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Introduction

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INTRODUCTION

Dietrich Werner

Resources and Theological Perspectives on Eco-Theology, Climate Justice and Food Security – Priorities on ETCF in theological education and Christian leadership development

The *WCC* assembly in Busan in November 2013 identified eco-theology and climate justice as two of the key priorities for the next working period (2014 – 2021). Issues like eco-theology and climate justice should remain key components in the global pilgrimage of justice and peace in the ongoing post-Busan working period. Since climate change and ecological destruction are getting more and more menacing for humanity, climate issues provide a global challenge which should be reflected also in theological education and formation worldwide. Specialized ministries and their partners in the global South have shown the links between climate change and food security.

Although much research and project related work has been done already on these topics in some regions in World Christianity, only in a few institutions of theological education and Christian leadership development issues of eco-theology, climate justice and food security form part of the regular curriculum of instruction and training or inform

theological formation processes in an integrated perspective,[1] especially in and in exchange with the global South. A great potential therefore lies in discovering existing resources for the transfer of knowledge and wisdom from all contexts/regions.

In the years between 2014 and 2016 some major ecumenical partners developed a major initiative on issues relating to the ecumenical sharing of resources about eco-theology, climate justice and food security (ECTF) in order to look into the current state of conscientization, training and resource sharing on these issues and in order to strengthen the awareness of the relevancy of ETCF issues and encourage churches and institutions of research and theological education with regard to the importance and urgency of eco-theological formation.

1.1 *ETCF* Study Project

The collaborative project between Globethics.net (Geneva), Bread for the World (Berlin), United Evangelical Mission (Wuppertal) and the World Council of Churches in cooperation with the Orthodox Academy of Crete and Volos Academy for Theological Studies in Greece a working and research project was started which followed an agreed set of strategic goals:

[1]While some substantial mapping of resources has been done by some outstanding scholars and research centres, (e.g.see bibliographies on eco-theology from Prof. Ernst Conradie in: Conradie, Ernst M.; *Christianity and ecological theology: Resources for further research,* Study Guides in Religion and Theology 11, SUN Press, Stellenbosch 2006. 405 pp. and Conradie, Ernst M.; *Christianity and Earthkeeping: In search of an inspiring vision*, Resources in Religion and Theology 16, SUN Press, Stellenbosch 2011,155 pp.) we do not have a survey particularly on resources and best practice models for training in eco-theology, climate justice and food issues developed.

- ***Mapping:* to highlight and to make visible** the contributions, resources and perspectives of *eco-theology, climate justice and food security particularly (ETCF)* from the churches of the South as often resources and contributions are only known and shared in the North.
- ***Mainstreaming:* to contribute to mainstreaming eco-theology, climate justice and food security issues *(ETCF)*** as integral components in Christian leadership formation both in formal theological education as well as in non-formal programmes of Christian and development training in the global South (mainstreaming).
- ***Lobbying:* to support and foster** the relevance of *ETCF* in the awareness of churches in the global North and the global South in a period when global political negotiations on binding restrictions on CO2-emissions reach a certain climax (2015).
- ***Networking:* to *contribute to international networking, exchange*** and South-South, North-South, and West-East networking between regional hubs of research and education in issues of ETCF issues.

The questionnaire which was developed for the ETCF study project was mainly sent and circulated to target groups like

- theological colleges, church-related seminaries, universities with their faculties of theology or religious studies and other church-related training facilities and programmes
- selected Christian or interfaith research centres and lay academies working on issues related to ETCF, and Eco-ethics

The results of this two to three years study process were presented to a final concluding working consultation in Volos Academy of Greece from 10-13 March 2016 which brought together some 25 leading experts

on eco-theological education from all parts of the world, with strong participation also from orthodox churches.

This booklet published by Globethics.net brings together major papers presented to the Volos study consultation, the main working papers and final results report from the ETCF study process and few additional papers from participants from Volos, produced and finalized after the Volos consultation.

This publication was made possible by the collaboration of many different experts, most of this done in addition and voluntarily besides the main job assignments.

First of all we would like to express gratitude to the members of the Steering committee for the ETCF process who inspired, guided and evaluated the whole process:

- *Dr. Dietrich Werner* (until April 2014 International Programme Coordinator *ETE*/WCC; from early 2014 onwards Senior Theological Advisor, *Bread for the World,* Berlin)
- *Dr. Stephen Brown* (Programme Executive, *Globethics.net/ Global Digital Library for Theology and Ecumenism*, Geneva)
- *Dr. Guillermo Kerber* (*WCC* executive staff for care for creation and climate justice, Geneva)
- *Rev. Andar Parlindungan* (Executive Secretary for Training and Empowerment, United Evangelical Mission, Wuppertal)

Secondly we would like to express gratitude for all those who prepared the ETCF consultation in Volos and facilitated good ecumenical cooperation and funding for its completion:

- Victoria Koczian, Theologian, formerly CEC and Globethics, now doctoral student in Budapest, Hungary
- Dr. Pantelis Kalaitzidis, Director of Volos Academy for Theological Studies

- Dr. Nicolaos Asproulis, Lecturer Volos Academy for Theological Studies
- Prof. Christoph Stückelberger (Founder and President Globethics)
- Dr. Jochen Motte, Director of the Department for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation in United Evangelical Mission
- Raphael Sartorius, Theologian and Doctoral candidate, Berlin who prepared the final reports on the ETCF project during an internship in Bread for the World

Finally we would like to express our gratitude for all those who have facilitated editorial and proof reading work for this publication

- Elisabeth Jeglitzka, Bread for the World, Department for Policy, Dialogue and Theology
- Dr. Ignace Haaz, Globethics Publications Manager
- Samuel Davies, Assistant Editor, Globethics.Net

We also acknowledge gratefully financial support for this project which has been made available by Bread for the World, WCC-ETE, UEM and Globethics and for the generous hospitality which we enjoyed in the Academy of Volos.

The publication will be released and presented to the annual Advisory Board meeting of the GlobeTheoLib-Consortium in Geneva early September 2016 and will hopefully provide an incentive and motivation for broader sharing and ecumenical learning on eco-theology, climate justice and food security in many institutions for theological education and training in the years to come.

Many of those who were related to this project have been encouraged by the visionary and critical Encyclica of Pope Francis "Laudato Si" which has put crucial emphasize on the strategic relevance

of a new paradigm of eco-theological education within Christianity and much beyond within humanity as a whole:

> *"Environmental education has broadened its goals. Whereas in the beginning it was mainly centered on scientific information, consciousness-raising and the prevention of environmental risks, it tends now to include a critique of the "myths" of a modernity grounded in a utilitarian mindset (individualism, unlimited progress, competition, consumerism, the unregulated market). It seeks also to restore the various levels of ecological equilibrium, establishing harmony within ourselves, with others, with nature and other living creatures, and with God. Environmental education should facilitate making the leap towards the transcendent which gives ecological ethics its deepest meaning. It needs educators capable of developing an ethics of ecology, and helping people, through effective pedagogy, to grow in solidarity, responsibility and compassionate care."*[2]

[2] Encyclica "Laudato Si", page 210; accessed in: http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html