Common Ground Journal

Perspectives on the Church in the 21st Century

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Theological Education as Mission

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Mission Statement
An Online, Open-Access, International Journal

Common Ground Journal (*CGJ*) is a publication of the iComm Ministry Network published twice annually as a resource for Christian congregations seeking to understand and faithfully live out their calling as the people of God in the world. The primary audience for CGJ is thoughtful Christians in congregations who are catalysts for growth within their own churches.

CGJ is devoted to the development of strong, faithful churches whose life and ministry grow out of the church's nature as the people of God. They are organized and led in a manner consistent with their nature and mission. They continually ask, "What does it mean to be a sign of the Kingdom of God in the world today?"

CGJ is a resource for congregational development. We invite scholars and thoughtful Christians in congregations around the world to stimulate inquiry, reflection and action around issues central to the life and ministry of the gathered community of faith. We invite those who serve as leaders in congregations, mission agencies, parachurch organizations, relief and development work, higher education, and non-traditional leadership development to apply their scholarship and expertise in these fields to the context of the local church. We encourage members of congregations to address the broader church with insights grounded in a thoughtful examination of Scripture, and in their own experiences as part of communities of faith in the world.

CGJ is international in scope. We draw on the rich resources of the church around the world to provide a variety of voices and perspectives on issues facing the church. Writers are encouraged to be specific to their own culture and context. In order to contribute to the development of indigenous literature, articles may be submitted in a language other than English.

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Submissions to the Journal

The *Common Ground Journal* welcomes articles from scholars and discerning Christians. Each issue will feature invited articles around a theme, as well as articles received through open submissions. Open submission articles are reviewed by members of the Editorial Review Committee who make recommendations to the editor regarding their publication.

General Guidelines

Common Ground Journal seeks to stimulate Christian Churches to thoughtful action around their calling to be the people of God in the world. All articles should be grounded both in theology and the life of the church. Writers are encouraged to write to and about their own cultures and contexts. CGJ invites submissions in the following categories:

- Articles that stimulate thinking and reflection on the nature of the Church

- Articles that link the nature of the Church to its life and work in the world

- Articles that explore the integration of theology and social sciences in relation to life and work of the Church

- Essays on truths gleaned from the interplay of theory and practice, theology and experience in the active life of faith

- Articles that present insights from congregations attempting to live out their identity as the people of God in world

- Articles based on responsible qualitative research designed to inform a local congregation's understanding of its life and ministry

- Articles that raise questions that the Christian community needs to explore in becoming the people of God in the world

- Reviews of books, journals, programs, web sites and related resources

Submission Guidelines
Common Ground Journal submission guidelines and protocols are based on the need of meeting web design standards that are compatible across multiple versions of both current and legacy web browsers. Please follow the standards carefully when submitting documents for consideration for online publication in the *Common Ground Journal.* Documents to be considered for publication should be e-mailed to the editor at: editor@commongroundjournal.org.

Article Length
Articles should be approximately 2500 to 3500 words in length. Book reviews and essays should be shorter.

Language and Foreign Languages
Articles should be written in clear narrative prose. Readers can be expected to be familiar with the language of the Bible and theology, but will not necessarily have formal education in these fields. Please avoid academic language and discipline specific terms. Provide clear definitions and examples of important terms not familiar to a general audience. Use explanatory footnotes sparingly; explanations and examples in the text of articles are preferred.

The best articles are clear and focused, developing a single thesis with examples and application. The successful writer translates complex ideas into everyday language without talking down to the readers. All articles should use inclusive language.

Biblical language terms and words in foreign languages should be transliterated into English. If foreign language fonts are used in lieu of transliteration, you must embed the fonts in the document so the text can be reproduced accurately. Instructions for how to embed fonts can usually be found under the *Help* menu of most word processors (keywords: embed font).

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In matters of style and format, please follow the *Chicago Manual of Style.* You must include proper documentation for all source material and quotations using footnotes.

A "Bibliography" of works cited should be included at the end of the article. A "Recommended Reading" list or "For Further Study" list may also be included.

Documents to be considered for publication should be submitted according to the following style protocols:

- Times New Roman font 12 point (important: you must embed any other font used in the document)
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- Do not underline text, as underlining is reserved for documenting hyperlinks—use bold or italic for emphasis
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- Charts, graphs, images etc. appearing anywhere in the document should be submitted in BMP, GIF, JPG, or WMF format—images should be as clear as possible
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- A narrative biography of three or four sentences identifying your name as you wish it to appear, the institution you work for or the relationship you have with the topic, your position, and other information relevant identifying your qualifications in writing the article
- A color (preferred) or black and white photograph of you (portrait style) in BMP, GIF, JPG, or WMF format
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Reader Response and Contact Information

Readers are encouraged to respond to articles published in the *Common Ground Journal*. This can be done in two ways. Formal responses to articles and themes or editorial matters may be submitted to the editor via e-mail or postal mail (see *Contact Information* below). Responses may be edited for length.

If you wish to initiate or participate in an ongoing discussion related to an article, go to http://208.185.149.229/WebX/cmngrnd/, where you can post and read responses of other readers. The following contacts can be used for any questions or recommendations for the *Common Ground Journal:*

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From the Editor

By Laurie D. Bailey

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In February of this year, the International Baptist Theological Seminary (IBTS) in Prague brought together a group of scholars with experience in missions, theological education and the church to explore whether contemporary theological education is focused on the real needs of local churches and mission agencies. This group of international leaders presented and discussed papers around the conference theme "Theological Education as Mission—Mission in Theological Education". Matters addressed at this conference have significance for the wider church. The papers raise questions that should also be raised in the local church as we go about the everyday business of being the church:

- What is the mission of the church?
- What is the historical and cultural context within which a given church exists?
- How does this impact the church's mission and engagement with society?
- How does the way people reason vary across cultures, and how should that affect teaching?
- How do people learn, and therefore how should the learning experiences be structured?
- What would a theological curriculum look like if it truly took into account the mission of God in the world?
- How does encountering the work through mission shape the church's theology?
- What are the implications of the unity of the church for shape and focus of theological education?

These papers offer a window into the accomplishments and challenges of the church in post-Communist Central and Eastern Europe as well as other parts of the world. CGJ is please to be able to offer a selection of the papers from this conference in this issue. Look for more of the papers in a future issue. The complete papers from this conference have been collected and published by Neufeld as a book titled *Theological*

Education as Mission. For information on purchasing the book, contact IBTS through their web site at www.IBTS.cz.

About the Editor

Laurie D. Bailey is editor of *Common Ground Journal.* She has over 20 years experience as a Christian educator in two Illinois churches, and enjoys acting as a bridge between the academic community and the church through consulting and freelance writing. She lives in Park Ridge, Illinois and has three grown children.

LCC: A Narrative Case Study of a Christian Liberal Arts College as Mission

By Stephen Dintaman

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A Description

To understand Lithuania Christian College, a brief account of its beginnings is necessary. LCC started in 1991 at the invitation of the new government of the newly declared independent Lithuania. They invited a Lithuanian evangelical believer, Otonas Balciunas, who had been converted in the mid-1980s by Mennonite Brethren living in Lithuania while they waited to emigrate to the west. He had been so active in church work and bible distribution that he had been forced to leave his position as a music teacher. The Lithuanian authorities now invited this visionary evangelical leader to start a Protestant school in Lithuania. It seems remarkable that a country so overwhelmingly Catholic by heritage would take this move to intentionally pluralize education in Lithuania. Otonas, through Mennonite Brethren contacts in Canada, eventually enlisted the help of philanthropist, Art DeFehr, who was instrumental in making LCC a possibility. Art has commented that the founding of the school was possible only within a very brief and specific window of time and place, and that if we had tried to make it happen in some other setting or time it would most likely have failed. That this window of opportunity opened as it did, and that there were visionary people there to take advantage of this opening, shows something of the special graced character of LCC's existence.

LCC is a Christian liberal arts institution of higher education that grants accredited bachelor's degrees in the disciplines of business, English and theology. It also has programs in psychology and sociology. Our hopes and prayers are that the psychology program will soon be recognized by the Lithuanian Ministry of Education as well. It currently enrolls 560 students who come from 18 countries. We are not a Bible college; we are not a theological seminary. As a liberal arts college we focus not only on specialized studies in one academic field, but on a broadly based program of education

that equips students for citizenship. All students take "core", or common, courses in history, the social sciences, oral and written communication, Bible, theology and ethics. A Christian liberal arts college means that all instruction, in whatever field, is done within a framework of Christian values.

We are a Christian school and require that all students take five semesters of Bible and theology classes, but we welcome students regardless of their religious beliefs. Perhaps 20-25% of our students are evangelical believers who come primarily because it is a Christian school. The majority of the remainder have some exposure to the Roman Catholic or Russian Orthodox faiths and range from deeply devout to "my grandmother took me to church and got me baptized after independence but I never go to church." Most of our students come because our curriculum is taught in English, and because they have heard it's a good place, or because it's close to home. Some students are quite vigorous in their rejection of faith, some truly indifferent, some have never really thought about it. A common view, especially among male students, is that science is the only source of truth and has replaced religion. Many have a concept of "religion" that describes something far removed from real life--a place that only grandmothers and priests inhabit. This is the make-up of the students we face every day at LCC.

LCC's Theological Profile

The theological identity of LCC is not easily pinned down. From its beginning it has been largely Protestant and evangelical, but in the broad sense of those words. Mennonites were instrumental in its founding, and continue to be the largest single group among the faculty; yet throughout there have been faculty from a wide spectrum of denominations, including several Catholics. Next to Mennonite, the Reformed tradition has been most present and active. I see LCC as a kind of happy convergence (mostly) between Anabaptist and Reformed perspectives on the mission of the church. Certainly the Reformed tradition has always had a strong sense that the church's mission extends beyond the preaching of the gospel, and contains a cultural mandate as well. The Anabaptist tradition, when not so removed from the world as to hardly be in it, sees the Christian community itself as salt and light with the potential to produce transformative effects in the larger society. As Mennonites become more socially self-confident and more world engaging in their ministries, and as Reformed churches adapt to a world in

which the church cannot operate from a position of political dominance, they can find a lot of common ground. Our Reformed component might emphasize more that we should be teaching students a Christian worldview; our Mennonite component that we should be modeling Christian community. Well, we have the chance to do both.

LCC does not seek theological uniformity. Our statement of faith that all faculty are required to affirm is the Apostle's Creed. Our lack of uniformity does not mean that we do not think correct theology is important, or that the disagreements among us do not matter. But in an academic liberal arts environment, it is possible for believers from somewhat different perspectives to share in a common educational mission. It does mean that the issue of just what LCC's mission is, always keeps percolating in the background. Right now we are in the middle of revising the core curriculum (the general required courses all students take), and a part of that revision was to define the student competencies for which we are aiming. The differences among us made this a lively discussion at times, and yet a clearly defined list of educational priorities has emerged and has been affirmed by all.

Theological Education in a Liberal Arts Community as Mission

Teaching theology at LCC requires walking a fine line. I am teaching in an academic setting where students are paying tuition to get a degree. In some of my classes they are there because it is required. I cannot assume faith in my students, and I must respect and accept their lack of faith. We do not view the classroom as a place to engage in worship or a place for overt evangelism. Yet I am not there strictly as an academician, but as a believer and a missionary. I would unapologetically own that, even given the restrictions the academic setting places upon what I may do in class, my intent in the classroom is to present the gospel in a clear and inviting way.

But I am finding that allowing students the freedom to disagree with me, and encouraging free and critical study of matters of faith, **is**, strangely enough, a potent form of witness to the truth of the faith. The relatively free enquiry mode of learning that characterizes liberal arts learning is in fact an ideal setting for engaging secularized young people with the message of the gospel. Our more secularized students have deep resistance and immunity to any form of ideology that does not allow critical reflection. A non-defensive approach to faith issues testifies to the resiliency of the faith and to the

freedom that is ours in Jesus Christ. Some of my most positive student responses come when I talk about "demanded" versus "elicited" authority, and the difference between a primarily fear-based or grace-based consent to truth. I think at times that some of my more conservative students wish I would be harder on the unbelievers, but I am finding it more fruitful to keep them in the discussion than to alienate them from the beginning. It is a challenge to teach in a way that challenges believers and also engages those for whom the language of faith is new and alien. One of my goals in teaching theology is to get the students in the back row, who assume that this stuff is boring and irrelevant, to sit up and notice that whatever they may think of the Christian faith, we are dealing with the stuff of real life.

An exchange between two students in my Intro to Theology class highlighted two very different views of education as mission. I was lecturing on the mission of the church and one of my more evangelical students said he thought that LCC wasn't a very good example of mission. He meant by that that we are not very aggressively evangelistic. Another student, one who had been consistently the most critical of the Christian faith and who enjoyed asking me all the hard questions, interrupted him and said, no—he thought LCC was a perfect example of mission. He added, "We all know why you are here and what you stand for. But we also know we are free to take what we want and to leave what we don't want." I thought—perfect--why hadn't I thought of that?

LCC students sense as soon as they enter our community that there is something different here. As soon as they walk in the building they smell it. Some notice the fact that it is a joyful place. Others say they are energized by the sense of hope they experience. Others appreciate the fact that their teachers treat them with respect and are interested in them as people. One Ukrainian student commented lately that she couldn't believe that here professors talk to students outside of class. Many students will go through their LCC years enjoying and being energized by the fruits of the gospel that they experience while here. Others, however, will trace these smells back to their source, or will follow the fruit back to the root from which they came. Either way students at LCC are changed by their time here. What I enjoy about being at LCC is that it is a ministry that offers students both the roots and the fruits of the gospel. A student may come for four years and simply enjoy the fruits of being in our kind of community. That

experience will in itself change them. But we also have the opportunity to clearly identify the root on which these fruits have grown, and offer that to them as well.

I measure LCC's success as a form of Christian mission on three different levels. Where any of these three happens, (and all of them do) I feel LCC has fulfilled its mission:

8. I think it is clear that almost everyone who goes through our program is changed by the experience. Their outlook on the future and on themselves becomes more positive and hopeful. They learn to relate to people in a different way. They all have been exposed to people and a community that believes that a life of integrity is not inconsistent with being successful. Through four years of exposure our students are thoroughly "salted" by the gospel; the leavening of Christian values and the fruits of the Spirit gets mixed into how they operate as people. They in turn will bring that salt into their lives and careers. This is confirmed in a number of interesting ways. Employers tell us that their LCC graduate employees are more confident and creative than other workers. Some of our graduates come back and tell us LCC has "ruined" them. For example, some of them find jobs in companies where the boss's idea of human motivation is to occasionally come in and yell and cuss at his employees. They know better, and find it difficult to work in those environments. More progressive corporations realize that LCC graduates do understand the value of innovative problem-solving and of more positive approaches to worker motivation and seek them out for employment. We now have the phenomenon of people who already have their degrees but have worked alongside LCC graduates, and realizing that these graduates have something different, have now enrolled to take a second degree from us.

9. Students who have some level of identification with a church will return to those churches as informed, committed church members. I am very happy if a nominal Roman Catholic leaves a committed one. I think of "A". When I first had him as a student in Intro to Theology he was a very confused young man. His body language communicated a lack of confidence. He was withdrawn and socially unskilled. He seemed confused by even the most basic theological concepts I was attempting to teach him. Three semesters later he took one of my elective theology classes. He sat in the front row, prepared for class, contributed to class discussion, and on the midterm exam had the only 100% score in the class. On campus he is a student leader, he is joyful, socially outgoing, and participates in chapel and other Christian life activities on campus. He is also a committed Roman Catholic. "A" is a real LCC success story.

10. Students who come not knowing Christ or caring about matters of faith become believers. This happens in many ways and places. Sometimes our students are the best evangelists for other students. Regular student chapels, Bible studies, and personal relationships become settings where Jesus can be shared, and students invited to faith.

LCC Models Ecumenical Cooperation

One of the missions of LCC is to introduce students to fellow believers in other church traditions. A place like Lithuania does not have a long history of ecumenical co-operation. Catholics and Baptists do not have a lot of experience in relating to each other in a positive way. At LCC they study the faith alongside believers from other communities, and with students who are not believers. This exposure enriches the theological learning process. Evangelicals have a tendency to want to stereotype Catholics so they can write off the whole tradition. I hear things like "Catholics don't know anything about a personal relationship with Christ." Well, sooner or later at LCC they meet a Catholic who does know about a personal relationship with Christ. It is a delight to see some of the close personal friendships that develop between Catholic and evangelical believers. I see them worship together in our chapel, or share together in Taize worship.

One example of ecumenical exposure for our students was last January when we had as our spiritual renewal speaker a Franciscan brother. He spoke every evening in a very low-key and compelling way about Christ and the Christian life. He explained that Protestants tend to speak of salvation as an event, and Catholics more as a process. And he said, "It's both." On the last evening he gave--get this--an altar call. You know; the type of thing where he invites anyone who wants to accept Christ as their savior to come forward. His message and the spirit in which he shared were found to be compelling by all.

After class the other day one of my study abroad students (every semester a group of 25-30 North American college students comes to LCC) came to me and said, "LCC is just the best place to study theology!" She then said that at her college back home her classmates all basically share her perspective, and professors merely describe what other traditions believe and they discuss them. But here she actually discusses those differences with members of those churches.

LCC has made me adjust my approach to teaching. Being conscious of the fact that everything I say is being heard by Catholic, Orthodox, evangelical, Pentecostal, and other than believing students, makes me much more conscious of what I am doing. I have incorporated a lot more Catholic and Orthodox ideas and issues into my teaching. Russian Orthodox students especially tend to feel not very included in activities on

campus. As I describe their tradition, and explain it as sympathetically as I can, and invite them to help me interpret it, I find they really begin to open up. I attempt to model what I also insist my students do in class and in writing—describe other church traditions in a way that a person from that tradition could affirm is truthful.

I once asked Fr. Antanas Saulaitis, former head of the Jesuits in Lithuania and an LCC board member, what I as a Mennonite could do to help our Catholic students become better Catholics. His answer surprised me. He said, "Teach them your own tradition. Whatever is true in it will transfer into theirs". Admittedly, not all Catholic leaders are as unthreatened by us as Fr. Saulaitis is. And not all evangelical pastors are either.

LCC enjoys a generally positive relationship with Roman Catholic leaders. Perhaps our most complicated relationship is with local evangelical churches. Though initially supportive, once the reality of the fact that we were a liberal arts university, not a Bible college sunk in, some evangelical leaders had reservations. LCC students are not saturated in absolute environmental doctrinaire Christianity. We are not pure Baptist, or pure Mennonite, or pure anything. We are an educational community with teachers from a variety of church traditions. We exist not only to teach the Christian faith but to prepare students to think critically and to contribute to society. We continue to face the challenge of interpreting our vision and the value of it to evangelical churches.

The Challenge of Contextualization

LCC has a difficult challenge in attempting to contextualize its work. The Christian liberal arts college model is decidedly a North American thing. Everything about us is confusing. The idea of a liberal arts education confuses the Lithuanian Ministry of Education where everything is geared toward specialized studies. The idea of a Christian school of higher education generally conjures up ideas of a Bible college or a school for training priests or pastors. We continually face the challenge of explaining just what we are. Yet LCC was founded to provide something new and distinctive in the Eastern European context.

One of the challenges of contextualization is simply, "which context?" To contextualize for Lithuania is not exactly what we want to do. Probably 30% of our students speak Russian as their first language. We also draw students from Albania and

Uzbekistan. Most of us do not speak Lithuanian fluently. Many of our faculty are short-term and are not going to learn the culture well enough to become effective contextualizers.

I think we definitely need to grow in offering our students resources for contextualizing the gospel in their own distinctive settings. We especially need Theology faculty who are imbedded in the Eastern European context. But another way to approach this is for LCC to constantly ask, "What do we bring that we can offer to students and churches in Eastern Europe?" One thing that we offer, that is appreciated and needed, is new approaches to pedagogy. These could be described in various ways. The vogue in the U.S. now is to speak of "student-centered learning." I dislike the term and the concept. I would rather say that what we bring is a relational and student-involving approach to learning. We do something probably no other university in Europe does...we require student attendance at classes. This does not simply grow out of a strong 'in loco parentis' view of ourselves, but of the conviction that learning is a conversation in which students must actively participate. A student who spent last semester at a university in Brussels told me that three of her classes concluded with a 5 minute oral examination by which 100% of the final grade was determined. That is awful! We expect students to do group projects, make class presentations, do research and analysis that they express in written form, and that they join in class discussions. For many of our students this is a refreshing change from their earlier school experiences.

One thing I sense from my Christian students is that most of them have only experienced what might be called an authoritarian pedagogy in matters of faith. It doesn't matter whether they are Catholic, Orthodox or evangelical. Most of their learning has been from authoritative leaders who told them the truth and did not encourage or value critical questioning. Sometimes this has been extreme. One young woman related that when she was a child her grandmother told her to kiss the icon. When she asked, "Why?" the grandmother shouted, "Because God will punish you if you don't!" Another student said she went to the confessional as a 10 year old in preparation for First Communion. After she confessed her little girl sins, the priest started screaming at her that she was a bad girl. Sadly, she reported, she has never been back to church. Granted, these are deformed versions of these church traditions, but few students associate being a believer with the freedom to ask "Why?"

I am not at LCC to undermine student's loyalty to their home churches. But the fact is, when you teach students their tradition--what they believe and why--and when you compare it to other traditions and encourage them to ask critical questions; in a sense you do undermine at least the authoritarian versions of their faith. I tell students time and time again that they do not need to agree with me, and that when they have critical questions they should ask them in class, and that that is when it all becomes fun. They initially don't believe me. But when unbelievers ask hard questions and I receive and consider them as worthy questions, the dynamics of the classroom begin to change. One student wrote a note of "apology" to me at the end of a class. She said she had been dreading the class because she thought I would be like a priest, and that she had been delighted to find that I was not at all like a priest! I hope that was a compliment!

The Lithuanian government's invitation to start a Protestant school was intended to provide a "window to the West". Of course that meant first of all--teach English. But it also meant to encourage democratic values and to prepare students to function in a more pluralistic society. Contextualizing the gospel should not require us to be apologetic about the positive Western values we represent, especially when you have been invited to do just that. No one asked us to come to Lithuania and **be** Lithuanian. But, from its beginning, LCC has worked to create Lithuanian ownership and involvement in our project. Currently, the majority of our staff and about 1/3 of our faculty are Lithuanian nationals. Without their skills and knowledge we truly would be a little North American bubble plopped down on the shores of the Baltic Sea. We could not begin to navigate through the maze of the accreditation process without their insider knowledge. We also require all Lithuanian students to take advanced courses in Lithuanian language. But we do not intend to become a Lithuanian school. LCC seeks to be an international learning community.

While LCC is "a window to the West", I wish at times that we could be a more self-critical filter of Western values as well. We really do not simply want to provide students with the language and professional skills they need to get jobs somewhere west of here. We are a window, not a door, to the West. While I described LCC as sharing the fruits of the gospel, we should become more aware and self-critical of the fact that the fruits we share have been grown in North American soil and have a distinctively American flavor.

There are subtle ways in which we can uncritically transmit western ideas without even realizing it. It shows up at times in our student recruiting literature. Often our brochures are about "being all you can be," or "join the adventure," or "discover yourself." When I pick these materials up and read them through the eyes of an evangelical pastor, I realize we are sending out messages he may not be too enthused about.

One assumption we bring to LCC is a certain view of adolescent development. American colleges assume that at around 18 a student becomes semi-independent from parents, and this is a time for experimentation and learning to think for oneself. We believe that if a student makes bad decisions at this stage in life, it is their responsibility. It came as a surprise to me that this is not a universally shared idea. Last summer I spent time in Albania and visited in the homes of several of our Albanian students. The first question I was asked by all their parents was, "Has my child been good?" Fathers asked this about their daughters with some intensity. I came to realize that in Albanian culture, Fathers regard themselves as responsible for their daughter's behavior, and any failure on their daughter's part would bring disgrace to them. And for the young Albanian women who graduated from LCC and then returned, they encountered a very difficult transition. After four years of being fairly independent modern young women, they returned to a culture where dad says the curfew is 9 pm, and an older brother can say, "Don't wear that, it's not modest". Another place this shows up is when small group leaders have asked students what kind of issues they argue with their parents about. In North America this would usually start a lively discussion. Here we find it produces nothing. Students say things like, "Why would I argue with my parents? They're my parents!"

Does LCC encourage concepts of human development and personal autonomy that are not so much Christian as modern and Western? Are we in fact preparing students to function apart from family and to become highly independent, mobile individuals--the kind of person who makes the ideal member of a global consumer economy?

Another example is the casualness we encourage on campus. One Albanian parent asked me when I was in her home, "Why do you teach students to disrespect you?" When I enquired further, she meant, "Why do you let them call you by your first names?" Is that practice Christian community, or American casualness about social titles and roles?

Another area where we continue to learn cultural sensitivity is in the scheduling of special events and programs. We have an annual Christmas program where we tell the Christmas story in song, dance, and re-enactment. The last two years, approximately 1800 community people have attended the program which we present on two evenings. But we do it during the first week of December which for Catholics is Advent, not a time for singing Christmas carols. We also bring a North American tendency to rather freely mingle together religious and secular programming; something most Catholics and Orthodox find disconcerting. We have chapel in a large lecture hall, not a consecrated space. While, in our evangelical freedom, we are not bound to strict observance of Lent and Advent, it would be sign of respect for local customs if we were sensitive to those who do observe them.

Some 220 of our students live in a dormitory a short walk from campus. Here is a place where the challenges of building community out of a diverse student body become very evident. Many of our students are truly shocked to discover that LCC has rules about their behavior in the dorm. They assume they are adults. LCC is about education, and why should their behavior be any concern of ours? On the other hand, some students come from conservative families and churches where very clearly defined rules for living are an important part of faith. The students, and certainly their parents, assume that LCC, being a Christian school, will continue to exercise the same kind of strict parental control. We can't and we don't. This is a great laboratory for talking about community life and why community requires certain minimal rules. It is a great opportunity for Christian residents to learn how to relate to and share with non-Christians. We believe so strongly that those students who live in the dorm gain so much more from their experience that we are now looking at building dorms on campus that would eventually house 450 students.

While by many measures LCC is a success story, we are keenly aware that we are always aiming at a moving target. Eastern Europe is undergoing rapid, profound changes. When LCC first started our university competitors were the leftover hulk of a pedagogical dinosaur left from the Soviet era. Now Lithuanian universities are scrambling to raise their standards, expand their programs, and incorporate more innovative approaches to learning. We are no longer the only creative show in town. In the years after independence Eastern Europe made a decisive turn to the west, and that often meant looking to the U.S. which was regarded as the hero of the Cold War and the

place where relatives had gone to start a new life. With the entry into the EU of so many Eastern European countries last May, and with the initial enthusiasm about the economic advantages of this new reality, countries like Lithuania may focus more on integration with Europe. We are being challenged to become a player, not just in "formerly Soviet" regions, but in the new EU.

Two years ago LCC began a discussion about expanding our reach into Eastern Europe. Thoughts were expressed that in some ways we were failing to become a truly international learning community and had become overwhelmingly local in our recruiting. It simply is easier to recruit students from Lithuania, and the majority of our students come from Klaipeda. So an Eastern European initiative was launched. This meant a deliberate shift of resources and recruiting personnel to attract students from countries where the winds of political and economic change were not as strong. Particularly, we began to focus more on Belarus, Ukraine and Russia. This was a costly shift. We set a goal of generating 40 full scholarships a year to enable this. This year was the first in which we have seen the fruits of this effort, and it has been remarkable. This year's freshman class was our largest: 153 students, of whom 52 came from outside Lithuania. Whereas we had 1 Ukrainian student on campus, our freshman class had 13 Ukrainians. These students enrich our campus in many ways. Many of them are highly motivated learners. A higher percentage of them are evangelical believers. And they bring to us a deeper awareness of issues in those countries. We felt the drama in Ukraine more intensely because we have students (from both sides) who were holding their breath. The influx of students from these areas also brings us the challenge of meeting the expectations of students who sometimes come from churches that are stricter in theology and moral disciplines than is the norm among our faculty.

Conclusion

I regard LCC as an extravagant gift from believers who want to contribute to the building of the future of Eastern Europe. LCC's mission model involves both the sharing of the gospel of new creation through Jesus Christ, and being salt and leaven that changes the chemistry of the students who come through our program, who then in turn are change agents in businesses, churches, and throughout society. The liberal arts model of higher education allows us to engage students within the realm of free discourse and

critical reflection. I find this setting profoundly consistent with modeling and presenting the Christian faith.

About the Author

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Re-envisioning the Theological Curriculum as if the *Missio Dei* Mattered

By J. Andrew Kirk

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This paper has been written with the intention of its being a stimulus to discussion in the context of a conference on theological education and mission. It is offered as an outline of an alternative way of looking at theological education, with the hope that it might provoke serious critical reflection on inherited patterns. At the same time, it is designed to encourage a rethinking of both the content and methods of educational practice, in the light of God's missionary activity and purposes for his people.[1]

It is now over forty years since I began to be involved in theological education.[2] I have been privileged to be engaged in teaching, for short or long periods, on all six continents. However, in spite of what I have learnt from numerous contacts across the world about the nature and ways of doing theology--about, for example, the crucial importance of context, different processes of learning, the relationship between theological and other disciplines, the subjects of the theological enterprise and reasons for which it is undertaken--I am not sure that I am much wiser about what patterns of education are the most appropriate.

In the brief compass of this presentation, I will attempt what my early professional training militated against, namely to begin with practice and then move to theoretical reflection. I hope others will find this to be a fruitful method. In this case, I intend to start with the outline of a theological curriculum,[3] adaptable to different circumstances and applicable to many forms of ministry, and then give a summary of the various assumptions on which it is based. I recognise, at the outset, that the relationship

[1] Further background material to the thinking behind this review of the curriculum can be found in the monograph: J. Andrew Kirk, The Mission of Theology and Theology as Mission (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1997).

[2] My first engagement was whilst an assistant pastor in North London in 1963-6: I did some part-time teaching at a neighbouring Anglican theological college (Oakhill).

[3] As will be observed, it is only an outline. The reason for this is that I am proposing more a method than a strict syllabus. One of the major facets of the design is that it can be made contextually appropriate. Hence, it would defeat the object to make the content too prescriptive.

between theory and practice is never uniformly in one direction: practice is always informed by theoretical commitments and theory is always influenced and tempered by practical experience. However, to reverse the normal procedure may help to highlight ways in which theological education in general has become resistant to fresh ways of thinking and stimulate the discovery of imaginative new patterns for the future.

Creating a Distinctive Design

The proposal, which I present here, is experimental and tentative. I do not know personally of any theological institution that has adopted a curriculum like this.[4] However, for reasons that I will elaborate later, it seems to me that this scheme has an overwhelming logic about it, even though it may differ considerably from the familiar kind of curriculum.

I see the curriculum divided into four stages. Each will follow the other, build upon it and stimulate repetitions in different patterns and combinations. The basic principle is that there should be a cumulative learning process that involves the *whole* person gaining *understanding* and acquiring *skills* in a *community* of other learners.

Stage 1. Exploring Contexts (Personal, Cultural, Social and Ecclesial)

The programme will start with the accumulated experience and knowledge of the student. This stage is designed to probe the student's awareness of both the reality of the society in which s/he lives and the activities, role and place of the church in that society. Students will be expected to reflect, at first spontaneously, and then systematically and critically, on their own experience of the Christian faith, the Christian community and social reality. With regard to the Church, they will be asked to consider such matter as the way it operates in different situations, the range of its activities, the degree of participation by its members, the structures of leadership, its reaction to local and national events, its image as seen from outside, and the congruence of its activities with its declared goals. They will be asked to think about the kind of ecclesial tradition it

[4] Nevertheless, the Birmingham Christian College (UK), an independent college training people for a variety of Christian ministries, elaborated a proposal for a BA (Missiology) in the late 1990s, which attempted to put in place a number of the principles elaborated here. After much consultation, the University of Birmingham was not prepared to validate it, without demanding major changes that would have emasculated the vision on which it was based.

represents (perhaps, in relation to others): Catholic, Orthodox, Reformed, Anabaptist, Free Evangelical, 'Peace-Church,' Charismatic or Pentecostal (or other). With regard to society, they would reflect on their experience of such matters as (their own) education, family life, friendship, work, patterns of consumption, residential environment (urban or rural), recreational activities, political views and experience of the media. During this stage they would be introduced to an awareness of culture, in order to begin to understand how it may have shaped their own attitudes, the society in which they live and the role of the Church.

This stage may take the equivalent of about six months of full-time study. It will involve students in taking stock of their lives prior to undertaking a formal programme of theological study.[5] During this period students will learn the skills of self-reflection, the ability to articulate, both verbally and in writing, their thoughts and concerns and the dynamics of working in small groups. They will be encouraged to study more about the history, life and traditions of the particular church to which they belong. Input will concentrate on grasping the disciplines and implications of cultural studies and social analysis. They will be asked to undergo (voluntarily) a standard personality test (like Meyer-Briggs), to gain further understanding of the kind of person they are. Given the aims and objectives of this stage, class contact hours will not be extensive. Rather, time will be spent in field-work, small seminar groups and in individual tuition.[6]

Stage 2. Studying the Church's Mission

The main purpose of this stage will be to produce a theological rationale for the church's task in God's world. It will be achieved by integrating biblical, historical and missiological studies.

[5] One of the weaknesses of many theological courses is that they do not appear to consider the prior experience of the student to be significant in their educational programmes. It almost seems as if they were saying that to learn theology one must start with a blank mind. This is a pedagogical approach, which is not even practiced in the earliest years of primary schools.

[6] The teaching staff will spend less time preparing material for formal input, and more on direct engagement with the worlds of the students, their churches and social context. The students' ability to reflect analytically and critically on the world around them will be learnt through discussion, practical writing-tasks and feed-back.

Biblical Studies

Biblical studies will begin by being synthetic, rather than analytic, in character. That is, they will focus on the overall message and broad themes, rather than on issues of introduction and detailed textual analysis. Critical theories will be reviewed only in so far as they throw genuine light on the living message of Scripture. In adopting this approach, the programme will reflect the current interest in a canonical reading of Scripture and the emphasis on narrative, as methods of interpretation and understanding.[7]

Historical Studies

Historical studies will look at implicit and explicit views of the church's place in the world at different points in its history. It will seek to elucidate the relation between the church's ideas and actions and the conditioning factors of given historical realities.[8] In the process students will be helped to see how belief and practice have interacted in the past.

Missiological Studies

Missiological studies will explore the experience, thinking and action of the contemporary church, both locally and globally, as it crosses boundaries (cultural, ideological, intellectual and geographical) with the good news of Jesus and the kingdom.

This part of the curriculum will follow paths not so dissimilar from the traditional structures of theological programmes. It recognises a certain division of theological interests into separate specialities--biblical, historical and systematic. However, each discipline will be studied from the perspective of the church's present calling. Moreover, the focus of the study will be the Christian community sent into the world, rather than abstract academic interests.

In Old Testament studies, the history of Israel, as the elect people of God, will be studied, paying special attention to the most formative periods--the call of Abraham, the

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[7] There is no space to enter into a debate about the methodological validity or hermeneutical usefulness of the critical tradition in Western biblical studies. Suffice to point out here that the concept and practice of critical method can mean a number of different things. Sometimes, the word critical is used as a tool to try to invalidate interpretations that are not agreeable to the one using the word.

[8] Two examples of this might be the reality and implications of a 'territorial' view of church-membership and the interaction between pioneer mission work and the colonial enterprise.

Exodus, the giving of the law, the coming of the monarchy, the Exile and restoration. Major themes will be highlighted, for example, justice, suffering, wisdom, holiness, communion with God, idolatry, messianic promises, Israel and the nations. In New Testament studies, particular emphasis will be given to the themes of fulfilment, Jesus and the kingdom of God, discipleship, vicarious suffering, resurrection and new life, the contextualisation of the church in the Greco-Roman world, the activity of the Spirit, the growth of the church, diversity of ministries, persecution, Christology in context (for example, Colossians, John, Hebrews, 1 Peter).

Historical studies will be selective of the most formative periods of the church's growth and interaction with its political and social context. Thus, attention will be paid to the early apologists, the rise and consolidation of Christendom, the initial evangelisation of Asia, Africa and Europe, the 'pre-Reformation,' Renaissance and Reformation (including the Radical Reformation and the Counter-Reformation), the rise of modern science, the struggle for religious toleration, the coming of democracy, the advent of atheism and secular thought, the birth of the modern mission movement, colonialism, the coming of the 'Third Church,' the decline of Christian faith in the West, the church under Marxist regimes.

Missiology will pay particular attention to ways in which the church has come to articulate its beliefs, beginning with the early summaries of faith and patterns of teaching in the NT, developing into the creedal statements of the third and fourth centuries and subsequent confessions of faith, including contemporary ones (for example, the Kairos Document from South Africa). A particular interest will be to trace the ways in which Christians have endeavoured to insert the Gospel into the multifaceted reality of their times (translation, contextualisation, inculturation, indigenisation) and how they respond to the challenge of secular culture and influential religious faiths.

This stage might occupy the equivalent of one year of full-time study. The amount of formal input will increase, in that theological educators will be required to set the parameters and guidelines for the subjects. Thus, it is envisaged that this period will see the greatest concentration of class-time. However, at the same time, students will be required to do their own research and contribute presentations to seminars. In order to maximise the ground covered within the constraints of time, students will be given a

choice of subjects to study on their own and together with their fellow students. Thus, class-time will be augmented by seminars.[9]

Stage 3. Engaging in Interaction and Consolidation

This stage, which will begin after the equivalent of approximately 1.5 years of full-time study, has two main functions: to learn how to apply theological reflection critically and constructively to the church's calling within its context, and to raise further questions that will become the subject of the next and final stage. In a series of interdisciplinary seminars and small tutorial groups a first attempt will be made at integrating the student's own observations and analysis of church and society in *Stage 1* with the conclusions being drawn from the biblical, historical and missiological material of *Stage 2*.

It will be particularly important that students keep, throughout their studies, a personal journal of their learning experience, noting down aspects of their study that have particularly caught their attention and raising questions for further exploration. This will be an account of a learning process. Every three months, they will be asked to produce for their tutor/mentor a short summary of the main points they have arrived at.

This stage should last about three months. It is designed not so much to study new material as to take stock of the journey so far and assess which are the important topics for further research and reflection.

Stage 4. Dealing with Issues that Emerge

At this point, the students will be introduced more systematically to methodological questions, for example, principles of interpretation, hermeneutics, philosophical assumptions, the use of historical and cultural analogies, the critical evaluation of historical developments, the use of social sciences as a mediation between the gospel and its insertion into specific situations in society, the use of case-studies, ethical theories.

[9] It is clear, as for any curriculum, that topics will have to be carefully selected. However, rather than being a mechanical process according to a pre-set syllabus, the selection can be augmented in the last two stages, where notable gaps may have been detected (by staff and students).

Thus, students will be learning to reflect on their own experience, gain knowledge from recognised experts, evaluate the material they are studying, and gain methodological skills, all in the interest of understanding and implementing the best mission practice for the church in their situation. At this stage, recurrent or new issues will have emerged in personal and social ethics, pastoral counselling, personal spirituality, cultural conditioning and the renewal of the church, which will form the agenda for this part of the curriculum. So, along with the required class-time dedicated to methodological and research questions, the content of this stage will be set by the students and staff together. It should include one major piece of individual research of the student's own choice, reflecting, biblically, historically, systematically and practically upon a particular mission concern. It may well entail the student's own involvement in a mission project. This final stage should be completed within fifteen months, with the last six months being dedicated almost exclusively to the project. *The whole programme would therefore last for the equivalent of three years full-time study.*

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The main point of a curriculum designed in this way is that it is flexible and adaptable. It is not intended that the stages be set within a rigid time-scale.[10] This may depend upon the time available to a group of students in a particular locality. One important principle is that students should be allowed periods of exclusive involvement with particular subjects, so that they can concentrate on its different aspects in some depth.[11] This may involve a fairly radical departure from normal timetabling. Each stage might be split into a number of different learning units (modules or courses), which happen either simultaneously or chronologically.

The four stages envisage a process in which the expansion of horizons and consolidation follow one another. The idea is not to complete a set, artificial syllabus, but to respond imaginatively to a continuing learning process. Regular assessments of the process would be a crucial ingredient of the curriculum, and might take the form of a

[10] The length suggested for each stage is a guideline. It is probably important that theological educators can see how this curriculum would fit a standard three year theological programme. The balance of time apportioned between the different stages is more important than the actual length.

[11] Thus, different weeks might be given to one major theme, for example, *forgiveness* or *reconciliation*, which would be studied within an inter-disciplinary framework.

residential, long weekend of the entire student body and teaching staff. Even out of the first cycle of the four stages, some key problems may have emerged, for example, conflict and its resolution, the exercise of power, attitudes to change, the nature and consequences of forgiveness and reconciliation. These can then be included as orienting factors for the next cycle, and so on. The courses would be both structured (with a number of required modules) and adaptable (for example, in the subjects shared in the seminars). This curriculum can be adjusted to a number of different educational opportunities and contexts, i.e., residential, non-residential, full-time, part-time, extension, etc.

In the next section, I will consider the theological, missiological and pedagogical assumptions on which this particular design is based. At the same time, although I believe a scheme of this nature is fundamentally sound in fulfilling the goals for which it is designed, I want to recognise also that there are potential weaknesses and problems in implementing it.

Assumptions and Principles for Theological Education

1. The Nature of the Theological Task

1.1 The Western Captivity of Theology

The Church around the world has inherited, from Western academic institutions, a tradition of doing theology, which, for reasons that will be explained later, is no longer adequate to the spiritual, intellectual and social challenges of our times. This theological enterprise has come to be seen as the norm for all serious theological reflection. And yet, it is now recognised that this tradition is firmly embedded in distinctive cultural characteristics that cannot any longer pretend to have universal validity.

Theology in the West has been dominated by *the method of rational, historical investigation*. The object of theological work has been mainly either ancient texts or the conceptual thinking of other scholars. The purest form of theological research is carried out by a circle of professionals whose main objective, apparently, is to survey critically the opinions of other scholars, in order to extend or modify certain hypotheses. Behind the method lies the assumption that real scholarship proceeds through the interaction of ideas about texts. Little direct application of the text to the contemporary world is carried

out.[12] The university library becomes the privileged location for doing theology and the academic journal the favoured mode of its expression.

Western theology tends to *separate theology from practice*. It is disposed to think in linear terms. So, 'applied theology' (such as ethics, homiletics, pastoral counselling and mission) is only possible after a long process of theoretical work has been undertaken, beginning with biblical and historical studies and moving on to systematic theology. The assumption seems to be that applied theology can only follow a process of 'pure' theology, in which thought is initially abstracted from the real world, so that it may be as impartial, objective and detached as possible and then, in this form, reinserted into social life.

There is a marked emphasis on *specialisation*. Theology is compartmentalised. Theologians have to choose limited fields to operate in. Under the influence of the natural sciences, the study in depth of any reality is deemed to be dependent on breaking it down into its component parts. As a result of this tendency, theologians are extremely hesitant about crossing the boundaries of different disciplines. However, this is hazardous for theology, for by its very nature it is designed to integrate knowledge and understanding. It is not uncommon for biblical specialists and historians, even ethicists, to insist that they are not 'strictly speaking' theologians.

Theology has become *professionalized*. In so far as theology in the West is seen as an academic study, it considers itself to be on a par with other subjects whose purpose is to train professionals--such as law, education, psychology and medicine. There is a sense in which the norm for theological excellence is laid down by a 'guild of theologians,' who, through professional accrediting bodies such as the university faculty, lay down the criteria for expertise in the respective disciplines. Without exaggerating too much, it might be said that to be credible, courses in theology need to convince the guild that the correct standards of procedure are being maintained.

The emphasis in Western theology then is on what the expert is able to teach in lectures, seminars, books or articles from her/his reservoir of knowledge. The best

[12] It is a characteristic of academic scholarship in Western institutions to approach the Biblical text first and foremost as an example of an 'archaeological' text, i.e. a text from the history of the Near East to be treated like any other. The text becomes the object of the scholar's minute examination, as someone with the expertise and authority to decide its meaning. The possibility that the text becomes the subject that interpolates the reader is not generally admitted as a valid methodological starting-point.

theological students are those who come closest to sharing the assumptions, grasping the methods and endorsing the claims of the guild.

1.2 The Irruption of the Non-Western World

In the last half-century a number of important considerations have begun to shake the self-assurance that Western theology's method and purpose is self-evidently right. Not least has been the growth and influence of theological thought as a deliberately 'contextual' enterprise, in which the intellectual tools of the theological disciplines have been put at the service of missiological discernment, for example, 'reflection on praxis' and 'the hermeneutical circle.' In the course of the development of this fresh way of doing theology, a number of traditional truisms have been challenged.

In the first place, the view that *value-free knowledge* is possible has been called into question. The beliefs that certain methods are free of all philosophical, ideological and cultural influences and biases, and that certain critical stances have acquired a confirmed scientific status are disputed on the basis of evidence to the contrary. Some approaches to biblical studies, for example, have been shown to be heavily dependent on now discarded positivist and rationalist assumptions.[13] Some theological constructs are indebted to particular philosophical systems like structuralism, existentialism, process thinking, game theory and deconstructionism. Each of these, in their own way, reflect a particular cultural influence and attempt to provide, within that contingent background, an explanatory framework for experience which transcends the empirical reality studied by the sciences.

Secondly, the tacit acceptance of a split between *theory and practice* is refuted. It is now much more universally recognised that the search for knowledge and understanding is context-dependent. It is related closely to the theologian's own *Sitz im Leben*: i.e., her/his range of commitments, system of values, life-style choices, etc.[14] Even the attempt to appear neutral or uncommitted on particular issues represents a

[13] Interpretations and explanations of certain biblical material are passed through the prism of 'methodological naturalism': i.e. the view that scientific method may not entertain the possibility that a non-material agent can cause things to happen in the world.

[14] Jurgen Moltmann recognises this reality and seeks to turn it into a virtuous approach to doing theology: c.f. *Experiences in Theology: Ways and Forms of Christian Theology* (London: SCM Press, 2000), chapters 1 and 3.

stance. The theological enterprise itself is now challenged to give an account of its practical purpose. Is it seen as an end in itself, a kind of aesthetic exercise in the production of well-rounded theological systems, or is it seen as a servant of the pastoral and missionary callings of the Christian community? Does the theologian measure the truth of theological statements by their plausibility to the sceptical and unbelieving secular mind or by their missiological effectiveness in evangelism,[15] the pursuit of justice, discipleship and spiritual growth? It is now a commonplace of much theological endeavour in the church of the global South that the verification of genuine theology is determined not so much by criteria formulated within the parameters of the academic community, as by its ability to liberate people for effective involvement in society. If it does not have this effect, it is considered an alienated and alienating force.

Thirdly, theology needs to become more integrated with *the disciplines studying human society*. If it is true that the ultimate purpose of theological reflection is to elucidate the task of Christians in given situations, then there must be some interaction with the fields of study that have to do with concrete reality in its manifold instances. Theology cannot avoid the question whether the message of Jesus Christ is good news of salvation. If this premise is accepted, it has to have a contemporary reference-point: in what sense and circumstances is it good news? No adequate answer can be given to this question without understanding the contemporary reality which forms the context in which the message is to be communicated as good news. *In this sense, neither biblical studies nor systematic theology on their own can be called theology proper. Only when they engage with every level of culture do they become part of a genuine theological undertaking*.

Fourthly, theology needs to be put at the service of a *learning process* that opens up opportunities for people of all backgrounds. Theological education is restricted in many instances to those who have reached a particular level of academic achievement, who can lay hands on sufficient financial resources for study and who share the cultural background of the educator. How is theological education to be made available to people who inhabit a 'non-book' culture, i.e. for those who have not succeeded in meeting the

[15] Much of academic theology is done in a university setting, where the legitimacy of a plurality of beliefs is taken for granted. This may be one of the reasons why apologetics as a theological discipline has fallen out of favour. Apologetics, however, when it is interpreted in terms of advocacy, has as one of its tasks to refute the arguments of the 'opposition,' not to accommodate the faith to its presuppositions.

expectations of the normal educational process? Present patterns of theological education will probably continue to reinforce the Western Church's alienation in deprived, urban areas. How is it possible for existing Western theology, given its cultural assumptions, to equip a genuinely indigenous leadership in all strata of society?[16]

2. The Implications for Theological Education of Missiological Approaches to Theology

Some theological institutions in recent years have begun to take these criticisms seriously and are encouraging more engagement between theological studies and social reality. However, what has tended to happen is that new courses have been added to an already over-stretched syllabus, for example, sociology, development studies, urban studies, pastoral psychology, medical ethics, inter-religious studies and, of course, missiology. The problem is that the timetable cannot take the strain, for nothing already existing is allowed to drop out. These changes to the curriculum do not address the fundamental questions that have been analysed here. What is needed, in my judgement, is a 'conversion' to a different paradigm. I would see the following elements as implicitly necessary for theological education to serve properly the Church's obligation to respond in obedience to the *missio Dei*.

2.1 Theological and Other Disciplines will be Integrated from the Beginning of the Course

This process could happen mainly by relating disciplines together through a multi-disciplinary approach to themes and issues. In the case of biblical studies, for instance, this would mean spending a minimum amount of time on purely introductory questions, in order to concentrate on teaching interpretative skills by addressing specific hermeneutical issues.[17] An example, in which I have been personally involved, is that of the study of violence. This lends itself to an approach from many perspectives--biblical, historical, social, psychological, inter-religious, juridical, conflict resolution, etc.

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[16] This question was first posed some thirty years ago. In Britain, it was reinforced by the influential document *Faith in the City* (1985) of the Church of England. Unfortunately, the question has remained largely unanswered.

[17] A good example of this procedure at work is Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (New York: Harper Collins, 1996).

2.2 Theological Studies will be Constantly Oriented to a Reflection on the Whole of Life

This will mean including, at every stage of training, field-observation and real-life case-studies. This will avoid the temptation to treat theology as a purely academic subject designed to provide answers to theoretical questions. At every step, theological learning will be applied to the Church's mission in the world. That is why the programme will begin by building on each participant's unique experience of the society in which s/he lives.

2.3 The Emphasis will be on Equipping People for Ministry Rather Than on Acquiring Knowledge

This implies that a major priority for participants will be acquiring a number of different skills related to mission. I would mention the following in particular: the ability to discover and understand the different facets of reality by learning to think about their own and other people's experience; the ability to convert knowledge, experience and historical investigation into practical wisdom (i.e. the ability to convert perception, insight, discernment and judgement into concrete action); the ability to handle issues of inculturation and contextualisation, i.e. to gain the experience of seeing how the Gospel should be inserted into contemporary situations; an expertise in discerning the purposes of God through reading 'the signs of the times,' or judging the nature of the particular *kairos* (moment of opportunity) in which the church finds itself; the competence to distinguish the 'spirits,' i.e. to discern what is genuinely of God and what is counterfeit in culture, society and the church and, thus, to know what to embrace and what to resist; finally the ability to understand and implement biblically-principled, missiologically-informed and culturally-appropriate styles of leadership.

3. The Main Presuppositions that Guide the Missiological Aims of Theological Education

3.1 The Necessary Foundation for the Theological Task in all its Dimensions is Biblical Realism

In Christian terms, knowledge of what God has chosen to disclose of his nature and purposes depends upon a trustworthy source of information. The Christian church,

with differing degrees of emphasis and qualifications, has always pointed to the written word of Scripture as being the deposit or fountainhead of this knowledge. The main reason for ascribing it a unique authority in conveying an understanding of God and his ways lies in the assumption that the text represents the considered view of witnesses to God's formative acts of salvation, specially chosen and prepared by the Holy Spirit. Prophets and apostles had an unmatched, singular, access to the mind of God in interpreting the things concerning Jesus Christ, the Lord of all.

Thus, the Scripture becomes the normative source for the knowledge of God. It is ultimately self-authenticating. However, the truth of its message is open to being confirmed by the principle of inference to the best explanation, i.e., it gives the most intellectually satisfying, morally coherent and existentially fulfilling account of experience in all its dimensions. It is the blueprint for the theological task, the court of appeal when disputes arise, a treasury of intellectual and spiritual resources for the believing community. Any theological curriculum has, therefore, to pay special attention to the foundation document.

As the history of Christianity shows repeatedly, appeal to the authority of Scripture is not straightforward; sharp differences over the meaning of the text have often divided Christians from one another. Therefore, much attention has to be given to sound methods of interpretation. There are three elements that need particular attention. First, the integrity of the text must be respected by listening to its message on its own terms. The first step in intelligent understanding is to use an inductive method of exegesis, which obliges the interpreter to enter empathetically into the world of the author without making hasty value judgements. Secondly, the interpreter must be aware of his/her intellectual, ethical, cultural and social assumptions and commitments. Interpretation involves a degree of self-awareness, involving an analytical and critical consciousness about one's predispositions before coming to the text. One's own understanding, therefore, has to be justified to oneself, as well as to other commentators. Thirdly, the interpreter must learn the hermeneutical skills necessary for relating a message originally transmitted 2000 or more years ago to a world which has changed dramatically in terms of material production, scientific knowledge, moral sensibility and belief systems, and continues to change. Much has been written about and experimented with in terms of the 'two horizons'--ancient text and contemporary context. Concepts like contextualisation,

indigenisation, adaptation and inculturation are employed to try to find ways of doing justice to this process. My own preference is to use the method of translation, extending it analogically from the field of linguistics to that of communication theory more generally.

3.2 The Main Ingredient for Developing Authentic Theology is a Grasp of the Church's Mission in All its Facets

I understand the affirmation of mission to be the existential and conceptual framework necessary for all theology worthy of the name. If theology is about God, there are only two possible routes to go: either it is philosophical speculation about the possibility of a transcendent being, whom one infers from the religious experience of humanity, or it is the exposition of material which claims to be a unique self-disclosure of the one, self-existing, infinite and eternal Being. In the first case, we end up with a theoretical construct like Hick's 'the ultimately Real,' that is completely inaccessible to cognition.[18] In the second case, we have to do with the knowable God of biblical revelation.

There are excellent reasons, philosophical as well as historical and theological, for dismissing the first option as a theoretical hypothesis without substance.[19] In the second case, we have to acknowledge God just as God has revealed himself to the world. This is decisively as a 'missionary' God, i.e. a God who is carrying out a specific set of purposes in and for the world he made. These purposes include the election of a community to be especially attentive to his voice and to carry out his wishes. It seems therefore logical that the task of theology-- discerning the mode of being and acting of this God--and, by inference, of theological education is permeated through and through by a biblically-grounded understanding of the mission of the triune God.

3.3 Theological Reflection Requires an Integration of its Many Parts

We have already spoken about theology as an unceasing enterprise. It has many distinct elements. There is the hermeneutical issue of the right relationship between text,

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[18] C.f., John Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion: Responses to the Transcendent* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); *The Fifth Dimension: An Exploration of the Spiritual Realm* (Oxford: One World, 1999).

[19] C.f., J. Andrew Kirk, 'John Hick's Kantian Theory of Religious Pluralism and the Challenge of Secular Thinking', *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue*, Vol. 12, 2002, pp. 23-36.

the community's traditions of interpretation and the contemporary world. Theology engages with real people who live a concrete social existence, within a particular history and cultural tradition, and who have specific questions about the setting of their lives. There is the question about who are the subjects of theology: not only the professionally trained, conceptually and linguistically articulate, members of the church, but the ordinary believing disciple, seeking to reflect on the meaning of his or her faith in the midst of the dilemmas of life. There is the prophetic task of theology, namely its prescriptive as well as descriptive role in telling forth the demands of an uncompromisingly holy and just God. There is theology as the articulation of the *sensus fidei*, i.e., the confirmation by the whole believing community of the rightness of certain formulations of faith and certain practical expressions of the Gospel.[20] Finally, there is the weighing of the tension between the universal and the local in expressing the obedience of faith: freedom to interpret and embody the meaning of the apostolic message in different localities, and its limits.

Doing theology implies keeping all of these aspects of the task in proper co-ordination and balance. The prophetic commission, for example, presupposes that there is a message with trans-cultural validity, able to discern just and unjust elements within specific contexts, and that all cultures are to be held accountable to a standard of good and evil that comes from beyond them. At the same time, to discern this norm within the universal Christian community may require an arduous process of hermeneutical dispute. To help it understand the missionary requirements of the Gospel of God in particular circumstances, the church has at its disposal a rich treasury of resources: a living liturgical tradition; commissions and study groups drawn from different churches and nationalities; individual 'charismatic' figures with heightened abilities to articulate the faith in creative and innovative ways; and myriads of Christians trying to make sense of their commitment to Jesus Christ in the midst of the demands and pressures of daily life. Life in a universal fellowship demands a patient process of listening, studying and acting

[20] In some ecclesial traditions this is spoken of as the process of *reception*: the development over time of the acceptance by the believing community of a particular way of formulating belief or walking in the way of Christ.

together, challenging one another, [21] seeking unity in love and truth and valuing the contributions of all, irrespective of culture, ethnic background, gender or social situation.

3.4 Understanding Social and Cultural Forces Requires Particular Skills

Some skills will be technical in the sense of learning to employ the tools of different social disciplines; some will require the development of ordinary human abilities. In the first case, education in good mission practice will require some comprehension, at least, of the means of identifying social and cultural trends, of being able to evaluate lifestyle surveys and of understanding the underlying economic dynamics of modern societies. So, within the curriculum, there has to be space for social and cultural analysis.

At the same time, participants in the programmes will need to refine their own abilities in the art of observation and discernment. As we shop, engage in secular jobs, read papers and magazines, watch TV and DVDs, search the web, participate in recreational activities, we need to be aware of what is going on around us and try to understand it by asking ourselves the right questions. Both casual and more intimate conversations will reveal something about the people of our communities. We must, however, be careful not to abstract ourselves from full human engagement in a way that becomes impersonal and exploitative of the other.

Conclusion

This paper is a modest attempt to re-envisage a process of theological education, which deliberately attempts to respond to the claim that proper theology, and therefore theological education, is through and through missionary in character. One final observation may be in order. It refers to the apparently wide gap between this approach and the more traditional, university-based style of education. There is no space here to discuss the implications for university accreditation of a missiologically-informed

[21] Sometimes, in very serious cases, for the sake of fidelity to the gospel, it may have to involve suspending communion for a time. Very occasionally, a church or churches appear to have violated a central Christian conviction to such an extent that it becomes a *status confessionis*: i.e., a matter at the heart of the apostolic witness to Jesus Christ, which has been seriously compromised. Such was the defence of apartheid in South Africa; such might have been the legitimizing of torture (as happened in Latin America in the 1970s and 1980s) as a tool in the fight against the alleged threat of communism.

programme. I would like to suggest, however, that there is a real distinction between a genuinely theological programme of education and one which has as its presupposition the study of religion.[22]

My own experience leads me to believe that, whether called theology or not, what happens in most secular universities is the latter rather than the former. Religious studies, as a coherent academic discipline, may well study the texts, traditions and history of the Christian faith, but it does so in the context of an assumption that Christianity (and all other world religions) has to be approached pre-eminently as one important phenomenon (epiphenomenon from an ideological perspective) within the totality of human cultural and social experience. The purpose of this kind of study is radically different from that which I have been outlining.[23] It may be that both have their own rationale. However, they should not be confused. I believe that many theological education programmes fail, precisely because they are trying to combine two quite distinct aims and methodologies.

About the Author

After a life-time of involvement in theological education in Latin America and England, Andrew Kirk is now retired. He continues, however, to be engaged in teaching and supervising students of missiology in the Czech Republic, England, Hungary and Romania. His latest book, *Mission under Scrutiny: Confronting Current Challenges* will be published by Darton, Longman and Todd in 2006.

[22] Gavin D'Costa argues this case forcefully in 'On Theologising Theology within the Secular University,' *Transformation (An International Dialogue on Mission and Ethics)*, Vol. 22, No. 3, July 2005, pp. 148ff.

[23] By way of understanding how contemporary intellectual sectors tend to deal with the subject of religion, the formal academic approach can be considered as part of the social analysis of today's societies.

Missiological Challenges in Polish Evangelical Theological Education

By Wojciech Kowalewski

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There is a plethora of difficult issues that the church has had to face since the fall of Communism that required theological expertise. Issues as broad as abortion, unemployment, liberties of democracy, consumerism, liberalism, and postmodernism, among many others, appeared on theological agenda. The important issue at stake is what kind of competence does the church have in the development of a post-Communist culture? And more so from an evangelical perspective, the critical question to be asked is: how does Polish evangelical theology fit into this picture and in what ways can it contribute to the understanding of Christian identity in contemporary culture? In this way, the question of theological education as mission and mission in theological education gets a new prominence in Polish evangelical thinking today.

Therefore, the title of this presentation is *Missiological Challenges in Polish Evangelical Theological Education*. In order to reflect on this, it is necessary to first very briefly point to some characteristic features of Polish evangelicalism; secondly to outline some developments in theological thinking in post-Communist era; and thirdly conclude with a proposal for a broader view of mission used as an integrative motif in evangelical theological education in Poland.

Characteristic Features of Polish Evangelicalism

Polish evangelicalism has a history of over 150 years and has always been a minority in an overall Catholic culture. Due to its minority status, the impact on the society and culture has always been somewhat limited and marginal. Nevertheless, the collapse of Communist rule has opened new possibilities for growth as well as impacting the society. Prof. Pasek, Director of the Centre of Documentation of Religious Minorities in Modern Poland, notes that whereas in 1989 there were only 15 registered evangelical denominations, since the fall of Communism until 2003 there have been a further 65 new

bodies registered which could be classified as part of evangelical Protestantism.[1] There is a growing interest among scholars in the study of the phenomenon of Protestant evangelical spirituality in Polish society. A recent symposium organised by the Baptist Theological Seminary in Warsaw under ambitious theme *Evangelical Protestantism in Poland at the Threshold of the 21st Century* attracted many scholars from various fields and clearly pointed to the potentialities and dynamism as well as diversity of this movement in Poland.[2]

Despite some of these differences and whilst recognizing the complexity of the issues under discussion, it is nevertheless, crucial to attempt some theological integration of the main features that are characteristic to Polish evangelical Protestantism.

Firstly, it is crucial to recognize that 'activism' is a traditionally strong feature of evangelical Christians in Poland. Virtually all evangelical communities emphasize the importance of the practical application of the *sola scriptura* to life, which in principle implies a close integration of Word and life. Thus identification of Scripture as the central authority among evangelicals, finds practical expression in a certain approach to the matters of spirituality, doctrine and ethics.

This activist approach also clearly points to the strong influences of pietist discipline which puts great emphasis on personal faith and 'holy living'. For many decades this 'experiential' element of faith has been emphasized more than theory. Therefore, this 'spiritual' emphasis on personal reading of the Scripture has had a deep impact on the particular perception of the relationship between 'piety' and 'theology.' The problem is that, this emphasis on activism was not always paired with a deeper theological reflection to the extent that in some cases it resulted in a very limited theological understanding of the Christian perception of the 'world' and spirituality based on a superficial division between 'spiritual' and 'secular' world. This was further strengthened by a particular socio-political location of evangelical churches which in Poland consist mainly of small communities. The minority complex, therefore,

[1] Z. Pasek, „Wspólnoty ewangelikalne we współczesnej Polsce" [„Evangelical Communities in Present Poland"], in T.J. Zieliński, (ed.), *Ewangelikalny protestantyzm w Polsce u progu XXI stulecia* [*Evangelical Protestantism in Poland at the Threshold of 21st Century*], (Warszawa: WBST, 2004), pp. 13-49.

[2] For more details on this and papers presented there see T.J. Zieliński, (ed.), *Ewangelikalny protestantyzm w Polsce u progu XXI stulecia* [*Evangelical Protestantism in Poland at the Threshold of 21st Century*], (Warszawa: WBST, 2004).

strengthened the tendency towards a certain type of uniformity and isolation from the outside world.

This points to a broader issue of the relation between religion and culture in Polish evangelical theology. Prof. Boguslaw Milerski of the Christian Theological Academy points to three typological views when it comes to discussion of this issue: (a) the first view emphasizes that the study of religion is independent in relation to the nature and culture; (b) the second view sees religion as part of culture, or in co-operation with culture; and (c) the third view completely identifies religion with culture.[3] Milerski asserts that the second view in its various forms is most widely represented and sees it as correct insofar as religion is simultaneously part of culture and transcending it.[4] This, however, often implies some conflict between religion and culture in terms of a lack of convergence between religious and secular symbols and values.

Developments in Protestant Theology in the Post-Communist Era

Therefore, the critical issue facing evangelical Protestants in the post-Communist era is closely associated with the search for a relevant theology in light of the multidimensional transformations within Polish society. Surely, doing theology cannot mean the simple transfer of theological ideas and systems from elsewhere that are not suited to a Polish context. In other words, what is important for evangelical theology is to move from being a theology that is influenced by its context to being a genuinely contextual theology which is able to self-consciously reflect on the historical and cultural factors that have influenced its particular expression of faith and to discern the deepest thoughts behind the narratives, customs and tradition that are characteristic to those communities of faith. The purpose of it is not to affirm a withdrawal syndrome, forging further development of 'ghetto mentality' or escape into romantic views of 'history' and 'ethos,' but rather rediscovery of its true identity.[5]

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[3] B. Milerski, „Religia a kultura" [„Religion and culture"], in *Rocznik teologiczny*, (No. 1, 1992), pp. 175ff.

[4] Ibid., p. 179.

[5] Cf. B. Milerski, „Żyć w diasporze…Zagrożenia i szanse w kontekście polskiego protestantyzmu" [„Living in diaspora…Dangers and Opportunities of Polish Protestantism"], in *Myśl Protestancka*, (No. 2, 2002), pp. 3-10.

Contextual theology by definition seeks contextual relevance and as such it does not claim to be universal but rather attempts to express the truth of Christianity in a way which is suited to the thought patterns and cultural inheritance of a particular context. The clash between some inherited theological formulations imported from Anglo-Saxon missionaries paired with a desire to be like the West, and the traditional Polish 'in-between' way of thinking help in understanding of the current crisis in evangelical Protestant post-Communist soul. While some evangelicals still subscribe to the separatist worldview, many others today seek new ways of approaching Christian identity and presence in contemporary culture. I'd like to point to three examples.

Prof. Boguslaw Milerski of the Christian Theological Academy, commenting on the identity of Polish Protestantism, uses the theological category of 'diaspora' in order to describe it.[6] There are three dangers that Milerski points to in this context: (a) the danger of losing one's identity; (b) the danger of isolation and forming a religious ghetto mentality; and (c) the danger of conformity, uncritical acceptance of values, symbols and views.[7] On the other hand, he argues that Protestant identity has a potential in terms of providing an alternative identity distinct from the predominant Catholic presence, which on this basis can attract some people.[8] Protestantism seen as a 'diasporal' community and being shaped by various traditions can also serve as an agent of reconciliation between various marginalized groups within the broader framework of the whole society.[9] In this way Milerski emphasizes that Protestantism is not only a religious movement, but also a cultural movement clearly associated with values expressed by the Reformation such as 'individual freedom,' 'responsibility and solidarity,' 'education,' and 'democratization of social roles,' which can all creatively contribute to contemporary Polish culture.[10]

Similarly, Baptist theologian and politician Prof. Tadeusz J. Zielinski, building on the theological inheritance of the Reformation and 'free church' tradition in his various works very often points to the Protestant alternative both in terms of its experiential

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[6] Milerski, „Żyć w diasporze…"

[7] Ibid., p. 8.

[8] Ibid., p. 9.

[9] Ibid., p. 10.

[10] B. Milerski, „Protestantyzm kulturowy a sprawy Polski" [„Cultural Protestantism and Polish Issues"], in *Myśl Protestancka*, (No. 2, 1998), pp. 3-7.

expression of faith as well as its social offer. While critiquing some negative features of Polish evangelicalism such as 'religious egocentrism,' 'social separationism,' 'countercultural complex' and 'vulnerability to fragmentation,' he also points to many durable and socially relevant evangelical values: 'a clear gospel message,' 'personal down-to-earth piety,' 'family-orientation,' appreciation of 'democratic principles' and 'enterprising readiness.'[11] Zielinski emphasizes that in the reality of post-Communist Poland only evangelicals themselves are able to shape their future, reducing their weaknesses and using their advantages.[12]

One of the major contributions, however, pointing to a more radical rethinking of theological understanding of the relation between church and culture is that of Baptist pastor and scholar Prof. Miroslaw Patalon who opts for a more radical rethinking of culture and argues for a rediscovery of the church as a learning community and a critical evaluation of the possibility of the enculturation of the gospel in the light of the postmodern pedagogy.[13] He notes the potential of arising pluralism as the basis for launching interdenominational cooperation on one hand and diversity within individual churches on the other. Therefore, according to him, scholars should work on a new definition of theology today, refocusing it from concentrating on God himself towards a reflection on the God-world relationship which needs to take the central position instead. In this way of thinking, the primary role of theological education is to enable "a meeting" in a wide range of dimensions.[14]

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[11] T.J. Zieliński, „Protestancka alternatywa. Ewangelicyzm polski jako oferta społeczna" [„Protestant alternative. Polish evangelicalism as a social offer"], in *Myśl Protestancka*, (No. 1, 1997), pp. 3-14; T.J. Zieliński, „Ewangelicyzm religia stoi. O religijne zaangażowanie polskiej inteligencji protestanckiej" [„Evangelicalism and religion. About religious involvement of Polish Protestant intelligentsia"], in *Myśl Protestancka*, (No. 3, 1998), pp. 3-9.

[12] T.J. Zieliński, „Hamulce i podniety rozwoju ewangelikalizmu polskiego u progu XXI stulecia. Studium o profilu teologiczno-systematycznym" ["Checks and Incentives in the Development of Polish Evangelicalism at the Threshold of 21st Century. Study in a Prism of Sytematic Theology"], in Zielinski, (ed.), 2004, pp. 127-147.

[13] M. Patalon, „Postmodern Trends in Communicating Christianity," in *Journal of European Baptist Studies*, (Vol. 2, No. 1, 2001), pp. 20-32; M. Patalon, *Teologia a pedagogika* [*Theology and pedagogic*], (Słupsk: WPAP, 2002); M. Patalon, „Polscy pastorzy baptystyczni wobec wyzwań postmodernizmu" ["Polish Baptist ministers in the Light of Postmodern Challenges"], in *Baptystyczny Przegląd Teologiczny*, (Vol. 1, 2002), pp. 26-39.

[14] M. Patalon, „Jedność Kościoła w XXI wieku. Propozycje dla polskich chrześcijan w perspektywie pytania o przyszłość rodzimego ewangelikalizmu" [„Church Unity in the 21st Century.

Mission as Integrative Motif

As the main concern of the current conference it to look at theological education as mission and mission in theological education, it is crucial to add to these arising theologies a clear mission perspective. In other words, this way of thinking takes as its premise that the Christian church has been constituted for mission and therefore renewal is concerned with recovery of church's true identity. But such a renewal requires a new approach to theological education, that would seriously take into consideration the Polish religious-ethical context and way of thinking, and therefore would not simply imply a return to the past but a much broader view of mission for today's changing culture.

Understood in this way, the main task of contemporary Polish evangelical theology is to give direction to the church in understanding the crucial relations between the Christian community and wider society, freedom and morality, faith and life in such a way that it would help in a responsible 'entrance into the world' with a renewed Christian self-consciousness. In order to make this possible there are several things that may need to be considered in evangelical theological education.

Firstly, the genuine engagement of the church as the community of Christ with the wider society calls for the recognition of the holistic content of the gospel, or a theology for the whole gospel, which is to be relevant to all spheres of life and is not just limited to the 'spiritual.' Such renewal takes time and requires critical evaluation and ongoing integration of the new elements arising in the process of transformation that at the same time helps in appropriate assessment of one's identity within broader culture. On a practical level, it implies that a faith community, in order to share the gospel in a relevant way, is expected to engage in the 'language' of the culture through exploring the 'cognitive tools,' 'concepts,' 'images,' 'symbols' and 'thought forms,' by means of which people today discover meaning and form personal identities.[15] The 'language' of the Polish culture has been significantly transformed along with new set of values and lifestyles that the post-Communist era has brought. When understood in this way, the issues of crisis of freedom, crisis of identity and crisis of hope, to name but a few, gain theological significance to be further explored by the Christian community.

Proposition for Polish Christians in the Perspective of a Question on the Future of Polish Evangelicalism"], in Zieliński, (ed.), 2004, pp. 97-109.

[15] S. J. Grenz and J. R. Franke, *Beyond Foundationism. Shaping Theology in a Post-Modern Context*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), pp. 158ff.

This brings us to the second aspect that has found theological expression, namely practical pastoral theology. Concrete issues that constitute new pastoral concerns such as relations between consumerist and spiritual understandings of freedom, the rise of pragmatism and new individualized ethics, demand Christian response and deep rethinking of what it means to be a Christian today. A review of the Baptist monthly *Slowo Prawdy* shows that this publication, which, due to official constraints, used to be very hermetic and published only articles on religious and historic themes in the Communist era, since the fall of the old system has seen a flood of publications concerned with social ethics, politics and culture in general that stimulate many discussions.[16] This requires contextual analysis, which is also rooted in biblical and theological reflection, which calls the community of believers to hear the cries, see the faces, understand the stories, and respond to the living needs and hopes of the persons who are an integral part of that context.

A particularly significant aspect of Eastern European missional challenge is that of 'hearing' and 'understanding stories' of contemporary people. More importantly, however, it is not just about 'hearing' and 'understanding' but also seeking new ways of missional interaction with these stories within broadly understood Christian community life. Given this pattern of thinking, theology is effective insofar as it is able to connect the narratives with a deeper understanding of a Christian experience of faith. Poetry, testimony, sermon or song can be great expressions of theological depth that are close to the Slavic soul, but do not always require straight lines of reasoning and a clear-cut propositional approach.[17]

Thirdly, there are various voices (Catholic and Protestant) that are coming out of an experience of the Polish post-Communist ethos, calling for a deeper renewal of community. But how is such a renewal to take place when the culture becomes more and more individualized and religion is privatized? Ecumenically-minded Catholic activist Wilkanowicz observes that in Poland, "smaller communities are needed in order to do evangelistic work in places where people live and work, to convey the Good News and to

[16] Cf. K. Brzechczyn, „Kościół Chrześcijan Baptystów w pierwszej dekadzie III Rzeczpospolitej" ["Baptist Church in the First Decade of the Third Republic of Poland"], in *Baptystyczny Przegląd Teologiczny*, (Vol. 1, 2002), pp. 11-25.

[17] Cf. D. Cosden and D. Fairbrain, „Contextual Theological Education among Post-Soviet Protestants," in *Transformation*, (Vol. 18, No. 2, 2001), pp. 125-28.

build a network of solidarity into everyday life."[18] Such a missional agenda is also very close to evangelical heart.

In practice this approach seeks to connect one's identity with a broader framework of interaction with others. This requires development of a new theology of openness to others, theology of dialogue, theology of reconciliation, understood both in spiritual and social terms. Without such radical rethinking, evangelical Christianity runs a danger of a further marginalization in years to come. Unfortunately, Malcolm Clegg of the Biblical Theological Seminary, critically noted that many evangelical approaches to mission today are still marked by a form of a 'hit-and-run' attitude that is based on individual as opposed to communal confrontation, and consequently put great emphasis on "the saving of individual souls rather than a broader healing of the land or consideration of the social implications of obedience to the gospel."[19] An integrative approach to theological education seeks to confront such reductionist views of mission by attempting to link mission with broader cultural testimony, but without losing the emphasis on spiritual regeneration.

Then, fourthly, the new approach to evangelical theological education recognizes that Christian community bears witness not only by 'doing' and 'proclaiming' but also by its core 'being.' In fact, in the light of a strong tendency towards spiritual activism, without the renewal of the 'being,' which precedes both 'doing' and 'proclaiming,' the effectiveness and credibility of Christian mission can be in danger of stagnation in years to come. Thus, renewed identity of the 'missional community' as grounded in the integrative principle will seek to break with dualistic, exclusivist and triumphalistic tendencies reducing the gospel to one aspect of mission against the other. The focus is rather on recovery of the whole gospel to the whole person in integrity with the Scripture--the contextual needs and commitment to a praxis of love in the midst of the concrete social and cultural realities facing Polish people today.

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[18] S. Wilkanowicz, „The Problems and Tasks Confronting the Church in Central and Eastern Europe Today," in *Religion in communist Lands*, (Vol. 19, No. 1-2, 1991), p. 36.

[19] M. Clegg, *Understanding the times – research into the impact and direction of Christian mission in Post-communist Central and Eastern Europe at the turn of the century* [Unpublished MA in Evangelism Studies Dissertation, University of Sheffield, Cliff College], p. 16.

About the Author

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Mission as the Creative Frontier of Theological Development

By David W. Shenk

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Jonah believed that God was a tribal deity; Yahweh was the God of Israel, he was not God for the nations. That vision of God permeates many of our cultures; in the USA bumper stickers proclaim, "God bless America." I have seldom seen a sticker stating, "God bless all nations." It is customary for the U.S. President in his annual State of the Union message to conclude with a rousing, "God bless America!"

However, in Jonah's mission to Nineveh all such tribal or national notions of God were shattered. Nineveh repented. God changed his mind and did not destroy Nineveh. Nineveh, the enemy of Israel, was included in the embrace of God's love. That is a theological revolution! In Jonah's mission to Israel, he discovered that the enemy is included in the loving, inviting reconciling embrace of God.

The Bible is a Narrative of Mission Transforming Theology

The Bible is permeated with these kinds of astounding theological developments as God leads his covenant people into mission. The Bible is a narrative of theological transformation on mission frontiers. Here are several examples of the people of God in mission within the biblical narrative, and consequential creative theological transformations.

God Called Abraham!

Why? "So that all peoples on the earth will be blessed through you" (Genesis 12:3). The gods of the nations empowered their worshippers to oppress others. For example, Pharaoh as the son of the sun god, Aton, used his empowerment by the gods of nature to enslave Israel. However, the God of Abraham empowered to bless the nations. An astounding example is Joseph who was a blessing to the Egyptians who had enslaved him and even imprisoned him.

God Encountered Moses!

Why? In God's encounter with Moses at the burning bush he commissioned Moses to be his instrument in delivering Israel from bondage in Egypt and in forming Israel into his covenant people. God gave Moses a mission. He was God's instrument to demonstrate that justice and covenant belonged together. Who belonged to this covenant community rooted in justice? Amazingly this covenant community was open for all. The Scriptures observe that when Israel left bondage in Egypt, they were a mixed multitude; many other people went up with them out of Egypt (Exodus 12:38). The covenant community God was forming in the deliverance from Egypt was a community of justice for all oppressed and a covenant not bounded by ethnicity. This was not a covenant just for the genealogical descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; others were welcomed as well!

God Elected Israel!

Why? God declared through the pen of Isaiah, "I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth" (Isaiah 49:6). Israel believed that settling in Canaan and forming a monarchy was the fulfillment of the calling to be a light for the Gentiles. However, being a settled kingdom in Canaan and the development of a monarchy did not serve the calling for mission to the nations very well.

To Israel's astonishment it was in the powerlessness of exile and diaspora that Israel's mission to the nations seemed to be most fully revealed. The prophets of the exile caught a whole new vision of mission: that of the Suffering Servant! It was in the diaspora as a suffering people that Israel's vocation of being a light to the nations is especially effectuated.

God's Surprising Call

God's call and election is an astonishing surprise. An astonishment of biblical mission is that the vitality of mission is not dependent on numbers, but rather on the call of God and people's response to that call. Notice how specific the election is in regard to the Messianic hope/promise: Abraham—Isaac—Jacob—Judah—David—Mary—Jesus. Then there is the apostolic church: 12 apostles representing the 12 tribes of Israel. Jesus chose them!

The grand surprise was the call of Saul to be an apostle! That call breaks all norms. He was not one of the twelve disciples, and he was a persecutor of the church. Yet God called Saul! All over the world this kind of surprise keeps happening. It is astounding to see who God calls. Many years ago I was surprised by the call of God on my life. He has called you. We have been called and elected for mission.

Paul never graduated from the astonishment of it all. "Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ," (Eph 3:8).

Mission Transforms Theology

In mission, our paradigms are challenged and transformed again and again. For example, in the experience of the church, one of the most fundamental and transforming missional paradigm revolutions is centered in a lower echelon Roman military officer, Cornelius.

To grasp the momentousness of what happened when Peter baptized Cornelius, we need to step back a moment and look at Israel's theological development. The sixth century BC exile of Judah to Babylon taught Israel a lesson they could not forget. They must faithfully obey the Law of Moses. The exile was God's judgment for disobedience. As Israel began to return from exile under benevolent Persian kings, Ezra set the norm for Judaism. The theology that formed those Ezra reforms was the bedrock conviction that Israel as God's righteous covenant people shall live by the Law.

However, the church proclaimed an astounding alternative: "The righteous shall live by faith" (Romans 1:17). How did this conviction become the bedrock of New Testament theology? The transformation began the day Peter stepped across the threshold into the home of Cornelius, and announced in essence, "I would rather not be here among you Gentiles. But God told me I must come. Why did you call for me?" By the end of the day Peter had baptized Cornelius and the large group of Gentiles who had gathered in his home to meet and hear Peter. This Gentile household had repented with signs of the Holy Spirit's fullness, without submitting to the Law of Moses.

Much of the remainder of the book of Acts and the Epistles is taken up with the astonishing theological and practical implications of this paradigmatic revolution that was breaking in upon the church within the frontiers of mission. The righteous shall live by

faith; not by the Law of Moses! Nowhere did the full implications break into the church more forthrightly that in Antioch where a full blown Gentile peoples' movement into the church developed; this movement was acquiring momentum completely outside Jewish control or Mosaic Law. That crisis led the Gentile and Jewish leadership to convene a special missiological – theological – hermeneutical consultation in Jerusalem (Acts 15).

The Jerusalem missions conference determined that the church in mission will not be a proselytizing movement. It will proclaim Christ and invite conversion, but it will not proselytize. Conversion meant that believers could remain in their culture; proselytes must move from their home culture into another culture. However, the Jerusalem conference determined that the Christian movement will not require believers to move from one culture into another. They will rather remain within their culture, committed to a Christ-centered way of life. The Gospel will be lived incarnationally within the culture of the believer.

Mission in Dialog with Theology

Although these biblical narratives reveal theological transformations that fomented within mission frontiers, it is noteworthy that the creative theological transformations on the frontiers were never independent of the traditional centers. Throughout the Old Testament, it is always the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that was the anchor for all that was transpiring. Even though the mission frontiers were transforming Israel's understanding of God and Israel's mission in the world, they were always in dialogical interaction with the Abrahamic beginnings of the journey.

In the New Testament experience, a core conviction within the missionary frontiers was that we are justified by faith. However, the church in mission anchored that conviction in Abraham, whom God considered righteous because of his faith. The New Testament church in all its missions fervor never abandoned the Abrahamic beginnings; they knew that they were a fulfillment, not a departure, from the faith of Abraham.

The Jerusalem Conference is the model for interaction between the creative theological transformations on the frontiers of mission, and an unshakable commitment and accountability to the traditional theological center. Wholesome theological development emerges from the dialogical interaction between the two, the mission frontiers and the traditional centers. Independency is not biblical; dialogical interaction

between the mission frontiers and the traditional centers is vital for both the younger churches and the traditional communities.

Transformations: 2000 Years of the Church in Mission

It is not only within the biblical narrative that we experience theological transformations as the people of God journey with God in his call to mission. For 2000 years the church has experienced sometimes profound transformations as the mission frontiers inform and form the theological enterprise.

Historical Paradigms of Mission

David Bosch has written a monumental work that explores six major paradigm transformations within the Western church. His book, *Transforming Mission, Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* identifies six fundamental transformations.[1] He observes that usually there is a person who emerges as the interpreter and conceptualizer of the transformation. These missional transformations as outlined by Bosch are as follows:

- Semitic / Gentile (Paul)
- Hebraic / Hellenistic (Origen)
- Minority / Majority (Augustine)
- Catholic / Reformation (Luther)
- Medieval / Enlightenment (William Carey)
- Western / Universal

I experience this analysis to be helpful. However, the book is a narrative of the Western church. The churches in the East have also been on a journey in mission. For example, what have the churches in Muslim ruled lands experienced in paradigm shifts during over a thousand years of Islamic dominance?

The 21st Century

David Bosch likens the modern era to Moses standing on Mount Nebo looking

[1] David Bosch, *Transforming Mission.* Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991

into the Promised Land. For the first time in 2000 years the church is genuinely universal. The world view of much of the emerging younger churches is much closer to that of the New Testament than is true of Western culture. These Christians read the Bible as a book that connects with amazing and revolutionary relevance to their own world view and experience.

Bosch observes that these churches are vigorously missionary; they have not been intimidated by the relativism and critique of missions that permeates much of Western culture today. The younger churches are not smothered by the inhibiting world view of the Enlightenment. These churches are speaking into the world wide church with a resilience and persistence that is transforming the shape of global Christianity, and global denominational fellowships. For example, much of the world has taken note of the debate within the Anglican Communion in regard to homosexuality. The Euro-North American axis does not have the final word; the Anglican Church is now genuinely universal and the majority voice is that of the emerging younger churches.

Recently on a flight to Kenya I read Philip Jenkins's *The New Christendom*, a book that describes this emerging world Christianity that has a dynamism that is quite other than Western expressions of the church.[2] As if to emphasize Jenkins' thesis, I heard Christian pop music over the Nairobi Airport sound system as I entered this large international airport at about 5:00 AM. Then I heard Bible reading, a brief meditation, and prayer. An early morning Christian devotional in a major international airport! Indeed the New Christendom is at hand.

Many of us have been stirred by the vigor of emerging church and mission in China. This is true of both the unregistered often underground house churches as well as the officially registered three-self churches (self governing, self propagating, and self supporting). In the midst of sometimes very intense suffering and persecution, the house church movement is developing a visionary missionary commitment, with a goal of commissioning 100,000 missionaries to carry the gospel into the worlds of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam.

This Back to Jerusalem movement views the New Testament as describing the movement of the gospel westward. Now the westward movement of the gospel is

[2] Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

depositing the seeds of the faith across China. These Chinese Christians are committed to continue carrying the gospel westward until they arrive at Jerusalem from where the movement began 2000 years ago. This dynamic missionary movement is already under way. They are transforming the way the world church thinks of mission!

A significant transformation is also fomenting within the former Soviet Union. These societies have experienced the deserts of utopian ideologies. They have been tested by the fires of persecution and exile. Some of these churches have emerged from the depths of suffering with a post Soviet missionary vigor that is touching Europe and the rest of the world with renewal. Their theologies are rooted in a keen commitment to the Kingdom of God with a resistance to secularisms or spiritualities that divide life into the secular and the spiritual.

Mission on the Frontiers: Theological Transformation

Examples of modern missions affecting theological transformations abound. I will note several salient examples of mission frontiers fomenting creative theological transformations.

The Gospel in Kenya

In the mid-nineteenth century the first missionaries began to arrive on the Kenya coast of East Africa. They mostly represented the Church Missionary Society of the Church of England. They labored for three decades with very minimal response. A couple of their African co-laborers pointed out that the greatest concern of the peoples of the coast was the Arab slave trade, not heaven. By preaching about heaven, and ignoring the slave trade, the missionaries were not communicating a gospel that has relevance to the anguish of the coastal peoples.

This observation created intense theological debate. What is the nature of faithful mission? The mid-nineteenth century pietism of the missionaries in Kenya formed a theology that was about heaven after death, but little or no connection with cultural or social transformation in the present. However, as the several African teammates read the New Testament, they did not disparage the promise of heaven, but they felt the heaven emphasis was a distortion of the fullness of the Gospel incarnated in Jesus. They

perceived from their reading of the Gospels that Jesus had come to bring freedom to the captives, now!

So the missionaries agreed to an experiment. They turned one of the mission centers over to African leadership. Under new leadership, the tiny believing African community proclaimed freedom for slaves. They hoisted a flag over the mission station with the word "*uhuru*" (freedom) painted on the flag. Slaves began to escape from their masters and took refuge in the mission center. One of the African leaders of the freedom movement, David Koi, was abducted by the slave traders and beheaded, the first Kenyan Christian martyr. Within weeks the church community had grown by hundreds and within a couple years to several thousand. That was the beginning of the indigenous church movement in Kenya—an African led movement that connected powerfully to the felt needs of the Kenyan people—good news for the poor—freedom for the captives.[3]

Grace in East Africa

Nearly a century later, Mennonite missionaries from Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, USA, came to Tanganyika (Tanzania). They came with the conviction that they would teach Africans to "obey all things" that Jesus had commanded (Matthew 28:19). The missionaries believed that obeying the all things meant that the African Christians would pattern their lives pretty much on Mennonite North American patterns. It did not work. The churches that developed were lethargic and alien to local culture. Then came the surprise. The East Africa revival flowing out of Uganda began to touch Mennonite churches and missionaries in Tanganyika. The revival proclaimed that all are sinners saved by grace; it was a call to walk in daily repentance and live in transparent fellowship and accountability with one another.

As the revival message transformed the missionaries and the African church, the church in America worried. Bishops feared that the message that we are sinners saved by grace would undermine the strong Mennonite emphasis on obedience to the teachings of Jesus. This revival message from East Africa began to touch Lancaster County Mennonites at a time when the church in America was moving into increasingly restrictive legalisms. The legalistic stream championed by the guardians of the faith in

[3] W. B. Anderson, *The Church in East Africa 1840-1979*. Dodoma: Central Tanganyika Press, 1977, 9-17.

Lancaster and the grace stream that the missionaries were proclaiming as they came on home leaves, created conflict. Yet the Holy Spirit was at work. The revivalists and the bishops never parted ways.[4] Nowadays Lancaster bishops frequently observe, "The East Africa revival saved Lancaster Mennonites from destructive legalisms, spiritual stagnation and death."

The Peace of Christ in Tanzania

Father Michael Donavan describes his surprising discovery of dimensions of the Gospel as he shared with the Masai of Tanzania, in his book *Christianity Rediscovered, an Epistle form the Masai.* For some months Donavan met with Masai villages around the evening cooking fires learning together about the pilgrimage of faith in God that began with the nomad, Abraham. The Masai already believed in the creator God, but the Biblical journey of learning to know God was captivating. That Biblical journey took them to Christ. Finally, decision time had come. They needed to decide whether they would join the new community, the church, as they continued the journey of learning to know God as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Each hamlet spent a week in discussion as they came to a decision. When Father Donavan met with each hamlet to hear their decision, he was astounded to learn that the core issue each hamlet had struggled with was in regard to their tradition as a warrior clan. For centuries they had engaged in intermittent war with surrounding clans. They discerned that to be disciples of Jesus and members of his community, they had to lay aside their weapons of war, and engage in peacemaking, not war, with the surrounding clans. That was the core issue, as he met with each village separately.

Donavan experienced a baptism of sadness, meeting with one village who said, "We have decided that we cannot abandon our warrior tradition, and so we have decided not to become members of the community of disciples of Jesus. Our answer is, 'No!'" Donovan describes going to the edge of the village that night and with profound sadness shaking the dust from his shoes.[5]

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[4] Richard MacMaster, *A Gentle Wind.* Manuscript. (Publication anticipated 2006 by Herald Press, Scottdale.)

[5] Vincent J. Donovan, *Christianity Rediscovered*. Notre Dame: Fides Claretian, 1978.

Donavan's own Catholic spirituality was transformed in these conversations with Masai who were encountering the Bible and Jesus for the first time. The missional frontier transformed his understanding of the nature of the Gospel and the Christian way, especially in regard to the way of peace. For these Masai the mass was the gathering in peace. When Donavan would come for the weekly mass, the leader of the community would take a tuft of grass and hand it to a companion, with the words, "The peace of Christ be with you." The tuft was passed from person to person. If anyone refused to take the tuft, then communion was suspended for that week; the mass was offered only when all within the community were at peace with one another.

Sadly this Christward movement among the Masai floundered because of the inability of the Catholic hierarchy to exercise sufficient flexibilities to enable Masai indigenous leaders to carry the movement forward. This was because no Masai potential leader was willing to commit to celibacy. Catholic ecclesiology could not flex sufficiently to empower authentic indigenous leadership.

Following Jesus in Iran

Creative theological transformations challenge the church whenever Christian witness encounters people of other faiths. For example, Islam is committed to *tauhid,* the unity of God and the unity of his will. That is the commitment of faithful Muslims, to bring every area of life under the one will of God. That is what the Iranian Islamic revolution is all about. As Christians engage Muslims in witness and dialogue, they hear the Islamic invitation, "practice *tauhid*." If you claim to be a disciple of Jesus, then be a disciple of Jesus. Don't divide life into compartments exempting some areas from the rule of the kingdom of God that Jesus proclaimed.

Just as the Iranian Islamic revolution was getting under way, a group of American church leaders visited Iran. On Christmas day they met the founding father of the revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini. He said, "I have a message for American Christians. Follow Jesus. If you would follow Jesus, the crisis between Iran and the United States would be quickly resolved." The Ayatollah's plea was that North American Christians would submit their lives to the authority of Jesus. Practice *tauhid*! No area of life should be exempt from the rule of Christ, if indeed we do confess that he is Lord.

Just as Donavan discovered dimensions of the Gospel that he had never been aware of before, as he journeyed in faith with the Masai, so also in the engagement with other religions such as Islam, Christians in mission gain fresh insights in the nature of the Gospel through those encounters.

Conclusion

Church communities or theological training centers need a lively interaction with the mission frontiers where faith is meeting non-faith. To do theology with little or no engagement with the mission frontiers is to be engaged in an academic exercise bereft of transformational power and creative, life-giving theologizing. All authentic Christian theological education must be engaged lively dialogical interaction with the creative theology developing on the mission frontiers; and the frontiers need the depth and tradition of the traditional churches and theological training centers.

About the Author

David W. Shenk lived in East Africa most of the first fifteen years of his life, where his parents were pioneer missionaries with Eastern Mennonite Missions. He and his wife, Grace, invested sixteen years in Somalia and Kenya with a special focus on presence, witness, and church formation among Muslims. He has also served as academic dean at the Lithuania Christian College. At present he is The Global Missions Consultant with Eastern Mennonite Missions. David has authored numerous books and articles on themes related to missions and the gospel in a world of many religions. He is a pastor, preacher, and teacher; he holds a doctorate in religious studies education with course work in anthropology from New York University. David and Grace are the parents of four children and they are blessed with six grandchildren.

Theological Libraries in Central and Eastern Europe

By Katharina Penner

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Introduction

It will be very difficult, if not impossible, to discuss in one short paper theological libraries in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE)[1] with their needs, challenges and opportunities, so I am bound to either repeat in review fashion already known clichés or generalize on certain issues without differentiating how they apply to each of the various theological libraries in particular. Central and Eastern Europe are blessed with a rich diversity in cultures and languages, with a variety of denominations and contrasting church structures, with a breadth of library activities in theological schools and a variety of methods libraries use to get their work done. One can maybe speak about needs and challenges of libraries in a particular country, but even this would not take into account all the local differences, the specifics and management structures of individual libraries, their different funding situation.

Because we are dealing with libraries of theological schools the contexts will vary even more widely. These schools seem each to require an individual analysis: they are influenced by local circumstances, by denominational attitudes, by the fact that their budget is based on donations and not on governmental support, by the attitude of the school's leadership toward library and what importance library is given in the overall educational process[2] and many other factors. Often the decision making process does not

[1] The term "Eastern and Central Europe" is not quite clear and is being used in different ways. Still carrying Cold War connotations, Eastern Europe is thus understood as the post-Soviet territory while Central Europe covers several countries of the former Warsaw Pact, such as Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Often other countries are included in this term, such as Bulgaria, the former Yugoslav states, Albania, which more precisely should be called South-Eastern Europe. It is interesting to note that at the end of the 18th century Europe was understood in its northern and southern parts, but not with the division into East and West (Virkus, 2003).

[2] One will usually encounter statements that the "library is at the centre of the educational process", but what practical consequences follow from this? In what ways is the library central in the institution? Does it become obvious, for example, in the quality of staff hired to work in the library, in the budget allocated to the library, in an emphasis on self-directed learning that takes place in the library instead of scheduling the days full with one-way lectures, in how intimately teachers are familiar with the

take place in the library, but by a faculty representative without library training who has received the responsibility for the development of the library. One can thus not expect any uniformly informed perception of library issues and standardized ways of dealing with them – each school and library develops their own survival mechanisms. Some schools have a well functioning Library committee and emphasize team leadership; others do not and, if they have more than one employee, usually mirror in the library structure the leadership structure of the school.

It is, nevertheless, possible to list some issues that are common to theological schools in Central and Eastern Europe and point out several aspects that cause problems and need to be addressed in order to advance theological libraries in this part of the world. In this article I will only selectively mention some issues from the past that still have implications for today and then move on to three aspects of library work, view of technology, personnel and resources, that I consider crucial at this moment of development in theological libraries of Central and Eastern Europe.

Issues from the Past and Implications for Today

Central and Eastern European countries used to have good public and research libraries, often holding multiple copies of books, especially textbooks. They were well supported by the state that promoted a culture of the book – emphasized literacy, subsidized prices for books, organized reading clubs and other literacy supporting activities in libraries.[3] Since the breakdown of communism the situation has changed dramatically. Funding for libraries has dropped tremendously, which means libraries have to cut back staff, cannot perform all of their previous services or purchase new books and periodicals. Many of these countries are at the moment going through a phase of "pure capitalism", less socially balanced than in countries who had professed capitalism for

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library collection and are using it themselves? It has been often observed that libraries in CEE often have a "rather marginal status" in the overall university power structure, without "any tradition of liaison with academic staff" (Pors and Edwards, 126; see also Pejova, 2002). Theological schools seem to continue this mentality.

The statement by Raymond Morris, former librarian of Yale Divinity School, may sound somewhat idealistic, but it does underline the issue: "Few indices point more accurately to the health of an educational institution than its attitude toward its library, and the sacrifice it is willing to make for it," quoted in Trotti, 158.

[3] See, for example, a report on Bulgaria by John Pateman "Libraries in Eastern Europe: Then, but not now", *Focus on International and Comparative Librarianship* 29/2 (1998):110.

some time. Only profit making enterprises survive in pure capitalism – libraries do not make financial profit[4] and are overrun by the developments. Libraries in theological schools encounter similar problems: they are perceived as a large black hole that takes up much money from the (constantly limited) budget but returns no visible product, at least not immediately.

Censorship and the suppression of religion under communism meant that there were no or very few theological libraries. So when in the early 90s the Iron Curtain fell and theological schools and their libraries received a chance to develop, often they started from scratch. To be sure, theological schools did exist before (Orthodox, Catholic, and some Protestant schools) and theological literature was being published – openly as well as underground, in the countries themselves or in the diaspora – but not in sufficient numbers and/or quality to stock a theological research library in the national language. This scarcity of theological materials in national languages remains depressingly obvious until today and a significant change is not foreseeable in the near future.[5] Thus CEE theological libraries continue to encounter serious problems in acquisition: the output of publications in national languages, especially in the area of religion, is quite low and often these are (well or less well done) translations from other languages, devotional materials, fiction or poetry. The latter sell better and in higher numbers. If libraries acquire English language theological materials, they struggle with insufficient finances as they need to pay in hard currency, and it is difficult to select valuable materials and catalogue books in a foreign language. They often also question whether they appreciate such an influx of English language textbooks and with it the dominance of Anglo-Saxon

[4] Consider, however, the UNESCO White paper on information literacy in developing countries, prepared by Zdravka Pejova, where it becomes abundantly clear that "lack of knowledgeable, skilled and efficient use of information [which libraries, if equipped well, can provide access to and teach how to use]…directly affects productivity in all spheres of life and work – in education, research, business, administration". Insufficient attention to develop strong libraries and information centers now, be it in theological or business and governmental institutions, will prove very detrimental later.

[5] Many of these problems were voiced during the January 2005 Conference for Theological Librarians held at the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Prague. Over fifty participants from countries of Eastern, Central and Western Europe as well as from North America discussed their experience in theological libraries and learned from each other. The papers of this conference have been published at the website of BETH (Bibliotheques Europeennes de Theologie) at www.beth.be.

theology, which may be quite different from their religious tradition.[6]

One observes quite a different attitude toward information in CEE countries when compared to Western Europe. Before the recent changes, information was not for sale, it was not a marketable service. Information had "cultural value" but was not and often still is not considered "an economic good" (Virkus, 2003). This is clearly seen in copyright laws: in CEE countries they were user-oriented, guaranteeing more rights to access and use of information for readers without expected payments. The laws attempted to ensure that information would freely go around, with the idealistic expectation that knowledge can and will change society, boost development, improve lifestyle, provide enjoyment. This is not like in Western Europe where laws give a strong position to the owner (usually not even the author but a publisher who purchased the right to the information from the author) who makes economic profit from it. The European Union is now forcing countries that have joined the Union to adopt different laws and some have already done so (Haavisto, 2000).

Theological libraries in CEE struggle with these changes both for economic and ideological reasons. Their mission is to enable students and faculty access to valuable and necessary information, but they often cannot afford the costs it takes to purchase multiple copies of a textbook that students cannot afford on their own, or materials produced in good quality in the West (books, periodicals, electronic resources). In their ethical understanding the user is still central and should be entitled to have affordable access to study materials, especially if we speak about training in theology and for ministry. While access to information is considered a human right in Art. 19 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, they question whether it is ethical for Christians to create economic barriers for their fellow sisters and brothers by pricing materials so high. It must be said in defense of Christian organizations in the West that more often than not they are very willing to waive or reduce payments and grant permissions for photocopying materials, if asked. Much listening and learning of and from each other's attitudes to information and copyright still needs to be done so that Christians can understand the reasons for certain laws and learn ways of dealing with information that are acceptable to the other side.

[6] It has been recognized that the spread of the English language, not least through the ubiquitous teaching of English as second language, includes as "part of the agenda, consciously or subconsciously … something like linguistic imperialism". English language is perceived as "a means of communicating a whole value system" (Cripps 2004).

Developments in Information Technology

Libraries in Central and Eastern Europe, both theological and state libraries, in the past fell far behind comparable libraries in the West because of a poor technological infrastructure. Investments in technology in these countries were made for the purpose of defense, but not for cultural or developmental purposes. Technology was "unavailable, unaffordable, and discouraged" for political reasons (Virkus, 2003). On the one side, communist ideology was afraid that access to technology would enable access to Western ideas. On the other side, Western governments prevented Eastern block countries from obtaining newer technology so as to prevent them using it in military ways. This Cold War mentality resulted in disadvantages for and stagnation of developments in civil areas, including libraries.[7]

Although technology, including for libraries, is more easily available now and some of it has even been developed in the national contexts, it often remains unaffordable and less developed. Western foundations have given much money to automate national and some university libraries, but the smaller and especially private school libraries, including theological libraries, have a long way to go. Often, either due to lack of knowledge and/or experience with technology or because they depend on the decision of the donor who pays for the library software, libraries end up with programmes that are not really suitable for their setting or don't "speak" their national language. Academic libraries in CEE purchase software designed for elementary schools in North America; librarians have to learn a foreign language to be able to operate the library software.[8] Another way that is sometimes chosen to save costs, to speed up or maximize, as is believed, the automation process is to design a "home grown" software. Although at first it seems very attractive that the library can influence all decisions as to the system's functions, interface and other aspects, in the end, this often turns out to be "the most

[7] "Lack of access to electronic information was especially dramatic in medicine, which appeared to Western visitors in small countries in the beginning of the 1990s to be tens of years behind modern developments." (Simon and Stroetmann, 1998:24).

[8] Many librarians in CEE do speak surprisingly good German, English or French, but for many, language is an obstacle. My own experience in the library at IBTS with foreign language software has not been quite easy. Although most of the interface features are translated into English, some aspects still remain in Dutch, which is not very helpful if the problem that one is trying to solve is connected with exactly this feature! It is also difficult to figure out the advice from the Helpdesk that from time to time comes in Dutch instead of English.

expensive way".[9] The creation of a library software requires an experienced expert team that has learned from previous mistakes and that is not testing its new and extraordinary ideas on your library. The team needs to not only design the system but to provide long-term service with follow-up improvements, which is often not the case with an *ad hoc* group of enthusiasts put together for the sole purpose to design a software. A library with a home made system has no colleagues to turn to for an exchange of frustrations and delights about the same software.

It is interesting to observe that, although many countries of Central and Eastern Europe had developed their own national ways of organizing materials, in recent years many of them are in the process of adopting Anglo-Saxon ways of operating a library, not because these are better but because they are more known and spread easier, not least by way of the English language (Walravens, 1999:935). Library software coming from USA or the United Kingdom has gone through several generations of development and has integrated previous experience. It is often cheaper because there is more competition and more of it is produced and sold; there are more machine-readable data and ways of cooperation in data exchange. CEE libraries are pressed by the need to automate as quickly and less costly as possible and so choose their software and ways of operation according to market principles. In this way they lose some of their distinctiveness.

Technology is one of the areas where theological libraries in CEE can, and pressured for economic survival and quick automation, should cooperate; for example, in exchanging information and experience about library software and the automation process, in creating networks and consortia to purchase the same software, in exchanging machine readable data, in forming consortia to license electronic databases--this being a very brief and non-exhaustive list of possibilities. Cooperation between libraries in general and theological libraries in particular has, unfortunately, not been a priority in CEE in the last 10 years for various reasons: little perception of its value; a competition for donors; distrust that, in a time of tremendous and quick changes, the other side will (be able to) keep the agreements or cooperation terms; uneasy feelings about cooperation because during communism it was forced upon libraries on state terms. Nevertheless, many ways are open here to underline that theological libraries are part of the one body

[9] Compare Drobikova's presentation on "Library Automation".

of Christ; they are connected in one mission and one cause. Working together they can not only achieve more – the pragmatic reason for cooperation – but also demonstrate the love of God and its power in conflict resolution, in overcoming differences and difficulties, and in crossing denominational and national barriers – the witness and missional aspect of cooperation. The moral, and sometimes idealistic, commitment to cooperation will be severely tested by the realization of the efforts and costs it takes to reach out to other libraries, but it will also underline the unity of their mission.

Some Western foundations have, via requirements attached to their donations, "pressured" CEE institutions to cooperate with each other. Caidi, in a study of state libraries of four CEE countries (Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic and Slovakia) describes four different (non-linear) stages of cooperation that CEE libraries have experienced during the recent years: 1) artificial, or forced, cooperation during the socialist regime; 2) resistance to get involved in any large scale cooperative projects (because it resembles too much the centralized model) and the attempt to modernize libraries on one's own; 3) directed cooperation, cooperation initiated by foreign foundations and/or state agencies having identified some common goals of libraries; 4) voluntary cooperation, which sometimes developed upon the withdrawal of foreign and state finances (2003:103-117). In my observation, some theological libraries in CEE have found their way into voluntary, maybe even self-initiated, cooperation on a local or regional level but it is still much less intensive or effective than cooperation between, for example, the faculty or academic leadership of the same theological schools. Probably, the philosophical framework is still missing to understand the importance of the library and the necessity of regional and inter-denominational cooperation between libraries.[10] Many libraries, however, continue at stage 2, either because of lack of vision, or lack of time and/or resources for cooperation.

While libraries that have already gone through the automation process and use electronic resources have a more differentiated view of technology and are aware of the different kinds of problems that technology creates, for many libraries it is probably still true that "expensive information resources … remain heavily under-utilized" (Pejova).

[10] One can list many examples of faculty cooperation of organizations, such as the Consortium of European Baptist Theological Schools (CEBTS), the Euro-Asian and the European Evangelical Accrediting Associations (EAAA and EEAA respectively), but only a few events specifically dedicated to library cooperation.

These will only mean something if people (staff and readers) can effectively employ them as useful instruments, that is, if users receive continuous training, if hardware is regularly updated, if there is some cooperation between academic and library staff as to available resources and their potential for use in teaching and learning.

Library Personnel

The question of personnel in theological libraries is a difficult question for almost any theological school. What kind of persons are being hired: are they primarily people and service oriented or goal oriented? What kind of training do they have: professional training in librarianship or are they trained in theology as they have to work with theological materials and serve theology and ministerial students? How much love for and experience with technology do they bring? What is different about theological librarianship: is it a specific ministry or is it not more of a ministry as a Christian accountant would have in a theological school? Sometimes these questions receive an extensive discussion but the person that would fit the ideal answers is not available or not affordable. Sometimes these questions are dismissed as unnecessary (because no real ministry is envisioned for a librarian) and the difficulties arise when a person is hired who does not fit with and/or is not able to fulfill the mission of the library.

We need to affirm that librarianship in a theological library is a ministry in its own right. It also provides support to multiple other ministries. Traditionally, librarians were perceived as stewards and guardians of the treasures from church history handed down from previous generations and collected in a library. Although this certainly does not sufficiently describe the function of a library, librarians are, in a sense, quite literally "surrounded by a cloud of witnesses"[11] who have left their testimony of how they have understood God and his people, life in community and the Christian calling to extend the kingdom of God. Librarians need to help people to engage with these witnesses by making materials available, by managing and ordering the current information overload, by teaching skills for finding and evaluating necessary information. As good stewards they will acquaint readers with new trends and enable them to discern the developments while also encouraging learning from past testimonies. Their position amounts to

[11] This expression is taken from "The theological library: In touch with the witnesses" by John Boone Trotti, 157.

gatekeepers of knowledge, and administrators of theological schools will need to decide whether they employ librarians who are skilled to open rather than close, to encourage learning rather than repel from discoveries, who help to wisely discern rather than passively withdraw to their offices.

Someone has remarked that "librarianship tends to recruit people who are interested in materials rather than in people, who are introvert rather than extrovert, and whose ultimate career aspirations lie in management rather than in direct operational involvement" (Coleman, 1981:67). The great temptation for librarians, usually under work load pressures, is to become material-oriented rather than people-centered. For a theological library, which together with teachers and other staff is engaged in spiritual formation, not storage and management but service and providing access to materials are the first priority. Librarians are needed who are aware of and think ahead about students' and faculty needs, create active links between people and materials, offer hospitality in sharing what they have collected, in breaking down personal and institutional barriers that hinder access to information, in inviting readers into their own space. They are visible and active beyond library walls; they maintain contacts with faculty, students and staff and are able to speak to academic issues from the library's perspective. They are at the intersection between theology and library, and those who are intimately familiar with both areas will certainly be more effective.

Using the image of the body from 1 Corinthians 12, Peterson (2001:231) has compared the ministry of theological librarians as that part which is the "memory in the Body of Christ". This has never been so true than in contemporary Eastern and Central Europe where after the breakup of communism national churches and Christians are developing valuable theological materials in national languages. These need to be collected and preserved for several reasons; first of all, to enable wider use and access, in view of the tremendous scarcity of theological works in national languages. They are also needed for future reference for historians, for the second and third generation of churches in these countries, and for international researchers. Not least, these materials are invaluable for the process of global theologizing when local theologies inform and enrich theologies from other geographical locations and religious traditions.

While theological schools in the West, if they are seeking state or other accreditation, have often been forced to employ professional librarians to meet expected

standards, professionalism has not been a major issue in Central and Eastern European theological schools. Most of the theological librarians in these schools have no or very little library training, although many do have at least some theological training, which is not necessarily a requirement in Western theological schools. Often library work is done by long or short term volunteers, wives of theological teachers, or graduates from the school's theology programme who have an inclination to organize and manage materials. These people often come with much enthusiasm, love for books and for people who need to use them, with a deep dedication to the work. The disadvantages, however, also can not be overlooked: because they have no or little training it is difficult for them to keep up with new developments. They often have the feeling that there is a problem, that something is not as effective and efficient as it could be, that the mission of the library could be realized in better and fuller ways, but they don't know what it is and how to change things. Under work pressure and with the feeling of not being as successful as they could be the initial enthusiasm may quickly turn into disappointment.

While requirements for a professional librarian in Western theological schools have caused a trend to a One Person Library with the budget covering only one paid librarian who has to cope with all of the library work more or less effectively, Central and Eastern European libraries are still able to pay several, though untrained, staff.[12] This may change soon, depending on economic developments and the personnel costs rising also in the East. CEE librarians will then be even more under pressure to be efficient and get more things done faster, to meticulously organize one's day and be proficient in multi-tasking.

View of Resources

As mentioned above, librarians have always been perceived as collectors and stewards of knowledge handed down through the centuries and created anew in each generation. Libraries were considered storehouses of information and the bigger of a collection a library was able to assemble the better and more successful it was considered

[12] To Western librarians and administrators libraries in the East seem to be overstaffed, with a "lack of a customer focus and the lack of a market orientation… still struggling to achieve the necessary culture change" (Pors and Edwards, 125).

to be.[13] Materials were purchased with the expectation that users would one day (if not immediately) need to use them. When certain programmes were taught or introduced in a theological school, the library needed to provide the necessary materials to support these programmes and supplement them each year with new materials.

The shift to a different model of librarianship came in the West in the eighties when, due to an explosion of information that became available year after year, a simultaneous explosion of costs for books and journals, and a stagnation of library budgets, libraries could not anymore afford to purchase all the valuable information that they perceived necessary for their educational programmes. In Central and Eastern Europe, the shift came somewhat later, after the collapse of communism, when libraries received free access to a much broader range of materials but had neither the budget nor infrastructure anymore to purchase them. Theological libraries in CEE, as mentioned before, have always faced a depressing lack of serious research materials in national languages; they are often not able to buy even what they consider essential, and this situation will not change in the foreseeable future.

The shift has often been described as a shift from the principle of ownership to the principle of access, from purchasing materials "just in case" someone would need them to making materials available "just in time" when they were requested (Moahi, 2002:341-9). Technological developments during the last twenty years took away the urgent necessity for libraries to store all materials in their own facilities and gave libraries a position of one "link in a network of shared resources" (Kane, 2003). Materials are available online on the Internet; they can be scanned and e-mailed to the user. Materials from electronic databases can be disseminated very quickly and efficiently. The shortage of materials, for example in CEE, can be addressed with many other creative methods besides just collecting and storing (like in a museum). "The access/ownership dynamic encourages us to look at ourselves more creatively: we need to focus more on function rather than organization, on content rather than medium, and on services rather than tradition" (Anderson 1991:7). It is also less costly than when each library purchases the same

[13] See the excellent article by Kane on "Access versus Ownership" in the Encyclopedia of Library and Information Studies.

materials themselves.[14] It is not helpful to consider these two principles as "either-or", they need to supplement each other and balance out each other's weaknesses. Although libraries may be able to purchase fewer materials, they can today provide access to a much broader range of documents than ever in history.

This shift causes changes not only in the acquisition of materials but in almost any area of library work: first of all a change in attitude, in priorities, in budget decisions. The priorities will shift to making materials available, or to concentrating on providing "integrated information services … via any and all media" (Pejova, 2002) more than on collecting and managing books and periodicals. Service, then, means knowing and anticipating the needs and questions of readers and building up experience in responding to them; that is, knowing the potential of neighboring libraries, whether and where materials are available in different formats (e.g. electronic sources), creative thinking in the establishment of active links between materials and people, a commitment to servicing all users of the library. To really exploit the technological revolution librarians in CEE need to stop being depressed about that which is not available to them for purchase, and think of their collection as being the whole universe of knowledge stored anywhere in the world to which they need to find the code for access. Internet sources, if properly selected and evaluated, can in the same way belong to the library's holdings as materials held in the nearby library to which readers can be sent or the materials of which can be ordered into one's own library. The librarian's job, then, is to be a detective, a hunter, a manager and navigator of knowledge, and a proactive planner.[15] Although the library does not "own" some materials, it is responsible to provide the information about them: catalogue Internet sources, provide links to OPACs of other libraries, develop the Library website as a portal, or gateway to available information. Students and faculty can be great helpers in the process of finding and selecting electronic sources: students

[14] Bruce R. Kingma and Natalia Mouravieva describe in their article "The economics of access versus ownership" a study conducted at the Library for Natural Sciences at the Russian Academy of Sciences in order to analyze the costs of the library's subscription to foreign journals and the costs for providing access to individual requested journal articles by interlibrary loan. The results of the study are very clear that the most cost-effective way to provide access to scientific journal articles within Russia is to allocate additional funding for international interlibrary loan rather than increase the number of foreign language journal subscriptions.

[15] See the article by Virkus, 1995 "Cyberdetective, Infonaut, Knowledge Engineer, Cybrarian or What?" for a challenging and creative definition of a librarian who masters the technological revolution.

because they are often more technologically minded than librarians and faculty because they have the professional expertise. If librarians fail to integrate electronic resources in the overall library collection, they will soon lose their readers and become helpless and irrelevant.

Especially in theological libraries of CEE cooperation as to acquisition and availability of sources becomes indispensable. Much has been written in the West about cooperative collection development; however, the application of this principle has been very slow, if not impossible, in the East. Why not, in an already existing network of theological schools, assign to each school priorities in the acquisition of books and periodicals in a certain subject area? While each school will make sure they have the basic essential reference materials, one school will concentrate on research materials in church history, the other in contemporary theology, the third in Biblical studies, and the fourth in some other subject area. Because of specialisation, resources that would have been spent on purchasing the same materials will then go into serious research collections that can be shared with each other. Possibly, before such arrangements will become possible – because they require a lot of trust between the schools, much planning, some equity of funds invested by each school, - some simpler steps can be taken. Why, for example, purchase the same book, periodical, CD-ROM if a theological or state library that is located in close geographic proximity already has it and it can be borrowed from it? This will encourage libraries to get to know each other's collections, for example, through Union lists of periodicals and on-line catalogues, to develop clear interlibrary lending agreements both locally and regionally and to make a commitment for cooperation. It will, however, also require some rethinking in the library: more staff time and finances will need to go into operating the interlibrary lending service, automation will need to be moved ahead quicker so as to make information about one's collection available, the safety of postal services will need to be considered.

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Theological Education in Light of Cultural Variations of Reasoning: Some Educational Issues

By Marlene Enns

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As stated in the registration brochure, our agenda for this conference is to "explore whether contemporary theological education is properly focused on the real needs of local churches and mission agencies" as leaders are being trained for church and mission work. While committing ourselves to describe and assess our ability to perceive, analyze, and implement correctly at the institutional level we will most likely be using similar reasoning processes as those we teach to our students at the classroom level, since if they are to be effective church and mission leaders they also need the ability (1) to adequately perceive information in the Bible, the church, and the world, (2) to analyze it, and then (3) to make wise and informed decisions. Should the results of our institutional assessment reveal that there is room for growth, there is a possibility that our renewed commitments may not take us much farther in the future, and that in a couple of years we will again be admonishing ourselves with similar exhortations. This cyclical phenomenon is due in part to the fact, that we will most likely be using again the same reasoning processes then which we use today. Hence, it is important to have a closer look at the way we perceive and process information.

The type of reasoning that is used most widely by theological education in its educational endeavors and assessments is Greek-based analytic cognition. We do not need to reject this type of reasoning. However, we need to be aware that it is not the only way to perceive and process data, and that it has inherent limitations. It needs to be enriched by other ways of reasoning in order to be able to read and assess situations in fresher and more comprehensive ways. One such different way of reasoning is Chinese-based holistic cognition (Enns 2003).

In the first part of the presentation we will briefly get acquainted with the main differences in perception and processing of data within the cultural traditions of holistic and analytic cognition. In the second part we will raise some educational issues that

require further attention and reflection should theological education in the twenty-first century be willing to make more room for cultural variations of reasoning.

Analytic and Holistic Cognition

Nisbett and colleagues conducted empirical research with East Asian (Easterners) and European-American (Westerners) college students. They selected this age bracket reasoning that such persons "would be expected to be more similar to one another than to more representative members of their parent populations" (2001, 305), since "higher education around the globe is likely to expose students to a similar set of experiences, values, and knowledge" (Norenzayan, Choi, and Nisbett 1999, 259). Their results reveal that Easterners perceive and process information predominantly through holistic reasoning and Westerners predominantly through analytic reasoning.

The researchers suggest that these differences are guided and formed by social organizations with their practices, such as those that reflect collectivistic and individualistic orientations (Nisbett et al. 2001). In fact, differences in determining *what* is important to be known and *how* it is to be known can be sustained by sociocognitive systems for millennia. East Asian contemporary populations stand in the tradition of ancient China which fostered a sense of collective agency and harmony, while European-Americans stand in those of ancient Greece which encouraged personal agency and debate. Because holistic and analytic variations of reasoning seem to be rooted in social organization with its practices, it is possible to draw parallels with caution to other populations represented at this conference that come from backgrounds with similar social organization and practices.

Now, what are the main differences between holistic and analytic cognition? Nisbett and colleagues (2001) organized their findings in the following five areas.

Attention and Control

Reasoning processes start with attention to surrounding information. While attending to the environment, everyone is selective since it is impossible to attend to everything all the time. However, it is interesting to note that *what* is attended to seems to be influenced by socio-culturally formed (naïve) metaphysical systems. Figure 1 gives a synopsis of the main differences:

Holistic System of Thought	Analytic System of Thought
Life is changing; to be is not to be, and not to be is to be.	Life is consistent; *A* must be *A* regardless of the context.
Models of the world are complex, interactional, and immune to contradiction.	Models of the world are simple and specific.
Attention given more to the field.	Attention given more to the salient target object.
See wholes. More able to detect covariation (perception of relationships within the field).	See parts. Isolate and analyze an object while ignoring the field in which it is embedded.

Figure 1: Main Differences in Attention in Holistic and Analytic Systems of Thought (Choi and Nisbett 2000; Ji, Peng, and Nisbett 2000; Nisbett et al. 2001; Peng and Nisbett 1999).

In fact, Masuda and Nisbett suggest that Japanese might be seeing far more of the world than do Americans. However, it seems to be more difficult for them to separate objects from their contexts (2001, 934).

Explanation and Prediction

Peng, Ames, and Knowles (2001) point out that after people have attended to phenomena in the environment, they typically try to assign them to their presumed causes in order to make inferences for future events, i.e., they make causal attributions and predictions (lay reasoning). When they do so, their reasoning processes again seem to be influenced by sociocultural factors.

Overall, East Asians hold to a complex and interactionist theory of causality by emphasizing the interaction between the object (or person) and the context (or situation). Hence, an honest person can at times behave dishonestly depending on the situation, and it is not likely that this will cause surprise to people. However, European-Americans hold to a more simplistic and dispositionist theory of causality by emphasizing more the dispositions or traits of the person. Hence, an honest person is believed to always behave honestly regardless of the situation, and if this is not the case, it is more likely that situational determinants of the behavior will be underestimated (Choi, Dalal, and Kim-

Prieto 2000; Choi 1998; Choi, Nisbett, and Norenzayan 1999; Norenzayan, Choi, and Nisbett 1999). Figure 2 summarizes the main differences:

Holistic System of Thought	Analytic System of Thought
Cause/effect relationships are complex and difficult to be predicted/explained.	Cause/effect relationships are linear and mechanical.
Explain events (social and physical) more with respect to the field.	Explain events more with respect to a target object and its properties/personal dispositions.
More likely to make group dispositions.	Less likely to make group dispositions.
More prone to hindsight bias (regard events as having been inevitable in retrospect; one knew all along that a given outcome was likely). Less surprise when an "outcome" is found not to be true.	More prone to attribution error (attribute behavior to dispositions of the person, and minimize the role of situations and contexts).

Figure 2: Main Differences in Explanation and Prediction in Holistic and Analytic Systems of Thought (Choi and Nisbett 2000; Choi, Nisbett, and Norenzayan 1999; Menon et al. 1999; Morris 1993; Morris, Nisbett, and Peng 1995; Morris and Peng 1994; Nisbett et al. 2001).

Relationships and Similarities vs. Rules and Categories

Cultural variations of attending to the environment also lead to differing ways of organizing objects, events, and people. For instance, Ji and Nisbett (Ji and Nisbett 2001; Ji 2001) found that Chinese students were more likely to group on the basis of some kind of relationship, either functional (e.g., pencil and notebook), or contextual (e.g., sky and sunshine), and would also justify their choice based on relationships (e.g., "the sun is in the sky"). However, American students were more likely to group on the basis of a shared category (e.g., notebook and magazine), or a common feature (e.g., sunshine and brightness), and would also justify their choice based on category membership (e.g., "the sun and the sky are both in the heavens") (in Nisbett et al. 2001, 300).

Formal Logic vs. Experiential Knowledge

When engaging in deductive reasoning about the studied characteristics of target objects and events, the epistemological assumptions between West and East have also been different. Figure 3 gives a synopsis:

Holistic System of Thought	Analytic System of Thought
Truth and reality are relational. Based on intuitive instantaneous understanding through direct perception. Knowledge is experience-based. Concern for relationships among objects and events.	Truth and reality are logical. Based on logic and abstract principles. Concern for inherent properties of the object of study, for categories and rules.

Figure 3: Main Differences in Epistemological Assumptions in Holistic and Analytic Systems of Thought (Nisbett et al. 2001; Norenzayan 1999).

It is interesting to note that when studying contemporary university students, Norenzayan and colleagues (2000) found that Koreans relied more on experiential knowledge when evaluating the logical validity of arguments than Americans. In fact, "the results indicate that when logical structure conflicts with everyday belief, American students are more willing to set aside empirical belief in favor of logic than are Korean students" (reported in Nisbett et al. 2001, 301).

Dialectics vs. the Law of Noncontradiction

East Asians and European-Americans do not have the same commitment to avoiding the appearance of contradiction when engaging in deductive reasoning. Peng and Nisbett (Peng 1997; Peng and Nisbett 1999), point out that in folk Western logic (based on Aristotelian logic) rules about contradiction such as the following have played a central role:

1. *The law of identity*: A = A. A thing is identical to itself.
2. *The law of noncontradiction*: A ≠ not-A. No statement can be both true and false.
3. *The law of the excluded middle*: Any statement is either true or false. (Nisbett et al. 2001, 301)

However, folk Chinese logic is based on Chinese dialecticism which Peng and Nisbett (Peng 1997; Peng and Nisbett 1999) describe in terms of three principles:

1. *The principle of change*: Reality is a process that is not static but rather is dynamic and changeable. A thing need not be identical to itself at all because of the fluid nature of reality.

2. *The principle of contradiction*: Partly because change is constant, contradiction is constant. Thus old and new, good and bad, exist in the same object or event and indeed depend on one another for their existence.

3. *The principle of relationship or holism*: Because of constant change and contradiction, nothing either in human life or in nature is isolated and independent, but instead everything is related. It follows that attempting to isolate elements of some larger whole can only be misleading. (Nisbett et al. 2001, 301)

These differences in reasoning between West and East have been pointed out for years in the work of historians, ethnographers, and philosophers. What is interesting, though, is that they now are supported by empirical evidence from the psychological laboratory in contemporary populations. For instance, while conducting studies about resolution of social contradiction with undergraduate students at the University of Michigan, Peng and Nisbett (Peng 1997; Peng and Nisbett 1999) made the following finding. Chinese students tended to be compromising and to find a "middle way" (e.g., both the mothers and the daughters have failed to understand each other"), while American responses were more likely to be noncompromising and to favor one or the other side within the conflict situation (e.g., "mothers should respect daughters' independence").

Educational Issues for Theological Education in Light of Holistic and Analytic Variations of Reasoning

Most teaching/learning situations worldwide encourage the Greek analytic way of reasoning, which is considered to be the most elaborate way of reasoning. Peng and Nisbett, however, make the pointed correction that it is not about which way of reasoning is higher or better, but of making wise decisions:

> The logical ways of dealing with contradiction may be optimal for scientific exploration and the search for facts because of their aggressive, linear, and argumentative style. On the other hand, dialectical reasoning may be preferable for negotiating intelligently in complex social interactions. Therefore, ideal thought

> tendencies might be a combination of both—the synthesis, in effect, of Eastern and Western ways of thinking. (1999, 751)

Peng and Ames remind their readers that even Kant (1965) "maintained that logical reasoning is very effective within the confines of science, but 'all the worse for the beyond'" (2001, 3634). Likewise, Norenzayan, Choi, and Nisbett make the following comment: "It appears that East Asian folk psychology, as it relates to causal attribution, better corresponds to the findings and theory of scientific psychology than does American folk psychology" (1999, 257). Such comparisons demonstrate the need for valuing these alternative approaches and allowing them to complement each other. Should we allow this to happen in theological education, what would some of the issues be that need further reflection and dialogue?

Issues Related to Objectives and Evaluation

It is no secret that most education worldwide—including theological education—has often been influenced by positivism and behaviorist theories. Objectives are often formulated in ways that assure a linear control of the whole teaching/learning process, i.e., they are concise, clear, specific, measurable and observable (e.g.,Tyler 1949). Hence, assignments, theses, and exams often reflect linear, algorithmic, and formal operational ways of organizing and presenting information since they need to fit very specific and measurable criteria. Under these circumstances evaluation is a matter of (1) checking the presence or absence of requested criteria, (2) to do so in a "fair" manner—usually defined as being egalitarian—and (3) to give a "final" grade. In the process teachers try to be as objective and neutral as possible, not allowing personal or contextual factors to "contaminate" the evaluation process.

This past year I had an interesting learning experience while evaluating as a second reader the senior project of a student who had finished his course work some years ago, and within four days was having the public defense of his project. I e-mailed a three page evaluation with suggestions for re-work to his mentor who is Latino. This is the reply I got from the mentor:

> Thank you for responding and for the manner in which you are doing it. I appreciate it a lot and agree with you that we need to stimulate the "thinking" process of our students. This is a challenge, but a dynamic one…. When I look at the work of students—and perhaps it is because of my condition as "Latino thinker"—besides

> seeing ideas and words, I see "the person" who is in front of us waiting to be helped in his/her development. Returning to the case of … [name of student] I believe and know that his work—which still is "perfectible"—has helped him tremendously in his formation and reflection. I still remember the times when I had to loan him my office and my computer so that he could continue to work and finish his project. He does not have a computer, and after using computers of several people, he finally has been able to hand in his project.… Please do not get discouraged. You see, we are thinking already, and we should not forget that the thinking process also requires character. (personal translation)

This note has caused me to think a lot: object is not isolated from the field, ideas and person are held together, formal and experiential knowledge are but two sides of the same coin, and thinking and character go hand in hand. I started to reflect about what God takes into account when making assessments, and I realized that it is more than "pure" doctrine/ideas—although he does not obliterate them (Matthew 7:21-29)—and more than visible facts—since he concentrates on the motives of the heart (1 Corinthians 4:5). I pondered about how Jesus "measured" and "rewarded" people in their "assignments/exams" in comparison to how the Pharisees did it, and realized that while for the latter it often was a matter of "either/or", of objective, neutral, and "unbiased" application of the law, for Jesus it was a matter of taking into account the whole person and his/her relation to the field (Luke 6:1-5), of "subjective" application of the law based on life-giving principles (John 8:1-11), of "unfair" goodness (Matthew 20:1-16), of regulations and character (Matthew 23:23), and of wise decisions (Luke 20:19-26).

This experience still gives me a lot to think about. I still have more homework to do, since our objectives and evaluation so powerfully shape *what* is worth perceiving and *how* it should be processed. We just might be missing out on very important information and insights if we only value analytic reasoning at the expense of holistic reasoning while assessing institutional and classroom situations in theological education.

Issues Related to Learning and Research

Learning and research in theological education—especially at the graduate level—is often guided by analytical reasoning. It should not be rejected. However, in light of cultural variations of reasoning, we need to think through questions such as following:

- What are the strengths and limitations of analytic and holistic reasoning within theological education?
- In what ways and to what extent can experiential and intuitive reasoning be incorporated as valid ways of knowing in formal higher education?
- How can knowledge that is not of the 'either/or' type or that is not tangible and measurable be evaluated?
- How would the incorporation of holistic ways of reasoning affect the educational framework in general, and the teaching/learning process in particular?
- How would the incorporation of holistic reasoning affect accreditation standards?

I have been challenged more than once while grading assignments of Latino students in Paraguay who did not follow my "clear and logical" instructions nor organize their ideas in Aristotelian categories, but rather wove together multicolor strings in a narrative without "clear" divisions of thought. However, when I was patient enough to understand their way of reasoning, I sometimes was amazed at the insights they had, at the depth of understanding they reflected, and above all, at the fresh dynamism and life that their work brought out. Hence, I am learning to recognize the validity of holistic ways of reasoning and starting to realize that,

- It may be just as important to discern the driving forces behind a narrative as it is to discern the rationality of the narrative (Parushev 2000, 1-2).
- Pushing back boundaries in research may happen just as much through weaving together existing topics with a different pattern and the pursuit of *missing relationships* as through the pursuit of new topics and of *missing pieces*.
- Inter-disciplinary and "broad" research may be just as necessary as intra-disciplinary and "deep" research.
- To point out mystery and complexity without need to come to a resolution—at least not for now may be just as important as to explain and predict (Enns 2005a, 2005b).

Issues Related to People in Context

Since analytic reasoning usually favors the agentic self, win/loose debates, and control, it will be a challenge to allow people with holistic reasoning to be heard properly both at the institutional as well as the classroom level, since they usually favor the

collective self, the middle-way, and harmony. Hence, we need to be sensitive to questions such as:

- Who determines the flow of the agenda/discussion and what is important?
- How is data for decision-making processes collected/screened, by whom, and why so?
- What types of suggestions/ideas are pursued and how are they pursued?
- Who decides what "makes sense" and why?
- To what degree and in what ways are reasons for "sense making" pursued, actively listened to, and wisely discerned?
- To what degree is uneasiness/restlessness among participants/students perceived and investigated? How are these situations handled and who handles them?

These and similar questions could help determine to what extent and in what ways room is made for cultural variations of reasoning in theological education (Enns 2004).

Conclusion

Although analytic and holistic cognition are not the only variations of reasoning they do give an example of how the perception and processing of data can be socio-culturally determined. The training of leaders for church and mission work, as well as the assessment of the suitability of theological education for this purpose, will perhaps be done in fresher and more comprehensive ways when—among other factors—cultural variations of reasoning are welcomed and used. Hence, it might be worthwhile to deal more consciously with the educational issues that such endeavor raises.

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Toward a Holistic View of Theological Education

By Einike Pilli

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The term "theological education" has two parts—*theological* and *education*—which can be separated. The first part, theological, refers mainly to the church and its teaching, while the second, education, means more independent activity. Paul Hirst writes about the term Christian education: "The whole idea of Christian education (is) a kind of nonsense and the search for a Christian approach to, or philosophy of, education a huge mistake."[1] He explains this strong opinion by saying that the term education is being used to pick out activities that can be characterized independently of any religious reference. This means that education has a different task from theology and that, therefore, the term theological education embodies tension.

However, theology cannot do without education. The activity of education is needed to communicate theology to generations to come, and to deepen their understanding of it. Sara Little, an author who has struggled with the relationship of theology and education, has noted: "Christian Education has to do with the process of helping truth to be experienced and interpreted."[2] The same is true about theological education – theology needs the help of education.

This "uneasy marriage" of theology and education, or church and school, became especially problematic during and after the Enlightenment when objective understanding of subject matter (including theology) became the main task of scientific thinking. Instead of theology being the controlling influence on other disciplines, as in Pre-

[1] P. Hirst, "Christian Education: A Contradiction in Terms?" in J. Astley, L. Francis, (eds.), Critical Perspectives on Christian Education (Leominster: Gracewing, 1994), p. 305.

[2] S. Little, cited in J. L. Seymour, "The Clue to Christian Religious Education: Uniting Theology and Education, 1950 to the Present" *Religious Education*, (99:3, 2004), p. 276.

Enlightenment times, it was forced to submit to the natural sciences where objects, unlike God, could be observed and controlled.

While in pre-modern universities the primary task of a faculty of theology was the formulation of doctrine and maintaining of orthodoxy,[3] the modern university strived to be value-free, describing theological phenomena increasingly "from the outside," in order to create an objective theory. This attitude also influenced theological seminaries wanting to be academically creditable. The question is raised as to how helpful an "objective" theological education can be as it speaks to the "theory" of theology and not to the expectations of the church. It is no surprise that this conflict of interest has caused many problems for theological schools such as lack of resources, and diminishing numbers committed students.

Dealing with these difficulties, while at the same time balancing the requirements of the academic world and the expectations of churches, is a big challenge to every theological school. How can these two sides be integrated? How can students be well-prepared both academically and professionally?

Holistic Approach in Education

Linda Cannell states, "The real challenge is to enable holistic learning toward informed wisdom." What does this mean? What is this holistic learning?

Holism in education is not a new thing – it can be seen in all eras of human history. John Sutcliffe writes about a holistic approach in the Bible, "The Bible does not give detailed prescriptions; but a spirit, a style of behavior, a direction for priorities, and a hope are revealed."[4] In specific, Christ's ministry and teaching are perfect examples of approaching people with a holistic attitude. Also authors like Comenius, Pestalozzi, Froebel, Montessori and Dewey have contributed to the holistic understanding of education.

In this era there are several educational perspectives which form the basis of a holistic approach in Education. The first influential perspective comes with the works of

[3] L. J. van der Brom, "The Church, the University and Culture: Can Theology Find its Way? An American perspective," in M. Brinkman, N. Schreurs, H. Vroom & C. Wethmar, (eds.), *Theology between Church, University and Society*, (Assen: Royal van Gorcum, 2003), p. 40.

[4] J. Sutcliffe, "Holistic Education in a Biblical Perspective," in: P. Schreiner, E.Banev, S. Oxley, (eds.), *Holistic Education Resource Book*, (Münster: Waxmann, 2005), p. 58.

Paolo Freire, who discriminates between "banking" and "liberation" concepts in education. For him, following a liberating education model means that acts of cognition are important, not transferals of information; students are critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher; students are posed problems relating to themselves in the world and with the world. Education has been seen as the practice of freedom, and people have been seen as beings in the process of becoming – as unfinished, uncompleted beings and therefore education has seen as ongoing activity.[5]

Two authors, Willem Wardekker and Siebren Miedema, have developed Freire's idea of education as cognition further. They are using the dichotomy transmission versus transformation. Transformative learning "is defined as the growing capacity or the growing competency of pupils to participate in culturally structured practices."[6] Transformation means for them the acquisition of knowledge and skills, and of norms and values of being, knowing, feeling and acting in a holistic or transactional way.[7] Meaning is created in participation.

The third educational perspective comes from the work of Jack Mezirow, who's theory is called transformative learning theory. Mezirow[8] suggests that all human beings function within meaning structures, and he understands learning as changes in these structures. For him the experience is the tool in producing learning that has an effect of growth and change in the individual. He calls this process of gaining coherence inside the meaning structure, perspective transformation. According to Oxley, holistic principles are also visible in a UNESCO report in 1996 called *Learning: The Treasure Within*, which describes learning through four pillars of education: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, learning to be.[9] A more specific approach of Religious Education comes from Clive and Jane Erricker and the Worldviews Project. They emphasize the importance of relational characteristics: attending to the means by which

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[5] P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Seabury, 1970).

[6] W.L. Wardekker, & S. Miedema, "Identity, Cultural Change, and Religious Education," *British Journal of Religious Education*, (23:2, 2001b), p. 80.

[7] Ibid.

[8] J. Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning* (San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 1991).

[9] S. Oxley, Creative Ecumenical Education: Learning from One Another (Geneva, WCC Publications, 2002), p. 18.

meaning can be articulated, attending to the degree of security provided, attending to the degree of freedom and independence shared, and attending to the balance of authority.[10] They call us to educate the whole child.

To summarize, concepts that are used to describe holistic education include the creation of knowledge in personal and contextual terms, and educating the whole person. It also includes the understanding of seeing a person as part of a broader context of community and communities as a whole and emphasizes dialogue as the method of learning.

Holistic Approach in Theological Education

The key idea of a holistic approach, which tries to solve the problem of the fragmented nature of theological education, is to keep different polarities, including theology and education, in a creative tension, informing and influencing each other. In doing that, some guidelines which grow out of the concept of holistic education are important.

The first guiding rule is to educate the whole person, not only his/her cognitive intelligence, but also emotional intelligence,[11] spiritual sensitivity and the ability to live according to a person's commitments and mentally accepted values. The concept of wisdom embraces all these areas. Bee discusses different theories of wisdom, and concludes by saying that wisdom "reflects an understanding of 'universal truths' or basic laws and patterns. It is also knowledge that is blended with values and meaning systems; it is knowledge based on the understanding that clarity is not always possible, that unpredictability and uncertainty are part of life."[12]

Baltes and Staudinger[13] support this notion, mentioning five characteristics of wisdom which include rich factual knowledge, rich procedural knowledge, life-based

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[10] C. Erricker, & J. Erricker, "The Children and Worldviews project: A Narrative Pedagogy of Religious Education," in M. Grimmitt, (ed.), *Pedagogies of Religious Education*, (Great Wakering: McGrimmon Publishing, 2000), p. 195.

[11] This idea is well established in the writings of Daniel Goleman, such as, for example, *Emotional Intelligence*, (A Bantam Book, 1995).

[12] H. Bee, *Lifespan Development* (2nd edition, Addison-Wesley Educational Publishers, 1998), p. 472.

[13] P. B. Baltes, U. M. Staudinger, "The Search for a Psychology of Wisdom," *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, (2, 1993), pp. 75-80.

contextuality, relativism, and uncertainty. Merriam agrees, noting that wisdom is grounded in life's rich experience, means to be reflective, and to make sound judgments related to our daily existence.[14] Sternberg and others[15] add another important view, namely, that wisdom should serve the common good. Wisdom in the Christian sense does not mean relativism about the central Truth of God, revealed in Bible. However, the concept carries an attitude of continuous reflection and adaptation of person's understanding, what it means to follow this God. This understanding blends a person's commitment to biblical truth and it's meaning in certain context: time and space.

In theological education, educating the whole person means that learning is much more than individual cognitive activity and that becoming a good professional in the area of theology and Christian ministry means much more than simply knowing facts. Research done in 17 European countries in 2003[16] shows that the qualities and competencies expected from future professionals, in addition to basic academic skills (reading, writing, general knowledge), include several social skills: the ability to express oneself well, team-work skills, learning skills, the ability to evaluate situations and solve problems, an attitude of initiative, and organizational skills.

Speaking more specifically about theologians and ministers, we might add some other qualities such as a desire to know God; an understanding of the limitation of human possibilities and the need to trust in God's power; knowledge of the church and broader society; the ability to see the difference between reasonable human solutions and the possibility of faith; and courage to follow the latter.

We can go on adding to both lists, depending on our context and the issues found in that context. However, it is clear that if we see the educational process more broadly than obtaining information, it also changes the way teaching and learning is organized. But more than organization, TE should affect our ways of assessing learning. David Boud writes, "Every act of assessment gives a message to students about what they should be

[14] B. Merriam, R. S. Caffarella, *Learning in Adulthood* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999), p. 165.

[15] Sternberg, et al., *Practical Intelligence in everyday Life* (Cambridge University Press, 2000).

[16] *Lifelong Learning: Citizen's Views* (Luxemburg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2003).

learning and how they should go about it."[17] Do modes of assessment interact with desired outcomes or do they measure only cognitive-analytical skills?

Another important guiding rule, growing out of the concept of holistic education, is to emphasize personal meaning making and transformation, instead of merely transmitting subject knowledge to passive recipients . In some instances, theological teaching at a denominational seminary may tend to deal with ready-made answers: Scripture as an authoritative source, traditional interpretation of scripture, and a curriculum designed to transmit the knowledge of earlier generations and identity-forming dogmas of a denomination, all of which are quite fixed by nature. Though these areas of knowledge may be valid, the problem with ready-made answers to important questions is that such teaching doesn't always result in learning;[18] or in the terms of Wardekker and Miedema[19]: transmission does not turn to transformation. Another reason is that transmission reinforces the tension between the two parts of the concept "theological education," sometimes even leading to the danger of indoctrination – passing on the teaching material from only one possible point of view, without leaving room for nuances and differences in understanding.

However, if the locus of learning is shifted from teacher to learner, the gap between the two polarities of the term may be shortened, which could make the process of theological education much more meaningful, enjoyable and effective. The challenge is how to make the knowledge of teachers and churches available to the understanding of students.

The third idea worthy of adapting from the concept of holistic education is the need to take seriously the interaction between the learner and his/her context. As our understanding is contextually conditioned, "rooted in a particular location in time and space,"[20] there cannot be serious progress in a person's understanding, feeling and

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[17] D. Boyd, "Assessment and Learning: Contradictory or Complimentary?" in P. Knight, (ed.), *Assessment for Learning in Higher Education*, (London: Kogan Page, 1995), p. 36.

[18] E. Pilli, "Täiskasvanu õppimine," ("Adult Learning") in E. Pilli, L. Jõgi, T. Ristolainen, (eds.), *Õppimine ja õpetamine avatud ülikoolis* (*Learning and Teaching in Open University*) (Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus, 2005), p. 71.

[19] Wardekker & Miedema, (2001b), pp. 78-79.

[20] A. Wright, *Religion, Education and Post-modernity* (London and New York: RoutledgeFalmer, 2004), p. 59.

commitment without a connection to one's context. Jack Seymour describes the goal of theological education as twofold: forming Christian identity and responding to grace to "repair" the world.[21] Both processes need an adequate understanding of context: context of the church and context of broader world.

Taking the context into consideration becomes even more important in a post-Christian context,[22] where Christians and their story become more and more marginal in the context of society. How can we find a "common language" with secular people in order to make communication possible? How shall we share "our narrative" which has shaped us with people who have "other forming narratives"?[23]

Yet knowledge of context in theological education also means taking the church and its practices seriously. It does not mean that a theological school repeats the teachings of the church just on a more sophisticated level. Rather, while knowing the teaching, feeling the atmosphere and being actively part of local churches, theological education is called to serve the church as a prophetic voice, showing shortcomings and helping to find the way out of these. It is clear that without a close connection between church and seminary that this is impossible.

Addressing the three challenges of facilitating learning of the whole person, emphasizing personal meaning making and transformation, and taking seriously the interaction between the learner and his/her context, might help us to gather together the fragments and solve some of the problems present in theological education.

Toward a Practice of Holistic Theological Education

How is it possible to address the challenges of a holistic approach in theological education? Following are suggestions for a starting point for further discussion.

The key to these changes is hidden in the concept of dialogue. Learning is not getting to know what others already know, says Charles Handy.[24] We learn on the

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[21] Seymour, "The Clue to Christian Religious Education…," pp. 276-277.

[22] Stuart Murray describes these phenomena more extensively in his book *Post-Christendom*, (Paternoster, 2004).

[23] P. Lakeland, *Postmodernity: Christianity in a Fragmented Age* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), pp. 91-92.

[24] C. Handy, *The Age of Unreason* (Harvard Business School Press, 1990), p. 63.

borders, we learn when we meet the different, the unknown. True learning happens in the meeting point[25] of different people, different contexts, and different opinions. Dialogue can lead to deeper understanding and knowledge. To meet, we need to dialogue. Mary C. Boys borrows the term "engaged pedagogy" from M. Shawn Copeland, who believes that an engaged pedagogy is essential "to the teaching of any subject in theology or religious studies intended to stimulate the profound engagement of faith, mind, heart, of self-disposition, and life-orientation."[26] Dialogue is important between different levels in theological education.

For educating the whole person, it is important that learning supports interaction between different parts of a person - not only the development of the intellect, but also of emotion, commitment, spiritual sensitivity, and the ability to communicate and co-operate with others. Students cannot be forced to support certain views however correct they may be dogmatically or intellectually, until they can accept these also emotionally, by making them part of their own personal views. They need help to think things through, to find sound agreement between their thinking, feeling and doing. The learning-teaching process can develop this interaction, or dialogue, within the student.

The same attitude is important also in the dialogue between seminary and church, seminary and university, and with the whole scientific world. It is also vital between the broader Christian community, different societies and cultures: West and East, South and North, America and Europe.

As a theologian and educator from a Post-Soviet country, Estonia, I am encouraging a deeper and more meaningful dialogue between theologians and seminary teachers from different cultural backgrounds. Theologians from Central and Eastern Europe can bring into this dialogue some valuable input, as transitions and transformations which these regions have experienced recently can bring openness to and awareness of issues which may be lacking in other contexts. At the same time, colleagues from Western Europe and North America can enrich the discussion with their

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[25] E. Saarinen, K. Lonka, *Muutused* (*Changes*) (Tartu: Fontese Kirjastus, 2004), pp. 60-61.

[26] Copeland, cited in M. C. Boys, "Engaged Pedagogy: Dialogue and Critical Reflection," in *Teaching Theology and Religion*, (2:3, 1999), p. 132.

contributions that grow from the background of their expertise, and wider resources, which are available for them.

In the communication between seminary and church, seminary and society, seminary and academic world, learning must be seen as more than what happens in the classroom. Interaction of students and teachers, relationships within different communities such as church, family, workplace, neighborhood, and people from different cultures and religions, may provide rich learning material. Furthermore, if they then bring these experiences into the classroom and reflect on them theoretically, the positive influence of contextualization is multiplied. In this process a richer knowledge is created which might prove valuable for understanding the church and its mission in this world.

In order to stay open to different voices, we cannot approach others with the "this-is-the-answer" strategy of late-Christendom. We require humility, vulnerability and openness, which are characteristics of many emerging churches.[27] Could this blending of formal and nonformal learning be a more desirable way of teaching and learning in theological schools? Andrew Wright believes that "the cultivation of wisdom is dependent on our acquiring the humility to learn from others."[28] This is another connecting point where "theology" might move closer to "education."

But that is not all; in adult leaning theory (and students of theology are mostly adult learners) it is believed that every learner brings into the learning important experiences and insights.[29] What is needed, then, is dialogue between so-called teachers and learners, though we should be all learners, mentors and their co-pilgrims. Sometimes this might mean it is necessary to be critical of academic knowledge and to listen to God speaking through the Holy Spirit; while at other times taking the risk to question if our traditional ways of interpreting the Bible are the only right and possible ways. This means that teachers not only listen to learners to assist the learner, but that they believe that they need dialogue with learners to learn for themselves.

The last important characteristic about dialogue in theological education is that it should never end and should be designed not only for ministers, but all people. In-service

[27] Murray, p. 256.

[28] Wright, p. 61.

[29] M. Knowles, *The Modern Practice of Adult Education* (Chicago: Association Press, 1980).

and continuous learning, which is gaining more and more importance in traditional universities, should become increasingly important in theological schools. In settings where the only unchanging thing is change itself, nobody is allowed to stop learning, especially not the ministers of gospel.

However, it is not enough when only pastors and leaders learn. Charles Foster calls the pre-modern pattern of an educated clergy and uneducated laity unconscious conspiracy. He describes this conspiracy as a way of withholding from laity the methods and skills to interpret the scriptures and to engage in theological reflection, so that they won't be capable opening their deepest questions and illumining their most hidden doubts.[30]

Lakeland refers to several Christian communities that are rethinking the lay/ordained distinction.[31] Nigel Wright adds that we should not link ministry with ordination – he is suspicious about the whole concept of ordination – but to help them find their place according to their gifts and callings.[32] Yet, to be effective in their ministry, all Christians, however gifted, need to engage in theological reflection about what they do.

One Possible Method

A teaching approach that has become important in both traditional and new universities is Problem-Based Learning (PBL). It is an approach designed to connect theory with real life experiences, or in the language of this writing – to encourage dialogue between reality and theory about it. It starts with describing a certain problem, goes through intuitively naming possible reasons for and solutions to this problem by brainstorming. Then students are sent to the library to look for possible solutions, which will be summarized after some weeks in the classroom.[33]

PBL is a helpful way to overcome the fragmentation of disciplines in curriculum. The question of how to integrate subject areas is ever-present in formally organized

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[30] C.R. Foster, *Educating Congregations* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), p. 26.

[31] Lakeland, p. 107.

[32] N. G. Wright, *New Baptists, New Agenda* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 2002), p.115

[33] PBL can vary to some degree in different contexts. This described way is in use in Maastricht University and in Harvard University, on side with many others.

learning. Often the specialization of teachers to narrow subject areas creates obstacles to learning which could be overcome by a closer connection with the church and society and by finding and verbalizing central problems for PBL exercises.

PBL can also incorporate the spiritual dimension; especially when we have to face hard and complicated problems that require the search for divine help.

To sum up, William Dryness' understanding of a "Good Theological School" is helpful. He calls attention to heritage, to context, to professional and spiritual development in the context of collaborative learning.34 To incorporate these elements, the educational philosophy and practice of theological education has to change toward a more holistic, dialoguing approach. In this approach it might be possible to overcome the discrepancy in the term theological education, showing that theological education can well be both theological and educational.

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[34] W. Dyrness, "The Church, the University and Culture: Can Theology Find its Way? An American Perspective," in M. Brinkman, et al., (eds.), *Theology between Church, University and Society*, (Assen: Royal van Gorcum, 2003), p. 54.

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Mission, Theological Education, and Ecumenism

By Simon Oxley

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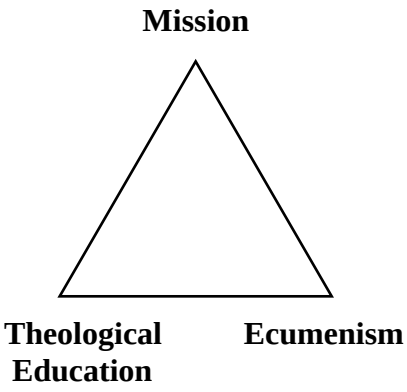
Introduction

This paper explores the relationship between the mission and theological education and ecumenism. We can place them as the three points of a triangle.



As we will see, there are links between each pair of concepts. The starting point of each of these relationships is, of course, God – one God, one *missio dei*.

Meeting in a Baptist seminary, we ought to note the great missionary pioneer William Carey. Sometimes to the displeasure of those who sent him, Carey formed strong links with Christians of other traditions. He proposed that a global missionary gathering be held at the Cape of Good Hope in 1810. This dream was ultimately fulfilled in the world mission conference in Edinburgh 100 years later, which is often seen as the beginning of the modern ecumenical movement. One of Carey's many achievements was the development of theological education in India, with the college at Serampore still providing the backbone for the churches. He, at a very early stage, epitomises the relationship between mission, ecumenism and theological education.

Before we move to this relationship, it is worth noting how three of these words are coming to be used in current English. 'Mission' is most common as every kind of organization has a mission statement. It sometimes seems that the churches are the ones who are most uncertain as to what their mission is and how to pursue it. English-language

newspapers of the more intelligent kind have taken to using the word 'theological' as a description of the obscure. Political discussions which centre on some small facet of policy of no great interest to the general public are described in this way. 'Ecumenical' is now sometimes used to describe any conversation or gathering that brings together people of different points of view.

Education itself has become a problematic concept. It is all too often regarded as a functional process designed to equip people with defined knowledge and skills – with the definition being given by those in power for their own ends. To counteract that, UNESCO, at its 47th International Conference on Education in 2004, took the theme of quality education. The notion of quality education is one that counters those forces that would limit the access to and understanding of education, including to that of economic utility. Education was presented as a process towards individual and communal wholeness (Christians would see that as a gospel value) and not just as a useful tool for the achievement of societal and economic goals, as important as those are.

The Timeliness of This IBTS Conference

In May this year the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) will take place in Athens. It is a space for encounter and dialogue offered by the World Council of Churches (WCC). In this space, around 500 people - young people, women and men involved in frontiers of Christian witness; church and mission leaders; theologians and missiologists from WCC member churches, the Roman Catholic Church and evangelical and Pentecostal churches – will gather to exchange their experiences and think together about priorities in mission and the future of Christian witness.

The theme of the CWME is *COME, HOLY SPIRIT, HEAL AND RECONCILE ! Called in Christ to be reconciling and healing communities*. Preparatory documents state that:

> Mission does not belong to us, but is the mission of God, who is present and active as Holy Spirit in church and world. In Jesus Christ, God has laid the basis for full reconciliation and healing.
>
> So, we believe and hope that it is possible to repair broken relationships between God and human beings, between people, between churches, between nations, between humanity and creation.
>
> We believe and hope to see signs of health, balance, and wholeness of life for individuals, communities, humanity and creation.

> We call on God the Spirit to heal, reconcile and empower us so that, as individuals and communities, we may become and share signs of peace, forgiveness, justice and unity, and renounce hatred, violence, injustice and divisions.
>
> Called to receive reconciliation with God in Christ, it is our mission to form healing communities in celebration, witness, mutual love, forgiveness and respect.
> We are called to create and multiply such safe spaces, hospitable to those who are stigmatized, lost, searching for meaning or community, and to journey with victims of violence and sin towards reconciliation and justice.[97]

The CWME will use four 'signposts' to reflect on the issues and challenges: 1) concerns of identity in multi-faceted and changing contexts; 2) healing and reconciling ministries in a violent world; 3) seeking alternative communities in a globalized world; and 4) being a missional and evangelizing church. It will also be a contribution from mission networks to the *Decade to Overcome Violence* (2001-2010). More information about the CWME can be found on www.mission2005.org.

We intend to feed the insights and challenges from this conference into the CWME through a workshop with the same title.

The Missionary Origins and Current Aspirations of Ecumenical Theological Education

The International Missionary Council, which became an integral part of the WCC in 1961, had a longstanding concern for the training of ministers drawn from the local populations where churches had been established. It was first expressed at their meeting in 1938 in Tambaram, India where it was observed that theological education was the weakest element in Christian mission. This was much later to result in the formation of the Fund for Theological Education (TEF) in 1958, whose successor programme, Ecumenical Theological Education, remains a key component of the educational work of the WCC. It had the purpose of promoting theological excellence and developing indigenous theological education. The TEF was to encourage churches in the South to share in responsibility for decision making about ministerial training. Sharing in responsibility was a step forward, encouraging the taking of responsibility would only come much later. In an article in the Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement, John

[97] To be found on www.mission2005.org.

Pobee, a former staff member responsible for the successor Ecumenical Theological Education (ETE) programme in the WCC, summarizes the purpose of the Fund:

> The three marks of TEF's work were *quality*, combining intellectual rigor, spiritual maturity and commitment; *authenticity*, involving critical encounter with each cultural context in the design, content and purpose of theological education; and *creativity*, leading to new approaches and deepening the churches' understanding and obedience in mission.[98]

For all the admirable sentiments expressed, especially considering its temporal context, theological education in many, if not most, places of the world has not thrown off the dead hand of a traditional Western view of proper academic processes and quality.

Turning to the present, the WCC continues to work on Ecumenical Theological Education in the context of a programme with the broad objective of revitalizing and supporting ecumenical formation within the churches and the ecumenical movement. The ETE programme promotes the creative education of ecumenical people and leaders, supports faculty and library development and encourages the contextual transformation of theological curriculum. My colleague Nyambura Njoroge comments:

> Ecumenical theological education and ministerial formation is not an end in itself but is a means of systematically and intentionally enlightening and educating those called to ministry in its various manifestations for lay and ordained persons. The process of training women and men to interpret scripture and understand the faith of the church so that they can follow Jesus in God's mission in preaching, teaching, healing and feeding is inevitable. Because of the many evil challenges we face in society, every generation of theological educators must discern how best to equip those who receive the call to ministry so that in due course they can return to the churches and society "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ" (Ephesians 4: 12-14).[99]

Learning Ecumenically

The modern ecumenical movement can be said to have developed from the learning experiences of the inter-denominational movements (e.g. Sunday schools, SCM,

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[98] Pobee S, *Education* in Lossky et al, *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, WCC Publications, Geneva, 2002 p387.

[99] Nyambura J Njoroge, Searching for Ways of Promoting Christian Unity in Theological Education and Ministerial Formation, in *Ministerial Formation 101, July 2003*, WCC, Geneva p34.

YMCA, YWCA) of the 19th and very early 20th centuries. For example, Philip Cliff, a British historian of the Sunday School movement, comments:

> …The first tentative steps towards future Church Unity were being taken as the delegates to World Sunday School Conventions encountered other churches. They learned to trust one another, even though they were different in church order, or emphasized different aspects of doctrine. These early ecumenical encounters laid the foundations for meetings which later became starting points for the International Missionary Council, the Faith and Order Commission, the Life and Work Movement, all of which are now included in the World Council of Churches.[100]

In the first years of the WCC, there was much mention of its life being a learning experience. The fourth of the Purposes and Functions of the WCC has remained essentially the same from its founding, to: "nurture the growth of ecumenical consciousness through processes of education and a vision of life in community rooted in each particular cultural context".[101]

Over the years, specific consideration has been given to ecumenical learning or formation. Three elements have been generally recognized:

- *ecclesiological* - learning to move towards unity
- *missionary* - learning to relate proclamation and social commitment
- *social-ethical* - learning how the world may be a dwelling place for all

We should note how this understanding of learning resonates with the theme of the current conference.

Ecumenical learning can be said to have five characteristics: transcending barriers; orientation towards action; learning in community; learning together; and intercultural learning.[102] Ecumenical learning should be a total and holistic process which integrates these elements and characteristics. The process, if it is to change attitudes and ways of behaving and relating, is as important as the content.

Ecumenical learning should engender enthusiasm and passion. Commenting on the passions aroused by football, Bill Shankly (a renowned football club manager in

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[100] Philip B Cliff, *The Rise and Development of the Sunday School Movement in England 1780-1980*, NCEC, Redhill, 1986

[101] World Council of Churches, *Yearbook 2003*, WCC Publications, Geneva, 2003 p60

[102] See Ulrich Becker, *Ecumenical Learning* in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, WCC Publications, Geneva, 2002 p379f

England) said, "Some people believe football is a matter of life and death … I can assure you it is much, much more important than that." Football supporters like myself know what he meant. However, ecumenism, which sounds so dull, aught to arouse even greater passions because it really is more important than a matter of life and death. It should arouse the passions of those who respond to the call of God in Christ, transcending the divisions and partiality of our institutions and articulations the faith, who believe that a new world is promised in Jesus' vision of the kingdom. It may anger those who want to retain a comfortable, for them, status quo even though they may recognize that all is not well with the church and the world. Ecumenism can not be a matter of indifference.

In an age when those who differ from us, especially in terms of ethnicity and religion, are regarded with suspicion if not fear, such ecumenical learning is vital. We need to discover the potential of learning from and learning with those who are different.

Learning Ecumenically in Theological Education

Writing in *Ecumenical Review, January 2005,* Phyllis Anderson, a theological educator in the US argues:

> If the church is going to participate in God's mission by manifesting the unity given to the people of God, its members and its leaders will need to be converted to this larger vision and be formed in an ecumenical consciousness.[103]

She goes on to suggest that there are two movements towards ecumenical consciousness – embracing ecumenical diversity (seeing, respecting and accepting others as they are) and receiving the gift of unity. This will not happen just because there is a diversity of students. Thus ecumenical or inter-denominational institutions may not develop an ecumenical consciousness or form people ecumenically if they simply rely on there being a lot of different individuals present. We have to be intentional creating opportunities for interacting across differences that enable learning. We also have to ensure that there are opportunities for reflecting on the unity of the church.

Nyambura Njoroge identifies two significant aspects of what she calls 'the art of teaching ecumenically'. They are that:

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[103] Phyllis Anderson, *Formation of an Ecumenical Consciousness* in *Ecumenical Review, January 2005*, WCC, Geneva 2005

> … theological educators need to have a deep understanding of the call to unity in faith in Jesus Christ as a fundamental requirement in ministerial formation and the skills to help students identify the root courses of the divisions.
>
> … theological educators and students should develop a clear understanding of reconciliation and how to bring opposing sides at the same table for dialogue, reflection and conversion into the body of Christ. Such a process of learning requires particular skills in the art of teaching, with an unambiguous intention of building a community where each person is taken seriously and listened to.[104]

Within the WCC's Commission on Education and Ecumenical Formation and its Working Group on Ecumenical Theological Education there has been discussion recently around what one might describe as the lack of educational awareness in theological education. Faculty in seminaries and theological schools are appointed for their knowledge in various disciplines and equal level of educational knowledge and expertise is rarely required. This reinforces a tendency for those who teach to reproduce the style by which they were taught. By style, I mean more than methodologies to better pass on the knowledge but the kind of engagement that is transforming. The second of Nyambura Njoroge's significant aspects of the art of teaching ecumenically, for instance, cannot be done through standing at the front and giving a lecture.

One of the great opportunities of working for the WCC is to visit and encounter theological and Christian educators in many parts of the world. However, I am sometimes disturbed by the self-description of faculty members as teaching, for example, systematic theology, New Testament or even ecumenics when this is done with no acknowledgement that they are primarily theological educators. Theological education, whether or not it is ecumenical, is about the formation of persons as well as being an academic discipline. Whether people are called to ordained ministry, full time service or the practice of discipleship in the life of the world, how they embody the good news is as important as what they know about it. Attitudes, behaviors and ways of relating should be as much the subject of learning as the traditional theological disciplines. What ecumenical theological education does by it own nature is to emphasize the need for this.

[104] Nyambura J Njoroge, Searching for Ways of Promoting Christian Unity in Theological Education and Ministerial Formation, in *Ministerial Formation 101, July 2003*, WCC, Geneva p34f

Two more principles of learning ecumenically are important for theological education. The first is that of integration. Theological education can fall into the Western academic trap of dividing knowledge into watertight compartments. Sometimes students could be forgiven for not recognizing the way in which the study of the Bible informs theology or the way in which ecclesiology relates to the practice of the Christian life. Learning ecumenically implies a holistic and integrative approach to the subject matter, to the style of learning, to the person and to the context. Learning how to learn is as important as learning particular things as it equips the person for continuous, life-long learning.

The other dangerous trap into which theological education can fall is that of individualism. There is nothing wrong with an individual pursuing academic excellence and achievement. However, for Christian theological education that is not enough. If we are to be true to our faith, learning must also be collective and communal as well as individual. This means that the creation of an open, exploratory and loving community is as significant as the development of the curriculum. The ability of the individual to contribute to communal learning needs to be nurtured, especially in those for whom theological education is also ministerial formation. Our understanding of ecumenical learning gives us this impetus.

Ecumenical Examples of Mission Issues in Theological Education

Common Witness

One of the tension points between churches, particularly in areas more recently opened to missionary activity, is proselytism. In the WCC statement *Towards Common Witness - A call to adopt responsible relationships in mission and to renounce proselytism*,[105] the 1996 Salvador World Mission Conference is quoted:

> We decry the practice of those who carry out their endeavors in mission and evangelism in ways which destroy the unity of the body of Christ, human dignity and

[105] WCC Central Committee, September 1997

> the very lives and cultures of those being evangelized; we call on them to confess their participation in and to renounce proselytism.[106]

Theological education that is ecumenical should be one of the places where we are able to explore together the meaning and implications of common witness, to be equipped together for this and to form the relationships that will give us confidence to work together.

Contexts of Poverty, Violence and HIV/AIDS

Churches have often found themselves ill-equipped to deal theologically with such issues. There has been a quite remarkable response to the devastation caused by the Indian Ocean tsunami. Individuals, social groups, churches and commercial organizations responded so generously that governments were shamed into increasing their initial financial response. As an expression of global human solidarity it has been truly impressive and we must be thankful for that which lies within our human nature that evokes such a response. However, this raises a very sharp question for the churches: why do we respond to such a tragic and catastrophic event with sacrificial generosity but not to global injustice with its tragic and catastrophic consequences? Every day, and day in and day out, thousands die of the effects of poverty and disease that are of the result of, or could be alleviated by, human decision. We may be concerned about this but we are not driven to sacrificial action. Our response to the Indian Ocean tsunami shows that we have a conscience but that it takes a particular set of circumstances for it to be roused to action. Paulo Freire, who for a time worked for the World Council of Churches, introduced us to the idea of conscientisation - a process of becoming aware of the social, political and economic contradictions in a context, developing a critical consciousness, leading to taking action against the oppressive elements of that reality. Theological education needs to raise critical consciousness and to help us learn how to do that in the context of the life of the churches

In the case of HIV/AIDS, church leaders in some places have hardened judgmental attitudes, propounded myths and inhibited the development of good practice. In response to that situation in Africa, the WCC has supported the development of an *HIV*

[106] Christopher Duraisingh, *Called to One Hope: the Gospel in Diverse Cultures*, WCC Publications, Geneva 1998, p74f

& AIDS Curriculum for theological institutions in Africa[107]. This is designed to equip the churches to witness to societies being destroyed by HIV/AIDS and individual ministers who spend their time conducting funerals and caring for the bereaved.

Plurality

More and more of us live in contexts of cultural and religious plurality. This has been seen as an enrichment of community, an opportunity for evangelism or a threat to faith and our way of life. If through the ecumenical movement we have traveled a long way in recognizing one another as sisters and brothers in Christ across the divisions of the church, we may find dealing with people of different faiths a step too far. A report of the Mission Theological Advisory Group of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland suggests that in theological education

> it may be possible to get beyond 'inclusivist' and 'exclusivist' intellectual positions and begin to make sense of living among people of other faiths and none. Making visits to places of worship belonging to people of other faiths and understanding their religious custom, observance and practice, can help to contextualize mere intellectual knowledge and make sense of the lived life of the other faith community. Further, as with 'placement', being among people of other faiths in their places of worship can challenge any sense we may have of 'rightness' and 'superiority' and ask us what mission really means when the territory is not our own.[108]

Conclusion

Too often ecumenism is thought of as being only about (re-)uniting the churches or only about an agenda that is heavily socio-political. Learning ecumenically must include all aspects of faith and of life. The ecumenical movement did not only have the missionary movement as a parent; it is, or should be, an expression of the love of God in action. The unity we seek is not a comfortable state where we can simply enjoy the company of one another and of God but is a costly way of working with God in the *oikoumene.*

In 1996, the WCC held a consultation on *Ecumenical Theological Education: Its Viability Today.* The Message from this meeting comments:

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[107] WCC, Geneva, 2001

[108] Mission Theological Advisory Group, *Presence and Prophecy,* Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, London, 2002 p202

There is consensus among us on the holistic character of theological education and ministerial formation, which is grounded in worship, and combines and inter-relates spirituality, academic excellence, mission and evangelism, justice and peace, pastoral sensitivity and competence, and the formation of character. For it brings together education of:

the ear to hear God's word and the cry of God's people;

the heart to heed and respond to the suffering;

the tongue to speak to both the weary and the arrogant;

the hands to work with the lowly;

the mind to reflect on the good news of the gospel;

the will to respond to God's call;

the spirit to wait on God in prayer, to struggle and wrestle with God, to be silent in penitence and humility and to intercede for the church and the world;

the body to be the temple of the Holy Spirit.[109]

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[109] Pobee, John. ed. *Towards Viable Theological Education: Ecumenical Imperative, Catalyst of Renewal.* Geneva, WCC Publications, 1997. p1

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