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Theological Education in the Context of Socio-Economic Deprivation

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Introduction

As the twenty first century marches on, the southward shift of Christianity's centre of gravity continues unabated. Researchers have estimated that presently some 62% of Christians live in the South[1] and they expect this percentage to reach 70% by the year 2025[2] This trend has sparked much discussion among missions strategists, and its significance continues to be assessed by students of world Christianity. The outcome of the mental energy which is being spent on the new phenomenon is uncertain at this time, but what is already apparent is that the growing concentration of Christians in the South poses an enormous challenge for theological education.

The reason for the challenge is not difficult to see. Christianity is a faith which majors on discipleship. Beyond formal profession, it requires the growth of its adherents into Christ-likeness by means of solid Christian nurture. But the socio-economic condition of the context where the Christian explosion is currently occurring places severe material constraints on the ability of theological education to produce the human resources required for the discharge of the discipleship mandate. How to transcend the limitations of the southern environment in order to secure a firm footing for theological education is one of the pressing issues

1 'South' refers to the poor countries of the world wherever they may be, not just those situated in the southern hemisphere where the majority of economically disadvantaged nations are found.

2 Todd Johnson, Peter Crossing and Bobby Jangsun Ryu, *Looking Forward: An overview of World Evangelization 2005-2025 (A Special Report for the Lausanne 2004 Forum)* by the Centre for the study of Global Christianity, 2004 www.globalchristianity.org

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that the theological education community of the developing world needs to address.

This paper enters the discussion by focusing on three constituencies which must feature prominently in any quest for the viability of theological education in the majority world: the southern church, the dispensers of theological education, and the global church. My claim is that these constituencies can contribute three critical load bearing pillars to the theological education edifice whose combined strength cannot but solidify the foundation upon which the building rests. More specifically, I venture the suggestion that socio-economic deprivation notwithstanding, theological education can find a firm footing even in the socio-economically infertile soils of the South *if it is supportively owned by the local Christian community, dispensed through an educational paradigm which is responsive to the local context, and supported strategically by the global church*. I will elaborate on this claim shortly, drawing in part on my own experience in the Caribbean context and partly on what I have been able to observe elsewhere.

However, before doing so, it is helpful to paint in broad strokes the socio-economic picture of the South by means of a brief comparative analysis of its condition with what obtains in the North[3], and highlighting the challenges that this poses for theological education in the southern region.

I. Our Socio-economically Divided World

For millennia, our world has been beset with all sorts of polarities. It has been punctuated by walls of partition which cut across all the major domains of human existence. Of all the chasms that have separated the inhabitants of our planet, the socio-economic divide has been one of the most difficult to overcome. For instance, while the ideological gulf that separated East and West for a good chunk of contemporary history has, in recent times, shown signs of shrinking, the gross imbalance in human fortune that has characterized North and South for a long time now continues to resist efforts at a rapprochement. North and South continues to symbolize a socio-economic polarity that divides the dwellers of the globe into the destitute and the well-off, the deprived and the affluent, the hungry and the well-fed, the 'haves' and the 'have-nots'.

Recent studies on wealth distribution have highlighted the persistence of huge disparities between the two 'regions'. The 1997 issue of the Human Development Report published by the United Nations Development Programme has revealed that 'the south has an average per capita income that is a mere 6% of the North's'[4]. Perhaps the most astounding fact is that the combined wealth of the world's top 200 super rich is approximately eight times the combined income of over half a billion inhabitants of the least developed

3 Similarly, 'north' designates the developed nations of the world wherever located, even though the majority of well-to-do nations are in fact situated in the northern hemisphere.

4 United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 1997* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) p. 24.

countries.[5] The inequality is further compounded by the heavy indebtedness of the southern countries to their northern counterparts and the onerous debt servicing requirements which come with it.

This enormous material imbalance would not be disturbing if it did not translate into a lavish lifestyle in one 'region' and abject poverty in the other. While it is acknowledged that no geographical sphere has a monopoly on either opulence or poverty, it is undeniable that the mass of impoverished humans are southerners. Of the percentage of the world's population who live in the developing world, some 2 billion souls live on US$2 per day or less.[6] It is no wonder that each day 100,000 of the world's poor are claimed by starvation and malnutrition.[7]

The prospect for the future is not promising. In recent times, poverty has been on the increase in several parts of the two-third world.[8] What this means in concrete terms is that the untold millions of poor people who inhabit our broken world must do without such necessities of life, as basic sanitation, potable water, adequate housing, basic health services, education and a sufficient diet.

In the past two decades, hopes for the amelioration of the prevailing state of affairs have been placed on globalization—the much touted new economic order at the heart of which is the integration of the countries of the world into a global and borderless market. The interest displayed by the developing countries in global organizations such as the General Agreement on Tariff and Trade (GATT) and the World Trade Organization (WTO), as well as the diligence with which many have implemented internal economic reforms clearly show that they expected much of the new world economic regime. It is perhaps too early to determine for sure whether these hopes have been misplaced. However, judging from some leading economic indicators, it appears that, so far, the experiment has not changed the situation appreciably. Studies have shown that although global export has grown considerably in recent times, trade figures for the least developing countries have registered steady decline for the past two decades.[9] Similarly, the recent boom in capital flow has revealed a clear bias for the North. According to the United Nations Development Project, of the $600 billion which moved around the world in direct investment in 1998, 70% went to North, 24% to some 24 southern countries and a mere 0.4% (less than $3 billion) to the 48 least developed countries.[10]

In the fast growing information technology area, the situation is no different. Research has shown that by 1998 while 26% of Americans had access to

5 United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2000* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006) p. 82.

6 World Bank, *World Development Report* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000/2001), p. 3.

7 Ronald Sider, *Evangelism and Social Action* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1993), p. 192.

8 United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report*, 1997, p. 33.

9 United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report*, 2000, p.82.

10 United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report*, 1997, p. 82.

the internet, only 0.8% of Latin Americans, 0.1% of sub-Saharans Africans and a negligible 0.04% of South Asians could afford such luxury.[11]

II. The Travails of Theological Education in Socio-economically Challenged Contexts

Clearly, the unfavourable socio-economic condition which is so prevalent in the southern landscape is a formidable hindrance to the viability of theological education in that region. As Philip G. Altbach has pointed out in his insightful article on the relationship between universities in the minority world and those in the majority world, 'the infrastructures of academic development are not cheap'.[12] It follows that the scarcity of resources is a major inhibiting factor to the provision of quality education in the 'have not' parts of the world.[13] Amongst the many areas which are adversely affected by the socio-economic harshness of the southern context three have been selected for special mention here, since without them there can be no theological education.

The first people affected are students. In many third world settings, theological institutions experience serious difficulties recruiting qualified students for their programmes. Several factors account for this, many of them socio-economic in nature. In some cases, the problem stems from the existence of too small a pool of qualified candidates to draw from. More often than not this reality is itself connected to the inability of government to allocate sufficient funds to the educational sector due to budgetary constraints.[14] Furthermore, at times, students who are qualified to pursue higher education shun theological studies because of the dim prospect for employment that provides an appropriate income. The questionable usefulness of a home-grown theological training for the bread-and-butter issues drives many a potential theology student to secular institutions with academic offerings which hold more lucrative possibilities, or to theological institutions in the North where the pasture is perceived to be greener.[15] Where the latter route is taken, a sizeable percentage remains in the receiving countries.

Moreover, there is the question of affordability that many of those who choose to prepare for the ministry locally face. Although third world schools usually charge low tuition, many students have difficulty affording it. Financing theological education through loan is rare. Even where this option is available, students tend to

11 United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report*, 1997, p. 82.

12 Philip G. Altbach, 'University as Center and Periphery', *Teachers College Record* 82 (Summer, 1981) p. 604.

13 Albrecht, *University*, p. 604.

14 Beside economic constraints, Altbach drew attention to the lingering impact of the kind of colonial educational heritage a notion received on that country's attitude toward education. See *University*, pp 605, 606.

15 It must be acknowledged that not all majority world students who pursue theological education abroad do so for economic reasons. Many go abroad because the subject they desire to study is not available in the two-thirds world.

avoid such indebtedness due to the uncertainty surrounding securing employment at the completion of their studies which can repay debts. It is not uncommon for seminary graduates who experience difficulty making ends meet at home to migrate to other latitudes in search of better opportunities, thereby contributing unwillingly to the brain drain problem with which third world countries are typically beset.[16]

Increasingly, the harsh economic realities are pushing students in general and theological students in particular to work while studying. Schools have responded to this trend by adjusting their schedules, typically offering courses in evenings or weekends. While the combination of work and study somewhat helps alleviate the economic problem, it puts serious pressure on the working student's ability to perform to his or her best. Even the most gifted find it difficult to respond to the competing claims placed on their time by work, family and study.

The next group of people affected are staff—both academic and administrative. Here, too, economic constraints create enormous difficulties for third world institutions. In many southern settings the expertise needed for the delivery of the theological programme is often not available locally. This limitation forces school administrators to make some hard choices. These include making do with less than the ideal, or bringing the required expertise from abroad at great cost to the struggling institution, or investing at considerable risk in staff development.[17] Even where local expertise is available, the theological institution may still be unable to secure the needed help due to its inability to match compensation packages offered by the business sector or publicly funded educational establishments.

A compromise which is often used in such circumstances is to share the available expertise with other organizations. This trade-off, however, has drawbacks. The casualty of such an arrangement is sometimes the quality of programme delivery, and almost always home-grown literary output. Faculties with too many competing claims on their time seldom have time to research and write.

Another major area of challenge for most majority world theological institutions is infrastructural support for their academic programmes. Recently, a Caribbean educator remarked to me that all he needs to teach is a student, the shade of a tree and a stool. His comment was intended to make the point that in the majority world education can be provided with the barest infrastructure. He is basically right. However, provision of such bare essentials as a basic physical plant, a modest library holding, reliable administrative and instructional equipment, textbooks, the securing and maintenance of accreditation should be possible. But in a context which is not permeated by a philanthropic ethos and where there are modest tuition fees this has always proved to be a daunting challenge. Such things require enormous capital outlays which are hard to generate from the context.

16 Altbach, *University*, p. 609.

17 The risk referred to here involves the possible non-return of the personnel sent abroad to study.

The situation is further aggravated by the fact that, at times, the environment forces many a third world institution to include in the list of minimum things that would be considered unnecessary for a theological institution to provide or a luxury if they were. Such is the case when a struggling school in an impoverished country is forced to maintain its own power plant because the country is unable to provide a reliable electricity supply, or when already cash strapped institutions must find considerable sums for security services because government is unable to provide this for its citizens.

III. The Feasability of Theological Education in the Face of Socio-economic Deprivation

One could be tempted to argue that in light of the poverty of the South and the opulence of the North, the latter should assume responsibility for the theological education of the former. As I will argue toward the end of this essay, the North does have a valuable contribution to make to this undertaking. However, the position adopted here is that despite the socio-economic disadvantages of the South, the responsibility for the theological education in the southern hemisphere rests primarily with the southern Christian community. I am convinced that this responsibility can be discharged if the venture is fully backed by the southern church, strategically supported by the global church, and is conducted in a manner that is responsive to the realities of the southern context. The balance of this essay will be devoted to the unpacking of this claim.

A. The Supportive Ownership of the Southern Church

In the early days of theological education in the developing world, the ownership of the enterprise rested in the main with the northern church. Many theological institutions in the South were established at northern initiatives, supported with northern funds, and staffed by northern personnel. They were by and large denominational institutions with close ties with the foreign missions of which the local denominations were basically extensions.

With the passing of time, the situation changed. As local church bodies matured and weaned themselves from their overseas 'mothers', they gradually assumed responsibility for the ministries and institutions which were formerly under missionary leadership. But while this assumption of ownership has been considerably successful in the case of such ministries as the pastorate, evangelism and church planting, it tended to lag behind in the case of theological education. In many instances, even after the handing over of the reins of governance to national leadership, many theological institutions not only continue to depend heavily on foreign aid for their survival, but they are sometimes required to support financially the local denominations to which they belong! A study produced by the Theological Education Fund of the World Council of Churches (WCC) on the financial viability of theological education in the Third World found that some 70% of the operational budget of theological institutions from various parts of the majority world came directly or indirectly from overseas resources and that 'most of the build-

ings have been built with foreign funds'.[18] When the foreign support stops, many of these institutions simply cease to operate.

My contention here is that if the quest for the viability for theological education in the South is to stand even a remote chance of succeeding, ownership must embrace not just the assertion of the rights of rulership but also the responsibility for the provision of meaningful material backing by the local church. Such an understanding must feature as an essential plank of the whole undertaking. Real support by the local church which theological education serves is an essential nutrient for its eventual growth from the status of a sheltered garden of foreign dependency to that of a fully acclimatized tree with deep roots in the southern soil.[19]

There are two elements essential to the actualization of the principle of supportive ownership. The first is a greater recognition by the church of the significance of theological education for its life and ministry. The church's deep conviction of the necessity of evangelism was the format which stirred the evangelistic zeal which resulted in the phenomenal growth that is being experienced in the South at this time.

There is a need for a commensurate enthusiasm for theological education, which many regard as luxurious, elitist and dispensable—an optional add-on to be undertaken after more urgent things are attended to. The church needs to be awakened to the truth that when evangelization is not supported by theological education, converts are dwarfed by a milk-fed faith, vulnerable to errors of all sorts and unable to be effective Christian witnesses.

The second element concerns the church's awareness of its stewardship capability and potential. The Scriptures make it clear that unfavourable socio-economic conditions are not necessary impediments to giving. Ancient Israel supplies an instructive example in this regard. While on the road to Canaan, that nomadic people built a splendid sanctuary to Yahweh with their own resources (Ex. 24-40). The 'fundraising' drive that was conducted for that project brought in much more than was actually needed for the work. The biblical author took pain to emphasize that the success was not due to the people's abundant wealth, but to the willingness of their hearts (Ex. 35:20,26,29).

If we turn to the New Testament, we find similar examples. It is indisputable that, in the main, the early Christians were not well-to-do. In fact, in 1 Corinthians 1:26, Paul candidly reminded the Corinthian believers of their low status when they came to Christ. Yet, this reality did not prevent him from challenging them to participate fully in the support of the Lord's work—whether relief for the poor, the missionary campaign or his own support (2 Cor. 8:1-15, Philp. 4:10-20). Nor did the Christians themselves use their plight to claim exemption from responding to the apostle's appeal. Indeed, some of those poor believers stunned Paul by their generous response. Out of the Macedonians'

18 Herbert M. Zorn, *Viability in Context* (London: The Theological Education Fund, 1975), p. 13.
19 Zorn, *Viability*, p. ix.

severe trial and extreme poverty came a rich generosity that far exceeded their economic ability (2 Corinthians 8:1-5).

Southern Christians must be challenged to emulate such commendable examples. This will require consistent teaching of the biblical principles of faithful stewardship and sacrificial giving. One of the main aims of southern theological education therefore must be the removal of whatever residue of a dependency mentality remains in the southern church. This will be achieved by producing leaders who will teach and challenge southern Christians—rich and poor—to participate in the work of God according to their ability.

The demonstration of the kind of sacrificial stewardship highlighted above is by no means confined to biblical times. I have seen inspiring examples of it in the Caribbean where I live and work. Though operating in an economically weak region, some churches and individual Christians have found ways to assume supportive ownership of theological education.

Some churches do it by covering the tuition cost of the students they send to the theological school. Other churches opt to support the ongoing teaching of a subject or subjects in which they have special interest. Hence, in our region, missions-minded congregations such as the Swallowfield Chapel of Kingston, Abundant Life of Barbados, Grace Community Church of Nassau, and Bolosse Baptist Church of Haiti have for years supported a chair in World Missions at the Caribbean Graduate School of Theology, making possible the training of Caribbean nationals for cross-cultural ministries and the teaching of missiology. Christian professionals too support the venture by contributing their expertise in critical service areas, thereby saving the institution large sums of money.

B. A Context Responsive Model

As is well known, the dependence of southern theological education on the North is not just economic; it is also academic, curricular and methodological. The enterprise has been described as being essentially a mere 'transplant from the West',[20] and a slavish imitation of what is used elsewhere.[21] Kosuke Koyama, the Japanese theologian and theological educator, has underscored that dependence by highlighting the global domination of the northern theological model. Koyama writes:

> Whether students are in Madras or Lima, the theological diplomas they receive are standardized by the level of Western Theological Education. The basic model of accreditation of theological schools throughout the world comes from accreditation standards originally written for Western Schools. Thus globally, all theologically education belongs to the Western-centred prestige system. The structure of curriculum and method are basically identical with the Western structure… wherever theologically schools are located, their curriculum is divided, more or less, into the four basic fields. Any change to

20 Zorn, *Viability*, p. ix.

21 Emilio Nunez, 'El Problema Del Curriculo' in *Nuevas Alternativas De Educacion Teologica* C. Rene Padilla, ed. (Buenos Aires: Nueva Creacion, 1985), p. 61.

this system would threaten the approved global system of theological education.[22]

Various reasons have been advanced for the pervasive dominance of the northern model. Attention has been drawn to the theological poverty of the South, the scarcity of instructional materials in the southern context, and the fact that the majority of those currently engaged in southern theological education have been trained in the North. Doubtless, these are important factors that must be given due consideration in any serious examination of theological education in the majority world.

But, however pertinent they may be, these considerations do not obviate the fact that the virtually wholesale appropriation by the South of a model that was designed for a context so vastly different from itself poses a suitability problem that cries out for attention. As Jim Stamoolis puts it, to be effective 'training must always be appropriate to the local context'.[23]

But what model of theological education would best suit the southern context? I will offer some pointers in the balance of this section, but before doing so, two caveats are necessary. Firstly, although sharing similar socio-economic challenges, the South is a remarkably heterogeneous region. Hence, the need may not be for one generic model designed to fit it all, but for a multiplicity of 'custom-made' models for the various sub-contexts which together make up the overall southern milieu. Secondly, the call for a contextualized approach must not be interpreted as a campaign for the wholesale abandonment of the legacy bequeathed by the North. Koyama, whom we earlier feature as lamenting the pervasiveness of the northern influence eschews any call for its outright elimination on the ground that such a move would be simplistic, impractical and even undesirable.[24]

What is needed is a critical appropriation of the legacy, involving the endorsement of its useful features, the adaptation of others, the correction of those deemed faulty and the creation of new ones as may be required by the peculiarities of each environment. With this in mind, speaking from the standpoint of the Caribbean region, I am putting forth the suggestion that a context responsive paradigm of theological education would need to exhibit the following four characteristics.

1. Church-centred

If theological education is to have the people of God as its principal beneficiaries, then one of its primary marks must be church-centredness. Jim Stamoolis puts it bluntly: 'If any curriculum is being taught that does not facilitate the ministry of the local congregation; it does not matter how orthodox or how classical the teaching it is not appropriate theological education.'[25] This is strong language, but it is

22 Kosuke Koyama, 'Theological Education: Its Unities and Diversities', *Unpublished Paper*, p. 10.

23 James Stamoolis 'Theological Education in the 21st Century: Emerging Critical Issues', *Unpublished paper delivered at the ICETE Conference, Moorlands College, April 1996*, p. 3.

24 Koyama, *Theological Education*, p. 6.

25 Stamoolis, *Theological Education*, p. 3.

right on target. Theological education lives up to its identity if it is demonstrably a servant of the church. But to serve the church effectively it must be in a position to feel the church's pulses and hear its heartbeat. It is only by being so closely connected to the church that theological education is able to determine the church's educational need: what should be taught, how it should be taught, and the level at which it needs to be taught. Such knowledge yields at least two great dividends.

The first is the matching of resources with needs, resulting in greater efficiency and cost-effectiveness, and the second, the development of context sensitive curricula and methodologies resulting in greater contextual relevance.

In an informative collection of essays dealing with the history of theological education in North America, the editors candidly highlight the uneasiness of the North American evangelical community with formal theological education as one of the issues which bedevils the enterprise.[26] Amongst the reasons advanced for the community's discomfort is its ambivalence about the usefulness of formal theological learning for what it considers paramount for the life and ministry of the church.[27] Needless to say the community's disenchantment has cost theological institutions some much needed support, as some of the disaffected churches went on to establish their own theological schools. There is here an important lesson that the southern theological education community should not miss.

2. Cooperative

The next feature of our proposed content-sensitive model is co-operation. The dispensing of theological education in an economically disadvantaged region necessitates conscious cooperation among those who feel called to serve the church in this fashion. This is particularly critical when the training required is formal and advanced. The infrastructural requirements are so demanding that few institutions can do it alone. Even in the economically well off North the task is proving to be daunting for some schools. The high cost of operation translates into higher tuition fees which reduces the affordability of the education and results in the eventual downfall of many an institution. In our economically disadvantaged two-thirds worlds context creative ways must be found to extract maximum results through the efficient use of scarce resources. The avoidance of costly duplications must be a dominant feature of our modus operandi.

In some cases this may mean the merging of weak institutions into one strong and viable entity. Such cooperation not only enhances cost effectiveness and promotes quality, it also boosts Christian witness. Clearly, it is much easier for society to ignore a multitude of struggling theological schools.

One is, of course, aware that the concern for the maintenance of theo-

26 D. Hart and Albert Mohler, eds, *A Theological Education in the Evangelical Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996), p. 7.

27 Hart and Mohler, *Theological Education*, pp 17-19.

logical distinctions is a major challenge to collaborative efforts amongst evangelicals. Indeed, in the volume referred to above, the editors appeal to just such a sensitivity to provide a rationale for the continued existence of a plethora of theological institutions, sometime operating in close proximity to one another.[28]

But without in any way wanting to downplay such concern, it must be stressed that in the South, given our limited resources, we must learn to work together, despite our differences. As people firmly committed to the basic tenets of evangelical faith, we should be able to find creative ways to preserve our distinctives while cooperating closely to offer the southern church the best theological education possible.

3. Bivocational

Bivocationality is the third tenet of the approach being proposed. My argument is simple. In contexts where the church is able to fully absorb a theologically trained workforce and provide full support for its workers a case can be made for a purist approach to theological education. But in areas where such ability is lacking, clearly an eclectic approach is the preferred option. Here, instead of confining training for the ministry to the study of theological disciplines alone, theological education should purposefully bring under its purview the study of non-theological disciplines which bear relevance to the wider society as well as the practice of ministry within the church. In so doing, theological education prepares persons to participate meaningfully in both domains, thereby playing the role of bridge between them. The versatility and currency of the education that results from this approach is further enhanced if, in addition to its diversified content, it enjoys formal recognition from the local educational system.

At the Jamaica Theological Seminary, this feature has been introduced to good effect. Since its introduction, the institution has experienced considerable growth, having attracted to the study of theology persons who probably would otherwise have made different choices. The varied content of the school's academic offerings and its accredited status made it possible for many students to come to the institution with the full financial backing of their employers, including secular government. In some cases students have been able to access loans from both the public and private sector.

It goes without saying that the increase in enrolment which resulted from this approach has contributed significantly to the financial viability of the school. Furthermore, the fact that the education prepares graduates for gainful employment in the secular realm has facilitated the retention of the majority for service in the church. Perhaps, the greater benefit of this two-pronged approach to theological education is the opportunity it provides for the broadening of the concept of ministry to embrace both the strengthening of the church through pastoral work and other activities, and witness to the world through sustained engagement with it and an ongoing presence in the secular marketplace. The impact

28 Hart and Mohler, *Theological Education*, pp. 25, 26.

of the graduates' witness in that latter domain has not escaped the attention of the society, including the political directorate.

4. Transformational

A great deal of what has been said so far can, with good reason, be characterized as coping mechanism—a gymnastic-like attempt to circumvent the socio-economic potholes of the southern landscape in order to keep theological education afloat. But we need to go further because what is really needed is the altering of the hostile environment into a milieu which is theological education friendly. Theological education itself has a significant contribution to make to this transformation project.

But how can theological education exert a transforming influence on the context in which it operates? To a large extent, the answer to this query lies in its effort to overcome the dichotomies it has inherited, and in so doing, assume a more integrative character.

We have already hinted at the transforming benefits which can be reaped when allowance is made for theological graduates to straddle both church and world. Doubtless, there would be an even greater impact if this were to become policy across the theological education world. Sociologist Lawrence Mamiya is certain about this. Speaking from the perspective of the African-American community, Mamiya argues that if the black clergy were knowledgeable in the area of public policy they would be in a position to influence government to adopt 'policy options that would lead to the empowerment of their people or bring healing to bruised and broken lives'. This conviction led him to recommend strongly the inclusion of training in policy analysis in the curriculum of seminaries in general, and particularly those which train ministers for work in urban and poverty stricken areas.[29]

But even more powerful context-altering energy would be released if theological education were able to overcome the physical spiritual compartmentalization bequeathed to modern culture by the enlightenment zeitgeist and inculcate in those it trains the necessity for holistic ministry. As an entity called to minister to people who are by nature multi-dimensional, the church must discard modernity's anthropologically misguided bifurcation and discharge a multi-dimensional ministry.

But history has shown that the church best fulfils this calling when it is led by persons whose portfolio includes *both* the ability to provide sound spiritual leadership *and* the capacity to stir people 'from their fatalistic attitudes to take actions [designed] to alter their conditions'.[30] Hence, in socio-economically chal-

29 Lawrence Mamiya, 'A Black Church Challenge to and Perspective in Christianity and Civil Society' in Rodney Petersen, ed., *Christianity and Civil Society* (Orbis Books: Mary Knoll, NY), p 57.

30 Mamiya, 'A Black Church Challenge to and Perspective in Christianity', p. 53—The Ministry of Voice of Calvary in Hendenhall and Jackson Mississippi spearheaded by the Black American Clergyman John Perkins, is a powerful example of the transforming impact of holistic ministry. See John Perkins, *With Justice For All* (Ventura, Ca: Regel Books, 1982), particularly, Chapter 13.

lenged environments, skills in community mobilization, community organization, community development, and the ability to speak prophetically to the context with a view to steering in the direction of God's ideal for societal life, are essential ministry assets that theological education should diligently seek to develop and hone.

C. Strategic Collaboration with the Northern Church

So far I've argued for the feasibility of theological education in the South solely on the ground that it is supportively owned by the southern church and dispensed in a manner which takes into account the peculiarities of the southern context. But this is not to suggest that the northern church has no role to play in the theological education of the South. This would neither be realistic nor desirable. Rather, our point is that the northern input, though welcome, should be supportive not determinative. What is needed is a kind of strategic collaboration that assists in the delivery of theological education in a manner that promotes the eventual self sufficiency of southern institutions.

It is a biblical principle for those who have to share with those in need (2 Corinthians 8:1-15). While the deprivation of the South challenges southern Christians to exercise faith and practise sacrificial giving, it provides an opportunity for northern Christians to practise Christian sympathy and demonstrate active love toward God's global church.

The collaborative and supportive input advocated here can take place in many strategic areas. I will touch on three: academic personnel, literary production, and financial assistance for students.

First, in many areas of the two-thirds world where advanced theological education is deemed necessary for the vitality of the church, there is a need for qualified personnel. In many theological disciplines, and theologically related fields, the southern church has yet to produce people with the requisite knowledge, expertise and credentials. Here the northern church can play a critically important role. It can contribute personnel who are academically qualified, culturally sensitive and willing to work shoulder to shoulder with and under the leadership of southern nationals. Such assistance need not result in a reversion to the dependency relationship bemoaned above if it is short-lived, and if steps are taken to develop nationals to take on the baton, when the foreign help ceases.

The dependency syndrome can be further reduced if the institution which is being aided is able to participate in the remuneration of the foreign personnel. Alternatively, the northern church can assist with the training of prospective southern scholars who are committed to the southern church. When qualified and committed southern scholars are found, it can also assist in retaining them for the region.

Second, assistance with the production of theological material in the South is another way the northern church can lend strategic support to the southern theological enterprise. This need is particularly acute in the French speaking parts of the two thirds world. The pressure of multiple tasks makes it very difficult for theological scholars in the developing world to

research and write. Even where these difficulties are overcome, finding publication opportunities is another problem. Facilitating literary output from the South is one of the best ways the North can contribute to the maturity of the southern church.

As helpful as materials produced in other contexts can be, they cannot adequately satisfy the need for homegrown reflection. Each context has a unique set of questions, concerns, and needs that the faith must address if it is to speak pertinently to that context. Just as reflection emanating from the North has been a blessing to the South, the reverse will prove true if the North is exposed to the thoughts and experiences of southern Christians.

A third way to collaborate strategically with the southern institutions in the dispensing of theological education is through the provision of scholarships for needy students. A common problem in many two thirds world institutions is high level of debt incurred by students unable to honour their financial obligations. When students can't pay, schools are deprived of the revenue they badly need to keep afloat. It follows that when students receive financial assistance it is not they alone who breathe a sigh of relief, but the institution as well. But the strategic character of such support is not exhausted by the dual result that it produces. It is also seen in the dividends that it yields to the contributor.

Clearly, for persons desirous to contribute to the health of the southern church, there is no greater opportunity than to participate in the training of its leaders in their own context. Such an involvement produces outcomes which are hard to beat: it is cost effective, facilitates a context sensitive training, and guarantees a higher rate of leadership retention for the southern church.

Conclusion

The ideas expressed in the preceding pages are not novel. There are signs (albeit faint) that the theological education enterprise is moving in the overall direction highlighted in this essay. In parts of the developing world, there are examples of the southern church assuming supportive ownership of theological education on a greater scale than before. Thomas Kuhn did warn us that paradigms don't change easily. Yet, one must be encouraged by the fact that a concept such as contextualization which gained ascendancy primarily because of its significance for missions and theology, is now being discussed in connection with theological education. This is a signal of openness for another look at the inherited paradigm.

Also, there are indications of the northern church's willingness to come alongside the southern church to assist with needs that the latter deems critical. Northern organizations such as the Overseas Council International, the Langham Partnerships, World Partners, the Mennonite Central Committee, Tear Fund and others have understood the importance of this new model of North-South relationship for theological education.

In light of this, in both regions, what is needed is not a re-invention of the wheel, but a speedier actualization of the new thinking. There is no more opportune moment to do so than now, when loud calls are being made for the renewal of theological education.