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unsettling a whole family and leaving the doctoral candidate able to continue lecturing in his/her own cultural context.

THE IMPORTANCE OF AVAILABILITY OF THEOLOGICAL BOOKS IN TARGET LANGUAGE

It has already been noted that in **Indonesia** several languages have to be learned by theological students. If we were to look at a typical minister's 'library' in **Sarawak** we would find in addition to vernacular Bible and hymnbook, one or two Indonesian Christian books and some notebooks of Bible college lectures. That is the minister's total written 'resource'. This is not likely to change unless there is time for him to learn to read English at some stage.

THE IMPORTANCE TO THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH OF COMMUNITY CONSCIOUSNESS

There are various theories of collegiate life, from the intense ashram style where all live in close proximity, to the commuter style where lecturers usually appear only for lectures. The sense of belonging to a community—a fellowship of alumni—can be significant for church unity in later years. In **London** most black Christians segregate themselves in black congregations because they feel unwelcome in white churches and feel more at home with their own style of worship. In this context a mixed college allows black and white students to build lifelong friendships that will help to avoid perpetuating a ghetto segregation indefinitely. This aspect of collegiate theological education is extremely important.

CONCLUSION

As good exegetes relate texts to contexts, so good educators relate theological education to its context. No theological institution can safely behave in isolation. We will not serve the Lord or our churches fruitfully unless we teach theology in context.

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Toward a Theology of Theological Education

Dr. Dieumeme Noelliste

INTRODUCTON

Contemporary theological education faces many challenges. One thinks for example of theology's struggle to survive in a pluralistic environment and science-venerating mentality which together deny it the right to objective truth claims, normative criteria and evaluative judgments. The recent call for a balance between globality and contextuality is another challenge. After years of stressing contextualization, it begins to dawn on us that unless contextualization incorporates a global vision it runs the risk of degenerating into an unhealthy contextualism. Now theological education is asked to educate persons who are able to think globally and act contextually. This is an admission that while the categories with which theological education deals must be concretized and made meaningful in context, their relevance, import and applicability are universal and timeless, which means that the categories themselves are context transcending. To all of this must be added the growing dissatisfaction being voiced in many circles regarding much of what theological education does. The discipline is being assailed for a plethora of faults: lack of purpose, the disparateness and inadequacy of its content, disconnectedness with the community of faith, insensitive policies, ineffective teaching methods, and many others.

These challenges are serious and must not be brushed aside as undeserving of attention. To adopt this attitude is to deny theological education the possibilities of renewal that these criticisms may well contain. While self-flagellation must be avoided, we would do ourselves and our calling a disservice if we failed to seize the opportunity provided by these critiques to rethink, assess, and scrutinize our approach to theological education.

Having said this, however, I would like to put forth the suggestion that there is a more fundamental and far reaching challenge than the ones already mentioned that theological education needs to address urgently if it is not to disintegrate and disappear as a discipline. I refer to the challenge of identity. In many conceptions [p. 299](#) of theological education, the adjective 'theological' is emptied of its content. In these formulations the accent falls on professional training, the acquisition of skills, sociological understanding, praxiological involvement and denominational advancement. The theological dimension is often minimized and misconstrued. This is evident in the fact that many of those who seek to reform theological education by giving it a theological grounding take as their point of departure and guiding principle a particular doctrine, a given understanding of the mission of the church, a certain conception of the ministry, and the nature of theology itself.

Edward Farley, for example, displays great insight when he propounds the thesis that for a reform to address the 'deepest problems' of theological education, it 'must find a way to recover theologia'.¹ But when Farley explains what theologia consists of we discover that what he has recovered is really anthropologia, not theologia. According to him, theology is the explication of the pre-reflective dispositions of faith. It finds its starting point in the contemporary experience of and devotes itself to explicating this faith experience.² Concerned with theology's lack of scientific standing and the prevailing scepticism regarding Christian faith. Karl Rahner, for his part, proposes that the concept of theology best suited to meet this challenge and solve the problems faced by theological education is an apologetic one. Theology is not the explication of pre-reflective faith, but the exposition and demonstration of the 'existential and anthropological credibility of God

¹ Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education*. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), p. 156.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 156–159.

p. Revelation'.³ Rahner urges that the whole curriculum be organized along this apologetic line. We too will argue for the recognition of the apologetic dimension of theology, but we doubt whether theology can be reduced to that element. In the proposals put forth by people like Farley, Rahner and others we note a dimming of the theological light. The result of this absence of clear theological focus has been a growing erosion of the distinctiveness of theological education.

The claim of this paper is that essential to the renewal of theological education is the retrieval and the maintaining of its uniqueness and distinctiveness. This, in turn necessitates the reclaiming of its theological character. But to be theological, theological education must be theocentric, that is to say it must take as its focus the knowledge of God, the people of God and the purpose of God. Theologically understood, then, theological education consists in the formation of the people of God in the truth and wisdom of God for the purpose of personal renewal and meaningful participation in the fulfilment of the purpose of God in the church and the world. This overall thesis will be analyzed under three [p. 300](#) broad headings. But before we do so two caveats are in order.

First this thesis is not a totally novel one. H. Richard Niebuhr propounded it forcefully a generation ago in his *The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry*.⁴ The Roman Catholic Bishops in the United States alluded to it in their 1982 document entitled *The Programme of Priestly Formation*. And most recently, Max Stackhouse refers to it in his Apologia. These works provide helpful insights in the formation of the guiding thought of this paper, but they contain major ideas with which our thesis disagrees.

For example in our view Niebuhr's formulation urges too sharp a dichotomy between God, Christ and the Bible. While one must always guard against the dangers of an undifferentiated Trinity and of bibliolatry, one must not lose sight of the fact that Jesus Christ is God's supreme revelation and that the Holy Scriptures are a witness to God's revelation. Likewise, while we concur with the Bishop's decision to provide a revelational grounding to theology and theological education, we find such a grounding vitiated by their heavy accent on ecclesiastical tradition and teaching.⁵ Admittedly, Stackhouse is my closest kin, but his main concern in Apologia is apologetic not theological. In addition, the theocentrism advocated here is somewhat broader than the one articulated in his Apologia.⁶

Secondly, no claim of finality is made for the construal presented here. The scarcity of the biblical data on the subject and the plurality of purposes which often inform conceptions of theological education militate against the viability of such a claim. There is some truth to James Gustafson's suggestion that perhaps one should not talk about 'the theology of theological education ... but (about) theologies and their formative influences on theological education'.⁷ This admission notwithstanding, we still believe that it is possible and worthwhile to identify in the biblical text inferences that constitute a basic

³ Rahner's view is summarized by Francis D. Fiorenza in 'Thinking Theologically About Theological Education' *Theological Education Volume 24*, Supplement II (1988): 99.

⁴ H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry: Reflections on the Aims of Theological Education*. (New York: Harper and Rowe 1956).

⁵ *The Program of Priestly Formation*, (Washington, D.C.: National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1982).

⁶ Max Stackhouse, *Apologia: Contextualization, Globalization and Mission in Theological Education*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988).

⁷ James Gustafson, 'Reflections on the Literature on Theological Education Published Between 1955 and 1985' *Theological Education* vol. 24, Supplement II (1988): 43.

framework within which as precise an understanding of the theological educational task as possible can be constructed.

I. THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION AS EDUCATION IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

Theological education is essentially education in divine revelation as attested most clearly in the Scriptures, and in Jesus Christ, and interpreted by the church throughout history.

Genuine theological education is at the core an exercise in transcendental knowledge. If the root *theos* in theological means anything at all, [p. 301](#) it must set theological education apart as an endeavour which has its source and ground in God and which has as its major concern communication about God. Sidney Rooy is correct when he affirms that to educate theologically is to transmit to 'another person what we know of God and his relationship to the world'.⁸ The knowledge of God, then, is the primary content of theological education.

Despite the claim of western immanentist mentality what can be known of God is beyond our grasp. This does not mean that we embrace the claim of agnostic transcendentalism with its denial of the knowability of ultimate reality. Our contention is that data about ultimate reality is accessible. But it is accessible only through divine self giving and gracious disclosure. Even when he was in the presence of Yahweh, Moses could not intuit or infer that he was speaking to the self existing and eternally present I AM. That information had to be given ([Ex. 3:14](#)). Paul likewise was under no illusion regarding the fact that what he was communicating to his churches was knowledge hitherto unknown ([Eph. 1:9](#)), not the product of his thinking or his insight into the socio-historical context. What he was imparting was a mystery previously hidden but now freshly revealed ([Eph. 3:2-11](#)).

Theological education then is education in a word from beyond. 'We think theologically only because God has given us something to think (about) by coming to us first'.⁹ Hence, what we endeavour to impart is not first and foremost 'our word about God but God's Word to US'.¹⁰

In the perspective of biblical faith the communication of the transcendent Word is not an option but an imperative. To the new generation of Israelites who were not present when the Torah was given at Sinai, Moses took time to explain it ([Deut. 1:5](#)), commanding them to treasure it in their hearts ([6:6](#)) and urging them to pass it on to the successive generations by any means possible ([6:7](#)). Paul took a similar stance with respect to the gospel. For him, the gospel which has been received is to be transmitted ([1 Cor. 15:3](#)), and kept unadulterated: 'Even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you let him be eternally condemned' ([Gal. 1:6](#)). To the young pastor Timothy whom he has been training, he gave the charge: 'What you heard from me, keep as a sacred pattern of sound teaching ... Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you' ([2 Tim. 1:13, 14](#)). And he is clear that transmission to posterity is the purpose of this safekeeping. 'The things you have heard ... entrust to reliable men who will be qualified to teach others' ([2 Tim. 2:2](#)).

⁸ Sidney Rooy, 'Modelos Histoicos de la Educacion Teologica' in C. Rene Padilla ed., *Nuevas Alternativas de Educacion Teologica* (Buenos Aires: Nueva Creacion, 1986), p. 43.

⁹ Thomas Gillespie, 'What is "theological" about Theological Education?' *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* vol. 14:1 (1993): 63.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

But notwithstanding the givenness of the revealed Word and the injunction to pass it on in its purest form, p. 302 that Word is apprehended only partially. The Word is greater than us and can never be grasped totally by us. 'Now we see but a poor reflection ... and [we] know only in part' (1 Cor. 13:12). Of necessity, then, what we impart can be only an approximation of the real thing.

This condition of epistemological inadequacy, however, does not render superfluous the effort for the most precise apprehension of revealed truths; nor does it cancel out the need to make a public case for the reasonableness of such truths. For even in our condition of insufficiency we are still obligated to strive for the 'correct handling of the word of truth' (2 Tim. 2:13), and 'to be ready to make a defence for the hope that we have' to everyone who queries (1 Pet. 3:15). Max Stackhouse is correct when he contends that a basic assumption of theological education is the possibility 'to speak with some measure of reasonable confidence about what is ultimately mysterious, that in some degree it is possible to point to, if not fully grasp the logos of God'.¹¹

What the partiality of our knowledge demands is not the relinquishing of the use of reason but the adoption of an attitude of humility in the conduct of our task. Humility is displayed in at least two ways. First, it is shown in the acknowledgement of our insufficiency and our utter dependence on the Spirit of truth for understanding and insight into the truth of God. 'No one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. For he alone is able to probe the "deep things of God" ' (2 Cor. 2:10, 11). And secondly, there must be the willingness to engage in dialogical discourse as we strive to apprehend the knowledge of God. In his philosophical work, Paul Ricoeur sets forth the thesis that philosophic truth must be seen as the developing insight of diverse interacting perspectives. In this respect, objectivity is achieved only as an ideal of total communication in a context of dialogical interaction. The truth that is so achieved is never complete because the intersubjective communication itself is never complete due to the continuing disparity which plagues it.

Ricoeur's insight is relevant for theological truth as well. As a human activity, theology cannot claim finality and absoluteness for its formulations. Every theological system is but effort to approximate the truth. The theological task therefore requires critical conversation with other minds, perspectives and traditions—both past and present.

This emphasis on the knowledge of God as the key concern of theological education must not be construed as an attempt to do away with the need for practical training. The knowledge of God and the practice of ministry are not antithetical. What the emphasis implies is that theological knowledge must guide and shape ministerial practice rather than the practice determining the theology. In our perspective the practice of ministry whether it is preaching, teaching, counselling or administration 'is united and informed by the theological understanding of who God is, who we are in relation to [him]. and what God p. 303 wills to do for us and have us do in grateful obedience'.¹²

II. THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION AS EDUCATION OF THE WHOLE PEOPLE OF GOD

If the ground of theological education is the knowledge of God as derived most clearly from the Scriptures and the Incarnate logos and interpreted by the church throughout history, its focus is the people of God. Biblically speaking, instruction in the knowledge of

¹¹ Max Stackhouse, *op. cit.*, p. 211.

¹² Gillespie, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

God is an activity which involves the entire *laos* of God. Following its choice as God's 'treasured possession', Israel was given the privilege of witnessing the most impressive disclosure of God's character and will up to that point ([Ex. 19:5](#); [20:8-21](#)). And like the Sinai revelation, the rehearsing of the Torah, forty years later, had as its objective, the education of all the people in the knowledge and will of God. Deuteronomy, which is really a piece of theological instruction, purports to be an exposé of the commandments of God to all Israel including future generations ([Deut. 1:1](#), [3](#); [27:1](#); [31:1](#), [3](#)). The reading and interpretation of the law was to be a regular and perpetual exercise ([31:9](#)). Brevard Childs sees the significance of this in the importance attached to the proper understanding of the Torah by the people.¹³

The instruction of the people of God in the truths of God is a practice that the New Testament also endorses. After selecting the Twelve, Jesus spent much of his time teaching them. As the Incarnate logos, his instruction focused both on knowledge about God and on the knowledge of God himself. Hence, to his disciples he declared: 'Everything that I learnt from the Father I made known to you' ([John 15:5](#)). And to the Father he said: 'I have revealed you to those whom you gave me ...' ([John 17:6](#), [25](#)). Paul's expectation of doctrinal stability and spiritual maturity in the church of Ephesus assumes the education of the entire body of believers in the knowledge of God. Indeed, in the same passage where this hope is expressed, he calls for the training of all believers for the discharge of the ministerial task ([Eph. 4:11](#)). His own contribution to this process consisted in explaining to everyone God's redemptive mystery as it has been revealed to him ([Eph. 4:11](#)). His own contribution to this process consisted in explaining to everyone God's redemptive mystery as it has been revealed to him ([Eph. 3:9](#)). And as Moses of old, he insisted that the explanation of that message must be a perpetual task ([2 Tim. 2:2](#)).

Now this emphasis on the people as the target of theological education does not make redundant the singling out of a smaller group within the wider body of the *laos* for special attention. Biblical evidence for such a practice is not lacking. One thinks at once of Moses' band of assistant judges ([Ex. 18:15-26](#)), Elisha's school for the prophets ([2 Kings 6:1-7](#)), and Jesus' school of disciples.

What must never be lost sight of, however, is that such a special focus is meaningful only within the wider [p. 304](#) perspective of the theological education of the entire people of God. Its primary *raison d'être* is not professional practice, but the formation of the *laos* in the knowledge of God. Basing himself on Pauline thought, Orlando Costas notes three specific ways in which specialized theological education contributes to this process. His characterizations will guide our reflection here.¹⁴ First is the preparation of 'teachers of ministers', known in Pauline parlance as 'doctors' and in ours as 'scholars' of the faith. Their role is to provide intellectual tools and resources necessary for Christian learning and teaching.¹⁵ Their work is vital for the transmission of the faith to later generations.

The second contribution has to do with the preparation of the ministers of the Word. Paul calls them pastors/ teachers and assigns to them a variety of roles. Chief among these roles is the nurturing of the people of God in the faith. For Paul pastors are first of all 'teachers and theologians'¹⁶ not practitioners of ministry. Again, this does not mean that ministerial practice is not part of their calling. Both Paul and Jesus take pastoral care and

¹³ Brevard Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press. 1979).

¹⁴ Orlando Costas 'Educacion Teologica Y Mission in Padilla', *op. cit.*, pp. 13, 14.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

proper church administration seriously, ([Jn. 21:15-18](#); [Acts 20:25-31](#); [1 Tim. 5:1ff](#); [Mt. 18:15-19](#); [1 Cor. 7](#); [11:2-33](#); [14:26-36](#)). The point being made here is that not only must ministerial practice be informed by theological understanding, it must also be given the proper ordering so that it neither eclipses the teaching of faith nor is taken as a substitute for it.¹⁷

The third input concerns the development of a body of lay theologians whose rôle is to assist in the educational ministry of the church. Aided by the work of the scholars of the faith and formed through the teaching ministry of the ministers of the faith, lay persons are equipped to teach the basic elements of the faith to others, and thus contribute to the spread of the knowledge of God among his people.

Seen from this perspective theological education, even in its specialized form, is not elitist. It is education which provides knowledge not merely to be applied but first and foremost to be passed on—to be transmitted.

III. THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION AS EDUCATION FOR RENEWAL AND PARTICIPATION IN THE PURPOSE OF GOD

Like everything genuinely Christian, the acquisition of the knowledge of God by the people of God has as its ultimate purpose the glory and praise of God ([Col. 3:17](#)). This overarching objective finds expression in two penultimate goals: the experience of personal renewal and involvement in the fulfilment of God's purpose.

Personal renewal is the primary objective of training in the knowledge of God. Israel was urged to learn and keep the law 'so that it may go well with you' ([Deut. 4:40](#)). This wellness was later defined as p. 305 the enjoyment of peace, security, prosperity and longevity in the land the people were on the verge of occupying. Ezra's reading and fresh exposition of the law to the returning exiles resulted in the confession of sins, the revival of worship, the enactment of a self-imposed covenant, and a pledge to order life henceforth according to the will of God ([Neh. 8-10](#)).

The cause and effect relationship between theological knowledge and existential renewal is no less clear in the New Testament. For Jesus, to know the truth is to be freed by it ([Jn. 8:32](#)). For Paul, exposure to the teaching of Christ aims at nothing less than the transformation of the self toward full Christianity ([Eph. 4:13-24](#)). He is clear that the goal of Christian ministry and teaching in particular is perfection in Christ ([Col. 1:28](#)). To be sure, just as the knowledge of God, total renewal is an ideal achievable only in the eschaton ([Phil. 3:12](#); [2 John 3:1ff](#); [Jer. 31:33ff](#)). Even so, the process leading to it is set in motion here and now through contact with the divine Word ([2 Cor. 3:18](#); [5:17](#)).

In this perspective, then, persons are theologically educated when their lives become 'congruent with that which is made known of God and that from which is manifest by God through the Christ, the Revealer of God'.¹⁸ This process involves more than cognitive impartation of the truth. Critical to it is the application of the Word of God to the hearts and minds of the people of God so that they become more and more like the Son of God.

If the immediate aim of theological knowledge is existential transformation its intermediate objective is altruistic service. Theological education is education for others. Here, the knowledge received and the renewal experienced equip and motivate for informed and meaningful participation in the work of God in both church and world.

¹⁷ Robert Meye 'Theological Education As Character Formation' *Theological Education* 24 Spring Supplement, (1988): 101.

¹⁸ Costas, *opus. cit.*, p. 19.

This participation is multifaceted and wideranging. It includes the pastoral ministry with its preoccupation with the teaching and proclamation of the word, ecclesiastical administration and pastoral care. It covers the ministry of the laity, which having been formed through the pastoral ministry, is enabled to exercise more meaningfully its spiritually assigned gifts for the building up of the church ([Eph. 4:11](#)). It embraces the work of evangelization and social action through which the church reaches out to the world with the knowledge of God so that persons may be transformed by it and become participants in the work of God. It encompasses the prophetic ministry of the church which, through the witness of its individual members and its corporate stance, seeks to steer society in the direction of the will of God for the world. In each of its facets, this involvement necessitates an adequate understanding of the context in which it takes place. Hence the necessity to acquaint students with the skill of social analysis.

Both in its immediate and intermediate objective, theological education redounds to the glory of God by facilitating the fulfillment of its purpose in individual persons, the church and society. Although I have [p. 306](#) not used the term 'Kingdom' so far, in essence, theological education is education in the service of the Kingdom of God. Its objective is to teach the knowledge of God in a 'given context to form and inform witnesses of the Kingdom and make them [thereby] the instruments of its transforming power'.

CONCLUSION

This paper has sought to suggest in very broad terms the trajectory that a theology of theological education might take. The contention throughout has been that such a theology would need to ground theological education in God himself. It would do so by making the knowledge of God its primary target and the fulfillment of the purpose of God in the individual, the church and the world its key objective. It is further suggested that this approach would restore the uniqueness or distinctiveness of theological education, thereby preserving its identity, which we claim is essential to its renewal.

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Manifesto on the Renewal of Evangelical Theological Education

PREFACE

The origins of the MANIFESTO go back to meetings of the International Council of Accrediting Agencies for evangelical theological education (ICAA), held at Chongoni, Malawi, in 1981. As a new body linking programmes of evangelical theological education worldwide, ICAA determined to draw up for public consideration a 'Manifesto on the Renewal of Evangelical Theological Education'. After wide consultation, and several revisions, the following statement was unanimously adopted by ICAA in 1983, and was