is not our behavior, but the patriarchal culture which permits and evokes such efforts to put and keep women in their place. And we need to learn how to respond appropriately for our cultural context.

Everyone who goes into ministry, whether ordained or lay, whether female or male, needs to be deeply rooted in Christ, with an active prayer and spiritual life. Women who go into ministry need in addition careful help in interpreting the biblical material which seems to exclude them from leadership in the church. Such material will be used against them, either directly or indirectly, and they need to be clear about how they respond to such passages. If they are not getting supportive interpretation in their biblical and theological courses, then women faculty and administrators need to be sure that other materials are available for them. Small study and prayer groups led by women can be very helpful in this area, as the students learn to support one another and to develop their own theological voice with integrity and passion.

Before carrying administrative responsibility as Dean, I regularly offered a seminar for women students in which we read from feminist, womanist, mujerista, lesbian, minjung, and First Peoples journals and writings, listened to women's music, talked with other women in lay and ordained ministry, listened one another into speech and strength. Almost all the women in the most recent seminar have gone on to strong pastoral service. They were married, single, divorced, heterosexual and homosexual, from a variety of churches. In one summary of what they learned they said: "Women in Ministry believe, empower, assert, strategize, celebrate, love, give thanks, power dress, get angry." For that seminar we met in a student's home to lessen the power differentials inherent in academic structures. Now that I returned full time to the classroom, I will again offer such a seminar regularly.

Forming women for pastoral ministry in the church includes the recognition offered at the Bossey gathering that *women have the same gifts and charisms as the rest of humanity*. However, women have often *developed those gifts differently because we have functioned on the margins of power in our societies, cultures and churches*. Thus, women in theological education should be encouraged to meet regularly with women who are serving congregations as pastors or other religious leaders, in order to experience the use of their gifts and charisms. And they need to learn how to use their vision from the margin to lift up their own and other voices not often heard. How to do that from the pulpit and the classroom and the community without sounding as though one is constantly beating a drum for one's own advantage is a skill which needs to be developed before entering parish ministry.

Conclusion

Women in leadership in theological education have peculiar gifts to hand on to women who are being formed for lay and ordained ministerial leadership. For the most part we have survived and prospered because we have been able to analyze critically the contexts in which we live, the barriers we face, and the opportunities we have created or been given. We have prepared ourselves academically, spiritually, and personally. We have survived a variety of often bizarre situations through our own ingenuity, our faith, the support of others, both women and men, and the constant guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is our responsibility to form new generations of women for service to Christ and the church with honesty, integrity and humor. As we do so, let us give thanks to the generations who came before us, preparing the way, making the rough places, if not a plain, then a path over which we have walked with gratitude. We can do no less for those who follow.

GENDER PERSPECTIVE IN TRANSFORMATIONAL EDUCATION

Sr. Mary John Mananzan, OSB

Introduction

One of the self-perpetuating features of an oppressed consciousness is its lack of consciousness of its being oppressed. This initiates a vicious cycle of the oppressed continuing their own oppression and those of their own kind. This is true in the case of women, who have so internalized their own oppression that they are not only victims; they are unwitting collaborators to their continued discrimination, subordination, and exploitation.

It is for this reason that women's perspective in education becomes a vital mission. Feminist education is at its infancy when compared with the entrenched mainstream education, which for women means education to femininity. The media help perpetuate the ideas and attitudes inculcated by schools, reinforcing sexism and domination by patriarchal values. It is important how this socialization of women is accomplished.

Socialization in the Family

The family is the first place where the child absorbs by osmosis biases, fears, prejudices. In the attitude of the parents, in the way they act towards others, in their prohibitions and admonitions, the seeds of racism, discrimination, and sexism are planted. From early childhood, the norms on how a girl should act are implanted. She is to be quiet, unobtrusive, and not boisterous. She somehow learns how to be coquettish and how to please especially the opposite sex. As an adolescent, she learns that she must learn how to be attractive to men, that her highest dream is to find a Prince Charming, who, when he kisses her, will live with her happily ever after. She learns from the example of her mother and female relatives that women have to honor their husbands, that they have to be subservient to the husband's decisions.

Maybe she learns by experience the price of nonsubservience—being battered verbally, psychologically, and physically. She observes how men put very little value on women's opinions and how women are belittled, ignored, or taken for granted. She sees how everybody must keep quiet when the father is taking a nap, how everyone must tiptoe around the father when he is in a bad mood, and how meals, trips, or other arrangements must revolve around his convenience or wishes.

It is in the family that the girl is socialized into her role as wife and mother, beginning from the time she receives her first doll or tea set and begins to play house (*bahay-bahayan*). She is conditioned to think that maternity is what gives her worth when married, just as virginity makes her valuable before marriage. The care and education of children is put in a whole package beginning with pregnancy and is handed to the woman as her main role. She is conditioned to think that she is responsible for the success or failure of her marriage and that whatever success she may experience in her life, if her marriage does not work, she is a failure.

Many cases of wife-battering have been justified on the grounds that the woman fails to comply with the image of a subservient, "good housewife." She also feels so much guilt when she somehow fails the expectation of her husband and other people that she even tolerates her husband's violence. The fact that a "broken home" is a failure, something her conscience must bear, also makes her hesitate to separate from a violent husband. So she endures long years of humiliation and pain "for the sake of the children."

Studies have shown that 50 percent of batterers were battered as children. Fifty-two percent witnessed violent behavior in their original families (Linda McLeod, p. 23).

Socialization in Society

Cultural values and attitudes towards women pervade not only the home but also society. Two of the most important socializing agents in society are school and mass media. Traditional schooling confirms and continues the stereotyping of roles began in the home. Certain subjects like Mathematics, Gardening, and Engineering are considered appropriate for boys, while Home Economics, Marriage, and others are considered suitable for girls. Textbooks are sexist not only in content but also in illustrations and in language. An illustration entitled "A Happy Family" shows the father looking at the television or reading a newspaper and the son playing with toy tanks and the mother and daughter setting the table.

The mainstreams of the different disciplines are usually *male stream*. History books are written as though only men made History, Psychology, Economics, Law, Social Sciences, and technical subjects. These fields of study are usually gender-blind. Scholarly researchers do not reflect the perspective of women. In other words, men's experiences, men's ways of knowing and male methodologies have been universalized as human experience, human epistemology, scientific method, and human knowledge.

In this age of information and technology, mass media are a powerful means of socialization. Sex and violence are the main selling features of movies and TV programmes and print media. Advertisements not only commodify women; they portray them in indecent poses, in subservient roles. They glorify but at the same time trivialize domestic work with "magic detergents" and super-efficient appliances. Action movies focus on criminality, extrajudicial solutions, and violence against women and children. These mesmerize the male audience with displays of complicated superweapons of destruction and murder. Pornography is most especially reprehensible not because it is "indecent" or "shows explicit sex," but because it shows the degradation of woman physically and sexually. When men feed daily on such films and programmes, actual violence against women in real life becomes no big deal.

Socialization by Religion

In the first Asian consultation of women theologians held in November 1985 in Manila, 27 women from seven countries coming from different religious backgrounds were unanimous in their conclusion that "there is a religious root" to women's oppression. The Bible is a norm of conduct for Christians. Although its main message is a liberating salvific one, its patriarchal elements have been used to rationalize the subordination and discrimination of women. The traditional interpretation of its first chapters considers woman to be secondary because she was supposed to be created from the rib of man and for the purpose of accompanying him. She is considered to be the cause of original sin, because she "tempted" man to disobey the command of God. This is at the root of woman's consciousness of inferiority and guilt. A raped woman in court, for instance, will be badgered by the defendant's lawyer, who will try to prove that by wearing an indecent dress or by being in a place at the wrong time, she somehow tempted the man to rape her.

From the foregoing, it is clear that a vicious cycle of violence against women has continued for generations. Powerful institutions—the family, educational institutions, the church, and the state— have not only failed to put a stop to it but have even justified and perpetuated it.

Such violence and misguided socialization thrive in a society that deprives women their right to empowerment through education. As a poster proclaims, "Educate a woman and you educate a community." One may ask, "Educate her to what?" It is difficult to give a finished

concept of the feminist model of education, first of all because it is still evolving. "It has not been confined to narrow, institutionalized parameters" (Spender, p. 149). It is being developed in varying venues from women's organizations' conscientization seminars to postgraduate courses in universities. However, there are definite trends that are manifested in these various forms.

Trends in the Feminist Model of Education

In the late 1960s, the emerging modern women's liberation movement started to ask questions about the condition of women. Then, there were no feminist books, no feminist experts, not even adequate data about the situation of women. So there was a need for women to produce this knowledge about themselves. Dale Spender recalls:

"Women found themselves meeting with other women and talking about their personal experiences (and validating it in the process); they were constructing a new reality without necessarily being about to state explicitly what it was they were doing . . . None of us (I recollect) had much more than our personal experience to go on. None of us was an expert who could rely on "book learning." We were all equal in the sense that we all felt that we had been "misled and we all wanted to come to understand how it had happened (and to make sure it didn't happen again)."

This already brings out one trend: *the lack of hierarchy* in these endeavors and the necessity of cooperative and *collaborative methods*. Shared knowledge became collective insights, which gave rise to new knowledge. And since the starting point of the process was women's *experiences*, this knowledge had a direct relation to life and not to abstract theories. The shared experiences also erased the boundaries between teaching and learning. Education became a *dialogical process*.

There is also an emphasis on the role of the personal, as opposed to patriarchal, education. Because of this *validation of personal experience*, women feel good about themselves.

There is also the trend of *interdisciplinarity*. A. Fitzgerald explains:

"Women's studies . . . is necessarily interdisciplinary . . . In acknowledging the male-centeredness of the traditional curriculum, it points out the biases inherent in all disciplines and thus the political nature of education itself . . . Questioning the underlying assumptions about the truth and supposedly objective knowledge of academic fields is to recognize that the very chopping up and categorizing of knowledge in the academy is itself a political act".

Another feature is *creativity* in methodology and *flexibility*. Reacting to the purely rational methodology of mainstream education, feminist education makes use of the arts, performing and visual, in its teaching-learning process. Women perform their reports and do not just read them. In many women's awareness seminars, chairs and tables are pushed aside, and learning happens in very relaxed postures, even some very "unladylike" ones.

As to the content of feminist education, it includes the analysis of the woman question, gathering data on the issues of women of all sectors, classes, ethnicity, and religion. It seeks to find an explanation of the origins of patriarchy and to describe all its manifestations in society. It exposes and neutralizes the forms of socialization that perpetuate the woman question and it outlines an agenda of societal transformation.

We will now discuss how these principles of feminist education have been concretely practiced in the Philippines.

Women's Studies in the Philippines

The context of women's studies in the Philippines is the women's movement. As discussed in some other essays, in spite of the patriarchal society being introduced by the Spaniards, Filipino women have retained the "dangerous" collective memory of their equality with men. The memory has inspired them to organize themselves to face the manifold problems in their society, including the various forms of violence to and trafficking of women.

Documents show that women's organizations already existed in the Philippines even in the early 1900s. One such document is the speech of the president of the "Asociación Feminista de Filipinas", delivered when Alice Roosevelt visited the country in 1906. Also, the suffragette movement in the 1930s won for Filipino women the right to vote.

It was not until the 1970s, however, that one could speak of a women's movement. At this time, women's organizations with a consciously feminist perspective were formed, seriously analyzing the woman question.

One such organization is the Gabriela, founded in 1984. It is perhaps the biggest federation of women's groups in the Philippines, comprising 200 organizational members and 45,000 individual members. Its founding principles include the understanding of itself as an essential aspect of societal transformation, not a separate, isolated woman-against-man struggle. There can be no total human liberation without women's liberation, because then one half of society would still be oppressed.

Women's Studies at St. Scholastica's College

In 1985 the women's movement was well on its way. Women's organizations, among them Gabriela, were holding conscientization seminars for their members. The academe lagged behind in this endeavor, although some colleges for women did have what may be called a "captive constituency." It is in this context that women's studies were introduced in some colleges and universities. I cannot discuss all the models of women's studies offered in the Philippine context. I will just discuss the one I know best—that of St. Scholastica's College.

St. Scholastica's College, a school for women founded in 1906 by German Benedictine Sisters, reoriented its thrust towards education for social transformation in 1975. As a further development of its social thrust, it decided to pioneer in the new field of Women's Studies. This grew out of the conviction that one of the most persistent socializing forces for women is education. Stereotyped roles are learned from the mother as the first teacher and are confirmed in the long years of schooling. Together with religion and mass media, sexist education continues the vicious cycle of women's subordination and discrimination. It perpetuates a victim consciousness that makes women vulnerable as victims of violence. Education is therefore one of the most important strategies for change.

The Breakthrough Seminar

During the semestral break of schoolyear 1985-86, a weekend seminar was held to develop the first Introductory Course to Women's Studies. That seminar was to become significant for the history of women's studies in the Philippines. Eighteen enthusiastic women activists, whom I invited as the dean of college and also as national chairperson of Gabriela, came together and in record time formulated the objectives of the course. They put together its syllabus and lined up a faculty roster for the initial course. The lack of professors with degrees in Women's Studies was a blessing in disguise, because the practitioners were forced to be the course's first professors, thus avoiding the dichotomy between women's centers and women's studies found in several First World Countries.

The objectives formulated for the course were:

- to make the students aware of the present status of women—their role in society, their problems in the context of economic, political, and sociocultural conditions.
- to develop historico-critical and analytical skills in the study of women.
- to identify personal and social values as well as structures that need to be transformed or enhanced for a more human and more egalitarian society.
- to enable the students to choose a specific issue or problem in which they would want to get involved for transforming action.

The course content included the discussion of nature versus nurture, physiology and psychology of women, women in Philippine history, current issues of women in Philippine society, women and religion, analysis of the woman question, and an agenda for renewal. To relate the course to real situations of women, an exposure program was included in the curriculum.

The Pilot Class

A class of 16 students majoring in Psychology was chosen as the first group to take the course. There were 18 lectures during the semester. At the end of the semester, the working groups formed presented their projects in creative forms, such as a skit, sound slides, and an original video production. The topics of the groups were Mail-Order Brides, Prostitution and Tourism, and Women Political Detainees.

The evaluation of the students was very encouraging. A student commented: “It was not only a content course, it was a perspective course. It changed my whole way of looking at reality.” The students also felt that the course should have an organizational component, so they formed S-KAIBA, which is one of the leading student organizations in the campus today.

Due to the favorable evaluation of both students and teachers, the course became a part of the general education curriculum of the college and was made a prerequisite for graduation. Another development is the offering of a Cognate Course on Women’s Studies. This consisted of six courses, four of which formed the core curriculum and two were electives. A Certificate in Women’s Studies was given upon completion of this 18-unit program.

The Institute of Women’s Studies

After three years of offering the Introductory Course to Women’s Studies, it became necessary to found an institute attached to the college but with a certain autonomy. Its main purpose was to provide an alternative education outside the formal educational set-up, using more creative methodology and providing outreach programmes. In 1988, the Securities and Exchange Commission approved the application for the incorporation of the Institute of Women’s Studies Foundation as a nonstock, nonprofit corporation. To date, the Institute offers the following programmes: Training Program, Research and Publication Program, Resource Development Program, Radio Program, and Women and Ecology Program. I will discuss here in detail just the training program.

The Institute offers a three-day women’s orientation seminar six times a year to grassroots women both in the Center and in the provinces. Factory workers, peasant women, and women living in slum areas have participated in these seminars.

Seminars, including one called “Towards a Gender Fair Education,” are given to teachers from the elementary and high schools and for professors in college. The objective of these seminars is to provide skills for analyzing sexism in the school setting with regard to attitudes,

structures, educational materials, and other factors, and to reflect on alternative systems and methodologies in education.

A one-month Trainers Training Seminar is given to women engaged in formal or nonformal education. The aim is to provide them with the content and the skills in providing the women's perspective to their educational work.

An ambitious project has been realized for the past four years: a three-month intercultural course on Women and Society. These have been participated in by women from the Philippines, Asia, and the Pacific. The four years' experience has revealed a logic to the course, which is valid for any Women's Studies course. The subject of women's studies is women's experiences. Thus, the course begins with the participants telling their own stories. Aside from helping to make the group jell, this module already comes up with women's issues for further discussion.

These personal experiences are put in a social context when the participants go on an exposure program and visit communities of women workers, peasants, slum dwellers, prostituted women, and other groups. A national context is given when the participants give their country reports, which situate the problems of women in their respective economic, political, and sociocultural systems. A reflection on these issues brings the group to the feminist theories that explain the woman question. Readings are given on the different theories and on patriarchy.

The next modules—Woman and Religion, Woman and Education, and Women in Arts and Media—provide the explanation for the main socializing forces that perpetuate the woman question. The second half of the course provides skills such as Feminist Research, Gender Analysis in Development, Facilitation and Organizing Skills, and Theater Arts. The course ends with the participants presenting their plans of action. They are awarded a certificate in Women's Studies.

The latest module developed by the Institute is a five-day Women and Ecology course held in the Institute's bio-diverse farm in Mendez, Cavite. This module consists of: the concept and practice of eco-feminism, principles of ecology, global and local situation of ecology, ecological advocacy and activism, holistic health and alternative healing, and eco-feminist creation-centered spirituality. It also includes shibashi, paneurythmic dance and an hour daily of actual gardening.

Meanwhile, St. Scholastica's College has started an M.A. in Humanities, major in Women's Studies.

The Women's Studies Consortium

In 1987, an informal group of women educators from schools that were offering some courses on women's studies came together to compare their experiences in introducing women's studies in their respective schools. This group included representatives from St. Scholastica's College, Miriam College, Philippine Women's University, University of the Philippines College of Social Work and Community Development, and De La Salle University.

After several fruitful meetings, they decided to organize themselves formally into a Women's Studies Consortium. Their aims: to discuss current trends in women's studies; to develop syllabi for different Women's Studies courses; to develop resource speakers on various women-related topics; and to mobilize each other's constituencies for concerted action on various women's issues.

The first national project launched by the consortium was the First Teachers' Training Seminar Workshop held in Los Baños on May 7-10, 1988. The main purpose of the conference was to interest other colleges and universities in women's studies. The different colleges and universities already offering women's studies narrated how they started their programmes and described the courses they were offering. Resource persons also gave some theoretical aspects of women's studies.

In 1992, the Women's Studies Consortium became the Women's Association of the Philippines to include not only institutional but also individual membership. Its main activities at present are holding regional and national conferences and teachers' training for women's studies and research on women's issues.

Impact of Women's Studies in the Philippines

It is too early to assess the national impact of women's studies in the Philippines. So far, only one or two schools have succeeded in making Women's Studies a part of the curriculum as a required subject.

At St. Scholastica's College, the annual evaluations of the Women's Studies course during the last 14 years show the remarkable impact of the course on the students. The evaluation questionnaire given by the Guidance Office to graduates includes the following questions: What changes in attitudes has the course effected in you? Did you experience any behavioral changes? Are there any ideas not clear to you? Are there ideas you don't agree with? Will you recommend this course to other students? The usual attitudinal change mentioned is the change of perspective in viewing the women's role in the family and society. A remarkable behavioral change mentioned by many is the gaining of self-esteem and self-confidence. Everyone has answered the question of recommending the course positively, and most do so with emphasis: "Yes, absolutely." Every year, 400 women graduate from the college. When one thinks that many of these women will be mothers who will practice a different way of child rearing, one can hope that somehow there will be some changes in the next generation.

The Institute of Women's Studies has received similar evaluations in the various courses it has offered for the last five years. Letters from the participants of the Trainers Training Seminar and the Intercultural Course show the deepening in commitment among the participants. The participants have reported the founding of Women's Crisis Centers, the launching of training programmes, and the offering of Women's Studies courses in their schools. To make a deeper and more systematic follow-up to these courses, the Institute held in August 1994 a reunion of the participants of the Intercultural Course for the last five years.

Women's Studies is at its infancy in the Philippines. So many things still need to be done as it continues to grow. But remarkable efforts have already been made by women in the academe and in the women's movements for the fulfillment of the agenda they have set out for themselves—to see a gender-fair education in the Philippines. Such education is indispensable in establishing a more egalitarian, a more just and humane Philippine society.

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FOSTERING GENDER EQUALITY IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Wong Wai Ching Angela

I. Introduction

Gender equality is central to any movement that seeks genuine peace and justice. For what is essential to the implementation of gender equality is a belief that nobody should be deprived of the right to live and to live well because of one's distinct bodily features or functions. It seeks unceasingly a vision of living well together as much as a living style that would appreciate the necessary tension between individual differences. Without such a belief and insistence to practice it, there could not be genuine peace and justice. In other words, gender equality is not about making everybody "equal" in a mathematical way, but rather, of creating spaces that would allow each single body to grow into all the different varieties that human talents and potentials could afford. But how well have our theological institutions been nurturing this understanding of gender equality? I would like to examine this question in the context of theological education in Asia.

II. The Myth of Jingwei

I would like to first begin with an ancient myth of China. The myth is titled *Jingwei tianhai* (the bird of *Jingwei* fills the sea). It is a myth about a mysterious bird named *Jingwei* which was originally understood to be the daughter of an ancient deity *Yendi* (god of the sun). This daughter of *Yendi* died of a tragic accident. She was drowned one day while swimming in the Sea of the East. After death, she turned into a bird with a white beak and red feet. From that point onward she has been carrying tree branches and rubbles from the Western mountain, trying to fill up the Sea of the East.¹ As a myth, the story needs to be carefully deciphered with regard to its complex geological and anthropological makeup. For example, there are studies that point toward an etiological explanation of the existence of an ancient bird (indeed *Jingwei* has been listed as a kind of bird in some ancient Chinese literature).² The geological imagination in the story is also very rich. If one knows the map of China, one would notice that the East has always been the Sea and the West the Himalayans. Both directions are taken as extremely holy in the Chinese tradition. As a story, *Jingwei* has often been included in poems and other literary traditions of China to tell the futility of human efforts in the event of calamities or difficult times.³ Indeed, a bird carrying tree branches and rubble, attempting to fill up the sea, is a task that could never be accomplished. Moreover, the protagonist of this short story is a woman who died an untimely death. Whether she did it for revenge on the sea that drowned her or she did it out of kindness for others so that nobody else should be drowned again, she was turned to a bird carrying out an impossible task. From this angle, the myth is almost like a Greek tragedy, retelling the doubly tragic fate of a young woman.

When I reflect on the general reception of feminist theology in the seminaries and theological schools around Asia, not to mention the Asian churches, I find it almost like the story of *Jingwei*. If feminist theology, despite its variant themes and approaches, represents a major theological movement to seek gender equality in the Church and society, the general

¹ Originally taken from *Shanghaijing*, now collected in *Shanghaijing jiaozhu*, ed. Yuan Ke (Rev. ed.; Chengdu: Bashu sushe, 1993), 112.

² Cf. "Feiqinmen" (the entry to birds), in *Taiping yulan*, ch. 975.

³ One of most famous poems written by an important Chinese literati-gentry, Wang Anshi, of the Song dynasty uses the same name of "jingwei," saying: "The grief of the royal daughter has never been resolved/ What could have her little wish accomplished?/ Down in one's heart one knows that branches and rubbles would redeem nothing/ Only to witness the ever changing of times" (my translation).

reluctance or even resistance to feminist theology at the frontline of theological reflection—seminaries and theological schools—in Asia represents a major failure in its effort. To date, many seminaries and theological schools in Asia have instituted a general elective course on feminist theology partly due to the pressure from our sisters and brothers in the international community. Rarely are there any genuine efforts in opening up new avenues in thinking theologically, reforming curriculum, or re-structuring theology faculties or student bodies that are still predominantly male. To this day, it is quite perfectly all right, in most cases, to teach a systematic theology course without referring to feminist theology, or to teach a biblical course without touching on feminist hermeneutics. While the pressure generated by the worldwide community to include at least an elective feminist course has indeed helped to enable greater participation and stronger presence of women in the theological arena, the discussion surrounding gender equality has, in my view, retreated from being an essential part of our theological vision to a more or less ecumenical rhetoric in most of our institutions. Resistance to the practice of gender equality from the congregations in general is even stronger.

To account for this situation, I often hear defense coming from two ends. First, that feminist theology as formulated is too western from the beginning. Second, that there are just not enough good, intelligent, scholarly women theologians around for the continuation or development of new curricula or inclusive theology. I would like to address them in the following.

First, the ecumenical agenda of contextualization makes it relatively easy to accuse feminist theology of being too western, regardless of its content. Even among some of our most outspoken feminist theologians, male and female, we find distaste for “Western” feminist theology and an appeal to do feminist theology with one’s indigenous Asian cultures.⁴ As a result, despite the heavily institutionalized western contents of most of our theological curricula, not the least systematic theology and biblical studies, feminist theology is often dismissed as a product of the west. And despite the fact that most of our theology faculty members take pride in their western theology training, feminist theologians are most often singled out as too westernized. While many of us find the political analysis of human rights, the Marxist revolutionary politics, or the liberation movement of the racial and ethnic minorities of the West an inspiration and a challenge, the feminist movement in the West is easily brushed off as too political or too radical. Feminist theology that takes gender equality as its primary concern is simply rejected or ignored whether it is mild or radical, blunt or articulate.

And yes, on the second defense, there are too few professionally trained women theologians in Asia. Then we must all ask why. It is impossible not to admit today that there are intelligent women around us living and working in the community. Many of them are highly respected by their fellow countrymen and women regarding their professional contribution in the society. But where have all the “intelligent” women gone in terms of theological education? And why did they stop or leave theological education if they didn’t finish? In my personal experience, I have met not a few women theologians with doctoral training who have had a difficult time finding a full time position in Asian theological institutions. Many of them are seen as “threatening” to the general congregation or of little use to the institutional churches. On a lighter note, not a few of the well-trained theological women “landed” in the homes of our brother theologians, constantly supplying the richest stimulation and interaction that any good thinker would need. There are still more women who are so discouraged at different levels of their social, familial, intellectual and institutional struggle that they barely reach the point of seeking advanced study or being publicly recognized. Looking back at my

⁴ I have critiqued the problem of placing Asian women squarely into some constructed identity of Asian up against an “imperial West” in my article, Wong Wai Ching, “Negotiating for a Postcolonial Identity: Theology of ‘the Poor Woman’ in Asia,” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* (2001): 5-23.

own journey I know how easily I could have dropped out from pursuing advanced theological study or teaching theology on every smallest turn of my life.

III. Two Approaches in Feminist Theology

Rather than laying blame on anyone, all seminaries and theological schools should seek way to overcome whatever obstacles are in the way to integrate the vision of gender equality into the heart of theological education. Where else if not from theological institutions we can start to take gender equality in our Christian formation seriously? To do that we need to go back to the question of the reason for feminist theology and how would it help to cultivate gender equality in the church and society of Asia. I propose that we should reformulate our understanding of feminist theology in Asia.

To begin, I would like to borrow the insights of a recent discussion of Elizabeth A. Clark⁵ an eminent church historian at Duke University for re-appropriating the role of feminist theology. Using the categories of “women’s studies,” “feminist studies,” and “gender studies,” Clark tries to delineate, in her original paper, the various radical challenges that women introduced to the field of church history. For her, seeing them from the context of church history, “women’s studies” names the approaches that focus specially on women, whether they are women mystics, witches or early church leaders, and etc. With slight shift of emphasis, “feminist studies” refers to approaches that stress the oppression of women wherever they are. Most radically different, “gender studies” is seen to challenge most fundamentally the question of methodology, truth and knowledge. Although Clark’s classification is debatable, it nevertheless helps to underline the various effects that concerns of gender equality have brought to Christian studies as a whole. I have reformulated her analysis into the following two approaches in feminist theology: first, a so-called “women’s question” approach, and second, an epistemological shift in theology.

3.1. *The “Women’s Question” Approach*

This phrase was most favorably used first among the missionaries from the West in the early twentieth century. It is an old usage corresponding to our common use of “women’s concerns” today. In retrospect, the attention given to the “women’s question” was the beginning of feminist theology. Such attention paid to the question of women crossed Clark’s categories of “women’s studies,” which focus on women’s groups alone, and “feminist studies,” which stresses the oppression of women. Focusing on primarily the oppressed women in society is how feminist theology in Asia starts as well. It describes very well the approaches taken up by a major portion of Asian feminist theological writings. Consequently, lists after lists of groups of oppressed women are being laid down: women trafficking, girl prostitutes, mail brides, sex tours, migrant women, comfort women, women exploited and dominated in industry, corporations, and families, women deprived of opportunities to education, employment and personal development, women discriminated against culturally and economically, etc.⁶ The idea of such an approach is that if there is only one group of women oppressed, all women are not free. In other words, the oppression of women in various corners is all connected.

⁵ Cf. Elizabeth A. Clark, “Women, Gender, and the Study of Christian History,” *Church History* 70: 3 (September 2001): 395-426.

⁶ The most representative list is found in the 1985 regional statement prepared by Asian Women’s Conference in Manila, for the Women’s Commission of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT). See “Final Statement: Asian Church Women Speak (Manila, Philippines, Nov. 21-30, 1985),” in *We Dare to Dream: Doing Theology as Asian Women*, ed. Fabella Virginia and Sun Ai Lee Park (Kowloon, Hong Kong: Asian Women’s Resource Centre for Culture and Theology; Manila, Philippines: EATWOT Women’s Commission in Asia, 1989), 148.

The basic effect of focusing on issues related to women is a clear articulation of the maltreatment of women around Asia and hence the demand on the churches and theology to respond. What does the Christian community have to say to the inhumane conditions that many of our sisters are facing? How do we interpret the Good News and God's mission to women in their misery and desperation caused by the various forms of oppression? This requires theology to go beyond providing "spiritual" direction and to engage in systematic structural analysis of our societies. As we all know, the general oppression and deprivation of women's opportunities for continuous growth are structural matters. It demands a thorough self-examination of values and practices among us in the church and a re-positioning and reforming of existing Christian practices if necessary. For instance, the dominant-subordinate model of relationship between the two sexes that is still prevalent in the Asian Christian community needs to be aborted.⁷

3.1. *An Epistemological Shift in Theology*

Feminist theology began with taking women as its primary subject of concern and continues to derive relevant strategies and responses to women in need. But feminist theology does not stop with women alone. From day one, feminist theologians declared their interest in not only women's liberation but also genuine human liberation. In other words, feminist theology aims to seek the good of the whole society. Unfortunately, in this process of seeking "the good," feminist theology challenges the fundamental assumptions of the whole theological discipline and announces its inadequacy. This creates for many an impression that feminist theology is only about complaints, power competition and ventilation of anger, hostility and revenge. Tension is heightened to a point that feminist theology is seen as introducing conflict and division in the community and bringing only the destruction of faith. Using Clark's category of "gender studies," I propose to look at feminist theology (including subjects such as feminist hermeneutics) not so much as studies about women alone, but rather as studies that go deep into the complexity of the relations between the sexes. This is what I call a shift of our epistemological paradigm in theology.

In the case of church history, for example, Clark finds the inclusion of "women's experience" open up again the primary categories of historical analysis such as periodization, social progress or social change. If the question of enlightenment were asked from the women's perspective, she proposes, it would be doubtful whether the same periodization would be accepted since women as "subject" was not put on the agenda until the eighteenth century. Due to its past negligence of women, the present categories in historical understanding are thus far from satisfactory. Similarly, in the case of systematic theology, many women find the understanding of sin, salvation and the understanding of God very much limited by the dominant male formulations.⁸ For instance, the question of Jesus' heroism is asked not only because of Jesus' being a man but also its individualistic, triumphant overtone.⁹ Further, in the case of biblical studies, once the question of women's presence is raised, everything ranging from methods of interpretation, hermeneutical principles, the canonicity of the books, to the authority of the Bible is open to be challenged.¹⁰ How do we reconcile the oppressive and the liberating elements of the Bible for women, for example? There is no straight path

⁷ See a recent argument proposed by Lina Gupta, "Kali the Savior," in *After Patriarchy: Feminist Interpretations of the World Religions* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1992), 15.

⁸ One of the more recent reflections on feminist Christology is found in Shalini Mulackal, "Feminist Christology in Asia," *Theology Digest* 48: 2 (Summer 2001): 107-110.

⁹ Hisako Kinukawa poses the question of Jesus' heroism further in the context of Japanese shame culture, arguing that Jesus, being a Jewish man, would not be able to redeem women without women's own initiative and active participation in the redemptive events. Cf. Hisako, *Women and Jesus in Mark: A Japanese Feminist Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Book, 1994).

¹⁰ Besides Hisako's, the most representative work by Asian feminist theologians is Kwok Pui Lan's *Discovering the Bible in the Non-Biblical World* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1995).

but a broad open road to our ongoing search in understanding God.

To use the words of Joan Wallach Scott, a historian: a radical epistemology implies the exposure of the often defining but silent and hidden operations of gender that are present in our societies.¹¹ To engage theology in gender studies therefore implies the need to reformulate theology anew as a discourse. To do that means one must acknowledge theology as not only produced in and out of a material world, but also as produced at the intersection and exchange between culturally produced, contesting subjects—whether they are men or women, oppressors or victims, or in most cases, both. Taking women as subjects seriously demands that we not only include women as a category in our theological reflection but also understand the nature of doing theology afresh. In other words, it is not about doing theology for women but a theology that takes every human being, man and woman, flesh and spirit, with all seriousness.

IV. “Martha and Mary” in Asia

I would like to illustrate my point of a genuine shift of epistemology in theology through two opposite interpretations of Martha and Mary found in Asia. It means that the story of Martha and Mary (Lk 10: 38-42) should not be seen only as a story for women but for all.

The first interpretation that takes account of women’s needs champions Mary over Martha. Such interpretation follows the lead of Jesus in the passage itself which says: “Mary has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken away from her” (v. 42; RSV). The interpretation that tries to read from the perspective of assuring women’s subjectivity departs from the typical interpretation that Mary is affirmed because she obeys Jesus and attends only to Lord’s words. Rather she is affirmed as a woman who chooses to pursue the way of the Lord over the traditional domestic role. Such a choice is affirmed by Jesus. As most women are still bonded to domestic duties whether they have a paid job outside of home or not, such affirmation foster the belief that women are just as valued by Jesus as men are.

Given all the social constraints on women as mothers and wives, the first re-reading of the Lukan story of Martha and Mary is indeed challenging. In response to Martha’s complaint of not being helped by her sister, Jesus’ response is surprisingly firm. Reading against the demands for women to fulfill unending domestic responsibilities, Jesus’ affirmation of Mary’s choice as the “only one thing” that is needed and that she has chosen “the better part” (v. 42; NRSV) is enlightening. In other words, Jesus is saying that women have a place in seeking the truth of God. And like all other male disciples, Mary’s choice is legitimate and cannot be taken away from her. Mary not only becomes the model of a “new” woman participating in public roles often assigned exclusively to men, but is also the model of women’s discipleship. Mary’s choice has become the choice of a liberated and yet faithful woman. This is a model that has given much energy and power to many Christian women around the world to go beyond their traditional roles and reach out for greater contribution to the various levels of society as well as the Church.

However, while this interpretation helps to chart an alternative path for women outside the traditional domestic sphere, it does not challenge the power of the privileged voice of Jesus as man or the authority of the church in defining who is more faithful. Why is Mary more preferred in the typical interpretation of the story but Martha remains the dominant model embraced by Christian teachings in family practice? One must ask: how much does the church really believe in the choice of Mary in a regular home? The deeper question is: does Jesus understand the “complaint” of Martha at all? Does he or the church, for this matter, understand the life of a woman like Martha at all? To push it further: is the affirmation of

¹¹ Joan Wallach Scott, “Women’s History,” in *Gender and the Politics of History* (Rev. ed.; New York: Columbia University, 1999), 27.

Mary's choice in fact a man's choice? Is the affirmation of Mary at the same time a denial of Martha who faithfully follows the caretaking role nurtured in her as well as many other women? In the end, which of the two women is more "faithful"?

While the "liberated" Mary is cherished by many Asian Christian women, such a model of discipleship has recently been challenged by women of Asia themselves. A woman novelist, Wu Xubin of Hong Kong once wrote a piece building on the narrative of Martha and Mary, which poses a very profound question to the understanding of Jesus among women. In her short novel, she writes about a woman working in the kitchen, cleaning, cooking and preparing plate after plate of food for her guests. Among her houseful of guests is this special wise man whose wisdom she admires very much. However, she feels passionately for her work, including every utensil she uses, all the ingredients she touches, cuts, and shapes. She loves to provide for people around her, while at the same time bearing much anxiety over whether the food is enough, the bedding is well prepared, or whether everybody finds satisfaction in their stay at her house, etc. And worse, she is left to do all the work by herself, whereas her sister is praised and supported by the wise teacher for sitting and listening among the other men. She finds the exchange of ideas out there in the sitting room interesting but most of the time too distanced from daily life. In that regard, she finds "Jesus" (never named in her novel) remote from her.

A Chinese woman pastor, Gao Ying, echoes the same reflection when she tries to understand the story in the Chinese context. According to her, rather than being ignorant and whining, Martha is a woman full of life and faithful to her task. Any interpretation that tries to put off Martha is a denial of women's dedication to their work in their daily living.¹² This is a highly controversial interpretation among feminists. Much debate could be drawn on the role of women and the meaning of women's liberation. Yet despite its controversy, what stands out from Gao's interpretation of the story of Martha and Mary is a need to understand women's experience in all its complex forms. Not one model of woman's discipleship is enough. Privileging one model of women's discipleship over another is, again, taking the power of "naming" away from them.

Most important, this is not an interpretation for the "redemption" of women alone. The fundamental question lies in the values we have constructed around men and women over the years. Therefore in our denial of women's traditional roles as mothers and wives, we rejoin the patriarchal system of valuing only work outside home, asserting that works in the public sphere are more important than works at home. This is not to say women should stay home and remain subordinate to the public power of men. Women have suffered enough in this prescribed order and there is definitely a need for change. However, change does not come through women's taking up men's roles or women learning to become men. We need changes to come from the other side as well. That is, for men to be aware of the need to be "mothers" and "wives." All of us should be critical of the patriarchal privileging of competitiveness, aggression, heroic individualism, and defining achievements in terms of personal honors and career titles. We see very clearly the destruction caused by the extension of such logic to the larger socio-political context as the 911 tragedy continues to unfold. It is time that we should prepare to nurture together a theological community that could appreciate both: activity and passivity, rationality and compassion, competitiveness and caring, individual maturity and mutual interdependence, be it for women or men. It calls for a radical shift of theological paradigm.

¹² Cf. Gao Ying, "Martha and Mary's Relationship with Jesus from a Feminist Perspective," *In God's Image* 13: 1 (Spring 1994): 60-63.

V. Conclusion

Finally I would like to revisit the myth of *Jingwei* introduced in the beginning of this paper. The drama of a drowned woman–turned–bird filling the sea unceasingly is depicted first as a drama of human futility. It marks the impossibility of some of our tasks. Looking at feminist theology as a woman’s thing and making it a nice adornment of liberal theological education serves neither harm nor much good. Women working alone to change gender hierarchy or to alter gender injustice is a task like the bird of *Jingwei* that does not yield long lasting fruits. Unless feminist theology is seen as a fundamental challenge to our existing values and an abundant resource for faith renewal for both women and men, our vision for a holistic humanity will remain only lip service.

On a last note, the story of *Jingwei* for women, whether our brothers come along or not, will be a story of women’s faithfulness as well. It shall be a testimony of their commitment in faith despite the churches’ denial of their rightful place. Despite the adversity and sometimes hostility they find in their experience with the various institutions or structures, they will continue to work unceasingly in response to the divine call: to be partners of God in living out a life toward peace and wholeness. The drama of *Jingwei* is also a drama of courage and persistence.

WOMEN IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION: A REFLECTION

Limatula Longkumer

This short reflection on theological education is done from an Indian woman's perspective and so the discussion is confined to theological education process within the Board of Theological Education of the Senate of Serampore Colleges (BTESSC) in India.

What is theological education?

Theological education is an integral part of higher Christian education. It is primarily understood as ministerial training for the church, an educational programme to prepare candidates for pastoral and other forms of ministries. The primary goal of theological education is to train ministers who will in turn equip congregations for God's mission. However, in a broader sense, theological education is not confined to ministerial training alone; rather it involves equipping the whole people of God. It is a continuous process in which the whole people of God is empowered for formation and transformation of the whole community. It aims to build a just and inclusive community.

Theological education should help us to engage in the dynamic process of people's experiences. People encounter different issues according to the changes time brings. Today we are living in a cyber society. It has brought limitless possibilities for humans as well as peculiar issues and problems we have never faced before. It has brought newer challenges. Issues like globalisation, inter-religious relationship, multiculturalism, fundamentalism, ecological crisis, women issues, dalits, tribal and indigenous people's struggles - all these impinge on our life and relationships. All these issues seem to be outside our traditional schemes of theological education. Today, the task of theological education lies in addressing these complex issues that emerge from our present context. It means demanding recourse and reformulation of our theological education and theological knowledge. Therefore, theological education needs to seek new avenues of knowledge to tackle the emerging issues in order to make education relevant to our people. Theological education should help us to penetrate into the areas that were not part of the traditional realms of knowledge. Without engaging in these issues, theological education will lose its value. Hence, it should help people to face these challenges in their practice of faith.

Theological Education in India

Indian society, regardless of all cultures and traditions in general, is a male dominated society where women are treated as inferior and dependent beings. Society places women in a position of subservience to and dependence on men. And so women are the most marginalised section in Indian society. Women issue is a societal issue for all, not only for women. Today the situation of women is improving gradually due to many awareness programmes on gender issues. Women themselves assert their rights and aspiration through forming the women's movement in theological circles. The feminist movement in the church emerged through two forces. Firstly, a new theological paradigm based on the experiences of women came out of the inspiration of the secular women's movement in India and not because of any reform movement in the church. Secondly, the feminist movement in the West inspired them. The sufferings and injustices of women's reality have become a context in which Christian women have begun their reflections on the liberating power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

During the last two decades, several national and regional seminars, consultations and symposiums have been initiated in India through the Board of Theological Education and Churches on women's issues. It is very encouraging to see that a sense of awareness towards gender justice has been created in theological education in India. Today in many theological

colleges, we have a department of women's studies or at least a course on women's studies is being offered. The Lutheran Theological College and Research Institute in Chennai offers Master of Theology Degree on Women's Studies. These are important steps in theological education and the university should continue to encourage and promote such initiatives. However, there is yet much more to be done towards gender awareness. Women are still not given their rightful place in the theological education and ministry of the church.

In spite of the initiative taken by Board of Theological Education on women's issues, theological education in India is still a male-oriented education process. In this male structured education process only very little encouragement is given to women. Moreover, the theology that we have inherited from the West is also a male-biased anthropocentric theology and so there is hardly any room for women to be there comfortably. The symbols, metaphors, concepts, and language have been so male oriented in the approach to and content of education. Until and unless the whole theological education orientation is changed to inclusiveness we cannot do justice to women. Some of the problems that women face in theological education are explained below.

Student ratios: Women students are far fewer than the male students in most of the theological colleges in India. In master's and higher levels of theological education, women are still fewer. Why are women not interested in theological studies? Or why is women's enrolment so low in seminaries? The reason is that the churches prefer male candidates than female and so the churches recommend more men than women for theological training. A wrong notion among the people is that only men can serve faithfully in the ministry. It is believed that women after marriage cannot be involved in ministry due to childbearing and family responsibilities. Therefore, a general understanding among people is that investment in women's theological education is a waste of time and resources. Because of this wrong assumption, many women are being discouraged from taking up theological studies, even though they have the interest and desire to go for full time ministry. Another reason why women's enrolment is less is due to limited accommodation facilities for women in theological colleges and seminaries. Most of theological colleges have very limited dorm facilities for women. The reason is that in the past only men used to come for theological studies and so the infrastructure was made according to those needs. Women going for theological studies are only a recent development. Because of the limited space, only a few women can be accommodated in theological colleges.

Faculty recruitment: There are 48 theological colleges affiliated to the Serampore University (theological university in India). In these colleges there are about 440 full time teaching faculty members. Out of these 440 teachers, there are only 47 women in teaching positions including those on study leave. It means women theological teachers in India constitute less than little more than 10% of all faculty members. In 15 colleges, there is not a single woman faculty in the college. Women remain underrepresented in the teaching ministry. This shows the imbalanced recruitment of theological teachers. If women are not encouraged to go for theological studies how can they be recruited to the teaching faculty?

Curriculum: As mentioned above, theological education in India today shows positive signs of gender awareness. The Serampore University has incorporated Women's Studies as a branch in the theological curriculum at the graduate and post-graduate levels of study. In spite of all this, we have not achieved gender justice yet either in theological colleges or in other forms of ministries. It shows that an addition of one subject or department alone is not enough to bring gender justice in the church and society. Often those courses on women's concerns end up as a course exclusively for a few women. Indeed, those subjects on women become literally elective courses exclusively for women. Some male students complete their course without even having a course on women's concerns. Therefore, the curriculum should be designed in such a way that women's perspectives are fully integrated in the curriculum.

Theological education needs to integrate women's perspectives on theological education not only for pedagogical principle but also to do justice to the theological curriculum. It should be incorporated within major theological instruction with equal focus on female theologians, so that women's concerns are thoroughly reflected in the theological curriculum.

Problem of Placement for Theologically Trained Women

Today, many young women experience the call of God for full time ministry. So, in spite of the restrictions on women entering theological studies, women's enrolment is increasing gradually in theological colleges and seminaries. But after the training in seminary, churches are not offering equal opportunity for them to be involved fully in ministry. Women are given secondary roles with limited opportunity in ministry. Women are not ordained in many churches to this day. A few churches have started ordaining women, but still they are negligible in number. Many churches do not give pastoral ministry to women. So, women are barred from the leadership role in the church's ministry. Once they are barred in the leadership roles, then they are automatically barred from the decision making body. Unless the churches open the space for women's involvement for ministry, receiving theological studies becomes meaningless and we can say that there is no partnership of men and women in ministry. It is only when the nature of true partnership is lived out by men and women in all aspects of life, then the true nature of the church as the Body of Christ will be realised. It is not only men, but both men and women who should work together as equal partners to transform this unjust system.

Suggestions

Theological education should aim to build an inclusive community where the equal partnership of both women and men exists. To achieve a holistic theological education, some of these points need to be considered:

1. *A holistic character of theological education* needs to be formulated, combining spirituality, academic excellence, mission and evangelism, gender justice and peace, pastoral sensitivity and competence, and the formation of character. Such holistic education needs to be worked out in the educational process. The present theological education process ignores women's issues. It is highly academic and theoretical and one-sided education. It is also detached from the actual situation of the people. Therefore, curricula that integrate balanced voices of the marginalised in theological education become imperative and crucial.
2. Women's *experiences* must be taken seriously as a critical and primary source for theological education. A theological study that neglects one section of the human race, namely women, cannot be considered as authentic theology. Women's studies should not be confined to classrooms. Instead of an optional course, one course on women's studies must be made compulsory for all theological students. It will help students to understand clearly the injustice links between men and women. Apart from the inclusion of one subject, women's experiences of the reality of life must be consciously integrated in the whole process of theological education - the sufferings and daily experiences of the women have to become an integral part of doing theology. Otherwise, theological education will miss its primary focus and goal. The integration of the perspectives of women in theological education will create awareness of discriminatory gender realities and help people to do something concrete to change this oppressive situation.
3. *Equal opportunity should be given to women.* Today women are not represented significantly in theological faculties; women students in theological colleges are much fewer than men; women are not in the decision-making bodies just because they are not given the opportunity. A gender awareness education alone is not enough, but it should

be put into practice. We should be sensitive to who is missing at the table: women are absent in the Council, Faculty and other decision-making bodies. We should make conscious effort to give equal opportunity to women.

4. *Reserve scholarships for women.* Special scholarships for women need to be created for all levels of theological studies. A certain quota of seats must also be reserved for women in theological colleges. Criteria for awarding scholarships must be relaxed for women. Such opportunities will encourage and promote women in theological education.
5. *Partnership in ministry:* Theological colleges and the church are interrelated. Both have a familial relationship. A change in theological curriculum alone is not enough. The churches need to be opened to the changes. Therefore, the present patriarchal structures of church ministry need to be changed if the partnership of men and women is to be realised fully. If the Church is to be the Church, we must strive for healthy participation of women in all the ministries of the church. The question of women's participation in the ministry should be approached not from the point of superiority or inferiority nor submission or obedience, but from the point of partnership. Partnership means mutuality and interdependence. This is the need of the hour in our churches today.
6. *Solidarity:* Theological education must be done in solidarity with the suffering. Women are the most sufferers in all societies. The sufferings of the women are due to different forms of oppressions, discrimination, harassment and exploitation, domestic violence, dowry deaths, poverty, etc. Women in their daily life encounter all these sufferings. Theological education should reflect sharply on this situation of suffering. God always shows a preferential option to the poor and the dispossessed. Therefore, theological education should be a way of sharpening one's sensitivity to the oppressed and at the same time liberating them from all forms of social evil. This is the task of theological education needed today.

**COMO LAS INSTITUCIONES TEOLOGICAS
PROMUEVEN LA IGUALDAD ECUMÉNICA Y DE GENERO**

Violeta Rocha

*Ven Santo Espíritu,
Renueva nuestra reflexión
Y nuestra práctica!*

Durante nuestra última reunión de Comité Directivo, realizado en Noviembre pasado en San Leopoldo, Brasil, reflexionábamos sobre la naturaleza y razón de ser de la comunidad de educación teológica latinoamericana y caribeña (CETELA). Esta comunidad busca ser un **espacio ecuménico** para el diálogo, el intercambio de experiencias, la generación de procesos educativos diversos, la producción teológica y la participación de instituciones teológicas de distintas partes del continente latinoamericano y del Caribe, donde la convivencia de unas más grandes que otras es posible.

Las experiencias de educación teológica en un continente como el nuestro, marcado por una pluralidad de tradiciones de fe y una presencia muy fuerte de una diversidad de rostros¹, necesariamente tienen que pasar, principalmente, por dos ejes transversales: *el eje del ecumenismo y el de la igualdad de género*. Decimos principalmente porque creemos que hay además otros ejes transversales que son muy importantes y que están en relación directa con los que acabamos de mencionar.

Desaprender para aprender: hacia una formación teológica ecuménica².

La anterior afirmación tiene mucha pertinencia cuando nos referimos a CETELA y por esta razón consideramos tan necesaria la interacción entre teología y pedagogía. Tal como cita la «Memoria de la VI Jornada Teológica de CETELA»: *“No se trata tan sólo de discernir pedagógicamente cómo es que cada uno de los rostros de Abya-Yala aprende y elabora su teología; también se trata de que las instituciones de educación teológica se dejen permear y puedan recrear sus métodos y estrategias pedagógicas. Hasta ser capaces de modificar las formas sexistas, jerárquicas y racionales de enseñar; de tal forma que se pueda dar lugar a la lógica del corazón, a la reciprocidad que haga flexibles los roles docente-discente y a una cultura institucional de equidad de género”*.³

Los procesos de desaprender para aprender siguen siguiendo todavía muy complejos. Esta dinámica, que tiene un carácter permanente, requiere de estrategias y de una visión de lo que queremos lograr como instituciones teológicas. Un clamor que llega reiteradamente desde las luchas que las mujeres sostenemos desde los diferentes planos de la vida cotidiana, es la formulación de estrategias para viabilizar nuestra visión de

¹ Desde los procesos de CETELA, en conjunto con la Asociación Ecumenica de Teologos del Tercer Mundo (ASETT), se ha venido desarrollando este concepto de rostros, con el que queremos indicar los colectivos humanos y eclesiales tradicionalmente marginados histórica y socialmente. Estos rostros pertenecen a mundos constituidos y están en proceso de afirmación de su identidad teológica.

² Jacques Nicole, ex director del Instituto Ecuménico de Bossey, Céligny, Switzerland, escribió un sugerente artículo en la revista *Etudes Théologiques et Religieuses* en el año 1994 a partir de su experiencia de educación teológica en Tahití y de la experiencia de colonización.

³ Memoria de la VI Jornada de Teología de CETELA “Abya-Yala y sus rostros, formación teológica y transversalidad”, realizada en Cumbayá, Ecuador del 2 al 6 de julio del 2000.

una sociedad, una comunidad, una iglesia, una institución más equilibrada, armoniosa y justa.

Nuestras instituciones de educación teológica cuentan con su propio itinerario teológico y pedagógico, vividos en diferentes escenarios de la vida política, económica y social latinoamericana y caribeña. Dichos itinerarios están marcados con mayor o menor énfasis por la incorporación de la teoría de género, el valor de la solidaridad, el análisis de la realidad y las teologías emergentes. Evidentemente todo esto ha sido producto de las transformaciones curriculares que intentan acercar la educación teológica a la realidad de los contextos y contribuir al proyecto de iglesias diferentes, participativas, democráticas y sostenibles.

En este proceso de desaprender para aprender, se han producido rupturas, algunos imposibles de conciliar, y nuevas epistemologías se perfilan para seguir el camino. Sin embargo, el ritmo de las instituciones no es el mismo, y esa es la razón por la que los principios de una igualdad ecuménica y de género se tornan reflexiones hacia las que hay que apuntar con mayor pasión en los próximos años.

Igualdad ecuménica y género: convergencias y diferencias

Estamos muy acostumbrados a hablar de ecumenismo, pero no tan profundamente de *igualdad ecuménica*. Yo misma me pregunto, ¿qué quiere decir esto? ¿Cómo interpretar este requerimiento de igualdad en las relaciones ecuménicas? Es decir, ¿cómo llevar a la praxis este principio de la igualdad en las relaciones ecuménicas?

Las instituciones que componen CETELA pretenden facilitar el acceso igualitario de los diferentes rostros a la educación teológica. Sin embargo, esto no asegura que nuestras instituciones sean aún escuelas de teologías igualitarias. Pero este es un proceso que requiere de muchas etapas, en las que el diálogo entre las instituciones y los diferentes grupos que hacen teología es muy necesario.

Un enfoque de nuestra pasada jornada teológica se llamó “Diálogo Teológico Transversal”. Este espacio culminó en una discusión abierta sobre las convergencias, diferencias e interpelaciones entre los rostros. La teología indígena, la teología afroamericana, la teología campesina, la teología feminista, la teología pentecostal y el grupo de las instituciones teológicas, apuntaban hacia un elemento vital para hablar de igualdad ecuménica. Y hoy en un contexto cada vez más marcado por la pobreza, la violencia y la injusticia presenta un desafío a nuestras escuelas de teología. ¡Es el elemento de *comunidad*!

Hablamos de comunidad desde diferentes perspectivas: encuentro, familia, historia, identidades, diversidad, culturas, vida fraterna, ancestralidad, tradiciones, y cotidianidad. En fin, me atrevo a decir que hablamos de convergencias y diferencias. Esta discusión me hizo reflexionar sobre mi experiencia de mujer nicaragüense, habiendo vivido los diferentes momentos de la vida nacional, incluyendo dictadura y revolución. En mi itinerario personal, muchas veces llegué a pensar en la comunidad ideal, ese paraíso perdido, ¡si es que alguna vez existió! Los últimos años me han hecho pensar que idealizar la comunidad ha sido motivo de lucha, pero por qué no decirlo, a veces también es frustrante. Haciendo una síntesis rápida de mi experiencia como educadora en una institución ecuménica, me doy cuenta de que precisamente debemos apostar por la igualdad ecuménica, por la convivencia y por lo que algunos llaman una cooperación intercultural⁴

⁴ Geert Hofstede en su libro, *Software of the Mind, Intercultural Cooperation and its Importance for Survival*, hace un interesante aporte a este tema.

Desde esta perspectiva de cooperación intercultural, considero muy valioso el eje teológico que es la *Koinonía*. Vivir juntos y juntas, o convivir, es un tema en sí nada nuevo, si no tan viejo como la humanidad misma. *Koinonía* es un concepto ecuménico muy utilizado en la búsqueda de la unidad de la iglesia. Pero además, la *koinonía* es un proceso pedagógico que pasa por la participación, la inclusión, la deconstrucción y la reconstrucción. Procesos de *koinonía* se viven al interior de las instituciones teológicas, con relación a otras tradiciones de fe y, por supuesto, en un sentido muy amplio, con lo que llamamos el mundo y la naturaleza misma. Estos procesos pedagógicos tienen implicaciones políticas en el mundo en que vivimos, inclusive en los conflictos existenciales que nos enfrentan a la coherencia, o falta de, entre lo que decimos y lo que hacemos. Un pensamiento afirma “Es con palabras y con actos que nos insertamos en el mundo humano. Esto equivale a un segundo nacimiento”.

Promover la igualdad ecuménica desde nuestras instituciones nos desafía a hacer un examen profundo del presente, como fenómeno de ruptura entre el pasado y el futuro. El análisis del presente lo conocemos, lo vemos y lo vivimos. Dicho análisis nos indica el peligro que corre la condición humana en cuanto a su sobrevivencia; las posibilidades de las nuevas generaciones son limitadas. Hannah Arendt, una filósofa política de nuestro siglo, afirma que es a partir de la condición humana que se desarrollan los espacios públicos donde se ejerce la palabra y la acción⁵. Ella va más al fondo cuando dice que en la libertad y la política se fundamenta la condición humana de coexistencia (¿pluralidad?). No existimos en singular, mas coexistimos en lo plural.

Más allá del género: vino nuevo en odres viejos

¡Más allá del género⁶! Realmente la frase es muy sugerente. ¿Será que en las instituciones teológicas que conforman CETELA, hemos hablado lo suficiente acerca de las teorías de género y que ahora necesitamos ir más allá? ¿O será que la herramienta de análisis es el principio de todo un recorrido más amplio? Evidentemente los itinerarios de nuestras instituciones son diversos y, como mencioné al principio, tienen diferentes ritmos. Posiblemente debamos de hablar de “maduración teológica”.

El grupo que se identificó con la teología feminista y género en nuestra pasada Jornada Teológica en Ecuador, recogió una afirmación reiterada varias veces: “vino nuevo en instituciones viejas”. Esta maduración teológica que buscamos debe ser un esfuerzo por la apropiación de las convicciones que generan estas teologías, para que puedan posicionarse dentro de las filosofías, dentro de las instituciones.⁷ Desde las diversas teologías hay un fuerte clamor por recrear los currículos desde un espíritu de transversalidad, entendiendo este espíritu como el hecho de caminar juntos en la reciprocidad, la posibilidad de construir juntos, de aportar a una espiritualidad más holística. Como apuntaba un documento de la jornada, “la transversalidad teológica es que armonicemos nuestras diferencias”.

Uno de los desafíos más grandes de nuestras instituciones teológicas es precisamente el cuestionamiento hacia las metodologías y pedagogías de la enseñanza. Es necesarios profundizar las vías, los caminos, las formas para el diálogo entre los géneros. Pero hay

⁵ *La condición humana*, obra publicada en 1958.

⁶ Anaida Pascual, pedagoga puertorriqueña, nos introdujo al tema de “Más allá del Género”, en el II Encuentro de Profesoras de Teología y Género, auspiciado por la UBL y CETELA, realizado en Managua, Nicaragua en el año 2000.

⁷ “Abaya-Yala y sus Rostros, Formación Teológica y Transversalidad”, VI Jornada Teológica de CETELA, Ecuador, 2000, CETELA, Editorial Kimpres Ltda., Bogotá, Colombia, 2001, p.98.

que ir más allá. CETELA ha sido desafiada a ser un espacio para el desarrollo de una metodología que pueda gestar una cultura de negociación, de intercambio de saberes, en la que se encuentren los puntos comunes y también se respeten los puntos divergentes. La interacción de teología y pedagogía es un proceso que amerita tiempo, voluntad política y el tener conciencia de la diversidad. Todo es parte de un proceso de maduración teológica de los diferentes rostros teológicos, pero también de las instituciones teológicas.

No hay que ser ingenuos y pensar que los procesos pedagógicos están libres de conflictos y de tensiones. Otro desafío para CETELA es construir pedagogías de resistencia, fundamentadas en las diferencias culturales y sociales en el contexto de una economía globalizada. La Dra. Pascual citó a una investigadora y educadora hindú, Chandra Talpade Mohanty ⁸: *“Para transformar radicalmente las instituciones educativas, los conocimientos deben ser entendidos pedagógicamente como cuestiones de estrategia y práctica, más que como saberes académicos”*.

Quisiera terminar diciendo que las instituciones que componen CETELA hemos insistido en la articulación academia-pueblo, buscando que mujeres y hombres reales sean el referente de nuestro quehacer teológico; que sean quienes dinamicen y cuestionen permanentemente nuestro modelo teológico y así evitar una mera retórica contextual.⁹ Desde esta perspectiva, la expresión “vino nuevo en odres viejos” cobra un profundo significado para trabajar no solo en los cambios a nivel de currículos, sino también en cambios de actitud que generen congruencia entre el pensar, el sentir y el hacer. Son inmensas las posibilidades para recrear, para la alegría, para la pasión, para el derecho a desarmonizar y disentir, y también ¡para lograr un vino de mejor calidad!

⁸ Del libro *On Race and Voice: Challenges for Liberation Education in the 1990's*.

⁹ Mandato de la V Jornada Teológica de CETELA, realizada en Matanzas, Cuba.

**HOW THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTIONS PROMOTE
ECUMENICAL AND GENDER EQUALITY***

Violeta Rocha

*Come Holy Spirit,
renew our thinking and our practice!*

At the last meeting of our steering committee in San Leopoldo, Brazil, in November 2001, we reflected on the nature and *raison d'être* of the Latin American and Caribbean Community for Theological Education (CETELA). This community seeks to be an **ecumenical space** for dialogue, for exchanging experiences, generating a variety of educational processes, producing theology, and encouraging theological institutions in different parts of the Latin American continent and the Caribbean, whether large or small, to participate and work together.

Experiences in theological education in a continent such as ours, strongly marked by a plurality of faith traditions and a great diversity of “faces”,¹ must of necessity follow two principal transversal axes, which are *ecumenism* and *gender equality*. We say “principal” because we believe other very important axes are also directly involved here.

Unlearning in order to learn: towards an ecumenical theological formation²

The idea of unlearning in order to learn is very relevant to CETELA. This is why we believe the interaction between theology and pedagogy is so necessary. To quote the minutes of CETELA's fourth theological congress: *“It is not simply a matter of discerning pedagogically how each one of the faces of Abya-Yala learns and elaborates its theology; the institutes of theological education have to allow themselves to be permeated by them so that they can recreate their pedagogical methods and strategies. And even become capable of modifying the sexist, hierarchical and intellectualised forms of teaching to make way for the logic of the heart, for reciprocity that will bring flexibility to the roles of teacher — student, and an institutional culture of gender equity.”*³

The process of unlearning in order to learn is always very complicated. It is an ongoing dynamic that requires theological institutions to develop strategies and a vision of what they want to achieve. In the constant struggle of daily life, women have again and again called for strategies to achieve our vision of societies, communities, churches, institutions that are more balanced, harmonious and just.

Our institutions of theological education have their own theological and pedagogical journeys and experience in the different contexts of political, economic and social life in Latin America and the Caribbean. Along these journeys they have, to a greater or lesser extent, incorporated

* Translated from Spanish by Elizabeth Cook of the Latin American Biblical University (UBL).

¹ This concept of “faces” has been developed in the reflection processes in CETELA, in conjunction with the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT), and we use it to mean the human and church groups that have traditionally been socially and historically marginalised. These faces belong to recognisable worlds that are in the process of affirming their theological identity.

² Jacques Nicole, former director of the Ecumenical Institute Bossey, Céligny, Switzerland, wrote a thought-provoking article in the review *Etudes théologiques et religieuses* in 1994, based on his experience of theological education in Tahiti and the experience of colonialism.

³ Report of the 6th theological congress of CETELA “Abya-Yala y sus rostros, formación teológica y transversalidad”, held from 2 – 6 July 2000, in Cumbayá, Ecuador.

gender theory, the value of solidarity, analysis of the social situation, emerging theologies, among others. All this has obviously been the result of changes in curricula, seeking to bring theological education closer to the reality of the different contexts, and to contribute to a project of building new churches — more participatory, democratic and sustainable.

This process of unlearning in order to learn has produced ruptures, some of them irreconcilable, and new epistemologies are emerging for the way ahead. Nevertheless, institutions do not move at the same rate, and this is why in the years ahead we must turn with greater passion to reflecting on the principles of ecumenical and gender equality.

Ecumenical and gender equality: convergences and divergences

We are quite accustomed to talking about ecumenism, but not so much about *ecumenical equality*. I have asked myself what this means. How are we to interpret this demand for equality in ecumenical relations? or, to put it another way, how is the principle of equality in ecumenical relations to be put into practice? The institutions belonging to CETELA want to facilitate equal access to theological education for all the different “faces”. However, this does not necessarily mean that our institutions have already become egalitarian schools of theology. This is a process which will have to go through many stages, requiring dialogue between the institutions and the different groups doing theology.

One of the main topic of our recent theological congress was named “Transversal Theological Dialogue”. This session ended in an open discussion on the convergences, differences and challenges that exist among the “faces” of theology. Indigenous theology, African-American theology, campesino theology, feminist theology, Pentecostal theology and the group of theological institutions all highlighted an element which I believe is vital in talking about ecumenical equality. And today in a context of increasing poverty, violence and injustice, it presents a greater challenge than ever before to our schools of theology. I am referring to *community*.

We talked about community from different points of view : encounter, families, history, identities, diversity, cultures, fellowship, ancestors, traditions and daily life... in short, I would say, in terms of convergences and differences. This discussion made me think of my own experience as a Nicaraguan woman having lived through different moments in our national life, including dictatorship and revolution. In my personal journey I have often reflected on the ideal community, the lost paradise, if such a thing ever really existed. Recent years have taught me that the ideal of community has been a motive for struggle and, why not say it, also a source of frustration. Taking a quick look back at my experience as an educator in an ecumenical institution, I realise that we have to work for ecumenical equality, community and what some call inter-cultural cooperation.⁴

From the point of view of inter-cultural cooperation, I consider the theological theme of *koinonia* to be extremely valuable. Community, living together, is not a new theme as such, indeed it is as old as humanity itself. *Koinonia* has often been used as an ecumenical concept in the quest for church unity. But, beyond that, *koinonia* is also a pedagogical process involving participation, inclusion, deconstruction and reconstruction. Processes of *koinonia* can be experienced inside theological institutions, in relation to other faith traditions and, of course, in a wider sense, in what we call the world and nature itself. These educational processes have political implications in the world in which we live, including existential conflicts which challenge us to coherence between what we say with what we do. It has been

⁴ Geert Hofstede makes some interesting remarks on this topic in his book *Software of the Mind. Intercultural Cooperation and its Importance for Survival*.

said, "It is through speech and action that we insert ourselves in the human world. This amounts to a second birth."

Promoting ecumenical equality, beginning with our institutions, challenges us to study closely the phenomenon of the present, as the gap between past and future. The present is something we know and see and experience. Our analysis of it shows us the human condition, the dangers to human survival, the limited possibilities available to future generations. Hannah Arendt, a 20th century political philosopher, has said that it is part of the human condition to develop the public realm where speech and action are used ⁵ She goes on to say that human life together (plurality?) is rooted in freedom and political life. We do not exist in the singular, we coexist in the plural.

Beyond gender : new wine in old skins

Beyond gender! ⁶ This is a very thought-provoking phrase. Have we in the theological institutions belonging to CETELA really talked enough about gender theories to say that we now need to go on beyond them? Or is this tool of analysis perhaps the start of a much longer journey? Obviously, our institutions have travelled different paths and, as I said at the beginning, at a different rate. Should we perhaps speak of "a theological maturing process"?

The group working on feminist and gender theology at our last theological congress in Ecuador picked up one phrase that was reiterated several times: "new wine in old institutions". The theological maturing process we are aiming for must seek to appropriate the convictions generated by these theologies, so that they can take their place in our philosophies, in our institutions". ⁷ The different theologies are crying out for our curricula to be recreated in a spirit of transversality, this being understood as journeying together in a spirit of reciprocity; being able to build together and contribute to a more holistic spirituality. As the final document of the congress put it, "theological transversality means harmonizing our differences".

One of the greatest challenges for our theological institutions is precisely the question of pedagogy and teaching methods. The ways, channels, forms for dialogue between the genders need to be developed, but we must go beyond this. CETELA has been challenged to provide a space for developing a methodology that will engender a culture of negotiation, an exchange of knowledge in which the commonalities are recognised and the divergences are respected. The interaction between theology and pedagogy is a process which calls for time, political will and awareness of diversity. It is all part of the theological maturing process of the different "faces" doing theology, but also of the theological institutions.

It would be ingenuous to think that pedagogical processes are free of conflict and tensions. Another challenge for CETELA is to develop pedagogies of resistance, rooted in cultural and social differences in the context of a globalized economy. Anaida Pascual quoted a Hindu researcher and educator, Chandra Talpade Mohanty:⁸ "If educational institutions are to be radically transformed, knowledge has to be understood pedagogically as having to do with strategy and practice, rather than academic knowledge."

⁵ *The Human Condition* published in 1958.

⁶ Anaida Pascual, a Puerto Rican educationist, introduced us to the theme "Beyond Gender" at the 2nd encounter of women teachers of theology and gender, sponsored by UBL and CETELA, held in Managua, Nicaragua in 2000.

⁷ *Abya-Yala y sus rostros, Formación teológica y transversalidad*, Ecuador, 2000, CETELA, Editorial Kimpres Ltda., Bogota, Colombia, 2001, p. 98.

⁸ From the book *On Race and Voice: Challenges for Liberal Education in the 1990s*

Let me conclude by saying that the institutions that form CETELA have insisted on the link between the academic world and the people. We try to make real men and women the reference point for our theological work, so that our theological model is constantly energised and questioned by them and does not become mere contextual rhetoric.⁹ From this point of view, the phrase “new wine in old skins” has a deep significance, not only for changes in our curricula, but also for a change of attitude in search of harmony between thinking, feeling and doing. There are tremendous opportunities here for recreation, for joy, for passion, for the right to disagree and dissent – and also for producing a better quality of wine!

⁹Mandate of the 5th theological congress of CETELA, held in Matanzas, Cuba.

GÊNERO E RAÇA NA FORMAÇÃO TEOLÓGICA DA IECLB¹

Rosane Pletsch

1- Informações Preliminares

Quero compartilhar, em primeiro lugar, a origem e razões da reflexão que aqui apresento. Considero importante mencionar isto, visto que a escritura de um texto sempre é contextual e obedece a um determinado objetivo. O pedido para abordar este assunto veio do Programa Ecumênica de Educação Teológica do CMI foi o facilitador da terceira reunião do Círculo Lusófono de Teólogas Africanas², em Angola, no ano de 2001. Esta organização de mulheres tem por objetivo, sistematizar e divulgar a teologia produzida pelas mulheres africanas ou afro-descendentes. Também pretende motivar estudantes de teologia a integrarem as categorias de gênero e raça em seu fazer teológico. Neste contexto, lembro de memória um poema de um cantor negro brasileiro Gilberto Gil, que diz:

“Negra é a mão.
É a mão da pureza.
Negra é a vida consumida ao pé do fogão.
Negra é a mão, nos preparando a mesa,
limpando as manchas do mundo com água e sabão.
Negra é a mão, de imaculada nobreza”.

Sabe-se que, no Brasil, são as mãos negras de mulheres as que limpam o fogão e que lavam com sabão. São estas mãos negras que lutam pela paz, que produzem e repartem o pão. Por isso mesmo, são as mãos de mulheres mãos nobres. Mas, contrariamente, estas mãos, o que elas fazem, o espírito que as impulsiona, a vida que carregam, suas revoltas e seus atos não constam nos livros, nem são objeto de reflexão teológica.³

O presente texto, em sua origem, estava previsto para abordar o tema “mulheres e formação teológica no Brasil, perpassado pela experiência do Círculo Lusófono de Mulheres Teólogas”. São muitas as denominações, os movimentos religiosos, as faculdades e centros de formação em teologia existentes no Brasil. São muitas as mulheres que estudam teologia, muitas vezes longe das faculdades de teologia, via de regra, denominacionais. Em função disto, o alcance deste estudo foi limitado ao âmbito de uma igreja apenas, a IECLB, a qual pertencço.

A escolha destes fragmentos remete a metodologia usada neste texto, que é a de possibilitar uma incursão no tema em estudo, a partir do olhar e experiência específicos da autora com o assunto. Classifiquei momentos em que se insere ou não gênero e raça como grandezas teórico-práticas na formação teológica da IECLB, conforme eu as vivenciei e pude perceber. Trata-se, portanto, de um conhecimento situado, corporificado, sem a pretensão da objetividade universal.⁴ A escolha dos fragmentos que o texto registra e não de outros se deve, seguramente, porque foram vividos e deixaram suas marcas em mim.⁵ O fato de me situar no interior do momento que procuro descrever e compartilhar dá ao texto um sabor atuante.

¹ Igreja Evangélica de Confissão Luterana no Brasil

² veja artigo da Rev. Eva Cosme na revista “Formação Ministerial”, número 96, de janeiro de 2002, página 60 da versão em Português e página 63 da versão em Inglês.

³ Os termos “negro e negra” são aqui usados para designar pessoas com raízes africanas. Também tem uma conotação política no sentido de preservar a identidade destas pessoas.

⁴ Sandra AZERÊDO, *Teorizando Sobre Gênero e Relações Raciais*, p. 211.

⁵ Suely ROLNIK, *Pensamento, Corpo e Devir*, p. 246.

2- Mulheres e Formação Teológica na IECLB

A abordagem sobre o tema “mulheres e formação teológica na IECLB” requer uma abordagem mais ampla sobre a entrada e permanência das mulheres na Faculdade de Teologia.

Em 1946 cria-se a Faculdade de Teologia da IECLB, em São Leopoldo. Este processo foi desencadeado pelos desdobramentos da Segunda Guerra Mundial, que impossibilitou a prática de enviar estudantes brasileiros à Alemanha para se formarem em teologia ou, então, de pedir o envio de pastores da Alemanha para trabalharem no Brasil.⁶ O interesse das mulheres pelo estudo da teologia remonta aos anos de 1952. As três primeiras estudantes desistiram no primeiro ano de estudo.⁷ A primeira estudante a formar-se em teologia data do ano de 1966 e somente a quarta mulher a formar obteve a ordenação somente em 1983.⁸

No vestibular de 2002, ingressaram 62 novas alunas e alunos, dos quais 32 são mulheres e 30 são homens. Esta é a primeira vez na história da Faculdade de Teologia da IECLB, em que o número maior de estudantes matriculados são mulheres. O curso de teologia na IECLB forma profissionais em três áreas: a pastoral, a diaconal e a catequética. Destas, 47 se preparam para o ministério pastoral (25 homens e 22 mulheres); 10 para o diaconal (8 mulheres e dois homens); 5 para o ministério catequético (3 mulheres e dois homens)⁹ Como se pode perceber através destes dados, a diaconia e a educação são uma espécie de “porta de entrada”, para a formação teológica de mulheres na IECLB. Como o ministério diaconal na IECLB tem em seu meio pessoas de origem afro-descendente, este poderia ser um campo fértil de reflexão teológica na perspectiva negra feminista. O lado positivo dos dados apresentados não deixa a descoberta uma preocupação: servir e educar são as profissões tradicionais assumidas pelas mulheres, o que se reproduz na igreja. Cresce rapidamente o número de mulheres que procuram formação pastoral.

Cabe lembrar que as mulheres, na Faculdade de Teologia, têm criado importantes espaços de articulação de sua teologia, bem como, de apoio mútuo, dentre os quais cito o “grupo de mulheres”, que congrega estudantes mulheres do curso de graduação em teologia. Este grupo, denominado por Wanda Deifelt de “comunidade intencional” é também um grupo “oficial” que reflete sobre a política estudantil na faculdade, englobando questões relacionadas à política eclesial, ao futuro campo de trabalho: suas dificuldades, suas possibilidades.¹⁰ Importante conquista deste grupo tem sido a criação da Cadeira de Teologia Feminista, instituída no ano de 1990.¹¹

Outro espaço de fundamental importância é a criação do “Núcleo de Estudos de Gênero”, que reúne mulheres e homens, do curso de pós-graduação da Faculdade de Teologia, bem como, de outros centros de formação, não necessariamente de Teologia. Este espaço de reflexão teórica e de desencadeamento de ações práticas tem tomado importantes encaminhamentos, dos quais queremos citar três. *Primeiro*: elaboração de um documento referente à política de cotas na EST (Escola Superior de Teologia).¹²

⁶ Joaquim FISCHER, *Breve Histórico da Faculdade de Teologia*, p. 18-21.

⁷ Carla S. KRÜGER, *As Mulheres e o Ministério Ordenado na Igreja*, p. 20.

⁸ Carla S. KRÜGER, *As Mulheres e o Ministério Ordenado na Igreja*, p. 21.

⁹ Informações da Secretaria da Faculdade de Teologia da EST (Escola Superior de Teologia).

¹⁰ Wanda DEIFELT, *Mulheres na Educação Teológica no Brasil*, p. 268-269.

¹¹ Wanda DEIFELT, *Feminist Theology: rethinking of theological education*, p.83-85.

¹² Proposta de Adoção de Política de Cotas por Sexo, p. 1. Documento disponível na Secretaria da Escola Superior de Teologia. Faz parte da história da EST (Escola Superior de Teologia) ter um quadro discente atuante, sendo que os espaços e conquistas citadas neste texto se devem graças ao engajamento das /os estudantes.

No referido documento sugere-se o índice de 40% mulheres no preenchimento de vagas do corpo docente da EST. *Segundo*: escritura, em fase de elaboração, de um livro sobre o tema “Gênero e Corporalidade”. *Terceiro*: participação na elaboração do Primeiro Seminário Nacional sobre “Mulheres e a Filosofia”, realizado na Universidade do Vale do Rio dos Sinos.

Concluo esta primeira parte de nossa reflexão apresentando um olhar crítico sobre o lugar das mulheres na formação teológica, extrapolando os muros da IECLB. Um estudo sobre a formação teológica no Brasil, elaborado a partir de questionários enviados a ASTE (Associação de Seminários Teológicos Evangélicos) nos fornece importantes informações e com base nestas Wanda Deifelt conclui:

“Visto que todos os seminários no Brasil são denominacionais, a questão mais premente a respeito das mulheres na educação teológica não pode ser resolvida somente dentro de suas paredes. A discussão deve incluir as denominações e as diferentes atitudes das igrejas a respeito do ministério feminino”.¹³

Quanto à formação de mulheres na América e Latina e Caribe, um estudo, desta vez baseado em questionários enviados às igrejas pertencentes a Evangelisches Missionswerk – EMW) conclui, entre outras coisas, que: a porcentagem de estudantes mulheres no curso de teologia é de um terço; que a teologia latino-americana na perspectiva da mulher (não se menciona o termo teologia feminista) é ensinada, mas raramente faz parte da educação teológica geral, incluindo a criação de uma cadeira ou cargo do professor/a específico; a grande maioria das mulheres necessita de bolsa de estudos integral ou parcial.¹⁴ Merece destaque a importância da teologia feminista nos estudos de teologia.¹⁵

O exposto até aqui permite que se conclua que: “enquanto a fé tem passado de mulher a mulher, a educação teológica organizada formalmente tem sido restringida amplamente aos homens e dominada pelas exigências da preparação do clero”.¹⁶ Por outro lado, permite dizer também que: “A coisa mais interessante nas atividades teológicas das mulheres é que elas não constituem simplesmente uma forma adicional de fazer teologia. Ao contrário, as mulheres estão desafiando a estreiteza teológica dos currículos das instituições teológicas”.¹⁷

3- Formação Teológica, Mulheres e Raça na IECLB.

Falar sobre teologia feminista negra, ou, simplesmente, de teologia produzida por mulheres negras é um desafio. Quem escreve teologia, via de regra, são pessoas que atuam na área da pesquisa, do ensino, que, numa linguagem simples, circulam no mundo acadêmico. Estas são, em sua maioria, homens. Esta é também uma realidade na IECLB. Raramente pastoras/es que atuam em comunidades e, muito mais raro ainda, pessoas membros de comunidades sistematizam sua vivência de fé.¹⁸ Se as/os membros escrevessem sobre e de teologia, poderia, certamente, surgir uma teologia na perspectiva, tanto da mulher branca, quanto da negra, já que estas mulheres participam da vida comunitária, sendo, via de regra, muito ativas.

Nos trabalhos diaconais da IECLB, como de outras igrejas também, um grande número de pessoas que participam e fazem uso da assistência ali oferecida são pessoas negras e, principalmente, mulheres. Isso remete a uma questão central, que diz respeito aos objetivos e

¹³ Wanda Deifelt, *Mulheres na Educação Teológica no Brasil*, p. 267.

¹⁴ Lothar ENGEL e Mauren TROTT, *Mulheres na Educação Teológica na África, Ásia, Pacífico, América Latina e Caribe*, p. 278-282.

¹⁵ Lothar ENGEL e Mauren TROT, *Mulheres na Educação Teológica na África, Ásia, Pacífico, América Latina e Caribe*, p.281.

¹⁶ WOCATI, *Mulheres na Educação Teológica*, p. 257.

¹⁷ WOCATI, *Mulheres na Educação Teológica*, p. 261.

¹⁸ Wanda DEIFELT, *Educação, Teologia e Cidadania: o desafio para as mulheres*.

metodologia do trabalho diaconal. Estão estes contribuindo para o surgimento de uma consciência negra na IECLB e fora dela? Ou estes trabalhos estariam induzindo a negação da negritude, chamando para um processo de ocidentalização, no caso da IECLB, de germanização?

O exposto até aqui mostra que a dificuldade da emergência de uma teologia feminista negra, no âmbito da IECLB, necessita ser analisada. Inclusive, faz-se necessário ir mais além da história desta igreja específica. É preciso estender a reflexão, no sentido de incluir a história da teologia e sua relação com a população negra, independente de denominação. Quero apresentar rapidamente alguns marcos desta história, no campo do protestantismo brasileiro.¹⁹

A vinda do protestantismo ao Brasil, de forma mais presente, remonta ao século XIX. Neste período, a grande maioria da população brasileira era formada por negros e mulatos. Calcula-se que mais de um terço do total do tráfico de escravos para a América teve como destino o Brasil. De 1820 em diante, aproximadamente, este quadro começou a se alterar e chegaram ao Brasil 4,5 milhões de imigrantes europeus. Era o período da transição de uma sociedade colonial capitalista, para uma sociedade em que passou a predominar o capitalismo industrial. Acreditavam os representantes do pensamento liberal, de que o protestantismo seria de suma importância para transformar a sociedade brasileira colonial em uma sociedade moderna. Associado a este projeto estava a ideologia do “jeito americano de ser”, fruto de uma mistura de patriotismo, racismo e protestantismo.²⁰ Quanto à escravidão, a abolição da escravatura, os missionários tinham opinião dividida. Os que chegavam ao Brasil identificados com a ideologia escravagista do sul dos EUA, cultivaram aqui este mesmo pensamento e práticas. Estes vieram se instalar no Brasil, exatamente, por ser o Brasil um dos últimos países em que a instituição da escravidão ainda era legal. Imbuídos de outro espírito estavam os missionários vindos do norte, que tinham postura anti-escravagista. Com a abolição da escravatura, poderia-se pensar que a população negra formaria a população livre brasileira, mas sabe-se que não foi isto que ocorreu. Desenvolveu-se, então, a política de “branqueamento da raça”, pois temia-se o rosto negro do Brasil.

É no interior da expansão do capitalismo industrial europeu e do interesse das classes governantes que deve ser visto o luteranismo, que é de interesse especial neste artigo. O luteranismo no Brasil é fruto da imigração européia. Vasta parcela da população européia, no século XIX formava verdadeira massa sobrando e grupos miseráveis. Solução para isto era enviá-los ao Brasil, que necessitava de mão de obra branca, em substituição da escrava. Imigrantes alemães, em sua maioria evangélica, tiraram o povo negro dos meios de produção.²¹ Como afirma Rieth, “foi sob o teto da antiga senzala que as famílias imigrantes tiveram seu primeiro abrigo”²²

Neste contexto, não é muito escandaloso o fato de pastores luteranos serem donos de escravos e, inclusive, os primeiros donos de escravos da comunidade, como no caso da Colônia Alemã Protestante de Três Forquilhas.²³ O pastor desta comunidade havia comprado, no mercado de escravos em Porto Alegre, a exemplo de outros da região, que o antecederam nesta tarefa, escravos para realizarem a construção da nova comunidade, comprando também Maria, da Nação Nagô, para aliviar as lides domésticas de sua esposa, que tinha filhos e filhas pequenos.

¹⁹ Sobre a relação da Igreja Católica na América Latina e o povo afro-descendente, veja artigos de Mauro Baptista e Eduardo Hoornaert, citados na bibliografia.

²⁰ Ricardo Willy RIETH, *Evangélicos de “Alma Branca”: os negros e o protestantismo no Brasil*, p. 177.

²¹ Martin Norberto DREHER, *Os Impasses do Germanismo*, p. 61.

²² Ricardo Norberto RIETH, *Evangélicos de “Alma Branca”: os negros e o protestantismo no Brasil*, p. 188.

²³ Elio E. MÜLLER, *Afro-descendentes da Colônia Alemã Protestante de Três Forquilhas*, p. 77.

Maria tornou-se líder na comunidade luterana e também entre a comunidade negra que vivia nesta região. O local da reunião, via de regra, não era o templo, mas o “Pátio do Engenho”.²⁴

Feita esta explanação mais histórica, quero compartilhar algumas iniciativas que ocorreram na IECLB e, principalmente na Faculdade de Teologia, em relação ao povo negro, a sua fé e teologia.

A partir de 1996 a EST (Escuela Superior de Teologia) conta com um professor negro, na área do Antigo Testamento, sendo que em 2000 cria-se o “Projeto Negritude na Bíblia e na Igreja”.

No ano de 1997 cria-se o Grupo de Negros que reúne estudantes de teologia e de pós-graduação. Este coletivo tem o objetivo de despertar a consciência negra, de introduzir a categoria raça nos estudos, enfim, de fomentar um debate e reflexão em relação a questão negra no Brasil e sua relação com a IECLB. Recentemente formaram-se alguns alunos afro-descendentes, que atualmente são pastores ou candidatos ao pastorado. Estes escreveram seus trabalhos de conclusão na perspectiva negra. O olhar específico da mulher negra, afro-descendente certamente virá a público em breve.

No ano de 2000 realizou-se um importante Simpósio, dirigido a toda a IECLB, sob o título “Abrindo as Portas da Igreja. Afro-Brasileiros Luteranos: sonho ou possibilidade? Este Simpósio tinha por objetivo discutir a relação entre luteranismo, etnia, cultura e questão racial dentro da IECLB”.

Ainda no ano de 2000 realizou-se um seminário com a presença de Émile Tounes, é um Africano-Americano, professor de teologia do Seminário Teológico União, Nova York que trabalha com a Teologia Womanista nos Estados Unidos. Em seu trabalho lembra o quanto à teologia feminista é ainda uma teologia branca, que reflete o cotidiano e as construções das mulheres brancas.

Segundo conversa com a vice-prefeita do Rio de Janeiro, Benedita da Silva, no II Fórum Social Mundial, que pertence à igreja pentecostal, 80% da população brasileira é afro-descendente.²⁵ Para ela, não existe melhoria de vida, muito menos a possibilidade de “um outro mundo”, enquanto o povo afro-descendente e negro não tiver respeitada a sua alteridade, recuperada a sua dignidade de vida, e puder dar a sua contribuição ao mundo em termos de experiência de vida, de valores. Isso se dá também em relação com a teologia. Enquanto a população negra não puder falar e cantar sua experiência de Deus, a cidadania destas pessoas não é completa, assim como incompleto será o falar sobre Deus. A justiça requerida por Deus será igualmente falha, pois experiências importantes de vivência do amor de Deus estarão excluídas. Exclusão não combina com salvação, nem na rima, nem no sentido.

Penso que a minha participação no Círculo Lusófono de Teólogas Africanas a relação que daqui para frente será construída pode e deve contribuir no processo de desenvolvimento, já iniciado, da consciência africana feminista na Faculdade de Teologia. Atualmente estou fazendo um levantamento de mulheres que estão envolvidas com o fazer teológico na perspectiva da mulher negra. Tarefa árdua, pois tais mulheres não são visíveis, são difíceis de serem encontradas, estão imersas neste mundo grande que o Brasil representa, num trabalho, muitas vezes, quase anônimo. Quem são estas mulheres? Onde elas atuam? Quais suas ênfases pastorais? Quais suas dificuldades? Eis uma série de perguntas. Penso que seria muito bom se um trabalho mais organizado e contínuo pudesse ser organizado para se chegar a resultados mais profícuos, abrangentes e ágeis.

²⁴ Elio E. MÜLLER, *Afro-descendentes da Colônia Alemã Protestante de Três Forquilhas*, p. 81-83.

²⁵ O diálogo com Benedita se deu no dia 01 de fevereiro no Centro de Eventos da PUC- Pontifical Evangélicos de Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul, no II Fórum Social Mundial.

A experiência que se teve no último encontro, em Luanda, Angola, de formar uma biblioteca com bibliografias sobre teologia feminista africana merece ser destacada. É necessário possibilitar e democratizar o acesso à informação. Penso que esta é uma experiência que pode, e esta é a intenção, ser enriquecida com artigos, estudos, livros, dinâmicas, experiências de liturgias, poesias e outros materiais e experiências, de todas as mulheres que vão se unindo ao Círculo. Esta é uma forma de alastrar o campo em que se produz teologia, abrangendo não apenas a universidade, as faculdades, mas também os grupos, as comunidades, os círculos.

Muitas vezes acontece que as mulheres negras que atuam com religião, no Brasil, se encontram nas fileiras do Candomblé e do Pentecostalismo, religiões estas que raramente são abarcadas nas tímidas experiências que se tem de ecumenismo. Em se tratando de religiões afro, faz-se necessário ir além do ecumenismo e avançar em direção ao diálogo inter-religioso. O ecumenismo e o diálogo inter-religioso, de uma forma geral e entre as mulheres, necessitam ser incentivados. Parece-me que somos todas, ainda, muito estranhas umas as outras. Estamos, ainda, muito dentro de nossas casas, para não dizer casulos. Desta abertura de espírito poderá surgir uma teologia mais integral, centros de formação localizados nas mais diversas regiões do país, para possibilitar o acesso à teologia a um maior número de pessoas, a criação de cursos ecumênicos de teologia, redes internacionais de troca de experiências e de solidariedade, e assim por diante.²⁶

Importante neste processo é aproveitar as oportunidades que o cotidiano nos coloca. São inúmeras as chances que o dia-a-dia nos apresenta que, via de regra, não implicam em grandes gastos, criação de estruturas caras e despesas outras. Teologia, antes de tudo, é experiência vivida, é amor encarnado.

O Círculo, ao meu ver, veio para reunir, para incentivar a solidariedade, para sugerir novas vivências, para transformar e para viver a esperança de que um outro mundo é possível. Tenho certeza de que disto todas nós entendemos um pouco.

²⁶ Rosa Marga ROTHE, *Formação Teológica em Belém: ousadia e confiança ecumênica*, p. 23-25.

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GENDER AND RACE IN IECLB¹ THEOLOGICAL TRAINING*

Rosane Pletsch

1- Introduction

To start with, I would like to share with you the origin and reasons behind the reflections that I present here. I think it is important to mention these, since the writing of a document always takes place within a given context and obeys a particular objective.

I was asked to write about this subject by the WCC Ecumenical Theological Education Programme, which facilitated the 3rd Meeting of the Lusophone Circle of Concerned Women Theologians², in Angola, in 2001. The objective of the Circle is to systematise and disseminate theology produced by women who either live in Africa or who are descendents of Africa. It also aims to encourage theological students to include considerations of gender and race in their theology. In this context, I can remember by heart a poem by the black Brazilian singer, Gilberto Gil, which says:

“Black is the hand
The hand of purity
Black is the life spent in the kitchen
Black is the hand that lays the table
That cleans the stains of the world with soap and water
Black is the pure, noble hand”.

Brazilians know well that it is the hands of black women that clean the ovens and wash them down with soap. It is these black hands that fight for peace, and that make and share the bread. For this very reason, the hands of women are noble. But, paradoxically, the things that these hands do, the spirit that moves them, the life that fills them, their actions and the things they loathe do not appear in books and neither are they the object of theological reflection.³

This document was originally intended to focus on the theme of “women and theological training in Brazil, with reference to the experience of the Lusophone Circle of Women Theologians”. There are many denominations, religious movements, faculties and centres of theological training in Brazil. Many women study theology, often far from the faculties of theology, which are generally denominational. But I decided to limit the scope of this study to only one church, the IECLB, of which I am a member.

The choice of the fragments set out here is related to the methodology employed in this document. I have tried to make an incursion into the subject of my study, from the viewpoint of and on the basis of my own experience. I describe how gender and race considerations are included or excluded as theoretical-practical values in the IECLB’s theological training, as I experienced and perceived it. This is therefore a very personal point of view and makes no claim to universal objectivity.⁴ My choice of some fragments rather than others is surely due to the fact that they left their mark on me.¹ The fact that I lived through the moments that I try to describe and share gives the document an immediacy that it would not otherwise have.

* Translated by WCC Language Service.

¹ Evangelical Lutheran Church in Brazil (*Igreja Evangélica de Confissão Luterana no Brasil*).

² see article by Rev. Eva Cosme in Ministerial Formation No96 of January 2002 page 60 in Portuguese (Terceiro Seminário Lusofono – Círculo Lusofono de Mulheres Teológicas) and page 63 English translation.

³ The term “black” is used here to denote people with African roots. It also has a political connotation in the sense of preserving the identity of these people.

⁴ Sandra AZERÊDO, *Teorizando Sobre Gênero e Relações Raciais*, p. 211.

2- Women and Theological Training in the IECLB

A discussion on the subject of “women and theological training in the IECLB” requires a broader treatment of the admittance and permanence of women in the Faculty of Theology.

The IECLB Faculty of Theology was established in São Leopoldo in 1946. The process of establishing the Faculty was begun due to the impact of the Second World War, which made it impossible to send Brazilian students to Germany for training in theology or to ask German pastors to come and work in Brazil.² Women’s interest in the study of theology dates back to 1952. The first three female students dropped out during their first year of study.⁷ The first female student to complete her training in theology was in 1966; but it was only the fourth student to be trained who went on to be ordained, and that was in 1983.⁸

In the entrance exams in 2002, 32 of the successful 62 students were women. This was the first time in the history of the IECLB Faculty of Theology that more women than men enrolled. The IECLB theology course trains professionals in three areas: pastoral work, the diaconate and the catechism. Of the 62 students who enrolled, 47 (22 women) chose pastoral work; 10 (8 women) chose the diaconate; and 5 (3 women) chose the catechism.⁹ As these figures show, the diaconate and education act as a kind of “entry point” for women seeking theological training in the IECLB. As the IECLB diaconate includes people of African origin, it could be a fertile ground for theological reflection from a black feminist perspective. The positive side of the figures presented here hides one concern: to serve and educate are the professions traditionally undertaken by women, and this is reproduced in the church. The number of women seeking pastoral training is increasing rapidly.

Women have occupied significant space in the Faculty of Theology and used it to articulate their theology and provide mutual help to each other. Among these are the “women’s group” that congregates women students on the theology graduate course. This group, labelled an “intentional community” by Wanda Deifelt, is also an “official” group that discusses student politics in the faculty, issues of church policy and the difficulties and opportunities of their future field of work.¹⁰ One of this group’s important achievements was the creation of a Chair of Feminist Theology in 1990.¹¹

Another fundamentally important initiative was the establishment of the “Gender Studies Nucleus”, in which participate men and women on the Faculty of Theology postgraduate course and students from other training centres, not necessarily studying theology. This forum for theoretical reflection and practical action has taken significant initiatives, three of which I will mention here. *First*: a document on the School of Theology’s quotas policy.¹² This document suggests women should fill 40 per cent of the School’s teaching posts. *Second*: a book on the subject of “Gender and Corporeality” (in preparation). *Third*: participation in the preparation of the First National Seminar on “Women and Philosophy”, held at the University of Vale do Rio dos Sinos.

⁵ Suely ROLNIK, *Pensamento, Corpo e Devir*, p. 246.

⁶ Joaquim FISCHER, *Breve Histórico da Faculdade de Teologia*, p. 18-21.

⁷ Carla S. KRÜGER, *As Mulheres e o Ministério Ordenado na Igreja*, p. 20.

⁸ Carla S. KRÜGER, *As Mulheres e o Ministério Ordenado na Igreja*, p. 21.

⁹ Information provided by the Secretariat of the Theology Faculty of the School of Theology).

¹⁰ Wanda DEIFELT, *Mulheres na Educação Teológica no Brasil*, p. 268-269.

¹¹ Wanda DEIFELT, *Feminist Theology: rethinking of theological education*, p.83-85.

¹² Proposal for the Adoption of a Gender Quotas Policy, p. 1. This document is available from the School of Theology Secretariat. The School has always had an active body of students – the forums and other achievements mentioned in this document are due to the endeavours of these students.

I conclude the first part of my reflection by presenting a critique of women's place in theological training, extrapolating beyond the confines of the IECLB's walls. A study into theological training in Brazil, prepared using information collected from questionnaires sent to the Association of Evangelical Theological Seminaries (ASTE) provides us with important information, from which Wanda Deifelt concludes:

“As all the seminaries in Brazil are denominational, the most pressing question with regard to women in theological education cannot be resolved only within its walls. The discussion has to include all the denominations and cover the attitudes of the different churches to the female ministry”.¹³

With regard to the training of women in Latin America and the Caribbean, a study, this time based on questionnaires sent to churches belonging to Evangelisches Missionswerk (EMW) concluded that: a third of students on theology courses are female; churches teach Latin American theology from a women's perspective (the term feminist theology is not used) but they rarely do this as part of general theological education, nor do they establish a Chair or teaching position for such training; the great majority of women need a partial or full grant for their studies.¹⁴ The importance of feminist theology in studies of theology merits special mention.¹⁵

The ground I have covered so far permits me to conclude that: “while the faith has passed from woman to woman, formal organised theological education has been widely restricted to men and dominated by the requirement to prepare clergy”.¹⁶ On the other hand, it also allows me to say that: “The most interesting thing in women's theological activities is that their work is not limited to just producing more theology. On the contrary, women are challenging the theological narrowness of the curricula of theological institutions”¹⁷

3- Theological Training, Women and Race in the IECLB

To speak about black feminist theology, or, simply, of theology produced by black women, is a challenge. Those who write theology are generally researchers or educators whose work circulates in academia. Most are men. This is also the case in the IECLB. It is rare for male or female ministers working in communities to systematise their experience of faith and it is even rarer for members of those communities themselves to do so.¹⁸ If they were to write about theology, a theology from the perspective of both white and black women could well emerge, given that these women participate in community life and are generally very active.

In the diaconal work of the IECLB, and also of other churches, many people who participate in and use this service are black and most of them are women. This brings us back to a central question, relating to the objectives and methodology of diaconal work. Is it contributing to the emergence of a black consciousness in the IECLB and further afield? Or does it involve a negation of Negritude, and instead promote a process of westernisation, or, in the case of the IECLB, Germanisation?

What I have so far covered shows how difficult it is for a black feminist theology to emerge within the IECLB. This needs to be analysed but, to do so, it is necessary to go beyond the history of this particular church and extend the discussion to include the history of theology

¹³ Wanda Deifelt, *Mulheres na Educação Teológica no Brasil*, p. 267.

¹⁴ Lothar ENGEL and Mauren TROTT, *Mulheres na Educação Teológica na África, Ásia, Pacífico, América Latina e Caribe*, p. 278-282.

¹⁵ Lothar ENGEL and Mauren TROT, *Mulheres na Educação Teológica na África, Ásia, Pacífico, América Latina e Caribe*, p.281.

¹⁶ WOCATI, *Mulheres na Educação Teológica*, p. 257.

¹⁷ WOCATI, *Mulheres na Educação Teológica*, p. 261.

¹⁸ Wanda DEIFELT, *Educação, Teologia e Cidadania: o desafio para as mulheres*.

and its relation to the black population in general, independently of any particular denomination. Therefore, I want to go on to present some elements of the history of Brazilian Protestantism¹⁹

The consolidation of Protestantism in Brazil goes back to the 19th century. At that time, the great majority of the Brazilian population was made up of Africans and people of mixed race. It has been calculated that more than a third of the slaves brought to the Americas were taken to Brazil. From about 1820, the demographic profile began to change and 4.5 million European immigrants arrived in Brazil. It was a period of transition from a colonial capitalist society to a society in which industrial capitalism predominated. The representatives of liberal thought believed that Protestantism would be of great importance in transforming colonial Brazilian society into a modern society. Associated with this project was the ideology summed up in the words “the American way of life”, a mix of patriotism, racism and Protestantism.²⁰ Missionaries had different opinions about the abolition of slavery. Some of those that came to Brazil identified with the slave-owning ideology of the southern United States and they cultivated this same way of thinking and acting here in Brazil. They came to Brazil exactly because Brazil was one of the last few countries in which slavery was still legal. The missionaries from the north were imbued with a different spirit and were against slavery. With the abolition of slavery, it could have been expected that the black population would become free Brazilians, but we know that this is not what happened. A policy of “whitening” was developed because people feared the black faces of Brazil.

The development of Lutheranism in Brazil, which is the focus of this document, should be interpreted with reference to the expansion of European industrial capitalism and the interests of the ruling class. Lutheranism in Brazil was the result of European immigration. A vast part of the European population in the nineteenth century formed a miserable segment of society. The solution found to deal with them was to send them to Brazil, which needed white labour to substitute the slaves. German immigrants, mostly evangelicals, replaced black people in the production process.²¹ As Rieth says, “it was under the roofs of the old slave houses that the immigrant families found their first shelter”.²²

In this context, it was not so scandalous that Lutheran pastors owned slaves and were even the biggest slave owners in their communities, such as in the German Protestant settlement of Três Forquilhas.²³ Like others before him in the region, this community’s pastor bought slaves at the Porto Alegre slave market to build the new community. He also bought Maria, a member of the Nagô nation, to help his wife, who had young children, with domestic work. Maria became a leader of the Lutheran community and also of the region’s black community. They generally met on the mill forecourt rather than the church.²⁴

Having completed this historical explanation, I now want to mention some IECLB initiatives, mainly in the Faculty of Theology, in relation to black people, their faith and theology.

In 1996, the School appointed a black professor to teach the Old Testament, and in 2000 a “Negritude in the Bible and The Church Project” was created.

In 1997, an Africans’ Group was formed, bringing together theology and postgraduate students. This group’s objective was to awaken black consciousness and to introduce the issue of race into the studies, and to encourage debate and reflection on black issues in Brazil in relation to the IECLB. Some students of African descent recently completed their studies and

¹⁹ On the relationship of the Catholic Church with people of African descent in Latin America, see articles by Mauro Baptista and Eduardo Hoornaert, listed in the bibliography.

²⁰ Ricardo Willy RIETH, *Evangélicos de “Alma Branca”*: os negros e o protestantismo no Brasil, p. 177.

²¹ Martin Norberto DREHER, *Os Impasses do Germanismo*, p. 61.

²² Ricardo Norberto RIETH, *Evangélicos de “Alma Branca”*: os negros e o protestantismo no Brasil, p. 188.

²³ Elio E. MÜLLER, *Afro-descendentes da Colônia Alemã Protestante de Três Forquilhas*, p. 77.

²⁴ Elio E. MÜLLER, *Afro-descendentes da Colônia Alemã Protestante de Três Forquilhas*, p. 81-83.

are currently pastors or candidates to the pastorate. They wrote their final studies from a black perspective. The particular perspective of black women of African descent will certainly be making an appearance soon.

In 2000, an important symposium was held for the whole of the IECLB under the title of "Opening the Church Doors. Afro-Brazilian Lutherans: a dream or a real possibility?" This Symposium's objective was to discuss the relationship between Lutheranism, ethnicity, culture and race in the IECLB.

Still in 2000, a seminar was held with the participation of Émile Towens, an African-American professor of theology at Union Theological Seminary, New York, who works in the field of "womanist's" theology in the United States. In her work, she points out that feminist theology is still a white theology that reflects the daily life and thinking of white women.

Speaking at the II World Social Forum, Benedita da Silva, vice-prefect of Rio de Janeiro, and a member of the Pentecostal Church, claimed that 80 per cent of the Brazilian population is descended from Africans.²⁵ She said that one cannot talk of improvements in the quality of life, much less in the possibility of "another world", until society respects the identity of black people of African descent and until black people themselves recover their dignity and are able to use their experience of life and their values to contribute to society. This is also true in relation to theology. Until black people are able to speak and sing of their experience of God, they cannot enjoy full citizenship nor can their experience of God be complete. God's justice will also be incomplete, because important experiences of the love of God will be excluded. Exclusion does not fit with either the rhyme or reason of salvation.

I think that my participation in the Lusophone Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians and the relationship that we will carry on building with the Circle could and should contribute to the already initiated development of African feminist consciousness at the Faculty of Theology. I am currently conducting a survey of women who are involved in theology from a black female perspective. It is an arduous task, because such women are not visible, and it is difficult to find them, they are immersed in this immense Brazil, in their work, which is often anonymous. Who are these women? Where do they work? What do they focus their pastoral work on? What problems do they face? These are a series of questions that we need answers to. I think it would be very positive if more organised and continuous work could be organised in order to arrive at more useful, comprehensive and swift results.

It is worth highlighting the fact that the last meeting, in Luanda, Angola formed a library of bibliographies on African feminist theology. We need to democratise access to information. I think that this was an experience that could (and this was the intention) be enriched if all the women in the Circle could contribute articles, studies, books, liturgies, poems and other materials from their experiences. This is a way of widening the field in which theology is produced and of including other groups, communities and circles as well as university faculties.

In Brazil, black women active in religion are often members of Candomblé or Pentecostal churches, and these religions which are rarely involved in the timid ecumenical initiatives that exist. When dealing with African religions, it is necessary to go beyond ecumenism and seek inter-religious dialogue. Ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue need to be encouraged, particularly among women. It seems to me that we are all still very unfamiliar to one another. We are still very much in our own houses, not to say cocoons. This freeing of the spirit could lead to the emergence of a more holistic theology; the development of training centres in the most diverse regions of the country, which would make theology accessible to a greater

²⁵ The conversation with Benedita took place on 1st of February at the Events Centre of the Rio Grande do Sul Catholic University (PUC) during the II World Social Forum.

number of people; and the creation of ecumenical theology courses and international networks through which we could share experiences and solidarity, and so on.²⁶

In this process, it is important to take advantage of the opportunities offered by daily life. Every day, we are presented with numerous opportunities that generally do not involve large expenditure, or the creation of expensive structures and other expenditure. More than anything else, theology is the experience of life, it is love incarnate.

In my opinion, the Circle can bring us together, encourage solidarity and suggest new ways of living that could transform society and bring hope that another world is possible. I am certain that all of us can contribute at least a little to this.

²⁶ Rosa Marga ROTHE, *Formação Teológica em Belém: ousadia e confiança ecumênica*, p. 23-25.

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EDUCAÇÃO TEOLÓGICA: REFLEXÕES DE UMA AFRO-DESCENDENTE

Kaká Omowalê

*“Veio da África, é feminina
Esta menina-mulher
Seu ventre gerou e gera esta raça com dor
Mulher negra, mulher Yaba!...
Estão presentes na história desde os navios negreiros
Prosseguem pelas senzalas, chegam até os quilombos
Nas batalhas urbanas que hoje duram nos campos e favelas
Mulher negra, mulher negra Yabá”.*

Grupo Afro Agbara Dudu

A experiência junto ao Círculo Lusófono de Mulheres Teólogas foi um momento de sentimentos fortes! Para uma afro-descendente era *retornar* ou *retomar* as lembranças ancestrais, o Continente Ancestral!

Uma marca bastante interessante do “Círculo” foi sua ecumenicidade, com a presença de diferentes denominações. Também pareceu muito interessante a pluralidade cultural, com a presença de diferentes grupos étnicos, o que levou a superação das possíveis atitudes xenofóbicas, afirmando a igualdade na diversidade.

O convívio com as mulheres africanas de língua portuguesa se traduziu em renovação das forças, coragem e esperança! Sem dúvida a experiência teológica do “Círculo” se traduz em um reconhecimento da legitimidade da experiência de Deus de cada grupo étnico participante, e a superação do que afirma a diferença como inferioridade, e esta como uma condição para a exclusão. Também a certeza de que as sábias pastoras, teólogas de África estão se organizando para que de maneira comunitária, sem os limites da intolerância étnica, regional, etc. cumpram a tarefa desafiadora de construir um “*Teologar*” que retrate sua experiência com o Deus-conosco.

O “*Teologar*”, proporcionado pelo “Círculo Lusófono” às pastoras-teólogas africanas, se mostrou um elemento desafiador para muitas/os em América Latina. Romper com a tensão dicotômica de algumas igrejas, que desejam pastoras/es e não teólogas/os, que não compreendem que um/a pastor/a tem a obrigação de ser teólogo/a¹ se mostra um objetivo a ser conquistado.

O “romper tensões” como desafio se multiplica quando a pessoa vocacionada ao ministério pastoral, a Teologia é afro-descendente. Ser descendente de africanos escravizados, em América Latina, é todavia, experimentar muito “*estranhamento*”. Para o senso comum ser pastor ou teólogo é ser homem, e ser branco. Como assegura o Bispo Paulo Ayres Mattos, as coisas freqüentemente acontecem dentro de um círculo de ferro vicioso onde ser branco é identificado com o poder e o poder branco se reproduz através de mecanismos institucionais que garantem que a ele só terão acesso os que forem brancos de pele. Os poucos “não-brancos” de pele que consigam ultrapassar as barreiras construídas pelo preconceito deverão

¹ Duncan A Reily. Metodista (IMB). em Situação da Educação Teológica.1989. Aste/Sinodal: São Paulo

Outra dificuldade para as afro-descendentes latino-americanas nesta “*casa pequena*”, se encontra no próprio “Teologar”. Sistematizar as experiências obtidas com o Deus da Vida enquanto povos descendentes de escravos, é rever a história, e todas as construções teológicas em torno do lugar ocupado por estes seres humanos. É encontrar que a Teologia, associada a outras ciências, deu sustentação ao escravismo; é não negar que a Bíblia também serviu de instrumento de opressão, quando foram tirados argumentos para a legitimação do racismo, e a negação da humanidade destes seres humanos escravizados - como o texto de Genesis 9, a maldição feita por Noé a seu filho Caim, que todavia paira no imaginário popular, que todavia está presente no senso comum. Também é identificar, como nos diz o Bispo Paulo Ayres Mattos, que a intolerância protestante eliminou a possibilidade do diferente sobreviver sendo ele mesmo, e o fato de que o diferente foi forçado a assemelhar-se.²

Uma afro-latinoamericana só se sentirá confortável dentro dos espaços de formação Teológica quando a “*casa-Teologia*” for uma “*casa comum*”, Oikos de Deus, espaço de convivência onde há lugar para todas/os. Quando sua religiosidade e experiência de Deus não for colocada em “suspeita”. Quando a aceitação de sua descendência de escravos/os africanas/os não estiver condicionada ao critério “assemelhar-se”.

Enquanto todos os “quando” são, ainda, um “*processo*”, um “*objetivo a ser conquistado*”, cabe às afro-latinoamericanas fortalecer a fé no Deus que caminha com seu povo, e que opta pelas que ocupam um “não-lugar”. Um exemplo disto está em Genesis 16, texto que faz parte da memória popular e tem sua origem entre as mulheres escravas. É a história de Agar, a escrava egípcia do patriarca Abraão e sua esposa Sara, e que com seu próprio corpo serviu ao seu senhor. Estando grávida não suportou ser maltratada, fugindo para o deserto. Na fuga Agar pára junto à uma fonte (Genesis 16,8) e um mensageiro de Yahweh vem falar com ela, que se sente acolhida e conversa com ele. A partir deste encontro esta mulher já não é mais a mesma, já não é vista como escrava, ela se encontrou com o “Deus que vê” (Genesis 16, 9-12) e este lhe fez promessa. Agora Agar é a mulher que teve a experiência da Teofania!

A experiência de Agar com o “Deus que vê”, serve de incentivo às afro-descendentes em América Latina! Pois o “Deus que vê”, e que acompanhou esta escrava que fugia afirmando sua dignidade, é o mesmo que estava com as ancestrais, que em América Latina também ousaram acreditar em sua humanidade, em sua religiosidade. O “Deus que vê” é o mesmo Deus, que hoje, caminha passos largos com braços estendidos à estas “loucas”, pobres, negras, mulheres, que com convicção em sua vocação, dão legitimidade à sua experiência de Deus, entrando pelas portas desta “*casa-pequena*”, se sentando com coragem, na *mesa da Teologia*.

² Paulo Ayres Mattos. O Direito de ser diferente (Lucas 9,51-56). Em Ribla 19 – 1994/3. Vozes/Sinodal:Petrópolis

³ Sílvia Regina de Lima em conferencia na II Consulta Ecumênica Afro-Latina e Caribenha de 1994.

⁴ Ibidem, p 20(252).

THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION: REFLECTIONS OF A WOMAN OF AFRICAN DESCENT

Kaká Omowalê

“She came from Africa, she is feminine

This girl-woman

Her womb gave birth to this race with pain

She is part of our history since the slave trading ships came

Black woman, black Yaba!...

She makes her way to the slave houses and then on to the fugitive slave settlements

And the urban battles that today continue in the fields and shanty towns Black woman, black woman Yabá”

Afro Group Agbara Dudu

My experience with the Lusophone Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians provoked strong feelings!¹ As a woman of African descent, it was like *returning* or *recovering* my ancestral memories, my Ancestral Continent!

A very interesting aspect of the Circle was its ecumenical nature, with various denominations present. I also found the Circle’s cultural plurality very interesting – people from various ethnic groups were present. This helped us to overcome any xenophobic attitudes and affirmed our equality in diversity.

The companionship of the Portuguese speaking African women renewed my strength, courage and hope! There is no doubt that the theological experience of the Circle led us all to recognise the legitimacy of each of the participant ethnic groups’ experience of God and overcome the kind of attitude that perceives differences as signs of inferiority and uses this as a criterion to exclude people. I am also now certain that the learned African women pastors and theologians are organising themselves so that, in community, and without ethnic and regional intolerance, they can accomplish the challenging task of building a theology that portrays their own personal experience of God.

The theology of the Afro-Lusophone Circle of pastor-theologians poses a challenge to many Latin Americans: to break the dichotomic tension that exists in churches that want pastors but not theologians, and which do not understand that pastors have the obligation to be theologians².

The challenge of “breaking tensions” is all the greater when the pastor or theologian is of African descent. Descendants of African slaves in Latin America are still viewed with some unease. Society imagines that all pastors and theologians are male and white. As Bishop Ayres Mattos said, events are frequently conditioned by the existence of a vicious iron circle in which power is held by whites and white power is reproduced through institutional mechanisms that ensure that only those with white skins have access to power. The few “non-whites”

¹ Kaká Omowalê attended the Third Lusophone Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians in Luanda, Angola, September 2001.

² Duncan A Reily. Metodista (IMB). in *Situação da Educação Teológica.1989*. Aste/Sinodal: São Paulo

that manage to break through the barriers raised by prejudice are required to at least have a white “soul”. Those in power are white either on the outside or on the inside.³

It is not difficult to imagine what it means for an Afro-Latin American woman – one who does not accept this whitewashing of the “soul” – to feel moved by a desire and conviction to systematise her experience of God, that is, to theologise. Sílvia Regina de Lima, an Afro-Latin American theologian describes this situation: “we arrived unexpectedly at the theologians’ table, to which we were not invited”⁴. The sensation of “not being invited” gradually crystallises with experience. There are so many difficult obstacles in our path that it becomes difficult to find the space that will allow us to gain access to theology. This constant encounter with exclusion makes us feel that theology is something for white men only, and that the house of theology is a “*small house*” which does not have room for everybody. To open the doors of this “*small house*” and “*sit at the table*” requires a determination to overcome sexist and racist ideology.

The exclusivity of this “*small house*” manifests itself to descendants of Africa in, for example, the difficulty we face when competing with others to obtain study grants. This competition very often takes place on an unequal basis. Or in the difficulty we experience in continuing our training or even finding work.

Another difficulty for Latin American descendants of Africa in gaining access to this “*small house*” is to be found in theology itself. To systematise the experiences lived through with the God of Life as descendants of slaves, is to re-examine history and all the theological constructions built around these particular human beings. It is to find that theology, associated with other sciences, provided support for slavery. That is not to deny that the Bible also served as an instrument of oppression. People quoted it to legitimise slavery and deny the humanity of enslaved human beings – such as in Genesis 9, when Noah cursed his son Cain: this event is still present in the popular consciousness and society at large. It is also to see, as Bishop Paulo Ayres Mattos points out, that Protestant intolerance eliminated the possibility of any of these different human beings preserving their own identity rather than being forced to become assimilated.⁵

Latin American women will only feel comfortable in the field of theological training when the “house of Theology” is a “*house open to all*”, the *Oikos* of God. When it is a sociable place where all men and women are welcome. When our religiosity and experience of God are not viewed with “suspicion”. When it is accepted that we are the descendants of African slaves and that we do not require assimilation.

For as long as all these “whens” are still part of a “*process*”, and still “*objectives to be attained*”, it is up to Afro-Latin American women to strengthen our faith in the God who walks alongside us and who has chosen the “have-nots”. An example of this occurs in Genesis 16, a well-known text remembered by women slaves. It is the story of Hagar, the Egyptian slave woman of the patriarch Abram and his wife Sarai. Hagar served her master with her own body and became pregnant. But she could not put up with being ill-treated and fled into the desert. During her flight, Hagar stopped near a spring (Genesis 16.8) and a messenger of Yahweh came to speak to her. He welcomes her and asks her to talk with him. After this meeting, this woman is no longer the same person. She no longer sees herself as a slave, she meets the “God who sees” (Genesis 16, 9-12) and God makes her a promise. Hagar is a woman who experienced theophany!

Hagar’s experience with the “God who sees” is encouraging for Latin Americans of African descent! Because the “God who sees” and who accompanied this slave in her flight, affirming her dignity, is the same God that was with our ancestors, ancestors who, in Latin America, also dared to believe in their own humanity and religiosity. The “God who sees” is the same God who is today taking long strides with open arms towards these “mad” poor people, black people, women. Women, who convinced of their own vocation, make their own experience of God legitimate, as they open the doors of this “*little house*”, and sit courageously at the *table of Theology*.

³ Paulo Ayres Mattos. *O Direito de ser diferente* (Luke 9,51-56). In Ribla 19 – 1994/3. Vozes/Sinodal:Petrópolis

⁴ Sílvia Regina de Lima speaking at the II Afro-Latin and Caribbean Ecumenical Consultation in 1994.

⁵ Ibidem, p 20(252).

***THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM IN CONTEXT:
THE MUSINGS OF TWO PRINCIPALS***

Sarah Mitchell and Dorcas Gordon

Dorcas Gordon (Principal, Knox College Toronto Canada) and Sarah Mitchell (Principal United Theological College Sydney Australia) met for the first time at the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey, Céligny, Switzerland in June 2001. The following correspondence emerged as the result of a commitment to co-write an article on “curriculum” for *Ministerial Formation*. This correspondence offers the reader the opportunity to enter into an open-ended conversation. The writers offer these reflections as a glimpse into what is happening in theological education today – from the perspective of two women principals. It is hoped that their musings might lead to further reflection and development.

September 4, 2001

Dear Dorcas:

We agreed to write an article on curriculum for *Ministerial Formation* and I suggested we might make it a conversation piece. So, here’s my first attempt at that. Does any of this make connections with where you are in your thinking and practice?

A key area of focus for any conversation about preparing people for ministry in the 21st century must be that of context, which leads me to two questions:

1. How does our curriculum prepare people for ministry and mission within a changing world and church?
2. How do we shape our curriculum so that difference and pluralism become valued and the norm?

In addressing the first question, the greatest difficulty seems to be to identify exactly what makes up an appropriate theological curriculum for today’s context. Post-modernism is a present reality and although many congregations seem to be living with a Christendom model, there is no future there. However, the church hasn’t yet made the necessary leap to embrace a model of church that acknowledges a post-Christendom faith. As our college attempts to develop its curriculum to help make sense of our new world, congregations do not always appear eager to keep up with these trends. On the one hand, congregations tend to blame the college for not preparing suitable ministers; on the other hand, the college can blame congregations for not being open to change and new ideas. Few would disagree with Meyers that “Seminaries, in order to prepare students for new ministries in the new context, need to develop closer ties between the classroom experience and the practice of ministry”¹, but is the Christendom congregation the best place for students to learn their models of ministry?

The growing gap between the church of the past era and the possible church of the future is widening as the church becomes smaller and more conservative. We have noticed a marked difference between the theology of church leadership (at national, regional and, sometimes, local levels) and the theology of those in the pews. As membership numbers decrease, the percentage of those who are theologically literate, or who are deep theological thinkers, appear to decrease at an even greater rate than those who are not interested in exploring theological thought. The Australian context is probably not very different from the North American context where the most committed Christians are now found among the less educated, conservative, cultural Right, and are those who tend towards biblical literalism and theological conservatism².

¹ Eleanor Scott Meyers, ed., *Envisioning the New City*, Louisville KY, John Knox/Westminster Press, 1992, p.24.

² William F. Fore, “Communication, Reconciliation and Religion in America” in *Communication and Reconciliation: Challenges Facing the 21st Century*, Philip Lee, ed., Geneva: WCC Publications, 2001 pp10-21.

At the same time as this chasm is opening up, our colleges are moving into closer relationships with universities. Until very recently, the deep suspicion against all forms of religion in this country has meant theology was not taught in Universities. Currently, conversations continue between universities and churches in an attempt to build faculties of theology in some universities. Some of these relationships are working well – others are still in embryonic conversations. The tensions of working with two “masters” – and keeping both happy – are often extremely challenging!

There is also a gap developing between urban and rural church. More and more people are moving to the city and all kinds of services (health, education, banking, commerce etc.) are being withdrawn from the rural areas. The church is faced with a challenge to provide new forms of ministry for the rural church, at a time when there is less money to offer such assistance. I recently attended a Rural Ministry Conference (the second I have attended over the past few years). The first conference I went to tended to focus on problems. At this recent conference there was a perceptible change in morale. The shift is a result of local people seeking new ways of being in ministry – and this has huge implications for the way in which we prepare our students for ministry.

This potential chasm between college curriculum and church expectations is nowhere more clearly highlighted than in my more specific second question: How do we shape our curriculum so that difference and pluralism become valued and the norm? It is no longer possible for us to pretend we are mono-cultural and that there is one universal curriculum that is appropriate for all. The Uniting Church in Australia has identified itself as multi-cultural, but we still tend to think “multi-cultural” means those who are “other” than the Anglo norm. We haven’t seriously addressed what changes might be necessary for us all (including Anglos) to become inter-cultural. A recent Uniting Church Worship Expo was attended by more than 200 people, only four of whom chose to participate in the workshop on multi-cultural worship. Multi-culturalism does not figure highly in most people’s consciousness. We can’t ignore it at our college, where we are a cross-cultural community and struggling with what that might mean for a learning/teaching environment. But, we have not begun to address what that might mean in relation to the Indigenous, Aboriginal people of this land. Currently, all theological education for Aboriginal people happens within the Aboriginal context and is not related to non-Aboriginal theological education. This decision was made in an attempt to give Aboriginal people the opportunity for self-determination. Sometimes this disadvantages both Aboriginal and Anglo. If we are going to build understanding and reconciliation within church and community, non-Aboriginal students and Aboriginal students need to know each other and develop personal relationships.

As to our multi-faith context, the path has only just been recognized and we have much to do here. We do have inter-faith dialogue at the national level of the church and have conducted one or two of those dialogues at the college. We have also tried to develop theological conversation partners across gender, age, ableness, sexuality and culture – and also within cultures. For instance, the Sydney culture is more about going to the movies, café culture and sporting events, than attending church (and many church people prefer the other cultural pursuits to going to church!) Conversation between the various elements of culture, public issues and theology is vital if we are to take seriously the *missio dei* of our age. We have recently launched a degree in Public Theology as one step on this journey of extending the

conversation partners. However, the responses of some of our conservative students, who have refused to enter into some dialogues, are deeply disturbing. There are still many living in church and society with unexamined assumptions, which carry all the potential to return us to patriarchal, mono-cultural prejudice. The current appalling debacle in this country over the people seeking asylum, who were stranded on the Norwegian ship Tampa shows, yet again, the deeply ingrained prejudices within this country.

Well, Dorcas, this is more than I had intended for a “first-off” in our conversation. The question for me is – how do we shape a curriculum for ministerial education within such a context? We’ve made some changes to what was a reasonably classical form of ministerial education – but I wonder whether these changes are superficial and whether some more deep-rooted change is necessary. I look forward to hearing what your ideas might be on all of this.

With best wishes
Sarah

November 23, 2001

Dear Sarah,

How long it has taken me to respond to your initial thoughts – and how much has happened in the interval. At the moment I am sitting in a plane, 39,000 feet in the air, returning home from the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature. I have spent five days in a luxurious hotel in a country that is at war, supported in this effort by my own country. One of the highlights of this conference is the number of publishing houses that have brought their latest publications and tempted us all to spend greatly, and we do with little reluctance given the forty to fifty per cent reductions.

I will begin with a brief contemplation on these five days and hope that my musings are “on topic” for our assignment. At the conference book display my eyes were drawn to book after book that sought to describe the various facets of Islam. And I realized that in all my knowledge and sophistication in biblical studies, I knew very little about another world religion, one that grew from the same family tree as mine. Also I realize what a confession this is. Toronto is one of, if not the most culturally diverse city in the world. Day in and day out as I commute to my office I encounter the Islamic world and I have paid little attention.

You speak of the importance of context, of difference, of pluralism being valued and the norm within theological education. You speak of a cross-cultural, multi-cultural context, of multi-faith and indigenous issues. Before September 11, I would have written of such things and would have given them my best objective description. Somehow that no longer seems enough. Now my questions focus on questions such as, how am I as a leader in theological education called to live out my commitment to multi-culturalism and multi-faith as basic to how we “do” theological education? What values must be at the heart of this commitment? While all is not clear, not by as we would say “a country mile,” what is clear is that I must return to a self that is more engaged. I have tools that I have developed in biblical studies to engage the world of theological education, tools that challenge me to engage the world around with, as Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza would say, a hermeneutical framework that concerns itself first and foremostly with the ethics of any interpretation.³ The work that is being done in postcolonial studies, I think, is beginning to provide a framework for the kinds of questions we need to ask more generally throughout our work in theological education.

³ E. Schussler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic: The Politics of Biblical Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999)

At Knox College we are engaged in a curriculum review. What's new about that I hear you say, nothing except that our concern is not just to tinker. Our intent is to identify the critical questions that we need to explore in evaluating our present program and in that questioning be open to something quite different from what we now have. What should our students "know", "be able to do," "be able to live out" when they graduate? There are many aspects that challenge us. Our present curriculum is too course heavy (we pretend it is a three year degree) in that we have been challenged by the denomination to consider this or that and our response has been to add more courses but to drop none. Many of the additions have been in the area of "practical theology," yet we still hear that we do not teach the "how to" of ministry.

Within myself, the more I consider curriculum issues, the more convinced I become that the "how to" will take care of itself if we find time for students and faculty to learn and to practice theological reflection. We have all the collective wisdom that we need to be the church of the 21st century (there is no learned seer out there), but we need to spend much more time bringing the traditions of the ages (broadly defined) into dialogue with our present experience - and that takes a lot of time and is hard work.

One of the challenging sections in our review concerns our relationship with the culture in which we live. One piece identifies a past time when we offered a variety of courses on "world religions" – what those religions out there, in a distant land believed, taught and lived. Now we are asking different questions. What does it mean to live as religious persons in Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver or North Bay? Should the Toronto School of Theology (the consortium of seven denominational Christian schools of which Knox is a part) move to being an inter-faith consortium? And if so how would this change our relationship to each other and those faith traditions that joined us?

As we continue our work, I am reminded of Richard Osmer's words that "education inevitably asks and gives answers to questions of this sort, selectively emphasizing some subjects and virtues while neglecting others. Herein lies its authority, which it may use wisely or poorly."⁴

For so many years I have called myself a feminist – open to diversity, plurality – not just open to but embracing diversity. What a challenge I feel as I contemplate what it means to give educational leadership within a denomination that suffers all the changing dimensions you describe in your letter: the dissatisfaction of congregations with theological education especially when our graduates run into any kind of difficulty; the call to be practical (but here I would agree with you that the Christendom congregation may not be the best place for students to learn their models of ministry); the gap between the theology of the church leadership and those in the pew. Although in regard to the latter, we have just begun a new certificate program for lay people and are extremely gratified with the response.

Last month I spent two days in Chicago engaged in a writing project with a good friend who is Director of a Doctor of Ministry program. Three years ago when I too directed such a program, we received a grant to conduct a research project on women who were students and graduates of our programs. What did women, now leaders within the church identify as their leadership model, their growing edge, their spirituality? What a privilege it was to hear the leaders describe their joy and pain in ministry. To a person, their sense of call was strong and well defined. While they identified their priorities variously, all of what you write is a part of that identification – a commitment to praxis, a search for a deeper spirituality, and emphasis

⁴ Richard Osmer, "The Teaching Ministry in a Multi-Cultural World," in Max L. Stackhouse and Don S. Browning, *God and Globalization, V.2; The Spirit and the Modern Authorities* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2001), p. 49-50.

on inclusion, and a commitment to diversity. And, Sarah, hear this, many of these women serve effectively year in and year out in both rural and urban churches, large and small. How encouraging this should be for us!

I do want to address one more issue before I close this chapter of our conversation. In preparation for our gathering at Bossey in June, I mulled over Nyambura's reference to Musa Dube's book in her letter of invitation.⁵ How much is expected of us who are now Presidents, Principals, and Deans – and how bogged down my daily life seems to be in the ordinary, everyday decisions. How seldom do I feel that I rise above the mundane to contemplate the “bigger picture.” How much the concerns for budget, staffing etc., etc. seem to be my priority! Do you experience this and what can be done?

Let me end here. Thank you, Sarah, for taking the initiative in opening our conversation, inviting me to probe more deeply, and in that to remember why I accepted the call to be Principal. I look forward to your response.

With best wishes
Dorcas

December 13, 2001

Dear Dorcas

I found your comments really helpful – and most perceptive. Yes, theory is one thing but the actual practice of living and working with a cross-cultural/pluralist commitment is quite another. Whether it be making sense of the terrorist attacks on America (and subsequent American/British/Australian/Canadian response to those attacks), working in a congregation where the organist wants to control the choice of music (and thus the theology – an experience I'm working with at the moment) or considering an appropriate response to a government intent on ignoring its Indigenous People and closing its borders to those who seek asylum – the same issues are at the heart of it all: how do we live as a reconciling community of difference, following the way of Christ. And, of course, the question that emerges out of all that for us as theological educators has to be: “how do we provide a curriculum for ministry/theological education that enables such reconciling community?”

I've been preparing for a feminist theology class I will teach next year and have found Diana Eck's work⁶ very helpful as I consider how we might form community based on feminist principles. She talks about the human tendency to “construct our *we* without including *them*” (p.202) and identifies pluralism as one of several possible responses to our diverse world – a response to which she obviously has an affinity. In pluralism, she writes, “we recognize the

⁵ *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, (St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 2000), pp. 197-8. (M)any feminist victories have been won, but patriarchy and its institutions have not fully yielded to women's demands. To be in the struggle for justice and liberation is, therefore to be in *a luta continua*, the struggle that always continues. Nonetheless, the most outstanding phenomenon of the last half of the twentieth century is the struggle for justice and liberation. Oppressed groups of various backgrounds no longer accept their oppression. Blacks, women, homosexuals, Two-Thirds World masses, Jews, children, the poor, or just about every minority and oppressed group, demand justice and liberation. They ask what and who denies them liberation, thereby suggesting that their oppression is also intimately connected to someone other than themselves. They ask how their oppression is executed, that is, which methods and means in social structures are used to maintain their domination. In this way, they probe the interconnection of their realities, speaking against oppressive and exploitative groups and institutions, and seeking liberating interdependence.

⁶ Diana Eck, *Encountering God: A Spiritual Journey from Bozeman to Banaras*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1993

limits of the world we already know and we seek to understand others in their own terms, not just in ours” (p.149). But how do we do this – and how do we teach it?

The United Reformed Church (UK) now includes in their preparation for ministry the opportunity for students to do a placement in another country with a partner church. I know my own life experience of spending significant time living, working and studying in cultures other than my own have had an enormous effect on me. Even after a few short weeks in Jamaica some years ago – or the most recent experience of living and meeting in a theological college in Malaysia (cold showers and concrete floors) – have opened my eyes and my heart to other ways of being. One of our students recently attended a six-week cross-cultural experience in India, sponsored by the Council for World Mission. As he moves into ordained ministry in the Australian outback next month, I know those few weeks will stay with him and will continue to shape his ministry for years to come. However, the reality within our context is that such visits and exchanges will only be available for a very small percentage of our students.

What are the options for the whole community? I believe the options are on our doorstep – or not very far away. We must live in what is one of the most multicultural countries in the world – and I guess Canada is not that dissimilar. But a multicultural environment doesn't mean that we are engaging in it in any way. The congregation I belong to is fairly multi-cultural and one of the ministers is very good at greeting people in their own language (he knows at least 18 different ways to say “hello”). People really appreciate this. Very occasionally, one of those languages is used for the exchange of the peace. However, we've never said the Lord's Prayer in a language other than English; we've never sung a non-English hymn. If you want to do that, you have to go to the special “Fijian Service”. We did have a concerted effort at one stage to pray and lobby for the release of an Iranian who had been held in an asylum seekers detention center (and we celebrated his release). However, even these small actions wouldn't be usual in most Uniting Church congregations and they appear to be exceptions rather than the way we do things usually. I don't think all our graduates would work naturally in this style. Even with this more diverse way of working, we don't *actively participate* in what this multi-faceted reality; we've included “others” but we haven't sought true understanding of each other through real encounter; I don't think we've expected to be changed by any encounter. Does our college curriculum encourage an open, committed dialogue for change? In some ways, yes – but the practical outworking of the academic teaching doesn't seem to be happening to any great extent.

Recently, our faculty invited some leaders from the local mosque to meet with us and have dinner together. The conversation flowed well – and I was pleasantly surprised to find they had no problems relating with a female principal (some of them also knew more of the Bible than some of us). We will continue our dialogue – and I believe it has the potential for real fruitfulness – time will tell whether the encounter becomes more than a “you in your small corner and I in mine” moment. It was an important first step, but much more will need to happen if we are going to be changed by the experience.

Imprinted on my mind as a result of our time with these leaders from the Muslim community was that during the evening our guests left us for a few minutes so that they could conduct their evening prayers. While they were out of the room, did we pray? Oh no, we made coffee, did the dishes, chatted amongst ourselves, before happily welcoming our new friends back in our midst. For me, this presents a real challenge. I think our curriculum also needs to assist students (and faculty) in deepening their encounter with God. We seem to leave the faith dimension for students to work out on their own – or with their spiritual director. Last night I led a Bible Study with young mothers, with whom I've been preparing our Advent Services. As we explored our understanding of who Mary was, all of the women had a two-dimensional Christmas-card picture of an unrealistic mother of Jesus. As they talked – and

shared their own experiences of giving birth and mothering, one of the young women declared, "I've never dared to question anything I learned at Sunday School." I came home with conflicting feelings: I was happy about the way in which new learnings had emerged but wondered whether I had helped the women develop a deeper faith in God. So often our academic learning encourages (wonderful) mind explorations but leaves out the personal encounter with the living Christ. For those of us who come from the more liberal spectrum, we seem to have thrown the baby out with the discarded manger straw! Many of us have had such bruising and disillusioning experiences of Sunday School faith – we know what we don't want – but is it enough to talk only **about** God and leave the talking/experiencing **of** God to only personal private moments? I'm planning to include bible study and prayer groups in the life of the faculty and college community next year. I'm fearful – but determined – to do this. Not only must our practical ministry be grounded in a commitment to meaningful encounter with the "other" of humanity, but also a meaningful encounter with the Holy Other. My fear is that we will not know how to experience God other than in our Sunday School ways and so will return to old models of spirituality that only reinforce a fear (and even hatred) of those who are different. (Thus the reason for having faculty meet to learn how to lead bible study and prayer, prior to meeting with the whole community).

So, Dorcas, I want to say that at the heart of any theological education curriculum there needs to be a commitment to move away from individualism, to open ourselves to the holy otherness/mystery of God and to participate in a construction of the "we" for which we do not have definition: the "we" of the *oikumene* must surely be much bigger than we have even dreamed of in past generations. Perhaps this new way of being, which challenges us to the core, is the next stage of God's revelation of what the kin-dom might be like. Is it possible for theological education to be shaped so that we can participate in this process?

Your comments about being overcome by administration struck a real chord. How do we, as leaders in theological education, put energy into what we have been called to do? I have found these past months on study leave very freeing (and, if I'm honest, very difficult). I have taken time to read, write and reflect in a way I've not been able to before. I've faced the pain (physically and spiritually) that is usually covered over by busyness and stress and am determined to carry some of the learnings I have made into my return to the office. I've loved the opportunity to do some practical ministry in the local congregation, to think deeply and to take time for prayer and meditation. However, I know that the daily demands will get in the way of my deep desire to build a Christ-focused community of reconciliation that thinks and acts with faith, compassion, vision and openness. As the days come closer, I wonder whether it is possible. And yet, I believe in miracles!!

With best wishes

Sarah

January 2, 2002

Dear Sarah,

What a dynamic piece you wrote! It initiated all sorts of thoughts, which, while they might not bring about any sense of resolution to our topic, might continue to focus our musings a little more.

First, community or as you say "a commitment to move away from individualism, to open ourselves to the holy otherness/mystery of God and to participate in the construction of the we for which we do not have a definition." My experience is that not only do we not have a definition of the "we", it is becoming increasingly hard to get any "we" together. In our college community many of the students are part-time, commuter students. They are older and a larger number than I like to think are on a "hurry to finish" theological education mode of thinking, which is often seen as a necessary evil in their goal of ministry. We are also part

of a consortium, a rich experience of ecumenical diversity except that at any given time our students can be taking courses in any one of seven colleges.

Even as faculty we have difficulty seeing ourselves as “we.” Within the academy, we have been rewarded for our individual contributions to our particular fields of knowledge. Our success is based on contributing more and more to the pyramidal intellectual ladder. We move up the rungs in proportion to how well we add another piece to the *status questionis*. This conditioning is hard to overcome. We gather together for faculty meetings, but even one lunch together every couple of weeks proved too much so died of “benign neglect.” How stimulating it would be to find time to engage in regular discussions about theological education. Our most recent work on curriculum development has provided a glimpse of how rich such discussions might be. As we gathered to develop curriculum outcomes, each faculty member worked hard to identify the essence of his or her discipline and what would be needed for “successful” ministry. I felt that in those times together I gained a much deeper insight into the rich resource that our faculty is, and how fortunate our denomination is to have individuals who exercise their call with such integrity.

My own experience of the work that I do, especially the administrative demands, is that it keeps me from “being” what I would like our institution to become. If even the Principal is unable to model community because she is busy doing paper work, important paper work (I don’t underestimate its importance), then how is community going to happen. I think this aspect of my call at the present moment, more than any other leaves me with a profound sense of failure. St. Paul’s letter to the Romans is often quoted, “the good that I would I do not and the evil that I would not that I do.”

And yet having said this, I don’t feel any sense of despair. I am a perpetual optimist, and I do see many signs of hope. My work in Doctor of Ministry education gave me some sense of the way forward. Calling itself a collaborative learning experience, Doctor of Ministry classes were weekly, four hours in length and built upon the fact that the class itself was community. All that we identified and valued as community needed to find a place within each learning unit. This diverse group of learners sought to be a **community** that worshipped and theologized together regularly over two years. It was hard work especially given the commitment of Doctor of Ministry education to a diversity of gender, race, ministry experience, denomination, language and sexuality. In this program a commitment to living and working within a cross-cultural/pluralist setting is a weekly engagement.

The other encouraging thing for me is that in many places this type of exploration and experimentation is taking place. What I have learned about the Bossey educational program of ecumenical formation speaks to the issues that are part of how we live and work with a cross-cultural/pluralist commitment. Its leaders refer to this learning experience as a process of disconnection and connection, of unlearning in order to learn or “growth through sorrow.” It is an interconfessional, intercultural and interdisciplinary process in which the participants engage the various disciplines of theological study in order “to practice self-critical discipline that allows for the reception of both cognitive and spiritual insights.”⁷

I have also found the work of Parker Palmer to be informative in providing an educational language for our concerns. He compares three models of community within which learning takes place: therapeutic, civic and marketing and in identifying the shortcomings of each creates a framework for his own understanding of the educational enterprise, that is, knowing, teaching and learning.⁸ What his analysis helps me to understand is that we must be clear

⁷ John B. Lindner, “Ecumenical Formation: A Methodology for a Pluralistic Age,” *Theological Education* 34, supplement (1997), 10.

⁸ Parker Palmer, *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher’s Life* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998), pp. 90-94.

about where truth(s) and meaning are determined within theological education. I'm sure you have felt as I have the temptation, in light of the heavy pressure of financial constraints, to give in to a marketing model that judges meaning and truth solely in terms of consumer i.e. student or denominational satisfaction. Or a therapeutic model that concerns itself with what is individual and intimate to the neglect of the world out there. Or a civic model that would allow a majority vote to determine truth and meaning in the theological enterprise.

To continue, I found your reflections on the initiatives within the United Reformed Church helpful. As in your context so in ours, those few students who take part in a cross-cultural experience almost always speak of changed perspectives. For me my first "cross-cultural" experience was quite close to home and really "cross-denominational." In the early 1970's I, born a Northern Ireland Protestant, enrolled in a Catholic college to complete my final year in a M.Div. program leading to ordination. I like to think that it was a perspective changing moment not only for me but also for the male ordinands with whom I studied.

At Knox we are increasingly conscious (in cooperation with the International Ministries division of our denomination) in committing more of our resources to cross-cultural learning experiences. While still minimal we encourage our students, through financial and administrative support, to do field placements outside of Canada. As Faculty we are seeking teaching opportunities that will challenge the western perspectives and presuppositions of our course material and bibliographies. We have a small legacy that allows us both to invite international scholars to spend a semester with us, or international graduate students to further their education. Their increasing presence in our midst, hopefully, will challenge our ethnocentricity or as you have put it help us to "understand others in their own terms, not just in ours."

Where we fall down is in our engagement of the context that is most immediate. Here I am speaking not just Knox College as it works to encourage the diversity of culture and language that is part of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, but also of the Toronto School of Theology as a consortium within the University of Toronto. We at the Toronto School of Theology have few informal let alone formal associations with the theological institutions of other faith traditions that are our neighbors within the city of Toronto. We might do well to look at other examples such as the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley California in which an interfaith dimension is included.

John Mbiti's work on tribal religions and theological education quotes Donald W. Shriver's foreword to a book on globalization, contextualization and mission in theological education. Shriver writes,

It is a book that begins in dialogue and ends with same. It is not afraid to ask Christians to converse with partners as old as Abraham and Sarah (what about Hagar?), as remote as Hindus it encourages me to pursue my own profession as a theologian with many new partners around the world."

Mbiti continues:

Indeed there are many "old" partners in doing theology, but "new" ones are few and may be suspect in some theological quarters. Theological education everywhere should lead us all toward the goal of having both new and old partners. Perhaps only that way will we be able to learn and practice the globalization of theology. Theological education has to take risks and broadly function in a truly multicultural and even multi-religious basis."⁹

Earlier he poses a question to those in the west using what I think is a delightful image: "Will theological education in the West ever get out into the street without an umbrella, get wet and hear the birds singing."¹⁰

Well, Sarah, it really has been a great experience receiving your letters and responding to them. They have invited moments of reflection - always, however, in the midst of the bustle of the everyday. But then maybe that is as good as it gets!

May you experience many blessings on the journey ahead.

Dorcas

⁹ John Mbiti, "When the Bull Is in a Strange Country, It does Not Bellow," in Max L. Stackhouse and Diane B. Obenchain, *God and Globalization*, V.2: Christ and the Dominions of Civilization (Harrisburg Trinity Press International, 2002), p. 172

¹⁰ Mbiti, "The Bull," p.170

**REPORT ON THE INTERNATIONAL FEMINIST
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY PROGRAMME (D.Min)
FOR ECUMENICAL LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

*San Francisco Theological Seminary, California, USA, Advanced Pastoral Studies
J. Shannon Clarkson and Letty M. Russell, Advisors
January 2001 to January 2002*

Education as Transformation

Ghana, 2002. By the time we had visited the Slave Castle at Elmina to witness the scenes of degradation, genocide and slavery for African women and men the painful story of colonialism was very much on our hearts. Our January 2002 course in the international feminist D.Min. was anything but “academic” in the sense of unconnected to the suffering and pain of the world around us. Led by Mercy Amba Oduyoye, Elizabeth Amoah and Rabiatsu Ammah, the students began to reflect on the interplay of gender, gospel and culture in a postcolonial context. At our opening lecture Mercy reminded us of the importance to adding questions about the social construction of *Gender* to the classical list of *God, Gold and Glory* in all our research and theological work.

It is no wonder then that the group made good use of Muse Dube’s work on *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* and the other books from the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians in the class that was held at the Institute of Women in Religion and Culture, Trinity Theological College in Accra. In looking critically at our histories as colonized and colonizers, and at the contemporary political, economic, and social realities of both the Western Initiated Churches and the African Instituted Churches, the group of 10 students and five faculty concluded that there was an urgent need to develop a *Feminist Missiology* that responds to the challenges of postcolonialism, feminism and religious discourse.

The challenge here is to respond to the past and continuing forms of postcolonial experience in countries of the North and South by seeking to become what Musa Dube calls *postcolonial subjects*. Women who are colonized and colonizers share in a hybrid of oppression and liberation that makes it necessary to work together as subjects who critically analyze the sources and practices of privilege, and look for liberating spaces in which we can share our gospel commitment to work against international and gendered oppression. This is what we were about as women from 8 countries and all the continents

Geneva, 2001. The same could be said of the course in January 2001 in Geneva, although the First World setting was so very different. We were nine women from seven countries and all continents who came together to reflect theologically on our practice of ministry in each local setting as it raises questions and challenges to our theology from a feminist perspective. We heard about theology of resistance from Nyambura Njoroge and struggled over how to mobilize church and ecumenical resources to fight the pandemic of AIDS with Musimbi Kanyoro. We were joined by Joyce Mercer, a professor from San Francisco Seminary who led a discussion of her former ministry in the Philippines.

In all these courses there is a paper written each week on the topics discussed so that women begin to articulate their own theology of action/reflection. In addition the students divided into three groups to study and share insights concerning: Domestic Violence Against Women, Conducting Bible Study from a Feminist Perspective, and Creating Liberation/Feminist

Liturgies. Meeting in Geneva provided ample opportunity to visit the Ecumenical Center and to learn more about how the churches cooperate in mission and ministry. Both this course and the one in Ghana depend on a network of women who make it possible for women to teach each other in an educational process that opens the possibility of transformation, not only in theology and ministry, but also in women's lives.

In reflecting on her experience in Ghana, Aruna Gnanadason, a staff member of the WCC who is a participant in the program, wrote:

I think this DMin programme is designed in a way that requires me to reflect seriously not only on other people's contexts and lives, but on my own as an Indian and as a Christian feminist. I recognise where my strengths lie, thanks to the encouraging remarks from Letty and Shannon but I also realise where my weaknesses lie and the areas that need improvement if I am to write a Dissertation/Project of any worth. I am grateful for this too, because it is sharpening my feminist consciousness.

Becoming post colonial subjects. This process of transformation through education is not easy for the teachers or the students as they carve out time to attend to many theological and vocational questions. We have been working to create this program since 1993 and we are still seeking ways to overcome the many barriers and to work together as *postcolonial subjects*. Shortly after the Ghana course, Letty Russell lectured in a Symposium at the University of Basel on "Gender Differences and the Hermeneutics of the Other in Missiology," organized by Professor Christine Lienemann. In the lecture she tried to develop some of the clues to becoming postcolonial subjects together in the work of transforming the world, beginning with ourselves. The clues are relevant to our work with the international feminist D.Min.

The first clue is the need to *pay attention to the power quotient*. This was highlighted in the course in Ghana from the visit to the Slave Castle onward. The power of those who run the course comes from the North. The majority of the participants are from the South. In working together on a common project, a degree in theology, we still have to negotiate: what theology? *what criteria?*, and so on. The educational systems we work in are themselves part of the Eurocentric male system of education which itself needs to be questioned. This is the reason for redesigning the D.Min. course to meet the needs of women in leadership in churches and ecumenical organizations. Yet in Ghana, there was much discussion of whether requiring papers and the use of computers was a way of disadvantaging women from the South or of making more tools accessible to them. There is no easy answer here, except to say that the purpose of such a program is to work itself out of a job so that more and more the course and the teachers are women theologians from the South. This certainly has happened as we only hold the courses in places where there is an abundance of Third World feminist theologians.

A second clue to working together as postcolonial subjects is that of *beginning from the perspective of the outsider*. This means developing the practice of listening to the pain of others and responding to their initiatives. The style of action/reflection in the feminist theologies of the courses makes it possible for the students to share in listening to each other and to model an integration of theological reflection and action for social justice. Each student was encouraged to write theological papers that were rooted in the questions and struggles of their own context. In Ghana we also joined our Nigerian sister, Yamtikara Msheila, to write a letter of protest and solidarity with groups working for the release of a 30 year old Muslim woman in the State of Sokoto who faces the prospect of stoning to death under Sharia law.

A third clue to becoming postcolonial subjects, working together on transformation of the world as both colonized and colonizers is recognition that *God's promise is always unfolding*. In situations where women come from such different geographical, economic, cultural and religious contexts it is not even possible to hold that the traditional teachings of the churches are the "truth." We work together to interpret the meaning of our faith and marvel and share new insights into the way God is at work in our lives.

The challenges to find ways to work together are very real, but this program is linked to people of faith around the world who seek to practice hospitality with one another. In fact, right after we decided in Ghana that we needed to work on a feminist theology of mission, Letty Russell and Shannon Clarkson went to the Symposium at the University of Basel, and the first paper, given by Katja Heidemanns from the Missionswissenschaftliches Institut Aachen, was on "Feminist Missiology"! There we were, hard at work on the same question that had come the South, and finding our clues from the writings and teachings of women like Mercy Amba Oduyoye who, among other things, share in the D.Min. program.

Student Participation and Scholarships

As of February 2002 there have been 72 women enrolled in the International Feminist D.Min. concentration. This group includes:

- An equal number of clergy and lay (36/36)
- The countries represented number 28 with 10 from six African nations; 24 from five Asian nations; 20 from the USA and Canada; three from three Central American nations; four from three South American nations; three from three European nations and seven from four South Pacific nations
- Church traditions represented include: 16 Reformed; 12 United; 13 Methodist; 5 Lutheran; 7 Roman Catholic; 3 Baptist; 3 Anglican; 3 Mar Thoma; 2 Pentecostal; 1 Apostolic, Armenian, Friends, Brethren, Metropolitan Community Church, New Covenant, Disciples, Congregational.
- Full or partial scholarship aid was provided through the World Council of Churches for 26 participants with funds from Evangelisches Missionswerk in Deutschland (EMW).
- Other scholarship aid received since September 2000 was provided by the Presbyterian Church, USA (\$5000), the United Methodist Church, USA (\$3,500), the Global Fund for Women in Theology (\$3,500), Basel Mission 21 (\$300), Mennonite Church, USA (\$1,000), the Wilbur Fund (\$1,000) the Jackie White Fund for International Women (\$250), and the Sisters of our Lady of the Mission (\$4,600).

To date, thirteen women have completed their programs and we look forward to an ever increasing number in this category. Those who completed their dissertations since September 2000 are: Barbara Barry, Libuseng Ketshabile, Penny Nixon, Ada Nyangendo Nyaga, and Ken Phin Pang. Barbara Barry (2001) wrote on *The Lake Silver School and Family Connection Project for the Empowerment of Women and Children*. Libuseng Ketshabile's (2001) topic was *Widowhood Among the Southern Basotho People in South Africa: A Christian Feminist Analysis*. Penny Nixon (2001), *Incarnational Sexuality: Queer Theology Made Flesh*. Ada Nyaga (2002) wrote on *Church's Mission with Adolescent Single Mothers in the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, Mathaithi Parish, Kenya*. Ken Phin Pang (2001) wrote about *The Unfolding Vision: A Study of the Hakka Women's Ministry in the Basel Christian Church of Malaysia*.

Future Challenges

There are many challenges which this program faces. It is always an open question of whether the participants will even make it through the various personal, economic, national and international barriers to arrive at the course. Yamtikara Mshelia took two years to come to her first course due to the conflicts in Nigeria between Christians and Muslims and to the difficulties of communication and travel arrangements. Joan Tofaeno took two years to come to the second course because of a government coup and political unrest in Fiji. The fiscal crisis in Argentina delayed the possibility of paying for a ticket to travel up to the very last minute. The list goes on, and this is only the beginning of the obstacles to finding enough time, materials, and energy to write papers and a dissertation/project in English.

Completing the D. Min. The transformation in women's lives is remarkable each step of the way. Even when they must stop part way because of bad health, family problems, loss of funding, inability to find a way to write, and so on, the women become part of an ongoing ecumenical education network that can continue to support them in their work. Many women do not finish because of the pressure of their ongoing ministries. For instance, Ofelia Ortega is President of Matanzas Theological Seminary in Cuba and keeps the dissertation/project close at hand but never finalized. The same is true of Lisa Meo in her work with women in theological education in the Pacific Islands as Director of the Weavers. Nellie Richie is busy as a Bishop in the Methodist Church in Argentina. The challenge is to recruit leaders who want the opportunity for continuing education in feminist theologies, but are willing and able to make the sacrifices of time and attention needed to write a dissertation. Our main effort here is to raise the entrance standards and also make clear the time it takes to do the program in advance, and to develop ways of continuing mentoring of both the participant and their dissertation advisors. We now have 13 graduates, two of whom, Libuseng Ketshabile from South Africa and Ada Nyaga from Kenya, had EMW/WCC scholarships.

Funding for scholarships. Another challenge is to build a strong base of funders for scholarships. The program is run by volunteers. This keeps expenses down, but it also makes it difficult to give the organizational time to cooperating with the WCC on a fund raising program. Two particular challenges here are that the Sarah Chakko Endowment Fund for Women in Theological Education will provide scholarships when the endowment is raised, but at the same time we need to raise scholarship money each year for the D.Min. program. As a result of economic constraints the program has only been able to take in two students in January 2001 and two in January 2002 in addition to supporting those already in the program. The challenge is to find a way to fund at least four a year so that we continue to have the global, ecumenical participation that is basic to the program goals and the learning process.

Accountability. A third challenge is to work with all the participants and sponsoring agencies to develop ongoing accountability. San Francisco Theological Seminary has been very cooperative in opening up the possibility of accreditation for this D.Min. program. The Director, Walter Davis, has retired and Warren Lee is the Interim Director. The support needed for this program is provided by dedicated staff at the present, but the future is an open question in this time of transition. The Geneva Advisory Committee for the program continues to be of great help in recruitment. The scholarship program is organized through the work of Nyambura Njoroge and Françoise Faure, but even here it is difficult to coordinate the work because of the cuts in staff and the lack of time to give to this aspect of Ecumenical Theological Education. The Advisors to the D.Min. program, Letty Russell and Shannon Clarkson are accountable to all these groups as well as to the students themselves. They need to be able to spend more time in keeping the students accountable and encouraging them in their work. Even now there is more possibility for this through e-mail communication.

Educational Networking. E-mail has also made it possible to develop alternative forms of continuing ecumenical theological education. The organizational structure is clearly a network which functions through a system of international communication. The teaching staff are those who belong to a network of feminist theologians in all parts of the globe. They welcome the chance to share their work and find new partnerships and stimulation through the presence of the D. Min. courses in their institutions in Asia, Africa and Latin America. The students themselves are recruited through ecumenical theological networks, not only in Geneva, but also in all the other areas of the world. Many students come into the program through the WCC programs at Bossey or through the programs for women conducted by the WCC such as the current program on “Women’s Voices and Visions: Being Church.” The students themselves form a network of exchange that encourages others to participate. Women leaders do apply. At present our application pool includes a medical doctor from Ghana and one from the Philippines, as well as the President of the Baptist Seminary in Nicaragua, and a woman in charge of novice education for the Maryknoll Sisters in the Philippines.

From beginning to end the network for international feminist education is being woven by women who know that the Spirit has been poured out on women and men, and that there are ever fresh ways of nurturing the gifts of the Spirit in a global network of caring and sharing. This network of women can contribute to transformation in church and society and its gifts can continue to multiply as we find ways to empower one another in the service of Jesus Christ.