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# DIVERSITY OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION IN ASIA

A Search for Cooperation and Mutual Enrichment

**Editors**

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Wati Longchar

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A Search for Cooperation and Mutual Enrichment
Editors: H.S. Wilson & Wati Longchar

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# Foreword

Theological education and formation in various forms has been the backbone of ministry from the time Christians organized themselves as faith communities. It assured transmission of right beliefs and has been a means of passing Christians traditions and values enmeshed in socio-cultural nuances to the generation that follows.With the introduction of Christianity, theological education also made inroads to Asia. The history of Protestant theological education in Asia has a history of 300 plus years.[1] During the last several decades, there have been tremendous development in terms of increase in number of theological institutions, degree programs, and promotion of ecumenical, interfaith relations, ecological concerns and experiments in indigenous, contextual methodologies largely within the inherited western/European model of theological education. The attention given to concerns of marginalized communities, women's studies and other emerging socio-cultural, economic and political issues have brought about significant changes in theological education. Thus theological education and formation in Asia has contributed

[1] It is noted that Dutch established seminary in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) in Jaffna (Nallur) in 1690 and later at Colombo 1696 for training indigenous clergy (Klaus Koschorke).BartholomausZiegenbalg founded a Lutheran Seminary in Tranquebar, in India in 1716 (Daniel Jeyaraj). The Serampore College founded in 1818 by William Carey, Joshua Marshmanand William Ward celebrated its bicentenary in 2018.

much in sustaining and nurturing Christian communities and their engagements with neighbouring communities.

However, during the last two decades, in several major cities of Asia with sizable Christian populations, a number of new theological education institutions and programs have emerged claiming to prepare leadership to promote a genre of Christianity that focuses on 'prosperity gospel' and 'self-help' Christian religion. This phenomenon of unrestrained growth of theological schools is often referred to as "mushrooming or proliferation of theological education." These neo-theological institutions are also engaged in marketing of theological education justifying that their specific goal is for preparing leaders to promote the message that the Christian gospel is about promise of salvation and prosperity to the faithful followers through health, wealth and spiritual bounty. With the claim that there is an urgent need to prepare leaders for various segments of ministries, mission and mentoring, trainings are offered with greater flexibility and diversities. Some even establish theological institutions as business enterprises in a free market ethos, concentrating in urban centres. A range of theological degrees including Master and Doctoral degrees are awarded often with the support and link to similar theological training programs overseas. Often, such educational programs operate ignoring Asian contextual realities. One of the ironies is that some of the faculty members of these new institutions are those trained in the historic seminaries with formal academic programs.

Simultaneously a new trend is the establishment of theological institutions centring on exclusive community identities: tribal, linguistic, denominational and varieties of neo-Charismatic Christian fellowships. That has resulted in the establishment of more than 100 theological colleges in metro cities like Seoul, Manila, Jakarta, Chennai, Bangaluru and Yangon which is an unhealthy sign for Christian witness. Apparently such proliferation of theological education is meeting the quest for theological education

by different segments of Christian groups. Is it due to the reality that the prevailing historic theological seminaries and colleges are predominantly denominationally focused and continue to offer inherited curriculums from the missionary past with little flexibility? However, without some means of dialogue and cooperation between the established and emerging programs of theological studies, the continued unhealthy competition would cause further fragmentations and weaken the quality of theological education. As a result vigour of Christian witness would be diluted.Therefore, assessing the causes for proliferation of theological institutions and addressing them as best as feasible is an unavoidable challenge to theological communities in Asia.

Most of the historic theological colleges and seminaries continue the legacy of giving prime importance to transmitting theological insights as philosophical and theoretical discourses and continue to make use resources developed in European and North American contexts. As a result theological curriculum is overloaded with the so-called fundamental and classical theologies, histories and biblical interpretations emanated in the West. Students are expected to devote a considerable time to study and master them which have very little to do in their ministerial context and the lived experiences of their respective communities. What are missing in most of the curricula are the discourses and focuses on social transformation of Asian masses, Christians as well as others that are forced to live in dehumanized situations.

Today most of theological curriculums do include study on ecumenism, local and world religions, interfaith dialogues, feminist/womenist theologies, varieties of indigenous and contextual theologies like minjung, dalit, eco-theology, HIV & AIDS, Disability, etc. But often they are not included in the core/required courses. In many instances they are offered as Electives or Optional courses. Many students are unable to take those courses as they are overloaded by

required courses. A few colleges even do not offer such courses as electives. A way forward is to integrate these emerging courses within the inherited traditional western fourfold curricula (Bible, theology, church history and practical ministry) patterns followed by almost all the historic theological seminaries. This paradigm of "integration" or "addition"is the crux of the problem in theological education in Asia. However, Asian theological communities developing their own theological curriculums that would empower the Asian Christian communities to witness their faith holistically requires a serious collaborative effort across Asia and beyond.

As per the present demographic projections, that in the next twenty years more than half of Christian communities would be living in the non-Western world. However, in Asia Christianity would continue to be a minority religion except in countries like the Philippines and South Korea. Besides the notion that Christianity in Asia is an imposition from the West closely related to colonization continues to be the attitude of the people of other faith communities in Asia. These realities, global and Asian, mandates that the non-Western and Asian contemporary realities need to reorient the theological education system transcending the inherited western European model. If theological education has to go through such a transformative process, some key questions have to be raised and to be addressed. What has to be the core purpose of theological education in Asian context? Should theological education exclusively focus on preparing leaders to safeguard the inherited traditions and institutions? What types of curriculums and pedagogical methods need to be developed? What factors are contributing to the proliferation of theological education? What are the contributory theological and sociological factors led to this phenomenon? What roles are played by of prosperity gospel theology and marketing strategy for quick results? Is it due to the failure of the existing theological education programs under the management of historical

churches? Are ecumenical theological institutions weakened by lack of resources provided by supporting denominations? Are students and faculty of other Christian tradition treated more as guests in ecumenical as well as in collaborative evangelical seminaries? Why there is a declining interest on the part of the graduates to serve in rural congregations? Why there is declining interest in pastoral ministry in some historic denominations? Are the most of prevailing theological education programs forming the candidates as educated elite professional suited more for urban congregations and church institutional management? How to evolve a theological education that is people-oriented, especially people in the margin in both rural and urban setting? How to re-capture and promote prophetic, transformative and movement character of theological education? How to transform theological education to be a catalyst to safeguard diversity of culture, language and spirituality? What should be the core and contingent courses of study? What is the pedagogical process to make a shift from prevailing cognitive and philosophical discourse in theological education to community transformative formation? All these above listed quires call for critical assessment of prevailing theological education and developing innovative alternates to experiment and evaluate their impact.

Recognizing that the current trend of theological education needs to be critically reassessed and reformulated as a transformative education, the Program for Theology and Cultures in Asia (PTCA) and the Foundation for Theological Education in South East Asia (FTESEA) hosted a conference inviting key theological education leaders on the theme "Revisioning Innovative and Transformative Theological Education in Asia in the Context of Proliferation and Quest for New Forms of Education/Formation," at Sabah Theological Seminary, Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia from September 12-16, 2018. The conference deliberated on the three major issues: (i) Five researchers presented five country case study on the proliferation of theological

education. Indonesia, Myanmar, Malaysia, India, and South Korea were selected for the case study due to presence of many theological institutions. (ii) The second major presentations focused on the challenges and prospects for theological education in five regions – Bangladesh (Islamic context), China (Post-denominational context), Hong Kong (Secular-market context), Philippines (Christian majority context), and Thailand-Mekong (pluralistic-poverty context). (iii) The third presentation focused on the challenges and prospects of theological education in the context of secular/public education in Christian colleges/universities. In the context of changing scenario of Asia, the representatives from ATESEA Theological Union (ATU), South Pacific Association of Theological Schools (SPATS), Senate of Serampore College (SSC) and Asia Theological Association (ATA) shared short-term and long-term theological support mechanism towards strengthening theological education in Asia and Pacific.

Where and how do we start to transformative theological education? It was identified that curriculum transformation is the key area in theological education followed by needed faculty reorientation to implement them. The PTCA-FTESEA conference issued a press note that:

> A crucial concern in Asia is the need of contextualization of theological education. The inherited traditional western fourfold curricula (Bible, theology, church history and practical ministry) patterns of theological education is still prevailing in Asia and it is not liberative and transformative. Asian contextual issues are different and it is difficult to insert/integrate new emerging courses within this paradigm. Asian theological educators must thus seriously engage in developing curricula relevant to Asian Christian context, since majority of Christians are from socially and economically poor backgrounds. We cannot talk about transformative theological education without addressing

> the problem and issues faced by the people in the margins. The issues, problems and context of the people in the margins are crucial in transformative education. This calls for restructuring or developing alternative theological curriculums viable to Asian realities as life-affirming and transformative.

The crucial challenge for today is continued promotion of contextual theological education for needed transformation in various aspects of Christian and wider communities in Asia for holistic life for all. That calls for remodeling theological education program aiming not only for training of denominational leaders, but also training them as community leaders, with skills in community development, transformation and spiritual nurturing.

Theological education must, first and foremost, cognizant of local, regional and global forces that shape human affairs and environmental ethos and should have adequate space for the critical assessment of them. The positive ones need to be strengthened with the vitality of Christian participation and negative ones have to be challenged from Christian perspectives in a participatory way with people with similar concerns. Thus the theologically trained leaders need to be equipped to discern the signs of the times, and be prophetic leaders in their given context. It demands rigorous scientific research, social analysis and critical thinking, yet it must be pastorally relevant, applicable and spiritually nourishing/sustaining education. Such a visionary life-affirming, engaging and transforming theological education has is to be done anchoring on the lived experiences of people who are faced with many constraining issues and problems for dignified existence and get marginalized. Without locating anchoring in the context of marginalized people, theological education would run the risk of serving the interests of oppressive and exploitative powers. It is in this context that PTCA-FTESEA conference called theological institutions to consider the followings:

- multi-forms theological education that cater to the needs of both urban and rural contexts,
- new curriculum and pedagogy relating to Asian religio-cultural and social context,
- restructuring or developing alternative theological curriculums viable to Asian realities as life-affirming and transformative.

In this context, the conference further affirmed importance of partnership.

The participants recognized the importance of ecumenical partner's support in faculty *development* especially those who are interested in *community transformative studies*. Asian colleges will be more benefitted if partners give priority to those scholars who are interested to *do research on Asian issues in Asia*.

We are happy that we could bring out the proceeding of the conference in the book form for further reflection in our search for a relevant transformative theological education in Asia.

H.S Willson
Wati Longchar
Editors

# Part I

# Case Studies of the Proliferation of Theological Institutions

# Proliferation of Theological Institutions in Malaysia

**Wilfred J Samuel•**

**Objective:** The objective of this research is to take us on a journey that would help us to assess the impact of proliferation of theological education in Malaysia as well as re-visioning for spiritual and socio-cultural transformation necessary for proclamation and reclaiming indigenous contextual identity and through theological education.

## 1.0 Research Analysis – History and Development of Theological Education in Malaysia

Malaysia despite being a Christian minority and Muslim majority nation, theological education here has progressed reasonably. Prior to independence on 31 August 1957, Churches were served by missionaries or pastors trained abroad; namely, Trinity Theological Seminary in Singapore which was founded in 1948 or seminaries in Hong Kong, India, Taiwan. The Roman Catholic Seminary however was already operational in 1665 in the northern Malaysian state of Penang, the Baptist Theological Seminary was established in 1954 (Penang) and the Methodist Seminary in the state of Sarawak in 1954. Establishment of other major seminaries and Bible schools in

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the post independence era (Nos. 4-15) include:

1. College General : Founded 1665 (Ad hoc Member)
2. Methodist Theological School: Founded: 1954
3. Malaysia Baptist Theological Seminary: Founded: 1954
4. Bible College Malaysia: Founded: 1960
5. Borneo Theological Seminary : Founded: 1965 (Associate Member)
6. Maktab Injil Malaysia : Founded: 1968
7. Malaysia Evangelical College: Founded: 1968
8. Malaysia Tamil Bible Institute : Founded: 1972 (Associate Member)
9. Malaysia Bible Seminary : Founded: 1976
10. Seminari Theoloji Malaysia : Founded: 1979
11. Sabah Theological Seminary : Founded: 1988
12. Alpha Omega International College: Founded: 1998
13. AGST Alliance: Founded: 2004 (Associate Member)
14. Tung Ling Bible Seminary: Founded: 2009
15. St Pauls Theological College: Founded: 2017 (Associate Member)

Apart from Seminari Theoloji Malaysia (#10) and Sabah Theological Seminary (#11), rest of the seminaries are mostly denominational based which cater for Mainline, Pentecostal or Reformed Churches. Malaysia Tamil Bible Institute (#8) is probably the only seminary that was established solely to cater for the Tamil ethnic language group. Malaysia Evangelical College has an English language department, while Borneo Theological Seminary, and Maktab Injil Malaysia use the Malay language as the medium of communication. The rest of the seminaries are basically bilingual or trilingual. (see Appendix 1)

## 2.0 Research Analysis – Positive Efforts Seen in Promotion Theological Education in Malaysia

It is noted that Malaysia, despite being a Christian minority nation, has done reasonably well in the establishing of theological training institutions to meet the needs of the local Churches.

**2a) Accreditation:** Although 12 out of the 15 Seminaries were established within the last 55 years, all of these seminaries have been structured well and have secured accreditation. Of the 15, 11 seminaries are accredited by ATA, 3 by ATESEA and 1 by the Roman Catholic Church of Malaysia. Most seminaries offer programs ranging from Certificate to Post Graduate levels.

**2b) Financial Sustainability** - In most of the seminaries, the average class size is 8 -12 persons. Therefore in-terms of financial sustainability, the fees collected would generally meet about 30% of the seminary's budget. Hence, the main task of the Principal would be fundraising and seeking scholarships. While in West Malaysia no government grants are provided for the seminaries, in East Malaysia annual grants are made available. Seminaries, therefore throughout the year would need to engage in fundraising initiatives and seeking individual donors to help balance their annual budget. Despite the drawback, only a handful of the 15 seminaries recorded a deficit in the past 5 years.

**2c) Human Resource** – International partners and mission agencies have and continue to play a crucial role in faculty development programs by providing scholarships. Although acquiring work pass for foreign lecturers has become extremely difficult in the recent years, seminaries continue to engage them on part-time basis or for modular courses.

**2d) Capital/Infrastructural Development** - Almost all urban the seminaries have a reasonably large campus (1 seminary with a swimming pool), equipped with good classrooms, library, recreation and IT facilities. The rural seminaries have basic facilities but sufficient to meet their immediate needs, generally lack IT and internet capabilities.

**2e) Library Resources** – Although theological books are extremely expensive, most urban seminaries are well equipped, with good cataloguing systems and internet connections. In addition four seminaries have also acquired web-based library access. However, the rural seminaries in East Malaysia continue to struggle with a lack in theological books in the Malay language.

**2f) Indigenous Leadership Empowerment** – It has become an established fact that the future of Malaysian Christianity is very much dependent on the development and empowerment of Indigenous or Bumiputra Christian community of East Malaysia and the Orang Asli community of West Malaysia. Churches and theological schools here have over the years taken cognisance of this fact and have endeavoured to create more opportunities to theologically train people from the indigenous communities and empower them as community leaders. This has been implemented with two objectives and by applying two means.

OBJECTIVES

- Address the problem of Islamization
- Develop Pastoral leadership

MEANS

- By creating more scholarships for indigenous students
- By introducing theological programs in the Malay language

Currently therefore there are 5 seminaries that offer theological programs in the Malay language and 1 seminary offers theological programs in the local 'Iban' ethnic Sarawakian dialect. This prudent

sharing of resources by the non-bumiputra Churches with the Bumiputra Churches, has allowed stronger leadership development and capacity building.

**2g) MATS – Malaysian Network of Seminaries** – The year 1997 marked an important milestone in the history of Christianity and theological education in Malaysia. It was the year when the Malaysian Association of Theological Schools (MATS) was formed with the objective of enhancing mutual cooperation, common witness and sharing of resources among the seminaries. Currently, there are 10 full member 4 associate members and 1 adhoc member. In the Malaysian context, where Churches are denominationally divided, MATS provides a vital platform for denominational dialogue and cooperation, and serves as a model for theological students in developing ecumenical understanding. It also serves as a platform for sharing of ideas and critical evaluation of theological programs, curriculum enhancement, theological formation, sharing of resources and improving pedagogical methodology. Assuredly, at our Seminaries we place great importance on theological formation with the perceptive balance between teaching of theology and practice of theology.

**2h) Forging SMART Partnership** – MATS member seminaries are also encouraged to forge close working relationship and establish smart partnerships, incorporating specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and timely goals with regional and international theological institutions in order to enhance teaching capabilities and smart resource utilisation. Sharing of library resources, faculty exchange programs and student exchanges all contribute to this mutual enrichment.

## 3.0 Research Analysis – Challenges Contributing to the Lack in Holistic Engagement of the Churches and Seminaries – The Need for Transformation in the Theological Education Sector in Malaysia

There are basically four areas of concern that will be discussed here; namely, contextualization, denominationalism, social transformation and the impact of Prosperity Theology and materialism.

### 3a) Challenges in the Area of Contextualisation

Malaysia being uniquely diverse, the Malaysian Church needs explore and seek new and meaningful ways in relating and interacting with the different denominations, language groups and cultural varieties. The greatest challenge for theological education rests in developing the necessary platform and tools for contextualization of the Christian message and creating a positive attitude concerning culture. Although contextualization is a process that attempts to read the Scriptures with the context of the recipients in mind and making it understandable, practical and acceptable to the hearers, the research indicates only 3 out of the 15 seminaries do conduct a regular course on contextualization.

- Contextual Asia Theology
- Theological Contextualization
- Mission and Contextualization

Generally, ATESEA seminaries have taken some positive steps towards improving contextualization, while Reformed Seminaries show some indication of moving towards the desired goal. Pentecostal Seminaries probably have a greater struggle in addressing indigenization issues as they are strongly guided by the Pentecostal or Charismatic theological framework. Among the Pentecostal Seminaries, Alpha Omega International College has a course of 'Intercultural Studies'. In comparison all three ATESEA accredited

Seminaries have courses on Asian Theology, Contextualization and Doing Theology with Local Resources.

**3a (i) Glorification of Biblical Jewish Culture** – In Malaysia, this trend had been revitalized by the Pentecostal-Charismatic Movement, where a strong emphasis has been placed on the Church and believers that they are the REMNANTS of Israel. The concept of remnant as we know could be defined as the people Israel who have been supernaturally preserved and redeemed throughout various dispensations. In modern reading, Christians who have been saved are also treated as the remnant of Israel (a sub-set group). This ideology has prompted the glorification of Jewish culture as against local cultures. Notably this can be seen in the influx and use of worship songs with Jewish melodies, use of harps in worship, use of 'shofar' (ram horns) as an instrument for spiritual warfare and Jewish Tambourine dances. In responding to such preferences, many seminaries and theological colleges have introduced courses to complement such needs within the Church. The alienation of local culture is most obviously noted in worship services. In many ways this has contributed to the sidelining of indigenization, contextualization and a failure to do theology with local resources.

**3a (ii) Glorification of Western Models** - The failure to recognize the need for contextualization derives from the failure to adopt a positive attitude towards culture. Once a positive attitude is embraced it would achieve two successive goals: first, making the Bible and gospel message relevant through in-culturization, contextualization and indigenization; and second, developing an attitude of personhood with people who are different to us. Both require that the Malaysia Church and theological institutions take the issue of 'culture and the gospel' seriously enough to put their act together, and prevent uncritical importation and appropriation of Western models and ideologies; at the expense of local cultures. The perpetuation of

Western theology and culture takes place partly due to the fact that the theological text books are widely imported from the West and it remains a preferential region for faculty development and training. Local initiatives are not forthcoming as desired. Certainly the call to Malaysian theological institutions to evaluate and reconsider the way their training programs are being structured and implemented, does not imply that they are merely initiating some form of a cosmetic change to existing Western models; but a call to revitalize the agenda for in-culturation and indigenization in a more wholistic manner.

**3a (iii) Fear of Syncretism** - Being a Church we share two responsibilities: 'being called out' to worship (1 Pet. 2:5-9) and being 'sent back' into the world to serve as effective witness (Jn. 17:18, 20:21). Concern about syncretism (faith being diluted) and danger of local cultures undermining the Divine truth cannot be overlooked either. All cultures and cultural practices must be tested and judged by the Scriptures. But such concerns must not dampen or suppress our effort towards in-culturization but guide the process of making faith relevant to the context.

**3.b Challenges in the Area of Denominationalism and Ecumenism -**

How should we understand the phenomenon of denominationalism in Malaysia? Statistics show that there are about 1,500 denominations in Malaysia (including independent single congregations). Denominationalism is the result of difference, where some are divided along ethnic lines, some on the basis of Church polity and others along doctrinal lines. Among the 15 theological institutions consulted in this research only 2 are ecumenical in its organizational structure. Denominationalism tends to focus more upon tradition and preferential values. Some missiologists in Asia consider denominationalism as a product of Western missionary imperialism, thus relevant only in so far as their missionary activity and identity is concerned. Given the situation that Malaysia is a Christian minori-

ty nation, addressing the problem of denominational pluralism is a vital theological concern; hence, it has to begin at the theological institutional level.

By this it is neither indicative nor to be assumed that ecumenism is dead in Malaysia. What is being highlighted here is the noticeable practice of 'functional ecumenism' in comparison to 'relational ecumenism'. So despite the openness to embrace ecumenical concerns on a functional level, most Seminaries are equally committed to promoting their denominational identity. The proliferation factor is very much tied to this need; promotion of denominational identity and theology.

However, the current and general situation within the theological training institutions in Malaysia seems to suggest that there is a lack in concerted efforts to promote "relational ecumenism", which would allow for altar and pulpit fellowship. As the findings show, only 2 seminaries out of the 15, offer a full course on "Ecumenism" as a part of theological training. Rest of the seminaries or Bible colleges cluster the topic as a 1 or 2 hour lecture within the Church History Course or History of Christianity. In one sense it is a failure to recognize that Jesus prayed for oneness of the Church even as His death was approaching; because it was the most pressing and urgent task. ("That they all may be one…" Jn. 17: 21). Hence, "This communion with Christ through faith and participation in his saving work implies deep solidarity with one another and intrinsically includes the sharing of material and spiritual resources (LWF document on Self Understanding of Lutheran Communion Study Document - Department for Theology and Public Witness 2015). Often it is an inherent misunderstanding that ecumenism is all about uniformity, which stirs fear and rejection of it. The Malaysian Church and theological institutions must continue to affirm that ecumenism is not about uniformity but unity. The ecumenical communion is lived out not in a coerced and prescribed uniform manner but reflects

a dynamic inter-connectedness of communal living by integrating the Christian faith and action to promote Christian values. The challenge here is that Churches that set up the seminaries or Bible colleges, to a large extent also control the activities and curriculum in an effort to save-guard their denominational identity, tradition, polity and theology.

### 3c Challenges in the Area of Impacting Social Transformation

Impacted by certain ideals of Reformed Theology, which has the tendency to dichotomize between body and soul, Malaysian Churches have the tendency to glorify evangelism as against social work or the diakonia ministry. With rapid changes taking place in the socio-economic and political contexts, Malaysian people are required to respond to these changes quickly and radically. Those who are unable to respond due to various factors would eventually become alienated and displaced within the community. Such displacement certainly contributes to various forms of social ill such as: poverty, illiteracy, alcoholism, abuse of a spouse or child, erosion of human rights, unemployment, migration, a rise in urban poverty, violence, HIV & AIDS, a breakdown in family structures, etc. While the Church in general cannot prevent this flux, it could become a bridge between the two sectors of the population impacted the most by it: the developed and the displaced. Of the 15 seminaries, 3 ATESEA seminaries have a Social Work program which offers courses on social work, Biblical Foundation for Christian Social Work and Social Work and Policies, while 1 ATA seminary has a regular course on Transformational Development. It is also noted that Churches prefer to engage in short-term welfare services compared to long term-development programs. This is further compounded by the fact that most of the Seminaries are based in urban settings, hence they are in some ways disconnected with rural realities. The following are general reasons cited for neglect of social entrepreneurship are:

- Church is Minority
- The Church is Limited in its Economic Capability
- Parochialism
- Fear of Being Considered Subversive
- Responsibility of the Government
- Waste of time as service to the Church is superior than service to the community. Influence of Prosperity Theology

Some possible ways of overcoming these challenges by seminaries are:

- Seminaries should establish a Department for Social Care and Community Concern to handle the task consistently and constructively.
- Establish plausible networks and MOU's with regional and international Christian NGO's in the related field.
- Introduce basic Social Concern courses as core subjects for basic degrees.
- Week-end practicum should also include certain number of hours spent serving as care givers in care institutions or homes.

It is also noted that if some Churches are involved in social work by operating children's home or home for single mothers etc, such involvement is to complement an evangelistic motivation. Hence, the seminaries and Bible colleges have a greater role to play in bringing about the awareness and the necessary theological change. I believe to a large extent redressing Prosperity Theology's impact would be vital.

### 3d The Impact of Prosperity Theology and Materialism

The local Malaysian Churches, particularly those influenced by the Charismatic or Neo-Pentecostal Movement, being guided by the opinion that material things remain a strong indicator of divine blessings in the life of a believer, seem to have developed a tendency

to glorify success or material wealth Hence, they affirm that believers in Jesus Christ, as children of God, are provided with enormous material blessings to be enjoyed here and now. Often Deuteronomy 28:13a is used to support this position. "The Lord will make you the head and not the tail." Therefore, it is taught that God desires His people to possess material, spiritual and physical prosperity and the formula to achieve that is to believe (faith), act (sow) and receive (reap). While the believing involves 'positive confession', the sowing involves 'tithing and offering' to the Church and its leaders. While there is nothing wrong with the desire to be blessed, it however would be a gross theological error to dump the 'Theology of Cross' and replace it with "Theology of Glory". Further, no shame factor should be attached to situations of poverty, sickness or lack of material blessings in the life of a Christian.

While Pentecostal and some Reformed seminaries have to grapple with the impact of Prosperity Theology more directly, ATESEA Seminaries in Malaysia will need to grapple with the indirect impact in the form of materialism and parochialism.

## 4.0 Research Analysis – Reasons that Contributed to the Proliferation of Theological Education in Malaysia and Impact Assessment

**4.1 Impact of the Charismatic Renewal** - The first reason attributed to the proliferation of theological education in Malaysia is the impact of the Charismatic Renewal, sometime referred to as the Neo-Pentecostal Revival. In what Church historians call the 'South Swing', it is implied that the Christian 'center of gravity' has shifted from Europe to Asia, Africa and Latin America; both in terms of Christian populace and missionary sending activity. Hence, by 2000 only an estimated 37% was found in Europe. The statistics further indicate that, if the current trend follows, by the year 2025, 31% of the Christian population worldwide would be Pentecostals/charismatics.

(Source: Barrett, David and Johnson, Todd. Annual Statistical Table on Global Mission 2001 – *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 25:1 (January 2001), p.25). The impact of charismatism in Malaysia started in the mid seventies and intensified in the mid eighties. Proliferation of the Church (formation of Independent Churches and breakaway congregations) had a direct implication to the formation of many independent seminaries. Despite some positive input from the movement in inspiring traditional Churches in the area of mission and worship, certain weaknesses are inherent as well. For example:

a. Mission enthusiasm overshadows the need for contextual appreciation.
b. Biblical culture is considered superior to local indigenous culture for fear of syncretism.
c. It has the capacity to 'mutate' and evolve quickly without conforming to any set theological or mission paradigm, hence causing confusion.
d. Its strong experiential base allows room for `supra rational' behavior to transit with minimum theological reasoning.
e. Its way of doing theology is radically different compared to traditional methodology.

**Traditional (Word + Interpretation + Contextual Application)**
**Charismatic (Experience + Biblical Parallel + Spiritualization)**

f. Its inconsistency in providing a standard theological answer to its fundamental doctrines such as `baptism of the Spirit' and speaking in tongues causes theological confusion, even among its divergent groups.
g. Generally among the charismatics, the charismatic culture is seen more prominent than charismatic theology.
h. The urgency for evangelism and the salvation of the soul are key motivational impetus for ministry, theological training

and pastoral care. The soul – body dichotomy is sharply contrasted, hence *diakonia* receives lesser importance as compared to evangelism.

The urgency to fulfil the missionary mandate indeed was key to the inducement of proliferation of theological education. Traditional mission methodology and theological training was seen to be time-consuming, very academic and static; lacking quick fix solutions. Therefore, proliferation started with the organizing of training for congregational based evangelism empowerment programs. These were eventually turned into formal theological educational entities with incorporation of some biblical and preaching courses.

As charismatic renewal in Malaysia moved into a rapid phase of progress in the 90's and theological schools became a pride of independent congregations and a benchmark to assess growth and progress. This was supported by the revival in Korea, which not only brought Korean missionaries to serve but also bring along financial aid to establish independent Bible schools. Some of these smaller schools had to be closed down after some years due to sustainability issues and withdrawal of funding; but there are many that continue to operate successfully today. The following is a fraction of congregational based Bible Schools in Malaysia.

| No | Location | Name of School | Year Founded | Principal |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Damansara, Kuala Lumpur | School of Acts | 1994 | Rev Ramond Mooi |
| 2 | Gopeng, Perak | Capernwray Bible School | 2007 | Rev John Lee |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3 | Bangsar, Kuala Lumpur | Shekinah Grace Bible College | 2008 | Dr. Christopher Raaja Wilson |
| 4 | Bukit Jalil, Kuala Lumpur | Asia institute of Ministries | 1985 | (Dr.) Prince Guneratnam |
| 5 | Kuala Lumpur | International Bible Training Center | 1984 | (Dr) W.F Kumuyi |
| 6 | Kuala Lumpur | Logos Academy | 1991 | Rev. Arnold Rajan |
| 7 | Klang, Kuala Lumpur | Shalom Vision Bible College | | Chandrakasan Munusamy |
| 8 | Selayang, Kuala Lumpur | Life Net Bible College | 1993 | Rev. Arnold Rajan |
| 9 | Kota Kinabalu, Sabah | Anglican Training Instute | 2010 | Can. Lin Khee vun |
| 10 | Kudat, Sabah | Luther Seminary | 1990 | Rev Mawilis |
| 11 | Kota Kinabalu, Sabah | Immanuel Bible College | 2014 | Ps Ezra Chin |
| 12 | Penang | Sekolah Alkitab Malaysia | 2011 | Ps Swee Bee |

Most of these seminaries are urban based and network with some other international churches or independent seminaries that would serve as an anchor entity. Many of these seminaries too offer online ministry courses to reduce cost impact. Since the focus is 'end time urgency' courses offered are less theological, modular, hands-on and ministry based. The lecturers are selected from experienced Pastors or those with honorary theological degrees.

Within the MATS family, there are 2 Pentecostal/Charismatic seminaries which are accredited by ATA. These seminaries have endeavoured to maintain a balanced theological focus, high academic standards, ecumenical openness and community development interest.

### 5.0 Re-visioning for Spiritual and Social Transformation

Having stated the context of proliferation in Malaysia, the task at hand is how we could revision for spiritual and social transformation by taking in to consideration the 4 proliferation factors.

| Causes Leading to Proliferation | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Rise of Charismatism and Independent Churches | Rise in the Asian Missionary Enterprise | Economic Development and Prosperity | Mission Urgency |

The process leading to revisioning would also need to take in consideration the impact analysis from the proliferation.

| Impact of Proliferation | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Continued Glorification and Dependency on Western Models | Apathy Towards Social Involvement | Rise in Denominationalism and loss of Ecumenical Witness | Fear of Local Culture and Contextaulization | Mission Urgency |

The following are some guidelines to help enhance the revisioning process in theological education in Malaysia.

### 5.1 Some Guidelines

Based on the research findings, both teaching of theology and practice of theology in Malaysia should seek a perceptive balance between the Great Commission and Great Commandment. Hence

the significant principles for re-visioning should rightly rejuvenate the following two areas:

a. Religious Life and Ministry Expressions
b. Community Life and Ministry Expressions

**A) Religious Life and Ministry Expressions - Needs of the Malaysian Church**

i) **Word and Sacramental Expression** – Word and sacrament as ministry brings people into communion with Christ. Second, offering true worship in the name of Jesus, affirming that no other name has been provided for liberation of God's creation and accepting that the Bible as the Word of God with final authority requires a positive attitude and respect towards the Word and sacrament.

ii) **The Great Commission Missiological Expression** - Mission in a pluralistic society requires living out the radical love of Christ, both individually and corporately as a Body of Christ. In the Malaysian context this involves exercising the spirit of tolerance, non-violence, avoiding religious extremism, enjoining the struggle for peace, echoing humanity's deepest and urgent cries – need to maintain the emphasis between the inclusive and exclusive claim of the gospel.

iii) **Religion and Cultural Expression** – Theological education in Malaysia in being missional, needs to develop a holistic witness model that would take into serious account the diverse cultural, religious and social dimensions in being and becoming salt and light among its neighbours. Culture could be understood as that which provides understanding, direction and meaning to the world we live in, and the way people who live in the world relate with each other on pre-agreed social terms.

iv) **Inter-Faith Conversational Expression** - Dialogue is not mere verbal communications and making non-pragmatic affirmations

but cooperation with people of different ideologies and background with the hope of discovering new dimensions and platforms for better relationship and common good. Dialogue is made necessary for the following reasons:

- Building bridges - There are limited alternatives when it comes to community living and communication within a pluralistic society: we either build bridges or walls. Bridges for positive relationship and walls to reflect exclusivism and extremism.
- Mutuality - Recognizing commonalities and differences for mutual cooperation. By seminaries taking the lead, it would provide a useful model for the churches to follow.

v) **Struggle for Sacred Space Under the Religious Canopy and Faith Expression in an Islamic Context** – The message of the Cross is simply this: the holy God became human in order to reach out to people with compassion and loving kindness. He endeavoured to meet their physical and spiritual needs in real and practical ways. He did it not by flexing muscles or with a thunderous display of power, but by becoming a sacrificial lamb. A similar call is extended to the Church in Malaysia; namely to practice incarnational spirituality without fear or favour.

vi) **Contextualization of the Gospel/Indigenization Expression**– Malaysia being uniquely diverse, the missional Church is required to constantly explore and seek new and meaningful ways in relating and interacting with the different religions and cultures. Here, I would like to point out that the missional Church's greatest challenge rests in contextualization of the Christian message and creating a positive attitude concerning culture. Contextualization is the process that attempts to read the Scriptures with the context of the recipients in mind and making it understandable, practical and acceptable to the hearers. The Malaysian Church, when it adopts a positive attitude towards

culture, would achieve two successive goals: first, making the Bible and gospel message relevant through in-culturization, contextualization and indigenization; and second, developing an attitude of personhood with people who are different to us. Both require that the Malaysian Church take the issue of 'culture and the gospel' seriously enough and prevent uncritical importation and appropriation of Western models and ideologies. Concepts such as in-culturation and indigenization must therefore be carefully inculcated into the Malaysian theological education system. Concern about syncretism (faith being diluted) and danger of culture undermining the Divine truth cannot be overlooked either. All cultures and cultural practices must be tested and judged by the Scriptures. But such concerns must not dampen or suppress our effort towards in-culturization but guide the process of making faith relevant to the context.

vii) **Context Sensitive Pastoral Expressions** – We are afresh reminded that the call of the Church is to minister, which is to witness in all possible ways to God's love in overcoming the worst crises of humanity: sin, death and devil (Jn. 20:21-23). This graphically points to the essential nature of the Church's task, which is nothing other than the proclamation of the Word of hope in words and deeds. Some have critically noted that traditional seminaries' curriculum and academic emphases have contributed to the poor pastoral training, where pastors see themselves as CEO's rather than servant leaders.

viii) **Ecumenical Relational Expression** – In a Christian minority and multi-denominational context as in Malaysia, enhancing ecumenical unity and Church cooperation is vital. Churches in seeking to fulfill the Great Commission and Great Commandment need to transcend denominational boundaries and constantly seek to overcome ecumenical challenges. As noted earlier, in Malaysia some see denominationalism as a

legacy of foreign mission agencies in promoting a particular brand name. Learning from history, ecumenism must not just be seen in functional terms but relational to remain dynamic ('that they may be one').

**B) Community Life and Diakonal Expressions - Peculiarities and Needs of the Malaysian Church**

i) **Poverty/Education** – Church is not only apostolic but it is also prophetic. The prophet as God's and peoples' spokesperson (as an intercessor) must learn how to speak a transformational language. Our method needs to be Christological – reflecting the way Christ lived in solidarity with his people. This goodwill extended to humanity through the gracious disposition of God, ought to be mirrored in our Church life through words and actions of grace. The Cross of Christ, which represents the supreme form of communication that is, speaking the language of love, remains the benchmark for practice of Christianity in Malaysia. In this context the Church should never relinquish its role in nation building and character formation to the NGO's and government.

ii) **Human rights violations** – Being Christ-like and in speaking the language of love in a world torn by violence and violations of human rights requires that the Church first of all consider identifying the forms of violence and violations present – in society. Similarly, the Church too needs self-assessment of its life, theology, structure and systems in determining and overcoming any existing elements of violence and violations of human rights within its parameters and precincts.

iii) **Ecological Degradation** – In the name of development ecological concerns are often neglected or conveniently sidelined. The rape of mountains, uncontrolled logging, use of banned pesticides, inconsiderate disposal of solid waste and similar problems

destroy the eco system; either due to carelessness, ignorance or greed. This may also be described as violence against nature. With increasing disregard for the eco system, such violence goes unchecked due to public and media numbness. Love for God creation must be actively preached and practiced.

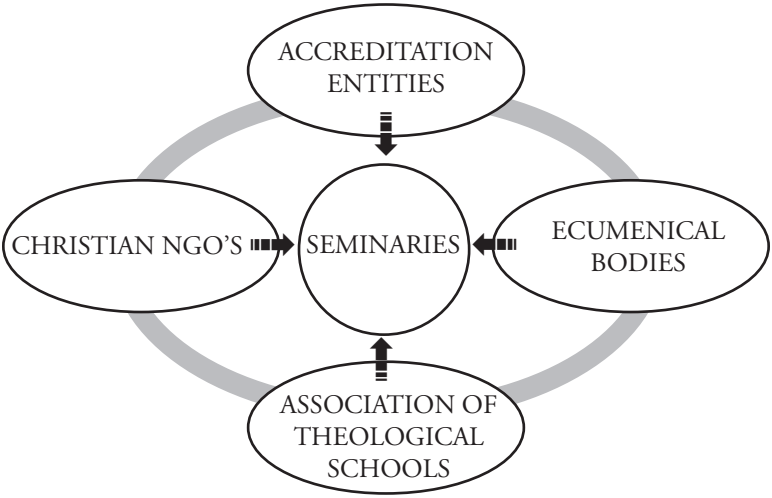
iv) **Growing Ethical and Moral Concerns** – In any rapidly modernizing and economically developing society, issues related to justice and socio-ethics would face challenges due to rapid paradigm shifts, changing ethical norms and quick evolving systems. Such proclamation defies absolutization of any particular pattern as well as totalitarian or authoritarian norms that are capable of reducing humanity by any standard. Forces that downgrade moral and ethical values in people and the community at large include: money, hedonistic pleasures, sex, power, greed, unhealthy competition, breakdown of family structures, ungodliness, lack of care for God's creation and pride.

v) **Church State Relation** – As the nation moves speedily in the direction of development, where religion, peace and political stability continue to remain as key ingredients to progress, the Church ought to see itself as a key player in promoting faith, peace and stability. For want of another word we could even call this religious patriotism. The Church certainly has a vital role to play in ensuring that the principle of national unity is professed and practiced. Persuasive intercession as action-prayer seeks to work with the state in all possible ways to promote national unity, solidarity and peace.

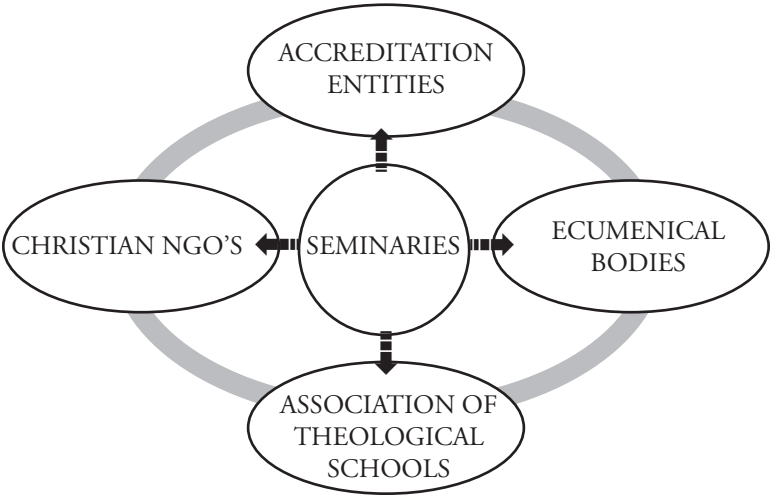
## 5.2 METHODOLOGY

a. **SIDE TO CENTER APPROACH – POLICY BASED**
b. **CENTRE TO SIDE APPROACH – EDUCATIONAL AND INFLUENCE BASED**

**SIDE TO CENTER APPROACH - POLICY BASED**




**CENTRE TO SIDE APPROACH - EDUCATIONAL AND INFLUENCE BASED**



**APPENDIX 1**

**Academic Program Offered - An Overview**

| No | Name of Institution | Certificates, Diplomas / Degrees | Language |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | College General: Founded: 1665 | • Philosophy Studies: (2 years) | English |
| 2 | Methodist Theological School: Founded: 1954 | • Licentiate of Theology<br>• Diploma of Theology<br>• Bachelor of Theology<br>• Bachelor of Divinity<br>• Master of Divinity<br>• Certificate of Worship and Music<br>• Diploma of Worship and Music<br>• Bachelor of Arts in Worship and<br>• Music Bachelor of Theology in Worship & Music<br>• Master of Arts in Worship & Music<br>• Master of Divinity in Worship & Music | English, Chinese Iban |
| 3 | Malaysia Baptist Theological Seminary: Founded: 1954 | • The Bachelor of Theology<br>• The Master of Christian Studies<br>• The Master of Divinity<br>• The Doctor of Ministry<br>• The Doctor of Missiology | English, Chinese Malay |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 4 | Bible College Malaysia: Founded: 1960 | • Certificate of Biblical Studies<br>• Diploma of Christian Studies<br>• Diploma in Ministerial Counseling<br>• Diploma of Theology<br>• Bachelor of Theology<br>• Master of Ministry<br>• Master of Divinity | English, Chinese |
| 5 | Borneo Theological Seminary Founded: 1965 | • Certificate<br>• Diploma<br>• Bachelor of Theology | Malay |
| 6 | Maktab Injil Malaysia : Founded: 1968 | • Diploma in Christian Ministry<br>• Bachelor of Theology<br>• Master in Christian Studies<br>• Master in Ministry | Malay |
| 7 | Malaysia Evangelical College: Founded: 1968 | • Certificate in Early Childhood<br>• Diploma in Theology<br>• Bachelor of Theology<br>• Master in Christian Studies<br>• Master in Ministry | English |
| 8 | Malaysia Tamil Bible Institute : Founded: 1972 | • Diploma in Biblical Studies<br>• Diploma in Biblical Theology<br>• Certificate in Ministry<br>• Certifcate in Biblical Studies | Tamil |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 9 | Malaysia Bible Seminary : Founded: 1976 | • Certificate in Biblical Studies<br>• Certificate in Theology<br>• Diploma in Theology<br>• Bachelor of Theology<br>• Graduate Diploma in Christian Studies<br>• Master of Christian Studies<br>• Master of Divinity<br>• Master of Ministry<br>• Doctor of Ministry | English, Chinese |
| 10 | Seminari Theoloji Malaysia : Founded: 1979 | • Diploma of Theology (DipTh)<br>• Bachelor of Divinity (BD)<br>• Graduate Diploma of Christian Studies (GradDipCS)<br>• Master of Christian Studies (MCS)<br>• Master of Divinity (MDiv)<br>• Master of Ministry (MMin)<br>• Doctor of Ministry (DMin)<br>• Master of Theology (MTh)<br>• Doctor of Theology (DTheol) | English, Chinese, Tamil Malay |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 11 | Sabah Theological Seminary : Founded: 1988 | • Dip.Th – Diploma in Theology<br>• BTh – Bachelor of Theology<br>• BD – Bachelor of Divinity<br>• M.Min – Master of Ministry<br>• Mater of Christian Studies<br>• Certificate in Theological Studies<br>• Certificate in Christian Ministry<br>• Master of Divinity<br>• Master of Divinity 2<br>• Master of Theology<br>• Master of Ministry | English, Chinese, Malay |
| 12 | Alpha Omega International College: Founded: 1998 | • Certificate in Ministry<br>• Certificate in Bible and Ministry<br>• Diploma in Theology<br>• Bachelor of Ministry<br>• Master of Arts in Pastoral Counseling<br>• Master of Arts in Intercultural Studies<br>• Master of Arts in Ministry<br>• Master in Divinity | English, Chinese, Malay |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 13 | AGST Alliance: Founded: 2004 | • Master of Theology (Biblical Studies)<br>• Postgraduate Diploma in Biblical Studies<br>• Doctor of Philosophy in Biblical Studies<br>• Master of Theology (Education) in Spiritual Formation and Discipleship<br>• Postgraduate Diploma in Spiritual Formation and Discipleship<br>• Doctor of Education (Spiritual Formation and Discipleship)<br>• Doctor of Education (Child and Family Development)<br>• Doctor of Philosophy in Education<br>• Master of Transformational Development<br>• Graduate Diploma in Transformational Development<br>• Doctor of Ministry in Leadership | |
| 14 | Tung Ling Bible Seminary | • Certificate of Ministry<br>• Bachelor of Ministry | English, Tamil, Chinese |
| 15 | St Pauls Theological College | • BA in Theology<br>• BA in Ministry and Mission | English |

## APPPENDIX 2

## GENERAL PENTECOSTAL MINISTRY BASED SEMINARY CURRICULLUM FOCUS

- Christian Leadership
- The Empowering Spirit
- Character - The Essential Ingredients
- Personal Vision & Calling
- Leading Church: Fresh Expression / Mixed Economy
- Leading Church in an Urban Context
- Being an Evangelist
- Formation Groups
- Evangelism - Theology of Alpha and How it Works in a Church Setting
- The Personal Life of an Evangelist
- Leading Church: Parish Church and Church Plant
- Men & Women in Leadership (Biblical Perspectives)
- Leading Church: Missional Communities
- Ordination & Leadership
- Leadership, Church and Teams
- Developing Teams
- Communicating Vision
- Building Christian Community
- Mission & Maturity: Group Structures in Church Life
- Guarding Your Heart in Leadership
- Evangelism
- Discerning Vision
- Ministry in the Spirit
- Designing Effective Structures & Strategies
- Leading Church: Parish Planting
- Church, Mission and Growth
- Engaging Church Structures
- Understanding and Developing Organisations

- Leading Church: Growing Church
- Growth & Change Management
- Equipping the Saints for the Workplace
- Equipping the Saints for the Home
- Equipping the Saints for Family
- Conflict Resolution / Management
- Discerning Movements of the Spirit
- Finances & Fundraising
- Integral Mission
- Flourishing in Church Leadership

## APPPENDIX 3

## MATS MEMBER SEMINARIES

| No | Name of Seminary | Accrediting Agency |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Malaysia Baptist Theological Seminary<br>40 A-D, Mukim 17 Jalan Batu Ferringhi, 11100, Batu Ferringhi, Pulau Pinang, Malaysia, Founded: 1954 | **Asia Theological Association** |
| 2 | Alpha Omega International College Plaza Mayang Block A, 2nd floor, No.1, Jalan SS26/2, Taman Mayang Jaya 47301, Petaling Jaya, Selangor, Founded: 1998 | **Asia Theological Association** |
| 3 | Tung Ling Bible Seminary<br>Wisma Eagles 2 (Level 3), 11, Jalan TP 6, Taman Perindustrian UEP, 47600 Subang Jaya, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia<br>Founded: 2009 | **Asia Theological Association** |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 4 | Bible College Malaysia<br>99, Jalan Gasing, 46000 Petaling Jaya, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia<br>Founded: 1960 | **Asia Theological Association** |
| 5 | Seminari Theoloji Malaysia Lot 3011, Taman South East, Jalan Tampin Lama, Batu 3, 70100, Seremban, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia<br>Founded: 1979 | **The Association of Theological Schools in South East Asia** |
| 6 | AGST Alliance 40A-D, Mukim 17, Batu Ferringhi, 11100 Penang, Malaysia.<br>Founded: 2004 | **Asia Theological Association** |
| 7 | Malaysia Bible Seminary Lot 728, Jalan Kundang, 48050 Kuang, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia, Founded: 1976 | **Asia Theological Association** |
| 8 | Sabah Theological Seminary No. 26, Jalan Pinggir, Sabah, 88821 Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia, Founded: 1988 | **The Association of Theological Schools in South East Asia** |
| 9 | Borneo Theological Seminary Peti Surat No. 125, 89308 Ranau, Sabah, Malaysia.<br>Founded: 1965 | **Asia Theological Association** |
| 10 | Malaysia Evangelical College Lot 67 Jalan Cosmos, Pelita Garden, Miri, Sarawak<br>Founded: | **Asia Theological Association** |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 11 | Maktab Injil Malaysia 5305, 98850 Lawas, Sarawak, Malaysia Founded: | **Asia Theological Association** |
| 12 | Methodist Theological School 51 Jalan Tun Abang Haji Openg, 96000 Sibu, Sarawak, Malaysia Founded: 1954 | **The Association of Theological Schools in South East Asia** |
| 13 | Malaysia Tamil Bible Institute 47, Jalan Nilai Perdana 5, Taman Nilai Perdana, 71800 Nilai, Negeri Sembilan D.K. Malaysia. Founded: 1972 | **Asia Theological Association** |
| 14 | St Pauls Theological College | **UK** |
| 15 | Roman Catholic Church Seminary in Malaysia (Sarawak and Penang) MATS Adhoc Members College General ( founded 1665) Major Seminary, Jalan Cengai, 11200 Pulau Pinang.Founded: 1665 | **Roman Catholic Church Malaysia** |

# Proliferation of Theological Institutions in Myanmar

**Lal Tin Hre•**

## Introduction

Theological Education in Myanmar has played a significant role in the life of the church since the presence of Roman Catholic missionaries in the 16th century. During the past several decades, we have seen many developments in theological education in Myanmar. There is an increased number of theological institutions, curriculum transformation in Myanmar context, increased of trained faculty members, and strengthening the support networks through Association of Theological Education in Myanmar (ATEM). As the country faces new challenges and opportunities with the dawn of democracy in the 21st century, theological education must make every effort to equip men and women to face the challenges of the present time. This paper tries to highlight some issues with the following objectives:

- to provide an overview of political-social-economic scenario in Myanmar challenges for future theological education in Myanmar.
- to explore new forms of theological education while at the same time recognizing and upholding the positive legacy of the past.

• *Rev. Dr. Lal Tin Hre is the Executive Director of Association of Theological Education in Myanmar (ATEM), Yangon, Myanmar.*

- to highlight the existing curricula in ATEM member institutions and the need to contextualize in semi-urban and rural context to identify challenges within our churches as well as larger social challenges that call for new approaches to TE in Myanmar.

**Methodology:** This research work depends heavily on three methods: – Questionnaire, personal visit to some schools and secondary sources.

## 1. The Formation of Theological Schools: Historical Development

The world is changing rapidly and radically affecting every aspect of our lives through information and technology, etc. The old is passing away and the new is obscured, we are challenged to adopt the process of metamorphosis. Information and new technologies or globalization are key agents for such changes. Theological education in Myanmar has passed through three main periods along with political changes since 16th century. The first period covered from 1554 to 1949, the second period from 1949 to 1962, and the third period from 1962 to the present day. Each period shaped the outlook and emphasis of theological education in its time.

During the first period, Burma (now Myanmar) was under the control of the British government. Though the Roman Catholic mission in Myanmar was started in the middle of the 16th century (1554) and the first small theological seminary was opened in Monhla in Northern Burma in 1769-70 by the Portuguese to train local Christians to priesthood. The Seminary later developed into an educational institution, namely, "The Missionary School" where basic philosophy and theology were taught.[1]

The Protestant missionary Adoniram Judson from the American

[1] Anna May Say Pah, "Theological Education in Myanmar –Historical Phases" in *Training to be Ministers in Asia: Contextualizing Theological Education in Multi-Faith Contexts*, edited by Dietrich Werner, PTCA Series No. 3 (Kolkata: PTCA, 2003), 14-15.

Baptist Mission came to Myanmar in 1813. The earliest so-called formal school was opened in 1836 in Tavoy. The curriculum included Biblical exposition, basic astronomy, geography, chronology and church history. A central Karen theological training program was started in Moullmein under J. G. Binney. Among the Chin people, the missionaries, namely U Striat opened in Haka (1928), Johnson in Haka (reopened) in 1948, Nelson in Tedim (1947), but all had to be closed down due to the World War-II. In 1953, another Bible School was opened in Tedim namely, "The Zomi Baptist Convention Bible School". The school was moved from Tedim to Haka and then Haka to Falam, currently known as Chin Christian Institute of Theology.[2]

Apart from such informal theological training in various locations during the missionary and post-missionary periods, the only theology in the churches and Christians in Myanmar was 'oral theology", witnessing individually or by preaching verbally to Christian congregations within the limited boundaries of the churches. The natives Christians strongly dependended on the missionaries' teaching and preaching during that time. However, such preaching and teachings did not meet the reality of Myanmar in terms of cultural, religious and socio-political contexts.

During the 1880s, denominational Bible Schools were founded in different places across the country. However, most of the schools were located in Rangoon, the administrative capital of the British Burma. For instance, the Karen Theological Seminary and Burman Theological Seminary were established in Rangoon by 1890. The Burman Women's Bible School (1893), and the Karen Women's Bible School in (1897) later joined them in Insein. Due to linguistic difference between Sgaws and Pows, the Pow Keren Bible School was started by the Pows in 1899.

To meet the urgent need of higher theological education, with higher degrees, the Baptist churches decided to have a joint Anglo-Vernacular Department with instruction in English. The name was

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[2] Zomi Theological College, *Chin Church History*, 2007, p. 234.

changed to 'Burma Institute of Theology' (now Myanmar Institute of Theology) in 1927.[3] The issue of proliferation of theological education in Myanmar is not only denominational line but issues of language difference and regional differences. For instance, there are many theological schools among the Baptist church, the largest denomination in Myanmar; and even within the same Convention, there are many schools due to linguistic differences. Some schools have joined the Theological Education Department (TED) of Myanmar Baptist Convention (MBC) and some are still run as independent schools.

The Anglican Church in Myanmar called, *The Church of the Province of Myanmar*, also started its own college, St. John's College in Yangon in 1863 and also in Mandalay in 1986. A catechist school was opened in 1883 and St. Peter's College was started in Toungoo in 1893 for training Karen pastors. After a few years, Emmanuel College at Mohnyin, Kachin State and Holy Cross Theological College, Yangon were established.[4]

During those periods, the leadership role of the schools was in the hand of missionaries. Not only the leadership role, but also the pattern of theological formation were simply reproductions or duplication of the Western Christian theologians. This is the reason why the Buddhist nationals looked at the Christian missions with suspicion as part of the White men's 3Ms scheme (Merchant, Military and Mission). The 3Ms Scheme which was strongly promoted by the British government through the missionaries.[5]

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3 *Op.cit*. 16-17.

4 *Op.cit*, 16.

5 Samuel Ngun Ling, "Beginnings and Development of Theological Education in Myanmar" in *Training to be Ministers in Asia: Contextualizing Theological Education in Multi-Faith Contexts*, edited by Dietrich Werner, PTCA Series No. 3 (Kolkata: PTCA, 2003), 3.

The second period of political transition was not long; it was after about 13 years (1949-1962) only. In 1948, Burma regained independence from the British rule. Following the independence, the anti-colonial sentiment of Burma nationalists' movement translated into anti-missionary movement strongly criticizing Western missionaries' work. The mission work was seen as a tool of the British colonization. Christians were suspected to be pro-Westerners who were not loyal to the nation. However, the establishment of Bible Schools and Seminaries became faster during this period. Many missionaries were forced to leave and the need of training native leaders forced the churches to open theological schools. This reflected not only the vitality of the churches but continued the tendency of decentralized theological training. For instance, the Karen Baptist Convention, the largest convention in Myanmar Baptist Convention, comprising of more than 20 associations have 18 Bible Schools.

There is a tendency that each Association wants to have their own Bible school. The outcome of such trend is that the quality of theological education weakened. It also encourages unhealthy competition among the schools. Some theological institutions have upgraded their programs – from Licentiate to Bachelor level, and from Bachelor to Master level (MDiv) and also began to connect with schools/association outside the country and worked for accreditation of the degrees. The Association for Theological Education in South East Asia (ATESEA) was founded in 1959[6] and

[6] The Association for Theological Education in Southeast Asia (ATESEA), formerly known as the Association of Theological Schools in South East Asia (ATSSEA), was established in 1957 in Singapore with sixteen schools as founding members. Currently networks 93 member institutions and schools in 13 countries. It also acts as an accreditation agency for theological education in the South East Asia region. See, atesea.net dated Feb. 9, 2018. Beginning 2010, ATU has focused its offering on the Doctor of Theology administered in the twelve Centers for Theological Excellence. The centers are member schools of ATESEA which have the resources to operate the program.

it has given accreditation to some degrees offered by member schools (*See Appendix I*). With the support of FTESEA and other mission agencies, some teaching faculty members were sent abroad for higher degree courses as part of faculty development program.

It is quite interesting to note that the main concern of theological education during this period was "evangelism" or "pastoral" or both. The theology was truly "Western", no contextual theologies or Asian theologies were taught. While the Bible was taught without relating to context, students were expected to do pastoral work in their respective churches such as Sunday School teaching and leading worship and also evangelistic campaign as part of the program.[7]

The third period covers the Socialist Period led by General Ne Win beginning from 1962 March. The plan of "The Burmese Way to Socialism Revolutionary Council" was to bring prosperity and equality to the citizens of Burma. One of the strategies of the government was to eradicate all traces of colonialism and upgrade business, banks and companies. Unfortunately, it was followed by the nationalization of all schools and enforcement of a socialist educational system indoctrinating socialist principles. All the foreigners, including missionaries, were forced to leave the country and visas into Burma were granted only to a few selected people. Myanmar people were also restricted to go abroad. Unexpectedly and unfortunately, instead of prosperity and equality in Burma, the country became one of the poorest countries in the world within 25 years due to wrong policies and corruption of the military ruling party. 25.6 percent of the population in Myanmar today lives below the national poverty line.[8]

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7 Anna May Say Pah, 17.

8 Asian Development Bank. "Poverty in Myanmar" (2016). www.abd.org/countries/Myanmar/poverty.

It should be noted that the leadership role in theological seminaries in the first two periods was in the hands of the missionaries. However, a clear impact of the absence of foreign missionaries was that the leadership role was shifted to the shoulder of national leaders. Faculty development program became one of the most urgent demands to fill the vacuum. The schools in Myanmar tried to connect with higher theological network like South East Asia Graduate School of Theology (SEAGST) and began its Master of Theology program through distance learning in order to accredit the program offered in the seminaries. The first batch of students was graduated in 1977.

The military regime called State Law and Order Resurrection Council (SLORC) took the power of the Burmese Way to Myanmar (1962s – 1989) from the hand of General Ne Win. Since then some of the street names were changed to native names including the name of the country, from *Burma to Myanmar*. During the military rule, the new capital Nay Pyi Taw also built and shifted the political capital from Yangon to Nay Pyi Taw and Yangon became the economic capital of the country. Theological schools suffered much during this time financially. Many of them of course survived with the funding from partner churches abroad and local contributions.

## 2. The Mushrooming of Theological Seminaries

As mentioned above, each Association in the Baptist churches and also other denominations are keen to open Bible school of their own. There were 209 theological schools and training centers in Myanmar.[9] Many theological schools in Myanmar are denominational and regional based schools and some schools are individual-based directly working with mission agencies or churches outside of Myanmar. Painfully, only one interdenominational school in Myanmar is founded in Myanmar, namely, Myanmar Graduate

[9] Appendix. II.

School of Theology (MGST) which is one of the affiliated member schools of ATA.

The mushrooming of theological schools became worse during the military rule. There are two main reasons – the stagnation of economic situation in the country and the increase in terms of support from friends and other organizations from abroad for mission work. It is apparent that the political-economic and social life strongly pushed the leaders to run Bible School. Out of more than 184 schools, two-third of theological schoolshad been started during the military rule (*See Appendix I*).

Currently, there are 50 Bible Schools/Colleges under the Theological Education Department of Myanmar Baptist Convention, (TED, MBC) out of which 24 institutions are members in ATEM, comprising of 34 schools representing 13 major denominations under the umbrella of the Myanmar Council of Churches (MCC). Out of 34 schools, 12 are Yangon-based whereas 22 are regional-based. Most of the schools offered B.Th. and M.Div. programs along with liberal arts. MIT is the only school that offers Master of Theology program accredited by ATESEA. 19 schools in Myanmar (out of 34) are accredited by ATU (formerly known as ATESEA), headquarters in Iloilo City in the Philippines. Applications for membership in ATU are still on the process for some potential schools.

The above-mentioned schools are generally regarded as ecumenical/evangelical schools,[10] and they are connected with ecumenical organizations under Myanmar Council of Churches (MCC). Still, there are good numbers of schools – evangelical, fundamental and Pentecostal schools flourishing in Myanmar. There were 353 schools in Myanmar in 2006.[11] Most of them are

[10] Some correspondents claimed that their school of thought is 'evangelical' than 'ecumenical'.

[11] See, Appendix.

the products of various mission agencies, or individual initiative and they do not come under any theological network or association.

The mushrooming of theological schools is partly promoted by mission agencies from outside the country in collaboration with local leaders who want to become the head of the institutions. Attempts have been made for unity by both MCC and individuals but failed. Some mission agencies, in fact, encouraged disunity among a people contributing toward isolationism. Tribal exclusivism, religious fundamentalism, western individualism, linguistic barriers and denominational separatism have all served to contribute towards isolation and competition leading to proliferation of theological education and resources.[12]

**Factors of mushrooming of theological seminaries in Myanmar are as follows:**

*Political Instability:* Since the time of "the Burmese Way to Socialism", led by General Ne Win, the political-economic condition in Myanmar was not only unstable but also uncertain until the general election held in November 7, 2010. To be candid, the country was completely isolated from the rest of the world and the people of Myanmar suffered much for almost five decades. Migration, refugee and asylum were experienced everywhere and millions of people scattered to almost all over the world. During this period, universities were not functioning well and to open a theological college was an option. The number of enrolment also increased since parents wanted their children to receive education. To speak the truth, there was no hope for common people to continue their secular education due to deterioration of general education system. The ruling party

[12] Steve Curtis, "Missiological Missteps and the Need for Theological Education in Myanmar" in *International Bulletin of Mission Research 2018*, Vol. 42 (1), 56-57.

wanted people to remain uneducated so that they continue their domination. In this context, some Christian leaders took advantage to run Bible schools with the support of friends and churches from outside the country

*Unemployment problem:* This is connected with the former factor. One of the problems in Myanmar till today is unemployment problem. There was no chance to find a job even for the graduates from universities because of lack of jobs offered by the government and the bribery/corruption of the authorities in getting a job in the public sector. Theological schools were the only place where they received formal and sound education and they paved the way to get job opportunities in private sectors and even in abroad.

*Desire to Improve in English language:* According to the responses of the questionnaire and the discussions held during the 8th Inter-Seminary Students' Assembly, many youngsters have joined theological schools for two reasons – to become pastor and to improve English, both in writing and speaking with an aim to work abroad. Surprisingly, the 70-90% of graduates serve churches. This is an indication that there is almost no job avenue in the government sectors.

*Financial Support:* When Myanmar was under the severe poverty for several decades, people had to struggle hard for their basic life necessities as many people lived daily hand to mouth. On the other hand, a few ruling apparatus became richer; the poor became poorer. The gap between the rich and the poor became very wide. Poverty challenged many capable persons who were in a position to seek foreign support that led to running Bible school. This resulted into many individual-based schools in Myanmar who directly worked with the sponsor/s and they were directly controlled by the sponsor in terms of finance, administration and curriculum.[13]

[13] See, Appendix.

*Denominational Demand:* The reason why almost every association, synod or conferences want to have their own Bible School are due to denominationalism, linguistic and geographical distance. A general characteristic is that almost all the schools in Myanmar are denomination-based institutions and the curricular offerings are mandated or approved by their denominational bodies. That means, theological education in Myanmar tends to uphold their denominational teachings and practices. Churches compete one another for running Bible School on their own. To have a theological school is considered as prestigious for the church.

**The Impacts**

The impact of such enormous theological schools has contributed both positively and negatively in the context of Myanmar. Positively, the mushrooming of theological schools is a great help to many young people in order to earn their livelihood, to work in a foreign land, paved the ways to go for higher theological education and equipped them for the ministry in their respective churches. Negatively, it brought unhealthy competition among churches and schools, insufficient resources in terms of library and teaching faculty, and lack of academic quality control and loosening of students' discipline.

**Theological Networks**

In order to facilitate and promote quality control of theological schools in Myanmar, the Association for Theological Education in Myanmar (ATEM) was founded by the Myanmar Council of Churches (MCC) in May 12, 1986 with the motto: "Equipping the Saints for Divine Mission" (Eph. 4: 11-13). ATEM has five main aims and objectives. 1) to upgrade theological institutions 2) to support faculty development 3) to develop contextual theology and theological education 4) to produce theological literature and 5) to promote relationship between theological institutions and churches in Myanmar.

ATEM closely works with ATU,[14] especially in relation to faculty development (trainings/seminars/consultations) and accreditation of degree programs offered by its member schools in Myanmar. In 1972, the South East Asia Graduate School of Theology (SEGAST) launched MTh program in Myanmar through correspondence under the supervision of Myanmar-Malaysia-Singapore-Thailand area.[15] The Senate meeting of SEAGST in Yangon in 2000 decided that it was time for Myanmar to run SEAGST program on its own in Myanmar. A total of 33 students received MTh degree during that time. Eight graduates out of 33 have completed their doctoral program in various schools abroad and today they are leaders in their respective seminaries and churches.

The Asia Theological Association (ATA) which was established in 1970 as a direct outcome of the need expressed at several Asia wide conferences and consultations. Now ATA has 308 member institutions from 35 nations across Asia, South Pacific and West Asia (Middle East). ATU and ATA are related to international networks. While ATU is strongly linked with ecumenical bodies, ATA finds its

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[14] The Association for Theological Education in Southeast Asia (ATESEA), formerly known as the Association of Theological Schools in South East Asia (ATSSEA), was established in 1957 in Singapore with sixteen schools as founding members. Currently networks 93 member institutions and schools in 13 countries. It also acts as an accreditation agency for theological education in the South East Asia region. See, atesea.net dated Feb. 9, 2018. Beginning 2010, ATU has focused its offering on the Doctor of Theology administered in the twelve Centers for Theological Excellence. The centers are member schools of ATESEA which have the resources to operate the program.

[15] SEASGT was opened in 1966 under the auspices of ATESEA and conducts advance theological studies at Master and Doctorate level. ATU has focused its offering on the Doctor of Theology administered in the twelve Centers for Theological Excellence. The centers are member schools of ATESEA which have the resources to operate the program. ATEM with the support of ATESEA and partners launched the Ten Years (1990-2000) faculty development program, resulted to produce 34 masters and seven doctorates.

resources through International Council for Evangelical Theological Education (ICETE). Currently no ATEM member school has dual affiliation/accreditation.[16] ATEM works with global theological networks like ETE/WCC, WOCATI, EDAN and many ecumenical partners.

**Where are the Graduates!**

Since the time of St. Augustine, theological education has stressed on spiritual formation and nurtured the spirit of service to the church. It was a training center especially for those who would become pastors/priests or at least any kind of church workers. The history of theological education indicates that this concept lasted for many centuries. The same idea is prevailing among the churches and theological students in Myanmar. "To enroll in theological school" means "to become a pastor". This may be the reason that the percentage of graduates who joined in the ministry in the church is high (60-90%).[17] The remaining 30-40% of graduates join NGO and other jobs in and outside the country.

However, when the political and economic conditions in the country changed from the rigid military rule to pre-democracy (on the way to democracy) since 2010, the situation of student enrolment became unstable. Some respondents stated that many applicants became more interested in liberal arts program rather than theological studies. The enrollment of new students in theology department thenceforth started declining year after year. For instance, in MIT the enrolment for liberal arts program was much higher

[16] In Myanmar, two schools –Bethany Theological Seminary (former ATEM member) and Myanmar Graduate School of Theology (MASGT) are affiliated with ATA, and accredited their programs of B. Th. and M. Div. degrees. Independent Presbyterian Church of Myanmar, the owner of BTS is no longer in MCC affected the membership of BTS in ATEM since 2017.

[17] Taken from PTCA Questionnaires feedback.

than theology programs (426 in *Theology* and 915 in *Liberal Arts* in 2018-2019 Academic Year).[18] More than half of the respondents mentioned about the declining of student enrolment both in the Department of Theology and Liberal Arts. This is the current trends in Myanmar and this could be due to the emergence of more secular colleges and transformed education system in the country.

There is no discrimination in accepting students for various programs in terms of gender; they study the same subjects and earn the same degrees. However, after training many churches do not give equal opportunities to women in ministry. Till today, only very few churches practice women ordination for full time ministry.[19] The present theological education prepares women to take up only traditional roles (or ministry) reserved for them – either as women leader in the women's department, associate pastors (women), Sunday School teachers or theological teachers in seminaries. Since there is not enough room for women (due to their women-hood) and also the surplus of theological graduates, a good number of women (also men) graduates are not engaged in church ministry.[20]

**Financial Resources**

As stated earlier, denominational seminaries are mainly financed

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[18] Taken from PTCA Questionnaires feedback, from Myanmar Institute of Theology.

[19] The Presbyterian Church of Myanmar (PCM) opened the gate for women ordination for presbyter and pastor only in the 2016 General Assembly Meeting. (Ref. GA/16-39). Wonderfully, Ms. Cherry has been accepted as a Probationary Pastor by the Gen. Assembly meeting of the PCM, held in February 2018. She is the first and foremost female pastor in the church since its inception in 1956. Surprisingly, some conventions in the Baptist churches are still negative in this issue.

[20] For instance, the total number of Pastors in Presbyterian Church of Myanmar comes to 120, but unfortunately all are men. Within the Baptist families, some conventions have few female pastors whereas some have no difficulty in this issue.

by the related churches/associations/synods or contributions from church members. Some schools are encouraged to be self-supported with limited amount of annual grant from the councils. In addition to such grants further assistance are sought from international partners and churches. Only a few schools are fully financed by the churches. The finding shows that church-based schools are much more stable in finance rather than individual-based schools. In the case of individual-based sponsorship, there are many cases of school closing down. It is said that some schools were closed down, reopened and closed again due to financial constraints. This is only due to the lack of fund as well as lack of management. On the one hand, the surplus of theological schools also affect the financial problem. It would be much easier to support the schools, if one convention or synod had only one Bible School. Hence, one of the criteria of ATEM membership is that the school should be church-based school.[21]

One of the most serious problems faced by the seminaries in Myanmar is financial constraint. In order to maintain the existing seminaries, great effort should be made in mobilizing the financial sources, including assistance from outside of the country. For instance, the annual grant from FTESEA for member schools in the previous years was extremely helpful for those schools, upgrading faculty for further studies, development of library resources and training programs. When the policy of FTESEA grant was changed from 2014, the annual grant is discontinued. This has caused crisis in some schools.

### 3. The Development of Curriculum

Generally, theological schools in Myanmar follow the conventional Western curriculum with a minimal contextual adaptation. The fourfold departments of specialized branches have been carried by

[21] ATEM Constitution, Rules and Regulations, p. 5.

the schools in Myanmar: Biblical Studies (Old and New Testament), Theology and Ethics, History of Christianity, Religions (Major Religions) and Christian Ministry. The contextual adapted branches included Feminist Theology, Liberation Theology, Contextual Theology, etc. Therefore, some respondents mentioned the schools' curriculum is so much Westernized and tuned to colonial system. This is due to the resource materials produced mainly from the West; only a few books by Asians are available. Most of the teachers are also trained in the West and they do not want to change it, rather simply follow the westernized system.

The respondents of questionnaire gave some critical comments. Some schools, especially students are not really satisfied with the existing curriculum, because they cannot respond to the existing issues today. In a multi-religious country like Myanmar, theological education must go deeper in understanding inter-faith traditions, their spiritual experiences and moral values. Theological education is also too much influenced by a patriarchal and male-dominated culture curriculum. The theological curriculum also do not address the needs of the rural masses who live in abject poverty. Some evangelical schools are still pessimistic on the courses on women concerns due to wrong theological orientation. Some schools also stated that the current curriculum is also too academic and very intellectual for the ordinary people in the church.

The teaching methodology of theological education in Myanmar puts more emphasis on cognitive or intellectual development rather than human development and social transformation. For instance, the curriculum in some schools is not concerned about the marginalized people and make no critical analysis to the unjust social structure.

Under the sponsorship of WCC, the first *Curriculum Workshop* was conducted by ATEM in 2010, facilitated by Dr. Greg Pawlien, and produced a *Common Curriculum for BTh and MDiv* programs. Very recently, a faculty from Yangon said that he is quite satisfied

with the current curriculum of the college as it is designed to meet the context and regarded as an inclusive curriculum. As a whole, the curriculum in ATEM member needs to revisit and revise and produce a common curriculum for theological schools in Myanmar, particularly for B. Th. and M. Div. levels in order to be more effective and to be contextual-oriented curriculum.

## 4. Recent Challenges for the Future TE in Myanmar

No one can predict whether existing theological schools in Myanmar will survive in the current changes that are taking place in Myanmar. As mentioned earlier, some of them were closed due to many reasons, including the insufficient support from the sponsor and also the lack of leadership role by the local founders. Let me underline some realities of recent challenges for the future TE in the country. The challenges are both internal and external.

*The societal-political-economical changes and the decline in student enrolment:* The general observation of TE is that Myanmar's dramatic societal, economic and political changes is contributing to the declining enrolment since 2010. After the process of democratization many doors have been opened for employment opportunities and young people are not interested in theological studies as it offers a very limited job opportunities and income. As a result, some schools are restructuring their administration (e.g. from *theological college/ seminary to university*), curriculum and their format from a full-time to a modular as an alternative mode which is more attractive to students and also pastors as this was allowing them to receive education without having to leave their respective ministries. Hence, one of the criteria for membership in ATEM is that an institution must have at least 20 fulltime students. ATESEA also puts this as an important criterion for membership application.

*From conceptual to contextual praxis-oriented theologies:* A shift from Western curriculum to contextual curriculum is badly in need

in TE in Myanmar. Such an imported form of Western theological education weakens connection with the practical, pastoral and missiological concerns of the local churches as well as failing to meet new challenges in contemporary Myanmar. It is deeply appreciable that some schools in Myanmar have already sought a strong focus upon the relationship between text and context.

As the people in Myanmar are facing various types of suffering for many years, e.g. social injustice, economic poverty, lack of religious freedom, gender imbalance, women and children issues, health issue, development crisis, environment/ecological imbalance, and tribal issues, injustice to persons with disabilities, issue of migration, etc. we need transformative theological curriculum. We need multi-task 'integrated' approach of curriculum rather than 'adding' approach because one cannot simply add new perspectives without changing traditional ways of thinking. Therefore, contextual theology should address those issues and in order to bring about liberation, peace, sustainability and stability.

*From monologue style to participatory style of teaching:* Education at all levels used unfair means in different ways and forms, and simply targeted scoring high marks and degrees without educational quality. The system inevitably affected all areas of learning process including theological education. The learning capacity of students became very low. They are not reflective or critical, rather they simply follow the teacher, and follow the parrot learning method. It is said that this teaching method was adapted from the Buddhist monk's style of teaching. In order to equip teaching faculty members in this area, the ATEM has conducted workshops on "Research and Teaching Methodology" for four times with the support of the Dan Mission.

The aims and objectives of theological education are to impart and nurture Christian faith, and help the people to reflect their faith in their daily life. In monologue style of teacher-student relationship, students have no right to question or to reflect but only to recite

the words the teacher utters. Therefore, in theological institutions traditional teaching method should be changed from traditional method to participatory style so that students would learn and understand critically and creatively.

*From Denominational to Interdenominational School:* Theological schools in Myanmar are mainly denominational. The spirit of interdenominational cooperation in running theological school is hardly found among the churches. Instead of cooperating one school to another, individualism or a spirit of isolation prevails creating negative attitude and competition. As stated earlier, out of more than 180 schools, only one school namely, Myanmar Evangelical Graduate School of Theology (MEGST) is the only interdenominational school located in Yangon.[22] Once ATEM tried to run Union Theological College and planned to build Myanmar Theological Research Center in the campus of MICT. Unfortunately, the plan failed mainly due to financial reason and lack of cooperation from the churches. However, ATEM continued to facilitate 1) qualified faculty resources 2) library resources 3) financial stability and 4) control of the quality of education for both students and faculty. Although looks difficult to achieve, we need to take concrete steps for collaboration and partnership among member schools for ensuring quality theological education. TE in Myanmar also needs to promote networking among the seminaries within the country and wider theological networks like ATU, PTCA, ETE/WCC, WOCATI, Senate of Serampore College, etc.

*Self-supported School:* One of the main challenging issues in theological schools in Myanmar is financial stability. Mobilizing financial viability and finding global support for theological education in Myanmar (or other Asian countries) is a challenging

[22] MEGST is affiliated with Asian Theological Association (ATA) and accredited its BTh, MDiv and MTh degree programs by ATA.

task. Many of the theological schools are still dependent on external sources, mission agencies, and partners from abroad. With the financial support of Scottish Episcopal Church in Scotland, ATEM conducted two seminars on 'self-sustainable development' aiming at making the member schools financially self-supported in the long run.

**5. Possible Remedies**

One of the Myanmar sayings goes, 'There must be a medicine if there is a pain". After we know the background of theological education in Myanmar, let me draw some possible remedies for the mushrooming of theological schools.

*1. The mentality of dependency:* This dependency is seen in two areas – dependency in finance and dependency in theological tradition. Painfully, some theological institutions in Myanmar are deeply dependent on external sources, mission agencies and partners from abroad. This dependent mentality must be changed.

The second dependency issue can be called dependent on "imported theologies". Most of the theological seminaries in Myanmar are still a duplicate of western model of theological education in terms of curriculum and teaching methodology. We need to move away from "ready-made theology" to "theology of transformation".

*2. Negligence of emerging issues:* Our changing world has brought new issues and challenges which affect all areas of lives. The twenty-first century has brought immense transition and challenges in all dimensions of life. The traditional way of theological education and leadership in the churches needs to be transformed. Some seminaries in Myanmar need to have new perspective on the theology of society. We should not neglect social issues including HIV & AIDS, migration, refugees, asylum, ecology, community development.

"The Gospel is first personalized and privatized, but it must be socialized".[23] We need to be sensitive to the new challenges, which we encounter today, in order to have more significant ministry.

*3. Quality in theological education:* The mushrooming of theological schools in Myanmar challenges the need of quality control in education, particularly in two areas –academic quality and upgrading faculty credentials. There is a great need to move from non-regulated to accredited institutions to upgrade their quality. It is encouraging to see that many ATEM member schools have accredited by both ATU and ATA. In cooperation with ATU and partner organizations, the ATEM has been trying to upgrade faculty development which is one of the main concerns and objectives of the Association.

The government of Myanmar has interfered in theological schools run by Christians in terms of running the school, its curriculum and quality control of the degree programs. Interestingly, some church leaders are more interested to have certificates from foreign countries (e.g., USA), or simply buy certificates from fake operators or groups of Americans. One of the remedies of the mushrooming of theological schools is that the government should be involved in ensuing quality education both in secular and theological schools by formulating a clear accreditation policies like in Indonesia, Taiwan, Philippines and many other countries.

*4. Sharing resources:* This refers to sharing of library resources. Many schools in Myanmar do not meet the requirement of library books for the program they offer. More importantly, we need to promote local writers and develop local resources.

*5. Ecumenism in praxis:* We live in an age of pluralism, diverse religious and non-religious groups co-exist, diverse theological

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[23] Simon Pau Khan En, *Equipping for Transformation of Leadership in Church and Society* (handout notes).

educational backgrounds leading to proliferation of theological schools, sometimes with conflicting theologies. On the one hand, such diversity of churches' background and theological schools challenge us to move forward from privatization to ecumenism. We need to actualize ecumenism praxis to bring solidarity and transformation in our society.

**Conclusion**

The former US president Barack Obama had a word CHANGE as a key word of his campaign. He expounded it in the word, 'you cannot do the same things and expect different results'. That is the essence of change, renewal and transformation. From this brief short review of the history and development of theological education in Myanmar, we can see the interconnectedness of social-political and economic changes and the role of theological education. Concerning the future of TE, theological schools would need to remodel in order to meet the reality of the people, revisit the curriculum and modify it to be more relevant and effective for the Myanmar context, especially in its rural and semi-rural context. Let's continue to equip students with knowledge, multi-task ministry skills and character formation which should contribute positively toward Christian unity, and the transformation of the culture and community transformation.

## Appendix I

## LIST OF THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTIONS

Note : ATEM = Association for Theological Education in Myanmar. TED = Theological Education Department. ATESEA = Association for Theological Education in South East Asia.

| S. No. | Name of Schools/Centers | Year of Estb. | Affiliated Denominations | Degrees Offer | Affiliated Theol. Associations | Accredited by ATESEA | Location |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Advancing Christ Theological Seminary | 1989 | Church on The Rock | BTh, MDiv | Independent | | Yangon |
| 2 | Advance Institute of Mission | | | | Independent | | |
| 3 | Akha Baptist Bible School | 1976 | Akha Baptist Convention | | TED | | Kengtong |
| 4 | Aletheia Christian Theological Seminary | 2002 | | BTh | Independent | | Kalaymyo |
| 5 | All Nations Theological Seminary | 2001 | Siyin Baptist Convention | BTh | TED/ ATEM | | Thanlyn |
| 6 | Asho Chin Theological Seminary | 1954 | Asho Chin Baptist Convention | BTh | TED/ ATEM/ ATESEA | BTh | Pyay |

| S. No. | Name of Schools/Centers | Year of Estb. | Affiliated Denominations | Degrees Offer | Affiliated Theol. Associations | Accredited by ATESEA | Location |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7 | Act Bible College | 1980 | Church on The Rock | BTh | Independent | | Yangon |
| 8 | Anchor Theological and Bible Inst. | 2003 | Timothy Sui Lian-Mang | BTh | Independent | | Yangon |
| 9 | Antioch College & Seminary | 1999 | Assembly of God | BTh | Independent | | Yangon |
| 10 | Apostolic Christian Bible College | 1988 | United Pentecostal Church | BTh | Independent | | Yangon |
| 11 | Asian Logos Theological Seminary | 2004 | | | Independent | | |
| 12 | Asian Theological Seminary & Mission Training School | 1999 | Rev. Ah Khi | BTh, MDiv | Independent | | Yangon |
| 13 | Bago-Yangon Karen Baptist Bible School | 2005 | Bago-Yangon Karen Baptist Association | | TED | B.Th& MDiv | Bago |
| 14 | Believers Church Biblical Seminary | | | | Independent | | Dagon (Ygn) |

| S. No. | Name of Schools/Centers | Year of Estb. | Affiliated Denominations | Degrees Offer | Affiliated Theol. Associations | Accredited by ATESEA | Location |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 15 | Bethany Theological Seminary | 1996 | Bethany Independent Presbyterian Church | BTh, MDiv | ATA | | Yangon |
| 16 | Bethel Baptist Bible Institute | 2001 | Bethel Baptist Church | BTh | Independent | | |
| 17 | Bethel Bible | 1999 | Assemblies of God | BTh | Independent | | Tedim |
| 18 | Bethel Bible Institute (BBI) | 2000 | Bethel (AG) Church | BMin | Independent | | Yangon |
| 19 | Bethel Theological Seminary | 1989 | Lairawn Baptist Association | BTh, MDiv | TED/ ATEM/ ATESA | B.Th& MDiv | Tahan Kalaymyo |
| 20 | Beulah Theological Seminary | 2003 | Abundant Life Church | BTh | Independent | | Yangon |
| 21 | Biblical School of Theology | 2003 | - | | Independent | | Falam |

| S. No. | Name of Schools/Centers | Year of Estb. | Affiliated Denominations | Degrees Offer | Affiliated Theol. Associations | Accredited by ATESEA | Location |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 22 | Biblical School of Theology | 1996 | Rev. Dr. Timothy Sui LianMang& Family | BA,MA (Theol) | Independent | | Yangon |
| 23 | Biblical Institute of Theology | 2012 | | BTh | Independent | | Yangon |
| 24 | Bible Training Center for Pastors | 1998 | | | Independent | | Yangon |
| 25 | Calvary Bible College | 1997 | Assemblies of God | BTh | Assembly of God | | Haka |
| 26 | Canaan Theological College | | | | Independent | | Yangon |
| 27 | Chin Baptist Theological College | 2016 | Rev. Hoi Cung Tum | BTh | Independent | | Haka |
| 28 | Chin Christian University | 1990 | CACC | B.Th& MDiv | TED/ ATEM/ ATSEA | B.Th& MDiv | Haka |

| S. No. | Name of Schools/Centers | Year of Estb. | Affiliated Denominations | Degrees Offer | Affiliated Theol. Associations | Accredited by ATESEA | Location |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 29 | Chin Christian Inst. of Theol. | 1953 | Chin Baptist Convention | B.Th& MDiv | TED/ ATEM/ ATSEA | B.Th& MDiv | Falam |
| 30 | Chin School of Evangelism | 1990 | Church on the Rock | D.Min | Independent | | Yangon |
| 31 | Christian Theological Seminary | 2000 | Thadou and Kuki Chin Baptist Association | BTh | TED/ ATEM | | Tamu |
| 32 | Christian International School of Theology | | | | Independent | | Yangon |
| 33 | Center for Mission and Culture Research | | CingKhen Mung | B.Th | Independent | | Yangon |
| 34 | Christian International School of Theology | 2003 | Rev. Dr. Michael Ken Kung | B.Th | Independent | | Yangon |
| 35 | Christian Theological College | 2000 | Myanmar Presbyterian Community Church | BTh | Independent | | Yangon |

| S. No. | Name of Schools/Centers | Year of Estb. | Affiliated Denominations | Degrees Offer | Affiliated Theol. Associations | Accredited by ATESEA | Location |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 36 | Church Planting Institute | 2004 | People Evangelical C. | | Independent | | Yangon |
| 37 | Church Planting School | | Rev. Va Bi | Diploma | Independent | | Yangon |
| 38 | Christian Bible Training Center | | | | Independent | | Yangon |
| 39 | Christian Theological Seminary | | Baptist | | TED/ ATEM | | Tamu |
| 40 | Church Planting Training School | | Myanmar Vision Christian College | | Independent | | Yangon |
| 41 | Conner-stone Bible College | | | | Independent | | Yangon |
| 42 | Dagon Bible Institute | 2000 | Reaching the World Church | BTh | Independent | | Yangon |
| 43 | Dagon Bible University | | Bread of Life Church, | BTh | Independent | | Yangon |

| S. No. | Name of Schools/Centers | Year of Estb. | Affiliated Denominations | Degrees Offer | Affiliated Theol. Associations | Accredited by ATESEA | Location |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 44 | DaweiMyeik Bible School | 1960 | DaweiMyeik Baptist Association | | TED | | Dawei |
| 45 | Disciple Bible College | 2001 | Love Children Home, | BTh | Independent | | Yangon |
| 46 | Doulus Theological Seminary | 1999 | Biblical Church of Christ, | BTh | Independent | | Yangon |
| 47 | Eastern Bible institute | 1993 | U Hkhawng San Aung | BTh | Independent | | Yangon |
| 48 | Ebenezer Theology Seminary | | Dr. KapSuan Pau | BTh | Independent | | Yangon |
| 49 | Elim Missionary Training School | 2001 | Adundant Life | | Independent | | Yangon |
| 50 | Elshadai Theology College | 1996 | | BTh | Independent | | Kalaymyo |
| 51 | Emmanuel Theological Seminary | 2002 | Evangelical Assembly Church | BTh | Independent | | Kalaymyo |

| S. No. | Name of Schools/Centers | Year of Estb. | Affiliated Denominations | Degrees Offer | Affiliated Theol. Associations | Accredited by ATESEA | Location |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 52 | Emmaus Theological Seminary | 1996 | Assemblies of God | Dip. Theo. | Independent | | Kalaymyo |
| 53 | Evangelical Baptist Bible Seminary | 1986 | | BTh | Independent | | Yangon |
| 54 | Evangelical Baptist Bible School | | Evangelical Baptist Church | BTh | Independent | | |
| 55 | Evangelical College of Theology | 2002 | Evangelical Assembly Church | | Independent | | Kalaymyo |
| 56 | Evangelical Baptist School of Miss. | 2007 | Rev. Dr. Pau Khan Khai | BTh | Independent | | Kalaymyo |
| 57 | Evangelical Bible College | 1979 | Assembly of God in Myanmar General Council | BA (Bible) | Independent | | Yangon |
| 58 | Evangelical Bible Seminary | 1991 | MYC | BTh | Independent | | Yangon |

| S. No. | Name of Schools/Centers | Year of Estb. | Affiliated Denominations | Degrees Offer | Affiliated Theol. Associations | Accredited by ATESEA | Location |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 59 | Evangelical Bible School | 1999 | Evangelical Christian Church | BTh, BD | Independent | | Yangon |
| 60 | Evangelical Christian Bible School | 1999 | Dr. Van Cung Tum | BTh | Independent | | Yangon |
| 61 | Evangelical Bible Seminary | 1986 | Peace Baptist Church | BTh, MDiv | Independent | | Yangon |
| 62 | Evangelical Reformed Seminary | 2003 | United Reformed Church in Myanmar | BTh | Independent | | Yangon |
| 63 | Faith Bible Training Center | 1998 | International Christian Center | | Independent | | Yangon |
| 64 | Faith Bible College & Theological College Myanmar | 1986 | Evangelical Baptist Church | BTh, MDiv | Independent | | Yangon |
| 65 | Faith Theological College | 2007 | | BTh | Bethel Bible | | Kalaymyo |

| S. No. | Name of Schools/Centers | Year of Estb. | Affiliated Denominations | Degrees Offer | Affiliated Theol. Associations | Accredited by ATESEA | Location |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 66 | Full Gospel Bible Training Center | 1996 | Full Gospel Association | Dip. Th | Independent | | Yangon |
| 67 | Full Gospel Institute of Ministry | | Full Gospel Assembly | | Independent | | Yangon |
| 68 | Faith Bible Training School of Theology | 1998 | International Christian Center | Dip. Theol. | Independent | | Yangon |
| 69 | Faith Bapt. Theol. Seminary | | Rev. Do. Do Suan Mung, | BTh | Independent | | Yangon |
| 70 | Far Eastern Fundamental School of Theology | 1987 | Evangelical Presbyterian Church | BTh | Independent | | Yangon |
| 71 | Free Gospel Outreach Bible College | 1999 | Evangelical Free Church of Myanmar | BTh | Independent | | Yangon |
| 72 | Gideon Bible College | 1995 | Brethren Assembly | BTh | Independent | | Kalaymyo |

| S. No. | Name of Schools/Centers | Year of Estb. | Affiliated Denominations | Degrees Offer | Affiliated Theol. Associations | Accredited by ATESEA | Location |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 73 | Gospel Baptist Bible College & Seminary | 1997 | Gospel Baptist Church Convention | BTh, MDiv | Independent | | Yangon |
| 74 | Gospel Baptist Bible Seminary | 1987 | Myanmar Gospel Baptist Church Convention | BTh, MDiv | Independent | | Yangon |
| 75 | Gospel for Asia Bible College | 1992 | Believers' Church of Jesus Christ | BTh, MDiv | Independent | | Yangon |
| 76 | Grace School of Mission | 2003 | | BTh | Independent | | Yangon |
| 77 | Grace Baptist Theological College and Seminary | | Grace Baptist Church | BTh, MDiv | Independent | | Yangon |
| 78 | Grace Bible College | 1995 | Evangelical Christian Mission Church | BTh | Independent | | Yangon |

| S. No. | Name of Schools/Centers | Year of Estb. | Affiliated Denominations | Degrees Offer | Affiliated Theol. Associations | Accredited by ATESEA | Location |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 79 | Grace Bible Seminary | 1999 | Rev. Ai Za Len | BTh | Individual | | Yangon |
| 80 | Grace Theological College | | Methodist Protestant Church | BTh | Independent | | Yangon |
| 81 | Grand Rapid Baptist Seminary | 1994 | Evangelical Baptist Church | MRE | Independent | | Yangon |
| 82 | Grace Music Institute | | | | Independent | | Yangon |
| 83 | Grace Theological College | 2016 | Grace and Truth Church | BTh | Independent | | Yangon |
| 84 | Hermon Biblical School of Theol. | | | | Independent | | Yangon |
| 85 | Harvester Theological Institute | | Harvester Christian Center | BTh | Independent | | Yangon |
| 86 | Hinthada Karen Baptist Bible School | 1967 | Hinthada Karen Baptist Association | | TED | | Hinthada |

| S. No. | Name of Schools/Centers | Year of Estb. | Affiliated Denominations | Degrees Offer | Affiliated Theol. Associations | Accredited by ATESEA | Location |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 87 | Holiness Theological Seminary | 1999 | Christian and Missionary Alliance | BTh | Independent | | Yangon |
| 88 | Holy Lighten College | | | BTh | Independent | | Yangon |
| 89 | House of Praise Bible Institute | 1997 | Myanmar Church Planting Mission | BTh | Independent | | Yangon |
| 90 | Holy Cross Theological College | 1935 | Church of the Province of Myanmar (Anglican) | BTh | ATEM/ ATESEA | | Yangon |
| 91 | Hpa An Mawlamyine Bible School | | | | TED | | Hpa-An |
| 92 | HpuKee Ku Bible School | 1932 | Kyar Inn Baptist Association | | TED | | Kya-inn-seikyi |
| 93 | Hpu Mya San Bible School | 1985 | Pathein-Myaung-myaPwo-Karen Baptist Associatio | | TED | | Pathein |

| S. No. | Name of Schools/Centers | Year of Estb. | Affiliated Denominations | Degrees Offer | Affiliated Theol. Associations | Accredited by ATESEA | Location |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 94 | HpuHsanPwo Bible School | 1959 | Pwo Karen Baptist Convention | | TED | | Hpa-an |
| 95 | Hpu Saw Bu Bible School | 1969 | | | TED | | Maungmya |
| 96 | HsawHtit Bible School | 1970 | Shwekyin Baptist Association | | TED | | Kyaukkyi |
| 97 | Immanuel PwoKyin Bible School | 1971 | Kachin Baptist Convention | | TED | | Myeik |
| 98 | International Mission Bible College | 2002 | Reformed Evangelical Church | | Independent | | Kalaymyo |
| 99 | Institutes for Mission and Church Planting | 1996 | LBC | BTh | Independent | | Yangon |
| 100 | Kachin Theological College, Kutkai | 1932 | Kachin Baptist Convention | BTh, MDiv, MTh | TED/ ATEM/ ATESEA | | Kutkai |

| S. No. | Name of Schools/Centers | Year of Estb. | Affiliated Denominations | Degrees Offer | Affiliated Theol. Associations | Accredited by ATESEA | Location |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 101 | Kachin Theological College & Seminary | 1901 | Kachin Baptist Convention | BTh | TED/ ATEM/ ATESEA | BTh, MDiv | Nawng Nang |
| 102 | Kalay Theological College | | | BTh | TED | | Kalay-myo |
| 103 | Kalay Gospel Baptist Bible College | 2007 | Gospel Baptist Church, Kalay Association | BTh | | | Tahan Kalamyo |
| 104 | Karen Bapt. Theol. Seminary | 1890 | Karen Baptist Convention | BTh, MDiv | TED/ ATEM/ ATESEA | | Yangon |
| 105 | Kayah Baptist Bible School | 2005 | Kayah Baptist Convention | | TED | | Demaw-so |
| 106 | KoThaByu Theological Seminary | 1942 | PatheinMyaung-mya Association | BTh, MDiv | TED/ ATEM/ ATESEA | BTh, MDiv | Pathein |

| S. No. | Name of Schools/Centers | Year of Estb. | Affiliated Denominations | Degrees Offer | Affiliated Theol. Associations | Accredited by ATESEA | Location |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 107 | Kyaukdaw Independent Theological Seminary | 2018 | Independent Presbyterian Church of Myanmar | | | | Kyaukdaw |
| 108 | Kyaing Tone Lahu Bapt. Bible S. | 1967 | | | TED | | Kyaingtong |
| 109 | Lahu Theological Seminary | 1950 | Lahu Baptist Convention | BTh | TED/ ATEM/ ATESEA | BTh | Kyaingtone |
| 110 | Lisu Bible School of Myanmar | 1969 | | | TED | | Myitkyina |
| 111 | Life Bible College | | Four Square Church of Myanmar | | Independent | | Yangon |
| 112 | Life Theological College | 2000 | Fundamental Baptist Church Myanmar | BTh | Independent | | Yangon |

| S. No. | Name of Schools/Centers | Year of Estb. | Affiliated Denominations | Degrees Offer | Affiliated Theol. Associations | Accredited by ATESEA | Location |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 113 | Life Theological Seminary (Alpha Bible College) | 2002 | | BTh | Independent | | Yangon |
| 114 | Living Center Theological Seminary | 2001 | Myanmar Evangelical Reformed Baptist Assembly | BTh, MDiv | Independent | | Yangon |
| 115 | Living Water Theological Seminary | | Living Water Evangel Church | BTh | Independent | | Yangon |
| 116 | Living Water Worker Training | 2003 | Living Water Church | | Independent | | Yangon |
| 117 | Lisu Theological Seminary of MM. | 1969 | Lisu Baptist Convention | BTh, MDiv | Independent | | Lashio |
| 118 | Logos Baptist Bible College | | Rev. ThaShwe Thein | BTh | Independent | | Yangon |
| 119 | Logos Evangel Institute of Theology & Mission | | Logos Assembly Church | MDiv, MTh | Independent | | Yangon |
| 120 | Lorrain Theological College | 2003 | Mara Evangelical Church | BTh | ATEM | | Yangon |

| S. No. | Name of Schools/Centers | Year of Estb. | Affiliated Denominations | Degrees Offer | Affiliated Theol. Associations | Accredited by ATESEA | Location |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 121 | LR Powkey Memorial Bible School | | | BTh | TED/ ATEM | | Tweentay |
| 122 | Mandalay Bible Seminary | 1985 | Fundamental Baptist Church of Myanmar | BTh | Independent | | Mandalay |
| 123 | Maranatha Bible College | 1984 | Assembly of God | BTh | Independent | | Kalaymyo |
| 124 | McNeilus Maranatha Christian C. | | | | Independent | | Yangon |
| 125 | Methodist Institute of Theology | 1987 | Methodist Church, Lower Myanmar | LTh | ATEM | | Thanlyn |
| 126 | Minister Training College | 2002 | Rev Lal LianMang | BTh | Independent | | Yangon |
| 127 | Ministers' Training School | 1999 | 9 Mile Christian Church | | Independent | | |
| 128 | Myanmar Chinese Christian Preachers' Training Center | 1983 | | | Independent | | |

| S. No. | Name of Schools/Centers | Year of Estb. | Affiliated Denominations | Degrees Offer | Affiliated Theol. Associations | Accredited by ATESEA | Location |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 129 | Missionary Bible Institute | 1995 | Rev. Michael H. Zahau | BTh | Independent | | Yangon |
| 130 | Missionary Training Center & Christian Theological Seminary | | Myanmar Christian Church | BTh | Independent | | Yangon |
| 131 | Missionary Training School | 1992 | Missionary Church | BTh | Independent | | Yangon |
| 132 | Mission Training Center | 2003 | (Win) Myanmar Christian Church | BTh | Independent | | |
| 133 | Moe Hok Baptist Seminary | 2004 | Tachileik Shan Baptist Association | | Independent | | |
| 134 | Mon Baptist Theol. Seminary | 1950 | Mon Baptist Convention | | TED/ ATEM | | Mawlamaing |
| 135 | Mount Zion Bible Institute | | Saya Thang Bwee | BTh- | Individual | | |
| 136 | Myanmar Bible Institute | 2004 | Biblical Baptist Church | BTh | | | Yangon |

| S. No. | Name of Schools/Centers | Year of Estb. | Affiliated Denominations | Degrees Offer | Affiliated Theol. Associations | Accredited by ATESEA | Location |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 137 | Myanmar Bible Seminary | 2003 | Biblical Church | BTh | Individual | | Yangon |
| 138 | Myanmar Biblical Christian Inst. | | | | Independent | | |
| 139 | Myanmar Bible Christian Institute | 2003 | Myanmar Biblical Christian Fellowship | BTh | Independent | | |
| 140 | Myanmar Center of Theological Studies | 1993 | Rev. Dr. Aung Mang | BThM-Div | Independent | | |
| 141 | Myanmar Christian Seminary | 1991 | Myanmar Christian Mission Fellowship | BThM-Div | Independent | | |
| 142 | Myanmar Evangelical Graduate School of Theology | 1996 | MECF Rev. Dr. Aung Mang, | BTh, MDiv | Non-Denomination | | Yangon |
| 143 | Myanmar Evangelical Mission Bible College | 2004 | Church of Jesus Christ | | Independent | | Yangon |
| 144 | Myanmar Evangelical Theological Seminary | 2001 | Myanmar Bible Mission Church | BTh, MDiv | Independent | | Yangon |

| S. No. | Name of Schools/Centers | Year of Estb. | Affiliated Denominations | Degrees Offer | Affiliated Theol. Associations | Accredited by ATESEA | Location |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 145 | Myanmar Global Central Theological Seminary | | Rev. Benjamin LianBoi | BTh | Independent | | |
| 146 | Myanmar for Christ Bible College | 1999 | Biblical Church of Christ | BTh | Independent | | Kalaymyo |
| 147 | Myanmar Harvest Bible Institute | | Yangon Christian Church | BABS | Independent | | |
| 148 | Myanmar Training Theological Studies | 1993 | Assembly of God | BTh | Independent | | Yangon |
| 149 | Myanmar School of Bible and Miss. | 1989 | Myanmar Apostolic Church | BTh | Independent | | |
| 150 | Myanmar School of Theology and Mission | 1989 | Full Gospel Center | BTh | Independent | | Yangon |
| 151 | Myanmar School of Bible & Mission Cana Garden | | | | Independent | | |
| 152 | Myanmar Vision Christian College | 1999 | Agape Orphanage Center | BThM-Div | Independent | | |

| S. No. | Name of Schools/Centers | Year of Estb. | Affiliated Denominations | Degrees Offer | Affiliated Theol. Associations | Accredited by ATESEA | Location |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 153 | Myanmar Institute of Christian Theology | 1836 | Myanmar Baptist Union & Myanmar Baptist Women Mission A. | BTh, MDiv. | TED/ ATEM/ ATESEA | BTh, MDiv. | Yangon |
| 154 | Myanmar Institute of Theology | 1927 | Myanmar Baptist Union | MDiv. MTh, DMin, PhD | TED/ ATEM/ ATESEA | MDiv, MTh | Yangon |
| 155 | Myanmar Theological College | | Methodist Church, Upper Myanmar | BTh, MDiv. | ATEM/ ATESEA | BTh, MDiv | Mandalay |
| 156 | Myanmar Training School | 1992 | Tabernacle Missionary Church | BTh | Independent | | |
| 157 | Myanmar Union Adventist Sem. | | | | Independent | | |
| 158 | Myanmar Vision Christian College | 2002 | | | Independent | | Yangon |

| S. No. | Name of Schools/Centers | Year of Estb. | Affiliated Denominations | Degrees Offer | Affiliated Theol. Associations | Accredited by ATESEA | Location |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 159 | Myitkyina Baptist Mission School | 2003 | | | TED | | Myitkyina |
| 160 | Myitkyina Christian Seminary | | | | Independent | | Myitkyina |
| 161 | Myanmar Music College | | | Diploma | Independent | | Yangon |
| 162 | Naga Baptist Bible School | 1983 | Naga Baptist Convention | | TED | | Hkhamti |
| 163 | Northern Shan State Union Christian College | 1993 | N. Shan State Union Baptist Association | BTh | TED/ ATEM | | Lashio |
| 164 | Northern Shan State Lahu Bible S. | 1972 | Lahu Baptist Association | BTh | TED | | Lashio |
| 165 | Nyaung Lay Pin Baptist Christian Bible School | 1965 | Naung Lay Baptist Association | | TED | | Nyaung-lay-pin |
| 166 | Paku Divinity School | 1997 | Paku Baptist Association | Diploma | ATEM | | Taungoo |

| S. No. | Name of Schools/Centers | Year of Estb. | Affiliated Denominations | Degrees Offer | Affiliated Theol. Associations | Accredited by ATESEA | Location |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 167 | Papun Karen Baptist Bible School | 1952 | Papun Karen Baptist Association | | TED | | Papun |
| 168 | Pastor Training School | | | | Independent | | Yangon |
| 169 | Praise and Worship Training Col. | | | | Independent | | Yangon |
| 170 | Peniel Bible College | | Rev. Moses Lian-Cuh | BTh | Independent | | Yangon |
| 171 | Peniel Bible College | 1997 | Rev. NgunMang | BTh | Independent | | Hmawbi |
| 172 | Pentecostal Bible Seminary | | Rev. John Jung Thang | BTh | Independent | | Yangon |
| 173 | Reaching the World Bible College | 1999 | Reaching the World | BTh | Independent | | Yangon |
| 174 | PwoKayin Theological Seminary | 1883 | PwoKayin Baptist Association | BTh | TED/ ATEM/ ATESEA | BTh | Yangon |

| S. No. | Name of Schools/Centers | Year of Estb. | Affiliated Denominations | Degrees Offer | Affiliated Theol. Associations | Accredited by ATESEA | Location |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 175 | PyawgonePwoKayin Bible School | 1966 | Kyonepyaw-Kaunggone Baptist Association | BTh | TED | | Kyonepyaw |
| 176 | Pyay -Thayarwady Karen Baptist Bible School | 2004 | Pyay Tharyarwady Baptist Association | | TED | | Tharawady |
| 177 | Reformed Christian College | 1989 | | | Independent | | Yangon |
| 178 | Reformed Theological College | 1987 | Christian Reformed Church | BTh | Independent | | Yangon |
| 179 | Reformed Theological Seminary | 1995 | Dr. TialHlei Thang | BTh | Independent | | Yangon |
| 180 | Restoration Bible Institute | 1999 | Church of Christ | BTh | Independent | | Yangon |
| 181 | Rhema Bible College | 1988 | Assemblies of God | BTh | Independent | | Kalaymyo |
| 182 | Shan Bible College of Myanmar | 2004 | Shweli Shan Baptist Association | BTh | TBC/ ATEM | | Muse |

| S. No. | Name of Schools/Centers | Year of Estb. | Affiliated Denominations | Degrees Offer | Affiliated Theol. Associations | Accredited by ATESEA | Location |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 183 | Shan State Baptist Theological Seminary | | Southern Shan State Home Mission Association | BTh | TED/ ATEM/ ATESA | BTh | Taunggyi |
| 184 | Shiloh Bible College | 2000 | | BTh | Independent | | Mandalay |
| 185 | South East Asia Bible College | | Rev. Dal ZaCin, Yangon | BTh | Independent | | Yangon |
| | | | | | | | |
| 186 | South East Asia Nazarene Bible College | | Nazarene Church | BTh | Independent | | Yangon |
| 187 | St. Peter Theological Seminary | | Anglican Church of Myanmar | | ATEM | | Taungoo |
| 188 | Trinity Lisu Theol. College | | | | ATEM | | Moggoke |
| 189 | Tahan Institute of Theology | 2000 | The Methodist Church, Tahan District | BTh | ATEM | | TahanKalaymyo |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 190 | TachileihLahu Baptist Bible School | 1998 | TachileihLahu Baptist Association | | TED | | Tachileih |
| 191 | Tahan Theological College | 1987 | Presbyterian Church of Myanmar | BTh, MDiv | ATEM/ ATESEA | BTh, MDiv | TahanKalaymyo |
| 192 | Tedim Theological College | 1986 | Tedim Baptist Convention | BTh | TED/ ATEM/ ATESA | BTh | Tedim |
| 193 | Tedim Christian College | 2000 | Tedim Baptist Church, Yangon | BTh | TED/ ATEM | | Yangon |
| 194 | The Salvation Army Officers' Training College | 1956 | Salvation Army | | ATEM | | Yangon |
| 195 | The Word College | | Dr. Aung Myint Thang | MDiv | Independent | | Yangon |
| 196 | Theology School of Ministry | 1996 | | | Independent | | Yangon |
| 197 | Union Theological College | 1948 | Matupi Baptist Asso. | BTh | TED/ ATEM/ ATESA | BTh | Matupi |

| S. No. | Name of Schools/Centers | Year of Estb. | Affiliated Denominations | Degrees Offer | Affiliated Theol. Associations | Accredited by ATESEA | Location |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 198 | Union Bible Seminary | 1996 | Rev. Dr. Moris-Remlalliana | BTh | Independent | | Yangon |
| 199 | Vernecular Bible School | 2001 | Abundant Life | BTh | Independent | | Yangon |
| 200 | Victoria Bible Institute | | Ruth BawiHnem | BTh | Independent | | Yangon |
| 201 | Wa Bible School | 2013 | Wa Baptist Convention | Dipoma | TED | | Lashio |
| 202 | Waimaw Theological School | 2001 | Waimaw Baptist Association | | TED | | Waimaw |
| 203 | Yangon Karen Baptist Bible S. | 1956 | Baptist | LTh | TED/ ATEM | | Yangon |
| 204 | Yangon Theological Seminary | | Fundamental Bapt. Church Myanmar | BTh, MDiv | Independent | | Yangon |
| 205 | Yangon Bible College & Seminary | | Rev. Dr. Moe Myint Aung | BTh | Independent | | Yangon |

| S. No. | Name of Schools/Centers | Year of Estb. | Affiliated Denominations | Degrees Offer | Affiliated Theol. Associations | Accredited by ATESEA | Location |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 206 | Yangon Adventist Seminary (YAS) | | Seventh Day Adventist | | Independent | | Yangon |
| 207 | Yangon Christian College & Sem. | | Church of Christ | BTh, MDiv | Independent | | Yangon |
| 208 | Yangon Bible Seminary | 2000 | Fundamental Baptist Church | BTh | Independent | | Yangon |
| 209 | Yangon Bible Institute | 1995 | New hope Church | BTh | Independent | | Yangon |
| 210 | Zo Christian College | 2002 | | BTh | TED | | Kalaymyo |
| 211 | Zomi Theological Seminary | 2002 | Zomi Baptist Churches of Myanmar | BTh | Independent | | Kalaymyo |

## Appendix II

### Diagram of Member Churches in Myanmar Council of Churches (MCC)[24]

| S. No. | Name of Church | Population | Number of Theol. School | Remark |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Baptist Church (Myanmar Baptist Convention) | 1, 612, 350 | 48 | |
| 2 | Anglican Church (Church of the Province of Myanmar) | 63, 899 | 1 | |
| 3 | Methodist Church (Upper Myanmar) | 37, 065 | 1 | |
| 4 | Methodist Church (Lower Myanmar) | 3, 963 | 1 | |
| 5 | Lutheran Bethlehem Church | 1, 720 | - | |
| 6 | The Salvation Army Myanmar Region | 1, 909 | 1 | |
| 7 | St. Gabriel Church | 400 | - | |
| 8 | Self-Supporting Kayin Baptist Mission Society | 18, 500 | 1 | |
| 9 | Presbyterian Church of Myanmar | 33, 824 | 1 | |
| 10 | Independent Presbyterian Church | 4, 500 | 1 | |
| 11 | Lisu Christian Church of Myanmar | 16, 000 | 1 | |
| 12 | Mara Evangelical Church | 18, 271 | 1 | |
| 13 | Free Home Mission Church | 10, 790 | - | |

[24] Van Kung, MCC Silver Jubilee (1987-2012) Souvenir.

There are nine Cooperating Bodies under MCC. (1) Association for Theological Education in Myanmar (2) The Bible Society of Myanmar (3) Myanmar Christian Health Workers Service Association (4) Myanmar Christian Leprosy Mission (5) Myanmar Christian Literature Society (6) Myanmar Youth for Christ (7) National Council of YMCA of Myanmar (8) National Ecumenical Church Loan Fund of Myanmar and (9) National YWCA. 18 member Churches formed Myanmar Evangelical Christian Fellowship (MECF), and Myanmar Christ's Mission Cooperation (MCMC) is a comprising of 15 member churches. The four bodies - MCC, ATEM, MECF and MCMC formed a network called Myanmar Christian Forum (MCF). According to the research made in 2006, the total number of churches in Myanmar was 535.

# Proliferation of Theological Institutions in Indonesia

**Lenta Enni Simbolon•**

## 1. Introduction

Theological Education in Indonesia has been existing since the Dutch colonial era, before the independence day of Indonesia on August 17 in 1945. Jakarta Theological Seminary, formerly named HTS was founded in 1934.[1] Theological schools that were given birth before the 1970s were usually founded by a synod with establishment permits from the Ministry of Education and Culture[2]. But an interesting phenomenon, since the 2000s, theological schools have been established with the permission of the Ministry of Religious

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1 HTS is Hoogere Theologische School. Then it become Jakarta Theological Seminary in 1954. See http://sttjakarta.ac.id/?q=content/sejarah-singkat-stt-jakarta.

2 Ministry of Education and Culture was started in 1945. Since 2014 there are 2 ministries which are in charge of education, namely the Ministry of Education and Culture for basic education to middle education while the Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education is dedicated to managing all higher education, include higher theological education.

Affairs and since then, there has been an unstoppable proliferation. Currently there are 365 theological schools in Indonesia.[3]

The impact of this proliferation has been a priority concern of the Association of Theological Schools in Indonesia so called PERSETIA. In 1963, at the initiative of the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (CCI/PGI), PERSETIA was established to be a fellowship of all theological schools with a vision to advance and promote theological education in Indonesia. Today PERSETIA has 50 member schools and 41 prospective members. So, this article will be presented in the context of PERSETIA (its members and prospective members) regarded as the representative of theological schools in Indonesia, as the oldest and leading association.

This paper aims to show the phenomenon of the proliferation of theological schools in Indonesia in relation to the quality of theological education in Indonesia. This proliferation phenomenon is inseparable from government interference, especially the Ministry of Religious Affairs which has the authority to grant permission to establish theological schools. This paper will start from the historical development of the theological schools and show how proliferation happens, followed by the impact of the proliferation as well. Then we will see the fact of Quality versus Quantity in proliferation context in Indonesia.

## II. The Historical Development of Theological Education in Indonesia[4]

### a. Period 1945-1970

In the period 1945-1970, there were 14 theological schools

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[3] See Appendix I, from the database of Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education 2018. See https://forlap.ristekdikti.go.id/perguruantinggi/homerekap/NOVBOUQwQ0ItRUI3RC00NTk0LUJBMDEtQjAzRTE0QzcyNTY2/1

[4] Soleiman Yusak, *The Proceeding of PERSETIA General Assembly 2014: Learn and Grow up together in Doing Theology*, (Jakarta: PERSETIA, 2014), 180-182.

established by synods. We can see them in the table below.

| No | Name of School/ Seminary | Short Description (founder) |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Jakarta Theological Seminary | Founded by Prof Dr. Theodor Müller-Krüger with support from CCI and some synods. Now this school is cared for by a foundation, supported by Church Council in Indonesia (CCI) and 14 big synods such as Indonesian Christian Church (GKI), Javanese Christian Church (GKJ), Protestant Church in Western Indonesia (GPIB), Pasundan Christian Church (GKP), Protestant Church in Timor Island (GMIT), Protestant Church in Mollucan (GPM), GPI, Evangelical Church in Java (GITJ), Protestant Church in Minahasa Sulawesi (GMIM), Protestant Church in Kalimantan (GKE) etc. |
| 2 | Duta Wacana Theological School | Founded in 1962 as a result of the merger of Jogjakarta Theological Academy and Bale Wiyata Theological School, Malang. Founded by five church synods, namely Javanese Christian Church (GKJ), Indonesian Christian Church of Central Java (GKI Jateng), Indonesian Christian Church of East Java (GKI Jatim), East Java Christian Church (GKJW), and Evangelical Church in Java (GITJ). In later years, STT Duta Wacana gained support from more church synods i.e. Christian Church of Sumba (GKS), Indonesian Christian Church of West Java (GKI Jabar), Muria Christian Church in Indonesia (GKMI), Pasundan Christian Church (GKP), Protestant Christian Church in Bali (GKPB), Protestant Church in Western Indonesia (GPIB) and Christian Church of Southern Sumatra (GKSBS) joined. Seminary become Faculty of Theology now in Duta Wacana Christian University. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 3 | GPM Ambon Theological School | Founded by Protestant Church in Mollucan (GPM) synod. |
| 4 | Theological Academy of Kupang | Founded by 3 synods : Christian Church of Sumba (GKS), Protestant Church in Timor Island (GMIT), Protestant Church in Mollucan (GPM). |
| 5 | Theological Seminary of Eastern Indonesia (STT INTIM) | Founded by several synods : Protestant Church in Western Indonesia (GPIB), Toraja Church and Protestant Church in Luwu (GPIL). |
| 6 | HKBP Theological Seminary | Founded by Batak Christian Protestant Church (HKBP) synod |
| 7 | Theological Seminary of GKE | Founded by Protestant Church in Kalimantan (GKE) synod |
| 8 | GMIH/ Tobello Theological Seminary | Founded by the synod of The Evangelical Christian Church in Halmahera (North Moluccan) |
| 9 | GKST Theological Seminary | Founded by Protestant Church in Central Sulawesi (GKST) synod |
| 10 | ITKI/Bethel Seminary | Founded by Indonesian Bethel Church,a group of Christian Pentecostal churches synod. |
| 11 | Theological College I.S. Kijne | Founded by The Indonesia Christian Church in Papua (GKI) synod. |
| 12 | Theological Faculty of UKI Tomohon | Founded by Protestant Church in Minahasa Sulawesi (GMIM) synod. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 13 | Balewiyata Theological Institute | Founded by East Java Christian Church (GKJW) synod. |
| 14 | The Academy of Wiyata Wacana | Founded by several synods: Muria Christian Church in Indonesia (GKMI), Evangelical Church in Java (GITJ) and Javanese Protestant Church in Northern Part of Central Java (GKJTU). |

From the table above and the chart below, we can see that historically, all the schools were founded at least by a synod, not by a local church. The synod established seminaries in order to meet the need for ordained ministers to serve in the church. There was no concern about quality and there was no accreditation done yet by the state (through the National Accreditation Body) in this period. But the good news is, in this era, all the permits to provide education process came from the Ministry of Education and Culture in Indonesia.

**b. Period 1970-2000**[5]

In the period 1970-2000, there are 19 theological schools that were established by synods but also by missionaries. We can see them in the table below,

| No | Name of School/Seminary | Short Description (founder) |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Cipanas Theological Seminary | Founded by Rev. Paulus Kurniawan from Ketapang Church. |
| 2 | Aletheia Theological Seminary | Founded by some elders of Kristus Tuhan Chruch (GKT): Twan Tjhing, Liong Sing Ngien, Liem Boen Pin, Pdt. Joseph Tong. |

[5] Soleiman Yusak, *The Proceeding Member Assembly 2014: Learn and Grow up together in Doing Theology*, (Jakarta: PERSETIA, 2014),180-182.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 3 | Theological Seminary of Abdiel | Founded by Isa Almasih Church synod |
| 4 | Theological Faculty of Satya Wacana | Founded due Ds Basoeki Probowinoto dan Ds Tan Ik Hay, at that time it was Education College |
| 5 | Methodist Theological School Bandar Baru | Founded by Methodist Church in Indonesia |
| 6 | North Sumatera Theological School | Founded by the synod of Gereja Jemaat Allah Indonesia (GJAI) |
| 7 | Abdi Sabda Theological Seminary | Founded by GBKP synod, later supported by several synods : HKI, GKPI, GKPS, GKPA etc. |
| 8 | Graduate School of UKIT Tomohon | Founded due to the need of development of the undergraduate program |
| 9 | Graduate School of Satya Wacana | Founded due to the need of development of the undergraduate program |
| 10 | Jaffray Theological Seminary Makassar | Founded by Robert Alexander Jaffray, a Canadian in 1932. He is missionary from The Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA) with an evangelical and pietistic spirit. |
| 11 | Bandung Theological Seminary | Founded by Rev. Caleb Tong, Joseph Tong and Dorothy Irene Marx |
| 12 | The HKBP Pastor School of Theology | Founded by HKBP synod |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 13 | Reformed Theological Seminary of Indonesia | Founded by Reformed Church Indonesia |
| 14 | Rantepao Theological School | Founded by Toraja Church Synod |
| 15 | Southeast Asia Bible Seminary | Founded by Rev. Dr. Andrew Gih 1952 to answer the need for the lack of God's servants in Indonesia at that time, on his second trip from China to Indonesia. |
| 16 | Jaffray Theological Seminary Jakarta | Founded by Robert Alexander Jaffray, a Canadian in 1932. He is missionary from The Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA) with an evangelical and pietistic spirit. This School is the twin of STT Jaffray Makassar which began with the Distance Class Program. |
| 17 | Arastamar Evangelical Theological School Jakarta. | Founded by Matheus Mangentang with the vision "to reach the unreached people". |

There is a paradigm shift in this period, that seminary not only founded for ordained ministers but to empower Christian ministry, both ordained and non-ordained. Also the founders of the seminaries in this era are not only synods as but individuals as well. Another fact of this era is, the National Accreditation Body so called BAN-PT was established in 1994, based on Law No. 2 of 1989 concerning the National Education System, and also based on Government Regulation No. 60 of 1999 concerning Higher Education. BAN-PT is an independent body that is appointed and reports its duties to the Minister of Education and Culture. The main function of the

BAN-PT is to conduct assessment of the quality of higher education. The obligation for accreditation is certainly a good step to maintain the quality of theological education in Indonesia but for some schools, accreditation can be a nightmare. Since then PERSETIA has organized several programs such as a national workshop to prepare member school for accreditation.

It has been a long time since Theological Education has been active in Indonesia. Many graduates of Theological Education work both as pastors and experts and professionals in various fields of work. Therefore it is not excessive if Theological Education gets an equal level with various other scientific higher education institutions in Indonesia. That is the reason that PERSETIA together with colleagues from the Catholic Theological Education struggled, and in the 1990s succeeded, in compiling the National Curriculum of Higher Theological Education in Indonesia in response to the need for recognition of Theology as Science in Indonesia. The recognition is a result of long fight and was well received from the Minister of Education and Culture in 1996 with the issuance of Minister of Education and Culture Decree No 0359 / U / 1996 on Theology as Science in Indonesia.[6] But the situation changed when in 2007 when the government issued Government Regulation No. 55 of 2007 about religious education. This topic will be explained more in the further section.

**c. Period 2000s-Present**[7]

The development of the establishing theological school since the

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6 Soleiman Yusak, *PERSETIA Speech on CCI Assembly 2015*, Malinau 2015.

7 Soleiman Yusak, *The Proceeding Member Assembly 2014: Learn and Grow up together in Doing Theology*, (Jakarta: PERSETIA, 2014),180-182.

2000s until now can be seen in the table below:

| No | Name of School/ Seminary | Short Description |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Sundermann Theological Seminary | Founded by the synod of Nias Christian Protestan Church |
| 2 | Amanat Agung Theological Seminary | Founded by a local church: Gereja Kristus Jemaat Mangga Besar |
| 3 | Theological Faculty of UKIP Sorong, Papua | Founded by Ottow dan Geissler. |
| 4 | The State Christian College (STAKN) of Toraja | Founded by Ministry of Religion of Republic Indonesia |
| 5 | Theological School of GPI in Fakfak | Founded by GPI synod |
| 6 | Sangkakala Theological Seminary | Founded by the synod of Gereja Jemaat Kristen Indonesia |
| 7 | Institute Injil Indonesia | Founded by family of Rev. H. German Edey. |
| 8 | Rahmat Emanuel Theological Seminary | Founded by Rev. Dr. Abraham C Supit, a pastor in a local church of Bethel Church. |
| 9 | Lintas Budaya Theological College | Founded by Pdt. DR. S.J. Sutjiono from a local church of Gereja Kristus Rahmani. |
| 10 | Marturia Christian College | Founded by GKJ synod |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 11 | Indonesia Nazarene Theological College | Founded by the synod of Indonesia Nazarene |
| 12 | The Salvation Army Theological Seminary Palu | Founded by Salvation Army Indonesia |
| 13 | The State Christian College (STAKN) of Kupang | Founded by Ministry of Religion of Republic Indonesia |
| 14 | Mamasa Theological Seminary | Founded by Toraja Church Synod |
| 15 | Bible Study for Indonesian Rural Development | Founded by Peter Hidayat in cooperation with some synods: GKI Anugerah, GKIm Hosanna, Bandung; Persekutan Diaspora, Persekutuan Alumni Kristen (PAK) Bogor. |
| 16 | GKS Sumba Theological Seminary | Founded by the synod of Pretestant Church in Sumba |
| 17 | The State Christian College (STAKN) of Tarutung | Founded by Ministry of Religion of Republic Indonesia |
| 18 | IKAT Theological Seminary | Founded by Jimmy MR Lumintang |
| 19 | IMAN Theological Seminary of Jakarta | Founded by Rev. Dr. Timothy Dzao Sze Kwang, Rev. Moses Chow and Rev. Joshua Ong. |

In this era, we can see the various founders of the seminaries such as some synods, one synod, a local church, some church leaders, individuals and the last interesting one, the state through Ministry of Religious Affair. There are seven (7) Christian Colleges established

by the State in several cities such in Manado (STAKN Manado), Palangkaraya (STAKN Palangkaraya), Ambon (STAKN Ambon), Tarutung (STAKN Tarutung), Kupang (STAKN Kupang), Toraja (STAKN Toraja) and Sentani Papua (STAKN Sentani).[8] Three (3) of them are members of PERSETIA now.

In 2014, PERSETIA had 50 members and 10 prospective members. Now, PERSETIA has 38 prospective members. PERSETIA is not the only association in Indonesia. There is the Association of Evangelical Theological Schools called PASTI[9] and the Association of Pentecostal Theological Schools called PESATPIN. There are 365 theological educations in Indonesia now, as mentioned before. If we make a comparison to the Islamic higher education, it only has around 700 institutions. Based on Central Bureau of Statistics 2018, Indonesian population based on religion is, Islam 87%; Christian 7%; Catholic 3%; Hinduism 2%; Buddhism 1%. The comparison of population between Muslim and Christian is 87% to 7% however the astounding comparison of around 700 to 365 of Islamic higher education to higher theological education. This number is very illogical.[10] Why is the number of theological schools so big for only 7% of population in Indonesia? As the oldest association that goes side by side with the birth of theological schools in Indonesia, PERSETIA sees that Government Regulation No. 55 of 2007 about religious education and Law No. 12 of 2012 are the main contributors to the proliferation.

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8 The State Christian College establishment permit was carried out by General Directorate of Christian Community Guidance of Ministry of Religious Affairs.

9 PASTI was born in 1981, now it has 84 member schools.

10 Based on Central Bureau of Statistics 2018, Indonesian population based on the religion is: Islam 87 %, Christian 7 %, Catholic 3 %, Hinduism 2 %, Buddhism 1 %. See https://sp2010.bps.go.id/index.php/site/tabel?tid=321

**d. The Dilemma of the Law concerning Higher Education**

Since the late 1990s and throughout the 21st century there has been a counter-productive policy from the General Directorate of Christian Community Guidance of the Ministry of Religious Affairs which feels the most entitled to regulate the higher theological education in Indonesia.[11] PERSETIA repeatedly expressed its protest and expressed its criticism of several policies that damaged the integrity of theological study as science, for instance criticism to Government Regulation No. 55 of 2007. This regulation legally allows the Ministry of Religious Affairs to accredit higher theological education in Indonesia. This is contrary to the Government Regulation No. 30 of 1990 and Minister of Education and Culture Decree No 0686 / U / 1991. According to Government Regulation No. 30 of 1990 article 121, the only state institution that has the right to carry out accreditation is the National Accreditation Body (BAN-PT).[12]

The law No. 12 of 2012, strictly regulating the administration of higher education and the authority of higher education is on the Ministry of Education and Culture, but there are several inconsistent articles and explanations of articles showing that there is authority on other specific ministries, for taking care of higher education. Articles and explanation of the articles are as follows:

> **Article 7 verse 1**
>
> The Minister (of Education and Culture) is responsible for the administration of Higher Education.

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[11] Term of Reference of National Consultation on Higher Theological Education of PERSETIA 2015.

[12] Soleiman Yusak, PERSETIA Speech on CCI Assembly 2015, Malinau 2015, page 2 and Term of Reference of National Consultation on Higher Theological Education of PERSETIA 2015.

**Article 7 verse 3**

The duties and authority of the Minister (of Education and Culture) for implementation higher education includes: granting and revocation of relevant permits with the administration of higher education ***except religious/ theological higher education.***[13]

**Article 30**

(1) The Government or Community can hold higher religious/theological education.

(2) Higher religious/theological education as intended in verse (1) in the form of universities, institutes, high schools, academy and can be in the form, pasraman, seminary, and other similar forms.

(3) Further provisions regarding higher religious/theological education is regulated by Government Regulation.

From several quotations of articles and above, it is clear that there has been a dualism between the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Religious Affairs. This causes difficulties for schools especially those established before 80s and which have Bachelor programs permitted under the Ministry of Education and Culture, but their Graduate and Doctoral programs permits are under the Ministry of Religious Affair, for example the Jakarta Theological Seminary, Faculty of Theology UKDW and so on.

Obviously, the law No. 12 of 2012 is a setback to the recognition of the Minister of Education and Culture Decree No 0359/U/1996 on Theology as Science in Indonesia. By this law, theological higher education was reduced to a kind of religious course, not an academic

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[13] See the PDF of the Law No 12 of 2012 in https://unnes.ac.id/wp-content/uploads/uu-12-2012.pdf

degree as other sciences. Since this regulation was issued, the Ministry of Religious Affairs has been very productive in issuing permits to open theological schools throughout Indonesia, although apparently not less than half of them can achieve the minimum Standards of National Accreditation Body (BAN-PT). The previous law said that the one who regulates higher education is the Minister of Education and Culture, but the law No. 12 of 2012 has given the authority to the Ministry of Religious Affairs. This confirms the monopoly of the Ministry of Religious Affairs for all higher theological education.

## III. The Current Situation of Theological Education in Indonesia

In the last decade, higher theological education in Indonesia spend a great deal of energy to adjust to many regulations from the government regarding higher education in Indonesia. There are at least 4 regulations among others which seize the focus of theological schools in Indonesia. Firstly, the Decree of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia No.154 of 2014 concerning the Cluster of Science. There is no more Theology as a study program in Higher Education nomenclature in Indonesia. It has ended an era where we got to know degrees like the Bachelor of Theology or Bachelor of Science (Theology).[14] Thus, theological schools in Indonesia need to advance a position, whether it is for the assistance of the Ministry of Religious Affairs or Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education. If Theology is still valued as a science that prepares pastors and theologians with a balanced and complete emphasis on theology as a science and practice, so the clusters must be a part of Humanity Studies with the new title of study program as we find as in overseas countries "Divinity Studies" with a Bachelor of Divinity. This new cluster is under the assistance

[14] Soleiman Yusak, *PERSETIA Speech on CCI Assembly 2015*, Malinau 2015, 2 and Term of Reference of National Consultation on Higher Theological Education of PERSETIA 2015.

of the Ministry of Research Technology and Higher Education.

In order to respond to this transformation, PERSETIA together with Catholic colleagues, in January 2018 formed an Association of Divinity Study and some PERSETIA member schools will start using this new title of study program from 2018. This choice was taken after a long struggle since 2012, since the law No.12 of 2012. PERSETIA is concerned about the low quality of higher theological education under the Ministry of Religious Affairs. It is so easy to give permission to establish a theological school giving a superficial understanding of theological education. It reduced theological education to become only a matter for 'religious experts', and no longer a broad and deep academic ability as well as being tested in the academic works. This low quality also goes hand in hand with the poor awareness and participation of the hundreds of ecumenical 'newcomers' theological schools. This is understandable, because some do reflect unhealthy fragmentation and competition among various churches, among church leaders who are also 'newcomers' in the free-market Christianity in Indonesia.

Secondly, there is the Government Regulation No. 17 of 2010 concerning Management and Implementation of Education. According to this regulation, there are important points related to the curriculum, based on competences, that refers to the National Education Standards. The competencies include the foundation of personality, mastery of science, technology, art, and or sports, attitudes and behavior in work, as well as mastery of the rules of community life in accordance with the expertise in work. The curriculum of the study program will experience change in line with the enactment of the Indonesian National Qualifications Framework (IQF) which emphasizes both competency and learning outcomes.

Facing this new standard, we found the fact that most of the PERSETIA member schools have not made changes to the curriculum in accordance with the demands of that regulation. Some

of the member schools of PERSETIA do not even know about and or implement the curriculum that was established in 2010. Then, this became a very hard work, when the Government Regulation No. 17 of 2010 (Article 97) insisted that all higher education implement IQF no later than 2012.[15] So curriculum review at theological schools in Indonesia becomes very urgent, considering this is related to full awareness as an institution that organizes education in the context of Indonesian society experiencing very rapid dynamics dealing with global competencies, especially in the context of the implementation of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC). Responding to this regulation, PERSETIA held a national workshop in which each member school was trained to review the curriculum based on the IQF and the action plan to accompany the implementation.

Thirdly, there is the Government Regulation No. 4 of 2014 concerning the Implementation of Higher Education and Higher Education Management which contains provisions on the management and organization of higher education. In article 28 it was emphasized that the higher education organization consists of policy makers, implementers of academics, supervisors and quality assurance, academic support or learning resources, and administrative or administrative executives. In line with this, the operational basis for the implementation of education must include the internal quality assurance system aspects along with the implementing unit (Article 32). In 2016 the Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education issued Guidelines for the Higher Education Quality Assurance System which became a guide for the implementation of external and internal quality assurance systems. This guideline

[15] Most school members face various kinds of constraints related to curriculum improvement, both constraints related to information issues about education political policies in Indonesia, and other problems related to higher education governance.

again confirms the absoluteness of the database that is used both for external quality assurance and internal quality assurance. Having this new regulation, PERSETIA held the national workshop on internal quality assurance on March 2018.

The last is the Regulation of Minister of Technology Research and Higher Education No. 100 of 2016 about establishment, change, and dissolution of higher education institutions. It caused fear for most theological schools. Let us look at some parts of this regulation which endanger theological schools, including:

> **Article 10 verse 2**
>
> The conditions referred to in paragraph (1) consist of:
> a) Curriculum is compiled based on graduate competencies in accordance with national standards of higher education ***(based on IQF)***
>
> b. ***Lecturer, at least 6 (six) lecturers for 1 (one) Study Program***
>
> e) The land for the campus (private campus) to be established is located in 1 (one) stretch that has at ***the least area 5,000 (five thousand) square meters*** for higher education, polytechnic, or academy.
>
> **Article 15**
>
> Changes in universities/higher education as referred to in Article 12 can consist of:
>
> d) ***Merging 2 (two) institution or more into 1 (new one).***
>
> e) ***Unification of 1 (one) institution or more into 1.***
>
> **Article 19**
>
> (1) Revocation of higher education permits as referred to in Article 17 paragraph 1 is carried out for reasons:

a) The higher education is declared ***not accredited by the National Accreditation Body (BAN-PT)***

These three articles are frightening for theological schools in Indonesia nowadays because most theological schools have only small limited area also limited financial ability; many study programs of those theological schools have not been accredited yet[16]; most theological schools do not meet the adequacy of lecturers.[17] Therefore, on one hand the possibility to do a merger is the new strategy so that those small schools are healthier but on the other hand, merger often seems like the end of everything. Previously Mohammad Nasir, The Minister of Research, Technology and Higher Education claimed that he has noted 127 names of higher education institutions that were categorized as potentially closed. As many as 25 of them have been officially revoked. If this regulation is consistently implemented then it is just like a time bomb, with a lot of schools waiting for the time to dissolve or merge as the consequences.

## IV. The Challenge of Theological Education in Indonesia: Quantity versus Quality

PERSETIA has 50 member schools of which only 12 are under the guidance of Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education. The rest of them are under the guidance of the Ministry of Religious Affairs.[18] PERSETIA is faithful to its initial vision to become a fellowship of theological schools in Indonesia to advance theological education and maintain the quality of theological education in Indonesia. It cannot be denied that the main indicator of the quality is accreditation's grade. The appendix III will show us that the existing study programs under the Ministry of Research,

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16 See the Appendix III

17 Soleiman Yusak, *op.cit., 1.*

18 See Appendix II

Technology and Higher Education generally have very satisfying accreditation grades. For example, all of the study programs of Jakarta Theological Seminary gets A, as well as Faculty of Theology of UKDW Yogyakarta.

The large number of theological schools does not automatically guarantee good quality. From Appendix III, most of the member schools who are under the Ministry of Religious Affairs only get a C in accreditation, there are a few who get B but we do not see many grade A as well. Actually, this is not only the picture of PERSETIA's members but also the image for all theological schools in Indonesia. Even worse, there are many study programs that have not been able to reach C or not been accredited. This is the most fundamental challenge for theological schools in Indonesia: to get out of the old paradigm[19] into a new commitment to focus on quality. For PERSETIA itself, having many members is not its dream. Among of 365 theological schools in Indonesia, only 50 schools are accepted as members. Small number with high quality is better than many unqualified members.

Another challenge faced by theological schools due to the reality of low quality is the readiness to merge with others. If the school wants to continue to exist and wants to be healthier, then merger must be seen as the best way out to be able to improve the quality of education and efficiency. We are challenged to be able to accept Merger positively as a government solution even though the technical implementation in the field is not easy.

Another challenge we face in Indonesia is the failure of theological schools to achieve the minimum standard. It is still

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[19] Old paradigm sees that theological school is only to product pastor, it is only for internal need of church and other primitive paradigm. Theological schools should also be responsible for the public and society instead the church.

easy to find many study programs without an accreditation grade. Therefore, if the school is unable to continue the education process, if the school is not able to achieve all the standards and if the school is unable to adjust to government regulation, then the school must be encouraged to quit and stop. Phasing out is an inevitable decision.

## V. Conclusion

PERSETIA as the oldest and most prominent association of theological schools in Indonesia, for decades has experienced the wave of changes in higher theological education. The proliferation of schools, the dualism of guidance between the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Research Technology Higher Education and facing so many new government regulations, shows that the government wants to control higher education even more tightly in the name of quality improvement.[20] But, the stakeholders of the theological schools, include the churches, need to be critical of the government and regulations if the regulations are counterproductive.

All the stakeholders of the theological education should be aware that Theological Education needs to be managed professionally-institutionally.[21] Quality should be the focus. Because Quality is at the heart of education, the achievement of universal participation in theological education will be fundamentally dependent upon the quality of education available.

## Appendix

1. Database of Theological Schools in Indonesia
2. Member School of PERSETIA and Prospective member
3. Directory of Accreditation Grade

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[20] Soleiman Yusak, *op.cit.,* p. 1

[21] *Ibid., p. 2*

**The Database of Higher Theological Education in Indonesia Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education 2018**

| No | Name of Education Institution | Location |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Universitas Kristen Indonesia Tomohon | North Sulawesi |
| 2 | Institut Agama dan Keagamaan Oikumene Indonesia Timur Ambon | Ambon, Mollucan |
| 3 | Institut Kristen Borneo | Kalimantan |
| 4 | Institut Injil Indonesia | East Java |
| 5 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Injili Indonesia Jakarta | Jakarta |
| 6 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Jakarta | Jakarta |
| 7 | STT Bethel Indonesia Jakarta | Jakarta |
| 8 | Sekolah Tinggi Theologia Injili Arastamar (SETIA) Jakarta | Jakarta |
| 9 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Jaffray Jakarta | Bandung |
| 10 | Sekolah Tinggi Alkitab Tiranus Bandung | Bandung |
| 11 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Baptis Bandung | Bandung |
| 12 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Kharisma Bandung | Bandung |
| 13 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Bethesda | Bogor |
| 14 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Kadesi Bogor | Bogor |
| 15 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Cianjur | Cianjur |
| 16 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Cipanas | Cipanas |
| 17 | STT Internasional Harvest Tangerang | Tangerang |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 18 | STT PRESBYTERIAN INDONESIA | Tangerang |
| 19 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Berita Hidup | Solo |
| 20 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Baptis Indonesia | Semarang |
| 21 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Intheos Surakarta | Surakarta |
| 22 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Efata Salatiga | Salatiga |
| 23 | STT Rhema Salatiga | Salatiga |
| 24 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Abdiel Ungaran | Ungaran |
| 25 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Magelang | Magelang |
| 26 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Diakonos | Purwokerto |
| 27 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Patria Blitar | Blitar |
| 28 | Sekolah Tinggi Alkitab Jember | Jember |
| 29 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Duta Panisal Jember | Jember |
| 30 | Sekolah Tinggi Pendidikan Agama Kristen (STIPAK) Malang | Malang |
| 31 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Yestoya Malang | Malang |
| 32 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi SAAT | Malang |
| 33 | Sekolah Tinggi Alkitab Surabaya | Surabaya |
| 34 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Injili Indonesia Surabaya | Surabaya |
| 35 | Sekolah Tinggi Theologi Injili Abdi Allah | Mojokerto |
| 36 | Sekolah Tinggi Alkitab Nusantara | Malang |
| 37 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Injili Indonesia Yogyakarta | Yogyakarta |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 38 | Sekolah Tinggi Agama Kristen Marturia Yogyakarta | Yogyakarta |
| 39 | Sekolah Tinggi Theologia Nazarene Indonesia | Yogyakarta |
| 40 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Johanes Calvin Bali | Bali |
| 41 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Injili Indonesia Bali | Bali |
| 42 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Abdi Sabda Medan | Medan |
| 43 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Bethel Medan | Medan |
| 44 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Injili Bethsaida Medan | Medan |
| 45 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Paulus Medan | Medan |
| 46 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Imanuel (SETITEL) Teluk Dalam Kabupaten Nias Selatan | South Nias |
| 47 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Palembang | Palembang |
| 48 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Basom | Riau |
| 49 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Injili Indonesia Batam | Batam |
| 50 | STT Lintas Budaya Batam | Batam |
| 51 | Sekolah Tinggi Agama Kristen Abdi Wacana Pontianak | Pontianak |
| 52 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Ekklesia Pontianak | Pontianak |
| 53 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Kalimantan | Kalimantan |
| 54 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Pontianak | Pontianak |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 55 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Gereja Kalimantan Evangelis (GKE) | South Kalimantan |
| 56 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Bethel Banjar Baru | Banjarmasin |
| 57 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Malinggang | Riau |
| 58 | Sekolah Tinggi Agama Kristen Samarinda | Samarinda |
| 59 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Bethel Samarinda | Samarinda |
| 60 | STT BISANRY MAKASSAR | Makassar |
| 61 | Sekolah Tinggi Agama Kristen Manado | Manado |
| 62 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Anderson Manado | Manado |
| 63 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi IKI El-Shaddai | Manado |
| 64 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Injili Indonesia Manado | Manado |
| 65 | STT Seapin Filadelfia Pinangunian Bitung | Bitung |
| 66 | STT Bala Keselamatan Palu | Palu |
| 67 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Injili Indonesia Ambon | Ambon, Mollucan |
| 68 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Dian Halmahera | Halmahera |
| 69 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Injili dan Kejuruan Kupang | Kupang |
| 70 | STT Abalbalat Wesleyan Kupang | Kupang |
| 71 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Baptis Papua, Abepura | Papua |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 72 | STAK Oikumene Noseni Biak Numfor | Biak, Papua |
| 73 | STT Gereja Protestan Indonesia (GPI) Papua | Papua |
| 74 | STFT GKI Izaak Samuel Kijne Jayapura | Jayapura |
| 75 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Erikson Tritt | Manokwari |
| 76 | Sekolah Tinggi Agama Kristen Merauke | Merauke |
| 77 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Walter Post Jayapura Papua | Papua |
| 78 | Sekolah Tinggi Agama Kristen Mesias Sorong | Sorong |
| 79 | STT Gereja Kemah Injil Indonesia (GKII) | Jakarta |
| 80 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Baptis Medan | Medan |
| 81 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Bandung | Bandung |
| 82 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi SAPPI Ciranjang | Ciranjang, West Java |
| 83 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi El-Shadday Surakarta | Surakarta, Solo |
| 84 | STT Institut Injil Indonesia Batu (I-3) | East Java |
| 85 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Baptis Independen Indonesia Purworejo | Purworejo |
| 86 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Marturia Tanjung Balai | North Sumatera |
| 87 | STT Periago | Jakarta |
| 88 | STT Salatiga | Salatiga |
| 89 | STT Bethany Balikpapan | Balikpapan |

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| 90 | STT INTIM Makassar | Makassar |
| 91 | STT Indonesia Manado (STTI Manado) | Manado |
| 92 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi IKSM Santosa Asih | Jakarta |
| 93 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Inalta | Jakarta |
| 94 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Pelita Bangsa | Cikarang, West Java |
| 95 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Reformed Indonesia | Jakarta |
| 96 | STT Baptis Independen Jakarta | Jakarta |
| 97 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Amanat Agung | Jakarta |
| 98 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Apostolos Jakarta | Jakarta |
| 99 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Lintas Budaya Jakarta | Jakarta |
| 100 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Tiberias Jakarta | Jakarta |
| 101 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Wesley Methodist Indonesia | Jakarta |
| 102 | STT Lighthouse Equipping Theological School (Lets) | Bekasi, West Java |
| 103 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Bethel The Way, Jakarta | Jakarta |
| 104 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Ecclesia Christi Jakarta | Jakarta |
| 105 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Eklesia Jakarta | Jakarta |
| 106 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Paulus Jakarta | Jakarta |

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| 107 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Apollos Jakarta | Jakarta |
| 108 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Baptis Jakarta | Jakarta |
| 109 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi IKAT Jakarta | Jakarta |
| 110 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Immanuel Nusantara Jakarta | Jakarta |
| 111 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Agapes Jakarta | Jakarta |
| 112 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Apostolic Jakarta | Jakarta |
| 113 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Doulos Jakarta | Jakarta |
| 114 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Pantekosta Jakarta | Jakarta |
| 115 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Victory Cibubur | Cibubur, West Java |
| 116 | STAK Sola Scriptura Jakarta | Jakarta |
| 117 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Rahmat Emmanuel Jakarta | Jakarta |
| 118 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Sunsugos Jakarta | Jakarta |
| 119 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Abdi Filadelfia Internasional | Jakarta |
| 120 | STT MAHKOTA Sion | Cakung, Jakarta |
| 121 | STT Biblika Jakarta | Jakarta |
| 122 | STT SAMUEL ELIZABETH | Jakarta |
| 123 | STT EKUMENE JAKARTA | Jakarta |
| 124 | SAAT MINISTRY CENTER | Jakarta |
| 125 | STT BAKTI FILADELFIA | Jakarta |

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| 126 | STT INJILI JAKARTA | Jakarta |
| 127 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologia Kabar Baik | Cianjur |
| 128 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Inti Bandung | Bandung |
| 129 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Misi Indonesia Bandung | Bandung |
| 130 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Misi Tuaian Semesta Bandung | Bandung |
| 131 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Presbyterian Shema | Cianjur |
| 132 | STT Kerusso Indonesia Bekasi | Bekasi, West Java |
| 133 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Arrabona Bogor | Bogor, west Java |
| 134 | Sekolah Tinggi Alkitab Penyebaran Injil (STAPIN) Majalengka | Majalengka West Java |
| 135 | STT Bina Muda Wirawan Tangerang | Tangerang |
| 136 | STT Injili Philadelphia Tangerang | Tangerang |
| 137 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Moriah Tangerang | Tangerang |
| 138 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Katharos Indonesia Bekasi | Bekasi, West Java |
| 139 | STT Tabernakel Kemuliaan-Nya | Surabaya, east Java |
| 140 | STT SKRIPTURA INDONESIA | Depok, West Java |
| 141 | STT Harapan Indah | Bekasi, West Java |
| 142 | STT Kalam Mulia Bandung | Bandung |
| 143 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Alkitabiah Eklesia | Semarang, Central Java |
| 144 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Kanaan Nusantara Ungaran | Ungaran, Central Java |

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| 145 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Kristus Alfa Omega | Semarang |
| 146 | STT Internasional Harvest Semarang | Semarang |
| 147 | STT Anugerah Alianse Semarang | Semarang |
| 148 | Sekolah Tinggi Agama Kristen Terpadu Pesat Salatiga | Salatiga |
| 149 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Berea Salatiga | Salatiga |
| 150 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Nusantara Salatiga | Salatiga |
| 151 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Sangkakala | Semarang |
| 152 | STT Jemaat Kristus Indonesia Salatiga | Salatiga |
| 153 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Soteria Purwokerto | Purwokerto |
| 154 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Injili Indonesia Purwokerto | Purwokerto |
| 155 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Tawangmangu | Tawangmangu, Central Java |
| 156 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Gamaliel | Surakarta, Solo |
| 157 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Torsina | Surakarta |
| 158 | STT Agape Indonesia Misi Internasional (AIMI) | Central Java |
| 159 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Simpson Ungaran | Ungaran, Central Java |
| 160 | Sekolah Tinggi Agama Kristen Wiyata Wacana Pati | Pati, central Java |
| 161 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Providensia | Malang |
| 162 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Elohim | Malang |
| 163 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Salem | Malang |

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| 164 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Satyabhakti | Malang |
| 165 | Sekolah Tinggi Alkitab Batu Malang | Malang |
| 166 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Bethany Surabaya | Surabaya |
| 167 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Parakletos Surabaya | Surabaya |
| 168 | Sekolah Tinggi Agama Kristen Abdi Wacana | Pontianak |
| 169 | STT Tabernakel Indonesia Surabaya | Surabaya |
| 170 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Efrata Surabaya | Surabaya |
| 171 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Adhi Wacana Surabaya | Surabaya |
| 172 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Aletheia | Malang |
| 173 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Tabernakel Lawang | Lawang, East Java |
| 174 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Happy Family | Surabaya |
| 175 | Sekolah Tinggi Alkitab GPDI Beiji | East Java |
| 176 | STT WIDYA AGAPE MALANG | Malang, east Java |
| 177 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Kadesi Yogyakarta | Yogyakarta |
| 178 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Lutheran Yogya | Yogyakarta |
| 179 | STT Berita Kitab Wahyu International | Yogyakarta |
| 180 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Biwara Wacana | Yogyakarta |
| 181 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Krestotes Indonesia Bali | Bali |

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| 182 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Kingdom Bali | Bali |
| 183 | STT Banua Niha Keriso Protestan Sundermann Nias | Nias, North Sumatera |
| 184 | STT Gereja Kristen Lutheran Indonesia Sihabong | North Sumatera |
| 185 | STT Gereja Metodis Indonesia (GMI) Bandar Baru | Sibolangit, North Sumatera |
| 186 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Global Misi Medan | North Sumatera |
| 187 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Itia Medan | North Sumatera |
| 188 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Siloam Medan | North Sumatera |
| 189 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Sola Gratia Medan | North Sumatera |
| 190 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Sumatera Medan | North Sumatera |
| 191 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Sumatera Utara | North Sumatera |
| 192 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi William Carey Medan | North Sumatera |
| 193 | STT Injili Indonesia Medan | North Sumatera |
| 194 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Renatus Pematang Siantar | North Sumatera |
| 195 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi HKBP | North Sumatera |
| 196 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Nias | North Sumatera |
| 197 | STT Oikumene Injili Sidikalang | North Sumatera |
| 198 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Imanuel Ministry El Shadday | Jakarta |
| 199 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Syalom Nias | North Sumatera |

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| 200 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Pelita Kebenaran | North Sumatera |
| 201 | STT Sola Fide | North Sumatera |
| 202 | Sekolah Tinggi Agama Kristen Emmanuel Agung Nias | North Sumatera |
| 203 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Reformed Injili Lumbantor | North Sumatera |
| 204 | STT INJILI ARASTAMAR NIAS SELATAN | North Sumatera |
| 205 | STT TRINITY PARAPAT | North Sumatera |
| 206 | STT Kasih Mentawai | West Sumatera |
| 207 | STT Ebenhaezer Tanjung Enim | South Sumatera |
| 208 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Agape Bandar Lampung | Lampung |
| 209 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Syalom Bandar Lampung | Lampung |
| 210 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Arastamar Bengkulu | Bengkulu |
| 211 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Calvary Batam | Batam |
| 212 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Huperetes Batam | Batam |
| 213 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Presbyterian Batam | Batam |
| 214 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Sidang Jemaat Kristus | Batam |
| 215 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Pantekosta Batam | Batam |
| 216 | STT ARASTAMAR RIAU | Riau |
| 217 | Sekolah Tinggi Agama Kristen PAIS Batam | Batam |

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| 218 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi ATI Anjungan Pontianak | Pontianak |
| 219 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Berea Pontianak | Pontianak |
| 220 | Sekolah Tinggi Theologia Injili Indonesia Pontianak | Pontianak |
| 221 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Borneo | Borneo |
| 222 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Khatulistiwa Sintang | Sintang |
| 223 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Immanuel Sintang Kal-bar | West Kalimantan |
| 224 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Tenggarong | East Kalimantan |
| 225 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Injil Arastamar Ngabang | West Kalimantan |
| 226 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Willfingger Kampung Baru | East Kalimantan |
| 227 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Injili Indonesia Samarinda | Samarinda |
| 228 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Kibaid Makale | Makale, South Sulawesi |
| 229 | Sekolah Tinggi Filsafat Jaffray Makassar | Makassar |
| 230 | STT YESYURUN ARASTAMAR SERITI LUWU | South sulawesi |
| 231 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Mamasa | Mamasa, West Sulawesi |
| 232 | STT SULBAR DI MAMUJU | Mamuju, West Sulawesi |
| 233 | Sekolah Tinggi Alkitab Ginosko Airmadidi | Jember |

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| 234 | Sekolah Tinggi Agama Kristen Apollos Manado | Manado |
| 235 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Missio Dei Indonesia | Manado |
| 236 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Rhema Pneumatikos | Manado |
| 237 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Pentakosta Mooat | Mooat, North Sulawesi |
| 238 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Parakletos Tomohon | Tomohon, Sulawesi |
| 239 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Tabernakel Tomohon | Tomohon, Sulawesi |
| 240 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Arastamar Mamasa | Mamasa, West Sulawesi |
| 241 | STT BAHTERA JOSIAS | Makassar |
| 242 | STT INJILI SETIA SIAU | Siau, North Sumatera |
| 243 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Istto Hikmat Wahyu | North Sulawesi |
| 244 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Filadelfia Langowan | Langowan, North Sulawesi |
| 245 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Injili Indonesia Palu | Palu, central Sulawesi |
| 246 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Marturia Palu | Palu, central Sulawesi |
| 247 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Palu | Palu, central Sulawesi |
| 248 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Pantekosta Poso | Poso, Central Sulawesi |
| 249 | STT Gereja Kristen Sulawesi Tengah | Central Sulawesi |

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| 250 | STT STAR'S LUB LUWUK BANGGAI | Luwuk Banggai, Sulawesi |
| 251 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Kalvari Maluku Utara | North Mollucan |
| 252 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Bethel Ambon | Ambon, Mollucan |
| 253 | Sekolah Tinggi Agama Kristen Informatika Timor | Timor |
| 254 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Arta Wacana Kupang | Kupang |
| 255 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Terpadu Waingapu | Waingapu, east NTT |
| 256 | STT Gereja Kristen Sumba | Lewa, east NTT |
| 257 | Sekolah Tinggi Theologia Injili Indonesia Lombok | Lombok Mataram |
| 258 | STT ARASTAMAR MATARAM | Mataram |
| 259 | STT SOE Prov. Nusa Tenggara Timur | NTT |
| 260 | STT INJILI INDONESIA KUPANG | Kupang |
| 261 | STT Gereja Injili di Indonesia | Yogyakarta |
| 262 | Sekolah Tinggi Agama Kristen Ampari Serui | Aceh |
| 263 | Sekolah Tinggi Agama Kristen Diaspora Wamena | Wamena, Papua |
| 264 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Reformasi Wamena | Wamena, Papua |
| 265 | STT LEVINUS RUMASEB SENTANI | Jayapura |
| 266 | STT ARASTAMAR WAMENA | Sentani, Papua |

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| 267 | STT INJILI ARASTAMAR NABIRE | Papua |
| 268 | STT ARASTAMAR MERAUKE | Merauke |
| 269 | STT PAPUA di Supiori | Papua |
| 270 | STAK Anak Bangsa | Surabaya |
| 271 | STT Anugrah | Surabaya |
| 272 | STT Pelita Hati | Bali |
| 273 | STT Petra | Samarinda |
| 274 | STT Advent Papua | Papua |
| 275 | STT Misi Bethany Jakarta | Jakarta |
| 276 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Reformed Injili Internasional | Jakarta |
| 277 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Iman Jakarta | Jakarta |
| 278 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Kenos Jakarta | Jakarta |
| 279 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Siloam Internasional | Medan |
| 280 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Indonesia Jakarta | Jakarta |
| 281 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Obaja Jakarta | Jakarta |
| 282 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Hagiasmos Mission Jakarta | Jakarta |
| 283 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Parausorat Nauli Jakarta | Jakarta |
| 284 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Global Glow Indonesia Jakarta | Jakarta |
| 285 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Sunergeo Banten | Banten |
| 286 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Sabda Agung (STTSA) | Surabaya |

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| 287 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Abdi Gusti Nganjuk | Nganjuk, east Java |
| 288 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Providensia Adonay | Batu, east java |
| 289 | Sekolah Tinggi Agama Kristen Teruna Bhakti | Yogyakarta |
| 290 | Sekolah Tinggi Agama Kristen Bina Citra Persada Medan | Medan |
| 291 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Diakones HKBP Balige | North Sumatera |
| 292 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Guru Huria HKBP Sipoholon | North Sumatera |
| 293 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Injili Betania Medan | Medan |
| 294 | Sekolah Tinggi Bibelvrouw HKBP Laguboti | North Sumatera |
| 295 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Injili Arastamar Tapanuli (STT Siarnauli) | Tapanuli |
| 296 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Bina Muda Wirawan Medan | Medan |
| 297 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Real Batam | Batam |
| 298 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Injili Setia Sintang | Sintang, West Kalimantan |
| 299 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Blessing Indonesia Makassar | Makassar |
| 300 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Agape Manado | Manado |
| 301 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Transformasi Indonesia | Manado |
| 302 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Huperetes Manado | Manado |

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| 303 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Manado | Manado |
| 304 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Hasta Marturia Manado | Manado |
| 305 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Kalvari Manado | Manado |
| 306 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Maranatha Manado | Manado |
| 307 | Sekolah Tinggi Agama Kristen Pais Talaud | Talaud |
| 308 | Sekolah Tinggi Agama Kristen Arastamar Soe (STAKAS) | NTT |
| 309 | Sekolah Tinggi Agama Kristen Manokwari | Manokwari |
| 310 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Russel Timika | Timika |
| 311 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Dian Eka Sabda Kalimantan Tengah | Central Kalimantan |
| 312 | Sekolah Tinggi Seni Musik Cantata Jakarta | Jakarta |
| 313 | STT Sriwijaya Palembang | Palembang, South Sumatera |
| 314 | STT Injili di Palembang | Palembang South Sumatera |
| 315 | STT Anugerah Sinagoge Medan | Medan |
| 316 | STT Sangkakala Jakarta | Jakarta |
| 317 | STT Real Jakarta | Jakarta |
| 318 | STT Pokok Anggur Jakarta | Jakarta |
| 319 | STT Krisba | Jakarta |
| 320 | STT Permata Bangsa Barito | Central Kalimantan |
| 321 | STT Taman Firdaus Jakarta | Jakarta |
| 322 | STT PAIS JAKARTA | Jakarta |

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| 323 | STT Makedonia Jakarta | Jakarta |
| 324 | STT Bethel Bekasi | Bekasi, West Java |
| 325 | STT Pelita Dunia Banten | Banten |
| 326 | STT IKAT di Batam | Batam |
| 327 | STT Kadesi Kalimantan | Kalimantan |
| 328 | STT Tabut Elohim Langowan | Langowan, North Sulawesi |
| 329 | STT Rumah Murid Kristus Bitung | Bitung |
| 330 | STT Krisba Batam | Batam |
| 331 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Perjanjiannya Kabanjahe | Kabanjahe, north sumatera |
| 332 | Sekolah Tinggi Alkitab Kalam Kristus Jakarta | Jakarta |
| 333 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Injil Bhakti Caraka Batam | Batam |
| 334 | Sekolah Tinggi Agama Kristen Kapuas Raya Sintang | Sintang, West Kalimantan |
| 335 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Yerusalem Baru Manado | Manado |
| 336 | Sekolah Tinggi Agama Kristen Lentera Bangsa Manado | Manado |
| 337 | Sekolah Tinggi Agama Kristen Arastamar Grimenawa Jayapura | Jayapura |
| 338 | Sekolah Tinggi Agama Kristen Maluku Utara | North Mollucan |
| 339 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Injili Mahkota Sion Saumlaki | Saumlaki, Maluku |
| 340 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Injili Humble Bengkayang | Bengkayang, West Kalimantan |
| 341 | Sekolah Tinggi Agama Kristen Didaskalos Sangihe | Sangihe, North Sulawesi |

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| 342 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Bina Insani Indonesia Kasih Abadi Pematang Siantar | Siantar, North Sumatera |
| 343 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Baptis Kalvari Jakarta | Jakarta |
| 344 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Amsal | Medan, north sumatera |
| 345 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Periago Pekanbaru | Pekanbaru |
| 346 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Deli Serdang Medan | Medan North Sumatera |
| 347 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Pantekosta Sumut - Aceh | Aceh |
| 348 | Sekolah Tinggi Agama Kristen Bina Muda Wirawan Wonogiri | Wonogiri, central Java |
| 349 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Sola Gratia Indonesia | Surabaya |
| 350 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Injili Indonesia Madiun | Madiun |
| 351 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Imanuel Pacet | Pacet |
| 352 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Galilea Indonesia | Yogyakarta |
| 353 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Ratson Bangka Belitung | Bangka Belitung |
| 354 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Andatu | Jakarta |
| 355 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Mawar Saron Lampung | Lampung |
| 356 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Mitra | Bekasi, West Java |
| 357 | Sekolah Tinggi Agama Kristen Diaspora Sorong | Sorong |

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| 358 | Sekolah Tinggi Agama Kristen Luwuk Banggai | Luwuk Banggai, Sulawesi |
| 359 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Global Jakarta | Jakarta |
| 360 | Sekolah Tinggi Agama Kristen Nabire | Nabire, Papua |
| 361 | Sekolah Tinggi Agama Kristen Oikumene Timika | Timika |
| 362 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi The Truth Jakarta | Jakarta |
| 363 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Gereja Pentakosta di Indonesia Pematang Siantar | Siantar, North Sumatera |
| 364 | ST Agama Kristen William Booth Jakarta | Jakarta |
| 365 | Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Anugerah Misi Nias Barat | Nias, North Sumatera |

**PERSETIA MEMBER SCHOOLS AND PROSPECTIVE MEMBERS**
**For Period 2014-2018**

| No | Member School | No | Prospective Member |
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| 1 | Jakarta Theological Seminary | 1 | Bethesda Theological Seminary Bekasi |
| 2 | Duta Wacana Theological School | 2 | Saint Paul Theological Seminary Medan |
| 3 | GPM Ambon Theological School | 3 | Diakonese School HKBP |
| 4 | Theological Academy of Kupang | 4 | Porhanger school HKBP |
| 5 | Theological Seminary of Eastern Indonesia (STT INTIM) | 5 | Ebenhaezer Theological seminary, Tanjung Enim |
| 6 | HKBP Theological Seminary | 6 | Biblical School of Tiranus, Bandung |
| 7 | Theological Seminary of GKE | 7 | Simpson Theological Seminary |
| 8 | GMIH/Tobello Theological Seminary | 8 | Ekumene Theological Seminary |
| 9 | GKST Theological Seminary | 9 | Christ of Alfa and Omega Theological Seminary |
| 10 | ITKI/Bethel Seminary | 10 | Inti Theological Seminary |
| 11 | Theological College I.S. Kijne | 11 | Marturia Theological Seminary, Palu |
| 12 | Theological Faculty of UKI Tomohon | 12 | Apollos Theological Seminary |
| 13 | Balewiyata Theological Institute | 13 | Arastamar Theological Seminary Bengkulu |

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| 14 | The Academy of Wiyata Wacana | 14 | Abdi Tuhan Injili Theological Seminary |
| 15 | Cipanas Theological Seminary | 15 | Bethsaida Injili Theological Seminary |
| 16 | Aletheia Theological Seminary | 16 | Arastamar Injili Theological Seminary Nias Selatan |
| 17 | Theological Seminary of Abdiel | 17 | The State Christian College (STAKN) of Pesat Salatiga |
| 18 | Theological Faculty of Satya Wacana | 18 | The State Christian College (STAKN) of Palangkaraya |
| 19 | North Sumatera Theological School | 19 | The State Christian College (STAKN) of Manado |
| 20 | Methodist Theological School Bandar Baru | 20 | Theological school of Injil Kupang |
| 21 | Graduate School of UKIT Tomohon | 21 | Theological school of Imanuel Nusantara |
| 22 | Abdi Sabda Theological Seminary | 22 | Theological Seminary Syalom Lampung |
| 23 | Graduate School of Satya Wacana | 23 | The State Christian College (STAKN) of Ambon |
| 24 | Jaffray Theological Seminary Makassar | 24 | Theological Seminary injili International of Reformed, Jakarta |
| 25 | Bandung Theological Seminary | 25 | Graduated Program of UKI |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 26 | The HKBP Pastor School of Theology | 26 | Theological Seminary Obaja of Jakarta |
| 27 | Reformed Theological Seminary of Indonesia | 27 | Theological Johanes Calvin Badung |
| 28 | Rantepao Theological School | 28 | Theological Seminary Elohim Indonesia Malang |
| 29 | Southeast Asia Bible Seminary | 29 | Bethel Theological Seminary Jakarta |
| 30 | Jaffray Theological Seminary Jakarta | 30 | Theological seminary Jemaat Kristus |
| 31 | Arastamar Evangelical Theological School Jakarta. | 31 | Theological Seminary Injili Efrata |
| 32 | Sundermann Theological Seminary | 32 | Theological Seminary of Luwuk Banggai |
| 33 | Amanat Agung Theological Seminary | 33 | Theological Injili Seminary Abdi Allah |
| 34 | Theological Faculty of UKIP Sorong, Papua | 34 | Theological Seminary of Luther |
| 35 | The State Christian College (STAKN) of Toraja | 35 | Theological Seminary of Sriwijaya |
| 36 | Theological School of GPI in Fakfak | 36 | Theological Seminary of Tawangmangu |
| 37 | Sangkakala Theological Seminary | 37 | Theological Seminary Trinity of Parapat |
| 38 | Institute Injil Indonesia | 38 | Injil Bhakti Caraka Theological Seminary in Batam |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 39 | Rahmat Emanuel Theological Seminary | 39 | Satya Bhakti Theological Seminary, Malang, East Java. |
| 40 | Lintas Budaya Theological College | 40 | Shema Presbyterian Theological Seminary, West Java. |
| 41 | Marturia Christian College | 41 | Abdi Allah Evangelical Theological Seminary, East Java. |
| 42 | Indonesia Nazarene Theological College | | |
| 43 | The Salvation Army Theological Seminary Palu | | |
| 44 | The State Christian College (STAKN) of Kupang | | |
| 45 | Mamasa Theological Seminary | | |
| 46 | Bible Study for Indonesian Rural Development | | |
| 47 | GKS Sumba Theological Seminary | | |
| 48 | The State Christian College (STAKN) of Tarutung | | |
| 49 | IKAT Theological Seminary | | |
| 50 | IMAN Theological Seminary of Jakarta | | |

**DIRECTORY OF ACCREDITATION GRADE OF PERSETIA MEMBER SCHOOLS**
**Updated June 2018**

| No | Name of Seminary | Study Program | Degree | Operational Permit | Grade of Acc | Institution Acc |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Jakarta Theological Seminary | Divinity Study | Doctoral | Ministry of Religious Affair | A | B |
| | | Divinity Study | Master | Ministry of R&T and Higher Education | A | |
| | | Divinity Study | Bachelor | Ministry of R&T and Higher Education | A | |
| 2 | Faculty of Theology UKDW, Yogyakarta | Divinity Study | Doctoral | Ministry of Religious Affair | A | A |
| | | Divinity Study | Master | Ministry of R&T and Higher Education | A | |
| | | Divinity Study | Bachelor | Ministry of R&T and Higher Education | A | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3 | HKBP Thelogical Seminary, Pematang Siantar | Theology | Doctoral | Ministry of R&T and Higher Education | - | not yet |
| | | Theology | Master | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| | | Theology | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | B | |
| 4 | Theological Seminary of Eastern Indonesia (INTIM) | Christian Education | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | C |
| | | Theology | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| | | Theology | Master | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| 5 | Faculty theology of UKIM Ambon | Theology | Bachelor | Ministry of R&T and Higher Education | B | B |
| | | Christian Education | Bachelor | Ministry of R&T and Higher Education | B | |
| | | Theology | Master | Ministry of R&T and Higher Education | B | |
| 7 | Faculty of theology Arta Wacana Kupang | Theology | Bachelor | Ministry of R&T and Higher Education | B | B |
| | | Christian Education | Bachelor | Ministry of R&T and Higher Education | B | |
| | | Theology | Master | Ministry of R&T and Higher Education | C | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 9 | The Academy of Wiyata Wacana, Pati | Theology | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| | | Christian Education | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| 10 | Theological Seminary of GKE | Theology | Bachelor | Ministry of R&T and Higher Education | B | C |
| | | Theology | Master | Ministry of Religious Affair | - | |
| 11 | Theological College I.S Kijne | Theology | Bachelor | Ministry of R&T and Higher Education | C | |
| | | Christian Education | Bachelor | Ministry of R&T and Higher Education | B | |
| | | Theology | Master | Ministry of Religious Affair | - | |
| | | Christian Education | Master | Ministry of Religious Affair | - | |
| 12 | GMIH/ Tobelo Theological Seminary | Theology | Bachelor | Ministry of R&T and Higher Education | B | C |
| | | Theology | Master | Ministry of R&T and Higher Education | C | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 13 | GKST Theological Seminary | Christian Education | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| | | Theology | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| 14 | Theological Study of Satya Wacana, Salatiga | Divinity Study | Bachelor | Ministry of R&T and Higher Education | A | A |
| | | Sosiology of Religion | Master | Ministry of R&T and Higher Education | B | |
| | | Sosiology of Religion | Doctoral | Ministry of R&T and Higher Education | B | |
| 15 | Cipanas Theological Seminary | Theology | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | B | not yet |
| | | Theology | Master | Ministry of Religious Affair | B | |
| | | Theology | Doctoral | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| 16 | Aletheia Theological Seminary | Theology | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | B | C |
| | | Theology | Master | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| | | Church Music | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | - | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 17 | Southeast Asia Bible Seminary | Theology | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | B | B |
| | | Theology | Master | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| 18 | Theological Seminary of Abdiel | Theology | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | C |
| | | Christian Education | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| | | Church Music | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| | | Theology | Master | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| 19 | Bethel Seminary Jakarta | Theology | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | B | |
| | | Theology | Master | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| | | Theology | Doctoral | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| | | Christian Education | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | B | |
| | | Christian Education | Master | Ministry of Religious Affair | B | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 20 | Abdi Sabda Theological Seminary | Theology | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| | | Christian Education | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | B | |
| | | Theology | Master | Ministry of Religious Affair | - | |
| 21 | Methodist Theological School Bandar Baru | Theology | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| | | Theology | Master | Ministry of Religious Affair | - | |
| 22 | North Sumatera Theological School | Christian Education | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| | | Theology | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| | | Christian Education | Master | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| | | Theology | Master | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| 23 | Bandung Theological Seminary | Theology | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | B | |
| | | Theology | Master | Ministry of Religious Affair | B | |
| | | Christian Education | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | - | |
| | | Christian Education | Master | Ministry of Religious Affair | - | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 24 | Jaffray Theological Seminary Jakarta | Christian Education | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| | | Theology | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| | | Christian Education | Master | Ministry of Religious Affair | - | |
| | | Theology | Master | Ministry of Religious Affair | - | |
| | | Theology | Doctoral | Ministry of Religious Affair | - | |
| 25 | Jaffray Theological Seminary of Makassar | Divinity Study | Doctoral | Ministry of Religious Affair | B | C |
| | | Divinity Study | Master | Ministry of Religious Affair | B | |
| | | Divinity Study | Bachelor | Ministry of R&T and Higher Education | B | |
| | | Christian Education | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | B | |
| 26 | Bibelvrow school of HKBP | Misiology | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | - | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 27 | Sundermann Theological Seminary | Theology | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | B | |
| | | Christian Education | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| | | Christian Education | Master | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| 28 | Reformed Theological Seminary of Indonesia | Theology | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | B | |
| | | Theology | Master | Ministry of Religious Affair | - | |
| 29 | Arastamar Evangelical Theological School Jakarta | Theology | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| | | Christian Education | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| | | Christian Education | Master | Ministry of Religious Affair | - | |
| | | Theology | Master | Ministry of Religious Affair | - | |
| | | Theology | Doctoral | Ministry of Religious Affair | - | |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 30 | The Academy of Wiyata Wacana, Pati | Christian Education | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| | | Theology | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| | | Theology | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| | | Christian Education | Master | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| | | Theology | Master | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| 31 | Amanat Agung Theological, Jakarta | Theology | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | C |
| | | Theology | Master | Ministry of Religious Affair | B | |
| 32 | Theological School of GPI in Fak-fak | Theology | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | C |
| | | Christian Education | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | - | |
| 33 | Rahmat Emanuel Theological Seminary | Theology | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| | | Christian Education | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| | | Theology | Master | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| | | Christian Education | Master | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 34 | Lintas Budaya Theological College | Theology | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| | | Theology | Master | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| | | Christian Education | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| 35 | Marturia Christian College | Theology | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| | | Christian Education | Master | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| 36 | Sangkakala Theological Seminary | Theology | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| 37 | Institute Injil Indonesia | Christian Education | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | C |
| | | Misiology | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| | | Christian Education | Master | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| | | Theology | Master | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| | | Theology | Doctoral | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 38 | Mamasa Theological Seminary | Christian Education | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| | | Theology | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| | | Christian Education | Master | Ministry of Religious Affair | - | |
| 39 | The Salvation Army Theological Seminary Palu | Christian Education | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| | | Theology | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| 40 | Indonesia Nazarene Theological College | Theology | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| | | Theology | Master | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| | | Christian Education | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | B | |
| 41 | The State Christian College (STAKN) of Kupang | Pastoral | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| | | Christian Education | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| | | Church Music | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| | | Christian Education | Master | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 42 | GKS Sumba Theological Seminary | Chisrtian Education | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| | | Theology | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| 43 | The State Christian College (STAKN) of Tarutung | Theology | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | B | |
| | | Christian Education | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| | | Pastoral | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| | | Church Music | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| | | Christian Education | Master | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| 44 | Bible Study for Indonesian Rural (STT SAPPI) | Theology | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| 45 | IKAT Theological Seminary | Christian Education | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | B | C |
| | | Theology | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | B | |
| | | Christian Education | Master | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | |
| | | Theology | Master | Ministry of Religious Affair | B | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 46 | IMAN Theological Seminary | Theology | Bachelor | Ministry of Religious Affair | C | not yet |
| | | Magister Artium | Master | Ministry of Religious Affair | - | |
| 47 | Theological Faculty of UKI Tomohon | Theology | Bachelor | - | - | |
| | | Theology | Master | - | | |
| 48 | Balewiyata Theological Institute | - | - | - | - | |
| 49 | The HKBP Pastor School of Theology | - | - | - | - | |
| 50 | Theological Faculty of UKIP Sorong, Papua | - | - | - | - | |

# Proliferation of Theological Institutions in South Korea

**Yeong Mee Lee•**

The present paper aims to assess theological education in Korea for formulating ecumenical and transformative theological education in Asia. In the following, the first section introduces the current situation of theological institutions and organizations, degree programs of representative schools and the numbers of faculty and students, as well as three examples of curricula that reflect ecumenical studies for Asian students in Korea. The numbers of theological educational institutions in Korea are countless,[1] if one includes all the schools run by churches or denomination. Thus, this research targets only the accredited theological institutions by the Education Ministry of Korea. The second section deals with the situation of Korean churches where seminary graduates mostly work after finishing MDiv. studies.

## 1. Assessment of Theological Education in Korea

### 1.1. Theological Institutions and Organizations:

There are 77 accredited theological educational institutions in

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[1] There are about 400 theological schools in Korea.

Korea, including Catholic Universities.[2] These institutions can be categorized into three types in its form. The first type (A), which is marked in yellow color, is theological department or Divinity School within University. There are 36 of them. The second type (B), which is in green color, is Theological College which means that the school started as seminary and is expanded to the school of a few department of the related subjects. There are 16 of them. The third type (C), which is in purple, is Theological Graduate University that includes seminaries. There are 25 of them. Except Yonsei University and Ewha Woman's University, all the theological institutions are based on denominations. The list does not include unaccredited theological institutions, run by denominations or churches.

The theological institutions work together through the associations of Theological Institutions and organizations of theologians and presidents. The main associations as follow:

- Korean Association of Accredited Theological Schools (KAATS)
- Association of Evangelical Theological Schools in Korea (AETSK)
- Korean Association of Christian Scholars (KACS)
- Korea Evangelical Theological Society (KETS)
- Korean Association of the Presidents of Theological Schools
- Korean Association of the Presidents of Evangelical Theological Schools
- Korean Association of the Presidents of Catholic Schools

Korean theological schools are in crisis of downsizing of entering students and face financial challenges. The reduction of entering students is resulted from the low interest in theology itself as well as the actual reduction of population. Young people do not want to be a minister that is no rank in the job market. Because of the low birth rate in Korea, the number of young people is rapidly reduced.

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[2] See, Table 1 (The types of the Accredited Theological Institutions in Korea).

Recently theological institutions face serious financial challenges because of two main reasons, among many others. The first reason is due to its weak financial ground. The school board of most theological institutions, except few large universities, is formed by the ministers of the denominations. As the allotment of the school trustee is weak, most schools heavily depend on the tuitions from the students and governmental support for its management. The decline of the churches accelerated the financial difficulties of theological schools.

Secondly, the new governmental policy to restructure universities threatens the sustainability of theological institutions. Since 2012, Korean government evaluates all the universities and ranks them by the given standards. Among the standards, challenging ones to theological institutions include the sufficiency of allotment from the school council and the percentage of employment of graduates. As mentioned above, allotment of school council of many theological institutions is small. Besides the percentage of employment of graduates of theological schools is low. Most graduates of seminary work as an assistant at churches, which is not counted as a job because it does not cover insurance. The government counts only the job that provides insurance for evaluation. As a result, almost all the theological institutions are mostly ranked on the low level, like C or D. The schools on the C level have to reduce the number of entering students, which ends up the reduction of tuition. The students from the schools on the D level are prohibited from applying national scholarship. The government evaluated universities with the same standard, which are unfair to theological schools. The governmental evaluation eventually reduces the size of school and makes it closed.

### 1.2. Degree programs

The degrees of major theological schools are as shown in.[3] In Korea,

[3] See Table 2 (Types of Degrees of KAATS member schools).

theological education begins on the undergraduate level (B.A. or Th.B.). Students pursue graduate studies of theology into two directions. One is for earning academic degree (Th. M. and Ph. D); The other, for practical degree (M. Div., D. Min). Those who aim to be a minister at church or Christian institution enter seminaries to earn M.Div, and D.Min. Some schools opened independent graduate schools for special subjects, such as counseling (Busan Presbyterian University, Honam Theological University and Seminary, Yonsei University), church music (Baptist Theological University, Honam Theological University and Seminary, Presbyterian College and Theological Seminary, Seoul Theological University, Songkonghoe University, Torch Trinity Theological Graduate University) and preaching (Seoul Theological University)

### 1.3. Curricula and Programs

Clarification of the objectives of theological education is important, because the goal defines the direction of its path. Theological schools in Asia tend to limit their objectives narrowly in their evangelical concerns. Typical descriptions of theological education are in such phrases as these: "Training Christian leaders who are committed to Jesus Christ and able to share his gospel in all its relevance through the Church and all agencies of God's kingdom"; "the preparation of men for the ministry of the Word and the Sacraments." These objectives do not reflect the fact that Asia is a non-Christian world in which great religious traditions are abundant and that very few of the general public may be familiar with Christianity. Furthermore, a feature of secularization is that theological thinking about what it means to be a Christian in the world can no longer be framed in any sort of normative universal terms.[4] The purpose of theological

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[4] Joseph C. Hough, "Globalization in Theological Education," in *Teaching the Bible: The Discourses and Politics of Biblical Pedagogy*, ed. by Fernando F. Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert (Oregon: Wipf&Stock Publishers, 2004), 62.

education in Asia should not be limited within denominational interest nor be strictly church-oriented. Despite the denominational foreground, theological education needs to expand to raise ecumenical leaders who may serve not only church but also society through the teachings of Jesus.

Most theological educational curricula follow "fourfold pattern," which divides theological studies into four areas- biblical studies, theology, church history, and practical theology. The division, which itself is an inheritance of western approaches, is created by convictions about the structure of theological knowledge and the sources of theological authority. The conviction, for instance, that the Bible, explicated but critically unquestioned, is the sole and comprehensive source of norms for all other theological knowledge and for religious action. The main problem of this division is that it prevents theological education from being in harmony with ministry and life of people. In this pattern, the disciplines are so separate, self-contained, and autonomous, while life of people is a whole and integral reality. It should be also noted that this kind of division is not evident in the teaching of other religions, where all areas are held together. The structure of studies brings outmoded as assumptions and norms to bear on our current educational practice. It forces to follow the pattern of theory-to-practice procedure.

Graduate School of Practical Theology, Eecheon, Korea, shows a good example of breaking the fourfold pattern of theological education through applying the method of team teaching. In a biblical course, for example, professors from each Testament and a professor of practical theology join in the team. All three attend the classes throughout the semester. Each in turn takes a role of resource person through lectures and facilitates the discussion; other faculty members participate in the discussion when they are not leading. The cost is high but is worth of it.

Early in 1980s, the WCC emphasized ecumenical learning,

which connotes three definitions. First, ecumenical learning enables people, while remaining rooted in one tradition of the church, to become open and responsive to the richness and perspectives of other churches, so that they become more active in seeing unity, openness and collaboration between churches. Second, ecumenical learning enables people, rooted in their own faith traditions and complex experiences of culture, gender, nationality, to become open and responsive to the richness of perspectives in the struggle of theirs, together to know God and to be faithful to God's intention for them in their world. Third, ecumenical leaning enables people to engage with personally relevant issues in the light of the scriptures, the traditions of their faith, worship, and global realities.[5] The goal of theological education for ecumenical leaders in Asia, therefore, should not be limited to raising church minister as vocation but extended to nurturing Christian leaders who are open to other religions for dialogue, critically engaged in issues of church and society, and committed to working for changes in church and society.

Such theological education begins with the religiously and culturally pluralistic contexts of Asia in which we find ourselves, and should pay particular attention to the voices of women, minorities and the marginalized. Such theological education leads a person to a holistic and harmonious experience of integration in which knowing and doing are united. In sum, the objective of theological education in Asia is to nourish ecumenical leaders who open to critical thinking of life, commit to working for change in church and society through spiritual transformation, and engage in mutual life among people of different faith traditions respectively.

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[5] Simon Oxley, "Ecumenical Perspectives in Religious Education: Looking Back, Looking Forward," in *Religious Education in Asia: Challenges, Perspectives, and Visions for the 21st Century*, CCA Asia Religious Education Forum, 2001, 16-18.

Self-supported theological education in Asia is crucial since financial dependency and dependency in the power of knowledge leads to dependency in thinking as well. Intellectual exchange needs to be mutual and inter-respectful. The intellectual exchange between the West and Asia is unfortunately based on mutual respects but subordinate. Asians themselves do not respect Asian scholarship as much as it deserves to receive. Asians must be equipped with self-respect for Asian scholars who are able to teach and guide advanced biblical studies in Asia. Asian schools may work together to accelerate the efficiency of utilizing financial and personal resources in teaching to raise ecumenical leader who will serve Asian communities.

There are three ecumenical programs in Seoul that aim to educate local ecumenical leaders mainly from Asia. They include Studies in Ecumenism and Social Transformation (SEST) at Hanshin Graduate School of Theology, International Graduate Studies of Theology (IGST) at Methodist Theological University, and Global Institute of Theology (GIT) at Yonsei University. All the programs are fully funded by local churches, institutions, and individuals.

### 1.3.1. SEST, Hanshin Graduate School of Theology[6]

The SEST program at Hanshin Graduate School of Theology, Hanshin University, is an example for ecumenical programs for Asian students in Korea. The goal of the program is (1) to foster young people and adults to develop relevant and effective ecumenical leadership in domestic as well as international levels, (2) to facilitate a community oriented and social transformative learning process that will result in cross-cultural understandings and ecumenical spirit, and (3) to strengthen a network of ecumenical leaders who are guided by transformative religious and social and ethics and committed to build the society founded on peace and justice.

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[6] http://www.hs.ac.kr/gsth/

The program does not follow the fourfold pattern of theological education but attempts to integrate the theory and practice, as well as theology and social studies. For this purpose, the curriculum is designed to hold two subjects in balance. Two thirds of courses are related to ecumenical studies in theology and one third related to social skill that is required to interact with the church and the community.

The curriculum of SEST for the year of 2017-18 is as follows:

| Spring Semester | | | Fall Semester | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Category | Subjects | credit | Category | subjects | credit |
| Basic | Guided Study 1, 3 | 1 | Basic | Guided Study 2, 4 | 1 |
| ecumenism | Biblical studies | Contextual Readings of the Bible | 3 | ecumenism | Biblical studies | Scriptural & Theological Reflection on Justice | 3 |
| | | Scriptural & Theological Reflection on Nature and Ecological Crisis | 3 | | | Scriptural & Theological Reflection on Peace and Reconciliation | 3 |
| | | Biblical Hermeneutics | 3 | | | The Bible and Preaching for Prophetic Spirituality | 3 |
| | Theoretical studies | Contextual Theology in the era of Globalization | 3 | | Theoretical studies | History of Christian Thoughts | 3 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | World Church History and Ecumenism | 3 | | | Christianity in Asia | 3 |
| | | Ministerial Leadership & Ethics | 3 | | | Theology of Social Justice and Gender Inequality | 3 |
| | Practical studies | History and Theology of Ecumenical Movement | 3 | | Practical studies | Public Mission and Ministry for Justice | 3 |
| | | Christianity and Other Religions | 3 | | | Interreligious Dialogue and Christian Mission | 3 |
| | | Ecumenical Liturgy & Worship | 3 | | | Pastoral Counseling for Peace and Resolution | 3 |
| Social transformation | | Workshop Seminar 1,3 | 1 | Social transformation | | Workshop Seminar 2,4 | 1 |
| | | Civil Society and Social Movement in Asia | 3 | | | Conflict Issues and Peace-building in Asia | 3 |
| | | Leadership Building | 3 | | | Community Building | 3 |

### 1.3.2. IGST, Methodist Theological University[7]

IGST is a master of theology program at Methodist Theological University aims to raise international church leaders. The program

[7] http://www.mtu.ac.kr/mtu/c3/sub3.jsp

helps students to deepen their theological understanding and develop their minitrial ability, and have leadership for the local community so that they become the subject of mission and evangelical transformation of local church and the community in the era of globalization.

The vision of IGST is

- to raise the local church leader from the local community for strong mission
- to educate local leader to be global leader
- to globalize Korean churches through the partnership between Korean churches and churches of third world
- to accomplish the vision of global campus of school

The program offers two years of Th.M. and 3 years of M. Div. The curriculum for two year program (2016-17) is the following:

(2016-1)
1NT1111 New Testament Studies (II): Jesus 3
2ST1114 Methodist Theology 3
2PR4081 Asian Religion and Christianity 3
PPS2011 Worship and Preaching 3

(2016-2)
4PT1281 Understanding Korean Society 1
1OT1113 Old Testament Theology 3
4PT2271 Counseling and Psychology 3
3SR6401 Sociology of Religion 3
4CE4131 Education and Ministry 3

(2017-1)
1NT1001 New Testament Studies (I): Paul 3
2ST1001 Seminar in Systematic Theology 3
2CH1001 Seminar in History of Christian Thought 3
4PT1001 Understanding Korean Church's Ministry 3

(2017-2)
1OT3121 A History of Israelite Religion 3

2CH0841 Seminar in Historical Theology 3
3ES2171 Seminar in Christian Social Ethics 3
4PT4137 Evangelism and Mission 3

### 1.3.3. GIT, Yonsei University[8]

The Global Institute of Theology of Yonsei University is one of the leading graduate schools where students from developing countries will be educated with cross-cultural and cross-confessional spirit to become future theological and social leaders of their own countries.

**Focus Studies**

On the basis of the following principles, GIT offers 3 collective areas of the study focus. The specific study focus can be chosen with the discussion with your academic advisors with whom students have the independent study class for master thesis or doctoral dissertation.

| **Focus A: Biblical Studies** | **Focus B: Theology & Culture** | **Focus C: Church & Practice** |
|---|---|---|
| Biblical Languages (Hebrew & Greek) Hebrew (Old) Testaments New Testaments Studies of Near East Asia | Church History Systematic Theology Philosophy of Religions Christian Ethics Religious Studies Theology of Culture | Pastoral Psychology & Counseling Christian Education Mission Studies Practical Theology Worship & Preaching Congregational Studies (Evangelism Spiritual Formation, Church Administration) |

**Intensive Courses**

In every semester, GIT offers 4-8 one-month ling "Intensive Classes." All students are required to take 2 core-seminar classes per semester. According to the focus area of students, they have option to take 2 classes per semester among the other intensive classes. GIT

[8] http://git.yonsei.ac.kr/

student is required to take 4 intensive classes in his/her focus study area (ABC) to complete the coursework. These intensive focus classes can be substituted by the classes at Yonsei United Graduate School of Theology (semester-long classes) upon the permission of the academic advisor. The followings are the projected class titles.

**Core-Seminars (required)**

| Core Seminar I | Core Seminar II | Core Seminar III | Core Seminar IV |
|---|---|---|---|
| Scripture & Interpretation (Integrate with diverse traditions of Interpretation) | Glo-cal Theology (Ecumenical, Pentecostal, Evangelical Theology) | Church & Society (working with diverse theological backgrounds) | Understanding Contemporary World (Interdisciplinary Studies) (Economy, Politics, Science and Technology, Health & Sustainability) |

**Recommended List of the Intensive Courses**

| Focus A: Biblical Studies | Focus B: Theology & Culture | Focus C: Church & Practice |
|---|---|---|
| Biblical Languages – Hebrew & Greek (A)<br>Interpreting the OT in Today's Context<br>Interpreting the NT in Today's Context<br>Contextual Reading of Gospels (A)<br>Contextual Reading of Prophetic Literature (A)<br>Bible & Gender & Power (AB) | Systematic Theology (B) Ecumenical Theology (B) Pentecostal Theology (B) Evangelical Theology (B)<br>History &Theology of Korean Christianity (BC)<br>Ecological Theology (BC)<br>Theology of the Third World (BC) | Pastoral Psychology & Counseling Christian Education Mission Studies Practical Theology Worship & Preaching Congregational Studies (Evangelism Spiritual Formation, Church Administration))<br>Evangelism in the 21th Century (C)<br>Creative Worship &Preaching (C)<br>Ministry and Social Movement (BC) |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Biblical Interpretation for Ministry (AC) Biblical Theology & Today's World (AC) Bible, Suffering, & the Problem of Evil (AB)<br>Wisdom Literatures (A)<br>Pauline Literatures (A)The Book of Revelation (A)<br>Ancient Near East Literature (A)<br>Studies on Historical Jesus (A)<br>Preaching from the OT (AC)<br>Creation Care & Sabbath Economics (AC)<br>Postmodern Hermeneutics (A)<br>Bible in Post-Colonial era (AB)<br>Biblical & Practical Peacemaking (AC)<br>Bible & Sexuality (ABC) | Peacemaking&Interfaith Dialogue (BC)<br>African Pentecostal Theology (B)<br>Christianity &Asian Religions (B)<br>History of Chinese Christianity (B)<br>Theology of Asia (B) Eschatology (B)<br>Black Theology (B)<br>Latin American Liberation Theology (B) History of Pentecostal Movements (BC)<br>Holy Spirit & Spiritual Gifts (BC)<br>History of Evangelical Movements (BC)<br>Cross-Cultural Theology (BC)<br>Contextual Theology (BC)<br>Race, Gender, & Class (BC)<br>Understanding Death & Life (BC)<br>Theology of Poverty & Development (BC) | Church &Mission in Global Context (BC)<br>Cross-Cultural Theology & Ministry (BC)<br>Pastoral Psychology &Counseling (C)<br>Christian Education in 21th Century (C)<br>Church Administration (C) Spiritual Formation (C) Church Planting & Growth (C) Ministry and Social Media (C)<br>Marriage and Family (C) Urban Church & Ministry (C)<br>Organic Organization and NGO Building (C)<br>Immigration and Globalization (C)<br>Emerging Worship (C) Church in Technological Age (C)<br>Spiritual Formation & Practice (C)<br>World Evangelists (C) Entrepreneurship<br>Health & Sustainability in Christian Perspective (C)<br>Ministry in Multi-Religious Society (BC)<br>History of Korean Revival Movements (BC)<br>Contemporary Ministry Issue (BC) |

**2. Theological Institutions and Korean Christianity**

Most of Seminary Graduates serve at the local churches of their

denominations after they graduated from the seminary. Thus, to assess the future of the seminary graduates, it is necessary to observe the current situation of Korean churches and ministers.

### 2.1 The current situation of Korean churches

The rapid growth of Christian population has already stopped in 1995, and now Korean churches are slightly growing in number and some denominations are facing the reduction of its members. "2015 National Population and Housing Census" by Korean Statistical Information Service shows the percentage of population according to their religions.[9]

| **Religion** | **Population (thousand)** | **Percentage (%)** |
|---|---|---|
| Christianity (Protestant) | 9,676 | 19.7 |
| Buddhism | 7,619 | 15.5 |
| Catholic | 3,890 | 7.9 |
| Won Buddhism | 84 | 0.2 |
| Confucianism | 76 | 0.2 |
| Cheondokyo | 66 | 0.1 |
| Dan Religion | 3 | 0.0 |
| others | 139 | 0.3 |
| No religion | 27,499 | 56.1 |
| **Total** | **49,052** | **100.00** |

The percentage of those who have a religion is less than a half, 43.9%. It was the first year the number of people who claimed to have a religion is less than those who claimed that they don't have

[9] "2015 National Population and housing Census" by Korean Statistical Information Service, 17.http://www.census.go.kr/dat/prs/prsDetail.do, searched in November 27, 2017.

any religion. It means that Korea became a secular world. Among the people with religion, Protestants are 9,676,000 (19.7%), Buddhists, 7,610,000 (15.5%), and Catholics, 3,890,000 (7.9%). The following is the population and the percentage according to religions. Also the number of protestant church members of major denomination has slightly grow and even downsized, in 2004-14.[10]

2004~2014년 주요 교단 교인 수

| | 예장합동 | 예장통합 | 감리회 | 예장고신 | 기장 | 예장합신 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2004 | 2,508,451 | 2,489,717 | 1,491,754 | 436,443 | 336,095 | 128,711 |
| 2005 | 2,716,815 | 2,539,431 | 1,507,994 | 464,865 | 337,188 | 137,449 |
| 2006 | 2,818,092 | 2,648,852 | 1,534,504 | 501,036 | 337,327 | 144,974 |
| 2007 | 2,912,476 | 2,686,812 | 1,557,509 | 474,047 | 337,570 | 147,415 |
| 2008 | 2,896,967 | 2,699,419 | 1,563,993 | 464,799 | 327,903 | 150,241 |
| 2009 | 2,936,977 | 2,802,576 | 1,587,385 | 464,515 | 317,886 | 151,507 |
| 2010 | 2,953,116 | 2,852,311 | 1,586,063 | 466,379 | 311,212 | 156,508 |
| 2011 | 2,988,553 | 2,852,125 | 1,585,503 | 482,488 | 305,953 | 153,361 |
| 2012 | 2,994,873 | 2,810,531 | 1,557,692 | 481,032 | 297,752 | 154,709 |
| 2013 | 2,857,065 | 2,808,912 | 1,486,215 | 472,717 | 289,854 | 152,316 |
| 2014 | 2,721,427 | 2,810,574 | 1,468,442 | 461,476 | 284,160 | 149,969 |

출처: 각 교단 교세 통계표, 단위:명 뉴스앤조이

The declination of population itself is another reason for the decline of church members. The reduction of church members also resulted in reducing the amount of church offering. The churches that had built new church building face the financial crisis to pay back the bank interest. Some is facing bankruptcy. Another reason for the reduction of church members is that Korean society becomes an old aging society.

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[10] http://m.newsnjoy.or.kr/news/ampArticleView.html?idxno=197728, accessed in November 27, 2017.

Although the number of churches and its members has been slightly grown, the number of ministers had been increased as shown in the following table that illustrated the changes in number of ministers of major denominations between 2004-14:[11]

2004~2014년 주요 교단 목회자 수

| | 예장합동 | 예장통합 | 감리회 | 예장고신 | 기장 | 예장합신 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2004 | 12,476 | 11,560 | 8,501 | 2,475 | 2,392 | 1,082 |
| 2005 | 17,037 | 12,223 | 9,006 | 2,659 | 2,488 | 1,072 |
| 2006 | 11,874 | 12,854 | 9,026 | 2,770 | 2,569 | 1,138 |
| 2007 | 18,264 | 13,887 | 9,236 | 2,903 | 2,634 | 1,193 |
| 2008 | 18,580 | 14,313 | 9,597 | 2,866 | 2,645 | 1,055 |
| 2009 | 18,611 | 14,997 | 9,795 | 2,914 | 2,672 | 1,656 |
| 2010 | 19,268 | 15,521 | 9,880 | 3,021 | 2,652 | 1,757 |
| 2011 | 19,829 | 16,257 | 10,135 | 3,124 | 2,723 | 1,842 |
| 2012 | 21,768 | 16,853 | 10,375 | 3,320 | 2,856 | 1,920 |
| 2013 | 22,216 | 17,468 | 11,282 | 3,308 | 2,879 | 1,982 |
| 2014 | 22,646 | 18,121 | 11,017 | 3,355 | 2,952 | 2,002 |

출처: 각 교단 교세 통계표, 단위:명 뉴스앤조이_

The gap between the growth of the numbers of the churches and the ministers creates those pastors who can not find a church to serve or who have to have a second job for living.

### 2.2 The Relation between church and the society

Since its dissemination in the late 1870s, protestantism grew apace in Korea. Korean Christianity, from the beginning, had been developed in two different directions in relation to Korean society. First, church played a prophetic role that criticized the society and led its

[11] http://m.newsnjoy.or.kr/news/ampArticleView.html?idxno=197728, accessed in November 27, 2017.

transformation. Christianity brought cultural and ethical challenges to the centuries-old traditional practices of Chosun Dynasty (1392-1910), such as drinking, smoking, and having more than wives. Christianity was mostly affective to women at the time, especially because they can have access to education through Christian schools. Under Japanese colonial empire (1910-45), Korean Christianity contributed to the independent movement, emphasizing the liberation traditions of the Hebrews, Exodus, and Jesus as the liberator. Christianity, in this manner, became a critical social religion from abroad that challenged the cultural suppression of the people and stood against the power of Japanese empire. The representing historical event is the March 1st Independent movement in 1919.

Second, it provided the venue for the economic growth and the changes of social status. Christianity was considered as a religion of the rich (country). Christian God was seen as the one who helps to be rich, if you work hard and sincere. This ethical perception matched with Korean characteristics that is diligent and honest. The political oppression of Japanese colonial government accelerated the development of Korean Christianity into this direction. The symbolic event for this movement is 'The Great Conversion Worship in Pyeongyang', in 1927.

Korean Christianity continued to be developed in these two directions. Under the Park's regime, the dictator who drove the whole country for the economic development, churches emphasized the material blessings. At that time, Christianity became a religion of the US that was seen to be military and economic savor of Korea after the Korean War in 1950-53. Church leaders who emphasized the material blessings made great success and became mega church, like Rev. David Cho Yong Ki. These churches are pro-government and against the North Korea, anti-communism. Seeing the advent and unprecedented expansion of the modern Pentecostal movement as one of the most important events in Korean Christianity, Sung-

Gun Kim claims that evangelical protestant Christianity in Korea successfully draws upon ancient Korean forms of shamanism as well as introducing modern capitalistic American materialism and sees it became 'a religion of success.'[12]

Because Korean economic development was based on the cheap labor, there was severe oppression of human right. Churches stood on the side of the poor and the oppressed. The belief in justice and the advocate of the oppressed provided the social value to the society under political oppression by the dictator. These churches were small but gained respect from the society. The churches also had pride as they believed in carrying God's justice and peace. Out of this practice, Minjung theology was born.

Both progressive churches and conservative churches were blossomed in this period. The experiences of democratic government since 1992 and economic crisis nationwide through IMF in 1995 broke the balance between the liberal and conservative churches in Korea. Liberal churches and minjung theology began to lose its influence to the society. Because of the emergence of democratic government, the critical role of Korean churches to the society is not as important as it used to be. The involvement of Korean reunification of the church faced the objection of the people and the right wings of Korean churches. Anticommunism is one of the most serious and fundamental obstacle to bring democracy in Korea. Within these changes, the critical and prominent role of Korean churches and Minjung theology is diminished.

But the conservative churches with mega church building seemed to overflow and became the symbol of religious success not

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[12] Sung-Gun Kim, "Pentecostalism, Shamanism and Capitalism within Contemporary Korean Society," in ed. by Sturla J. Stalsett, *Spirits of Globalization: The Growth of Pentecostalism and Experiential Spiritualities in a Global Age* (London: SCM Press, 2006), 23-38.

only in Korea but also to the world. With the national economic crisis, people lost jobs and faced bankruptcy and money became religion. Material blessings and success replaced the values of social justice or economic justice. Churches drove people for success. Christian God became a God of success. However, the emphasis of material blessing is no longer for survival or living, i.e. maintaining human dignity, but for greedy. Economic justice is ignored. Church itself became the place of economical corruption. There are ministers on the news headline for succeeding the church to their sons, sexual misconduct and collection of money for private purposes. Church is not respected by the society anymore. Christianity is called as "Dog religion." If the church used to lead Korean society, it is now following the society, pursuing ethics of materialism. Mammonism is now the religion of Korea.

In sum, the current Korean Christianity is facing the problems of down-sizing of church members and offerings, declining the attendance of young people (no Sunday schools). But more seriously, Korean Christianity became the religion of mammon and it no longer perform vital roles in Korean society, like it used to take the lead in the 1970s and 1980s.

### 3. Conclusion: New Direction of Theological Education in Korea

To overcome the current difficulties that both Korean churches and theological educational institutions are facing, theological education needs to seek new strategies. Among many possible alternatives, this paper suggests three: First, Korean theological education needs to turn their target from young people to the 50-60s who retired and wanted to plan their second career. These have pension and are somewhat free from financial burden. Second, theological education needs to develop integrative curricula in relation to social science and human science to recover churches' critical role for the society

and raised the voice to evoke prophetic spirituality of the society as well as persons, instead of focusing on blessing and healing power. Although the overall frame of curricula remains in the shadow of the fourfold pattern of theological education, the approach of the courses and teaching method would overcome the limit of fourfold pattern of theological education by approaching subjects, crossing boundaries between the text and the context, among disciplines, as well as between traditions and religions. The rationale of the model curriculum is to move from context to response and analysis, and finally into practice.Third, theological institutes need to develop communicative curricula. Information is already there. Class needs to be a platform for discussion and reflection through which students learn to interpret social life and their personal life with Christian values. The communicative curricula can be built up through networks among the theological institutes in Asia. They may cooperative with each other for developing co-educational material, workshop, field education, cross exchange seminar, etc.

Finally, Korean theological institutes may provide a joint post-master program for raising Asian ecumenical leaders, like Bossey in Switzerland. For advanced studies, most still think that one must go to Europe and the United States for study. The rationale behind this belief is that Biblical studies must be grounded in traditional historical study of the Bible, which had been anchored by the western scholarship, especially in Germany. The long history of scholarship in the West should not be ignored nor undervalued. However, contextual critical study of theology in Asia needs to be shared among Asian scholars and needs to be reflected in theological curriculum in raising ecumenical leaders. Asian theological schools have personal resources to educate students. A join degree may enrich our self-supporting theological education in Asia.

[Table 1] The types of the Accredited Theological Institutions in Korea (as of 2017)

| No | Institution | Type |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Catholic University | University, Department of Theology |
| 2 | Methodist Theological University | Theological College |
| 3 | GangnamUniversity | University, Department of Christian Study |
| 4 | Geshin Graduate Unviersity | Theological Graduate University |
| 5 | Asia Life University | Theological Graduate University |
| 6 | Gyeongsung University | University, Department of Theology |
| 7 | Geyong An Theological Graduate University | Theological Graduate University |
| 8 | Gyemyung University | University, Department of Christian Study |
| 9 | Covenant Theological Graduate University | Theological Graduate University |
| 10 | Goshin University | University, Department of Theology |
| 11 | Kwangshin University | Theological College |
| 12 | Kwngjoo Catholic University | Theological College |
| 13 | Salvation Army Theological Graduate University | Theological Graduate University |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 14 | Kookje Theological Graduate University | Theological Graduate University |
| 15 | Gimcheon University | University Theological Seminary |
| 16 | Korea Nazarene University | University, Department of Theology |
| 17 | Daeku Catholic University | University, Department of Theology |
| 18 | Daeshin University | Theological College |
| 19 | Daejeon Catholic University | Theological College |
| 20 | Daejeon Theological University | Theological College |
| 21 | Daehan Theological Graduate University | Theological Graduate University |
| 22 | Luther University | University, Department of Theology |
| 23 | Myungji University | University, Department of Liberal Art |
| 24 | Mokwon University | University, Department of Theology |
| 25 | Pai Chai University | University, Department of Theology |
| 26 | Baekseok University | University, Department of Christian Study |
| 27 | BoereaTheological Graduate University | Theological Graduate University |
| 28 | Busan Catholic University | University, Department of Theology |
| 29 | Busan Presbyterian University | Theological College |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 30 | Sahmyook University | University, Department of Theology |
| 31 | Seogang University | University, Divinity School |
| 32 | Seoul Christian University | University, Department of Theology |
| 33 | Seoul Bible Theological Graduate University | Theological Graduate University |
| 34 | Seoul Theological University | University, Department of Theology |
| 35 | Seoul Women's University | University, Department of Christian Study |
| 36 | Seoul Jangshin University | Theological College |
| 37 | Seoul Hanyoung University | University, Department of Theology |
| 38 | Seonmoon University | University, Department of Theology |
| 39 | SeonhakYupi Graduate University | Theological Graduate University |
| 40 | Seonggyul University | University, Department of Theology |
| 41 | Sungkonhoe University | University, Department of Theology |
| 42 | SungsanHyo Theological Graduate University | Theological Graduate University |
| 43 | Bible Baptist Theological Graduate University | Theological Graduate University |
| 44 | Suwon Catholic University | Theological College |
| 45 | Pentacostal Theological Graduate University | Theological Graduate University |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 46 | PentacostalTheological Seminary | Theological College |
| 47 | Sungshil University | University, Department of Christian Study |
| 48 | Graduate School of Practical Theology | Theological Graduate University |
| 49 | Asia United Theological University | Theological College |
| 50 | Anyang University | University, Department of Theology |
| 51 | Ezra Bible Theological Graduate University | Theological Graduate University |
| 52 | Yonsei University | University, Department of Theology |
| 53 | Yonsei United Graduate School of Theology | Theological Seminary |
| 54 | Youngnam Theological University and Seminary | Theological College |
| 55 | Yemyung Theological Graduate University | Theological Graduate University |
| 56 | Westminster Theological Graduate University | Theological Graduate University |
| 57 | Ewha Woman's University | University, Department of Christian Study |
| 58 | Incheon Catholic University | University, Department of Theology |
| 59 | Presbyterian College and Theological Seminary | Theological College |
| 60 | Jeonju University | University, Department of Christian Study |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 61 | Geneva Theological Graduate University | Theological Graduate University |
| 62 | Centural Theological University | Theological Graduate University |
| 63 | Chongshin University | University, Department of Theology |
| 64 | Korea Baptist Theological University | Theological College |
| 65 | Calvin University | University, Department of Theology |
| 66 | KC University | University, Department of Theology |
| 67 | Pyeongtaek University | University, Department of Theology |
| 68 | Korea Bible University | University, Department of Theology |
| 69 | Han Nam University | University, Department of Christian Study |
| 70 | Hansei University | University, Department of Theology |
| 71 | Hanshin University | University, Department of Theology |
| 72 | Hanil University & Presbyterian Theological Seminary | Theological College |
| 73 | HapdongTheological Graduate University | Theological Graduate University |
| 74 | Hyupsung University | University, Department of Theology |
| 75 | Honam Theological University and Seminary | Theological College |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 76 | Hoseo University | University, Department of Christian Study |
| 77 | Torch Trinity Graduate University | Theological Graduate University |

[Table 2] Types of degrees of KAATS member schools

| **Name of School** | **Type of degree** | **No. of students** |
|---|---|---|
| Methodist Theological University Type B faculty 26 | Bachelor in Theology | 800 |
| | Master of Theology | 100 |
| | Master of Theology, Master of Divinity | 300 |
| | Master of Divinity (Night) | 100 |
| | total | 1,300 |
| Daejeon Theological University Type B faculty 11 | Bachelor in Theology | 224 |
| | Master of Divinity | 89 |
| | Master of Theology | 11 |
| | Doctor of Philosophy | 1 |
| | total | 325 |
| Luther University Type A faculty 3 faculty 3 | Bachelor in Theology | 60 |
| | Master of Divinity | 10 |
| | total | 70 |
| Busan Presbyterian University Type B faculty 23 | Bachelor in Theology | 127 |
| | Master of Divinity | 215 |
| | Master of Theology | 27 |
| | Master of Art in Counseling | 9 |
| | total | 378 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Seoul Theological University Type A faculty 66 | Church Music (B.A.) | 65 |
| | Bachelor in Theology | 70 |
| | Christian Education (B.A.) | 50 |
| | Graduate School (M.A.) | 12 |
| | Theological Seminary (M.Div) | 160 |
| | Preaching Graduate School (Th.M) | 26 |
| | Doctor of Theology | 22 |
| | Master of Art in Counseling (M.A.C.) | 33 |
| | total | 438 |
| Seoul Jangshin University Type B faculty 17 | Bachelor in Theology | 57 |
| | Master of Theology | 11 |
| | Doctor of Philosophy | 11 |
| | Master of Divinity | 65 |
| | total | 144 |
| Sungkonghoe University Type A faculty 8 | Bachelor in Theology | 28 |
| | Mastor and Doctor of Theology | 7 |
| | Master of Divinity | 10 |
| | Master in Church Music (M.C.M) | 7 |
| | total | 52 |
| Yonsei University Type A faculty 12 | Bachelor in Art | 313 |
| | Master of Theology | 43 |
| | Doctor of Philosophy | 166 |
| | total | 522 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| United Graduate School of Theology Yonsei University Type C faculty 18 | Master of Divinity | 17 |
| | Master of Theology, Master of Art | 131 |
| | Doctor of Theology, Doctor of Christian Counseling | 74 |
| | total | 222 |
| Youngnam Theological University and Seminary Type B faculty 22 | Bachelor in Theology | 240 |
| | Master of Art | 134 |
| | Doctor of Philosophy | 22 |
| | Master of Theology, Master of Art | 46 |
| | Master of Divinity | 319 |
| | Master of Literature (Biblical Studies) | 15 |
| | total | 776 |
| Ewha Woman's University Type A faculty 10명 | Bachelor of Art | 116 |
| | Master of Theology | 17 |
| | Doctor of Philosophy | 4 |
| | Master of Divinity | 77 |
| | total | 214 |
| Presbyterian College and Theological Seminary Type B faculty 79 | Bachelor in Theology | 50 |
| | Bachelor in Art | 50 |
| | Bachelor in Music | 50 |
| | Master of Theology | 104 |
| | Master of Art | |
| | Master of Music | 20 |
| | Doctor of Theology | 17 |
| | Master of Theology in Ministry | 30 |
| | Th.D. in Ministry | 46 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Master of Theology in Missiology | 25 |
| | Master of Art | |
| | Master of Art in Christian Education | 31 |
| | Master of Church Music | 18 |
| | Master of Divinity | 300 |
| | total | 741 |
| Baptist Theological University Type B faculty 51 | Bachelor in Art | 125 |
| | Bachelor in Music (B.M.) | 50 |
| | (Master of Theology) | 30 |
| | (Master of Art in Christian Education | |
| | Master of Art | |
| | Master of Music (M.M.) | 8 |
| | Doctor of Philosophy | 8 |
| | Master of Divinity | 40 |
| | Doctor in Ministry | 10 |
| | Master of Divinity | 160 |
| | Master of Theology in Mission | 10 |
| | Master in Church Music | 20 |
| | total | 461 |
| Hansei University Type A faculty 10 | Bachelor in Theology | 30 |
| | Master of Theology | 26 |
| | Doctor of Philosophy | 0 |
| | Master of Divinity | 98 |
| | total | 154 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Hanshin University<br>Type A<br>faculty 16 | Bachelor in Theology | 176 |
| | Bachelor of Art | 47 |
| | Master of Theology | 2 |
| | Doctor of Theology | 10 |
| | Master of Art | 7 |
| | Master in Ministry | 19 |
| | Doctor in Ministry | 7 |
| | Master of Divinity | 143 |
| | Master of Theological Studies | 11 |
| | total | 422 |
| Hanil University<br>& Presbyterian<br>Theological<br>Seminary<br>Type B<br>faculty 14 | Bachelor in Theology | 55 |
| | Bachelor in Music | 15 |
| | Master of Theology | 20 |
| | Doctor of Theology | 20 |
| | Master of Theology | 5 |
| | Master of Divinity | 50 |
| | total | 165 |
| Honam Theological<br>University and<br>Seminary<br>Type B<br>faculty 39 | Bachelor in Theology | 53 |
| | Bachelor in Art | 40 |
| | Bachelor in Music | 60 |
| | Master of Divinity | 120 |
| | Master of Theology | 26 |
| | Doctor of Theology | 4 |
| | Master of Art in Christian Counseling | 30 |
| | Master of Music | 20 |
| | total | 353 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Torch Trinity Theological Graduate University Type C faculty 27 | Master of Education | 17 |
| | Master of Art, Doctor of Philosophy | 88 |
| | Master of Divinity | 294 |
| | Master of Theology, Doctor of Philosophy | 31 |
| | Master of Theological Studies | 11 |
| | Master of Worship and Church Music | 5 |
| | total | 446 |

# Proliferation of Theological Institutions in India

**Pratap C. Gine•**

## Introduction:

Is proliferation of theological institutions a serious issue in India? Who decides on the issue of 'proliferation'? What do they mean by 'proliferation'? Is 'proliferation' weakness or strength in the Indian contexts? Is it a concern for the educationists or theological observers or religious critics or social activists? Where is this 'proliferation' taking place – urban, semi-urban, or in villages? Where is it alarming – North India, South India, Eastern India, or Northeast India?[1] What are the determinant factors of 'proliferation' – need or number? How

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[1] We are aware that each Indian State is a country within a country. Each state has different language, food habit, dress, and practices, and thus each State contributes towards the rich Indian cultures. Thus combination of different cultures in India produce altogether Indian cultures, not a mono-culture. Each State feels happy and comfortable to practice their own cultural behaviour and festivals. Hence, we affirm that India has different contexts based on different cultures. The only single context that is seen is the union of Indian Territory.

is this 'proliferation' taking place? How can it be managed? What do the indigenous people think about it? Is it alarming in anyway? Answer to all these questions is hidden in the common understanding of *theological institution* and *proliferation*. The issue of proliferation of theological institutions would be dealt in this paper on the basis of Empirical Research Method apart from other historical critical method. At the end of this paper it would propose strategic remedial measures towards reformation.

**Definition of terms**

1. Proliferation: It is to grow in multiplication in elementary cell or part. This growing may not be in proportion to its requirement. Therefore, disproportionate growth is not welcomed. This 'growing', however, at times appear to be relative on the basis of how it is perceived and who perceived it.
2. Theology/Theological: Each faith-community has their own theology which is based on their respective Scripture. The content of this paper would necessarily deal with Christian Theology. Moreover, as "Christian Theology" is a designated discipline of theological studies and different courses are offered under this discipline in almost all theological institutions, it would be relieving and convenient to use only *theology*.
3. Theological Institutions: Educational institutions, which impart only *theological education*, are designated as theological institutions. This phrase has been used in this paper to include a wide spectrum of theological institutions.[2]

[2] In the Indian contexts, theological institutions have different nature, notion, and nomenclature based on the motto of their institution and the method they follow for imparting their education. Thus, in Indian situation, we

**Christianity in India**

In India, Christian population is 27.8 million which constitutes about 2.3% of total Indian population.[3] This figure, however, has been challenged and criticised claiming that the Christian Dalits were undercounted.[4] Christians in India can be found in both Roman Catholics and Protestant Christianity. The largest Protestant

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have Bible Schools, Bible Colleges, Bible Training College, Discipleship Colleges, Bible Translation Institute, Bible Seminary, Theological College, and even Theological College & Seminary together. It is not wise to assess who is greater and who is lesser. All of them are engaged in one way or the other in imparting teachings of the Bible for the ministry of the Lord Jesus. The name of each theological institution communicates either their location (e.g., Calcutta Bible College, Madras Theological College & Seminary, Manipur Theological College, etc.) or discloses identity and purpose (e.g., Trinity Theological College, Shalom Bile College, Discipleship Bible College, etc.). Sometimes it declares also the name of the founder of the institution or the first Christian missionary for this particular community (e.g. John Roberts Theological Seminary, Harding Theological College, Clark Theological College, etc.). There are colleges which are named by their Christian denomination (e.g., Baptist Theological College, Gurukul Lutheran Theological College, etc.).

[3] As per the latest Census administered in 2011.

[4] A significant feature of Indian Christianity is cross-cultural movement within the country itself, mainly southern Christians doing missionary work in the north. This has resulted in remarkable growth of Indian cross-cultural outreach agencies despite opposition and persecution. Often these outreaches take the form of highy contextualized ministries among Hindus, such as *Yesu Darbar* (Court of Jesus) at the *Yesu Mandir* (Temple of Jesu), full of *Yesu Bhaktas* (Jesus devotees), a new type of Christian emerging in South Asia. These new believers come from other religious backgrounds and are sometimes poor. There are Hindus who choose to remain in their religious communities while simultaneously pledging allegiance to Christ. Exact numbers for these believers are difficult to acquire, but it is estimated that in 2010 as many as three million people could be identified in this way, Cf. Daniel J. Bhakiaraj, "Christianity in South-central Asia, 1910-2010" in *Atlas of Global Christianity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 142.

denomination in the country is the Church of South India, since 1947 when Presbyterian, Reformed, Congregational, Methodist, and Anglican congregations with approximately 2.2 million members constituted this Union. A similar type of Union was constituted in north India, namely Church of North India with I million members. There are 473,000 Methodist members; 425,000 Baptists members, and 1.3 million Lutherans. Orthodox churches of the Malankara and Malabar rites totalling to 2 million and 700,000 members respectively. Pentecostal/Charismatic fellowships are growing, and many key Evangelical networks have recently increased, such as the Evangelical Fellowship of India, Pentecostal Fellowship of India, and Baptist Evangelical Alliance. Despite persecution, there has been obvious growth of the church in select states over the course of the past century, much of which occurred following independence in 1947.

**Theological Education in India at a glance**

Theological education in India has a history of its antiquity. It has passed through different missiological, denominational, ecclesiastical, sociological, geographical, and contextual phases. Yet it had never been as challenging as it appears to be now. With the coming of St. Thomas and St. Bartholomew during the early second-half of the first century CE on the (South) Indian soil, Christianity was introduced, and since then India has experienced inquisitivity on the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. This prepared the ground for the emergence of theological education, which in turn gave birth to theological institutions in its diverse forms.[5] There are reasons to

[5] The phrase "Theological Institutions" is an inclusive term to indicate various types and grades of theological institutions that are currently functioning in India. To name some of them: Bible School, Bible Institute, Bible College, Theological Seminary, Theological College, Theological College and Seminary, etc. No discrimination whatsoever has been made to identify their credibility while considering them in the current paper.

believe that there was the existence of Christian theological education even before the arrival of the Portuguese.[6] Theological education changed after the arrival of the East India Company. Theological institutions came up in places like Crangannore (1541), Vaippicotta (1581), Kaduthurthy (1624), and Verapoly (1682). There were other colleges too. For example, St. Paul's College in Goa (1541), Jesuit Seminary in Colombo (1605), Seminary of the Dutch Reformed Church in Colombo (late 17th century), etc.[7]

From the beginning of the 18th century through the 20th century, theological education experienced a shift in its formation and felicitation. It moved from family and church-based basic Bible teaching to denomination-based doctrinal teaching. It experienced challenges against faith-expression, and therefore developed *Discipleship* training in order to lay a strong Christian foundation among the followers of Christ. There was a time when different linguistic groups in India literally demanded Bible or simple Biblical portions in their own mother-tongue. This gave birth to different translation agencies who in turn created Translation Workshops, which served as another kind of theological podium. Concerted efforts were made to train young men and women, who after their graduation, would be mature enough to lead general education and provide Biblical teaching through the same institution. With

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6 A. Mathias Mundadan, History of Christianity in India: From the Beginning up to the Middle of the Sixteen Century, (Bangalore: Church History Association of India, 1989), 188-189; Daniel Jayaraj, "Origin of Protestant Theological Education in India: Recovering a Forgotten Legacy" in Dharma Deepika, Issue 34, Vol.15, No, 2 (July-December, 2011), 4. cf. Daniel Jayaraj, "Origin of Protestant Theological Education in India: Recovering a Forgotten Legacy, 4.

7 Daniel Jayaraj, "Origin of Protestant Theological Education in India: Recovering a Foreign Legacy", in *Dharma Deepika*, Issue 34, Vol. 15, No. 2 (July-December, 2011), 4.

the coming of William Carey in 1793 (November 11) gradually this dream began to fruition, particularly with the foundation of Serampore College on July 15, 1818. Consequently Serampore College received the Danish Charter in 1827 recognising it a university with the full cooperation of the Danish Governor, Ole Bie, posted at Serampore. This is considered to be the second university in the model of Copenhagen University outside Denmark.

With the establishment of the Serampore College (University) for the Protestant Churches, some of the existing theological institutions with their credibility started getting affiliated to it. The second phase of theological education emerged when the Government of West Bengal passed the Act in its Assembly in 1918, which was modified in 1997. By virtue of this Act, the Senate of Serampore College was created to administer and monitor the university activities. As per the latest official record of the Senate of Serampore College, 59 theological colleges, federated institutions, and organisations from India, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh are affiliated to the Serampore College (University). It offers degrees and diplomas as part of Internal and External studies. The External diplomas and degrees are: Dip. C.S.; B.C.S.; M.C.S.; Dip. B.T.; B.B.T.S.; M.B.T.S.; and D. Min. The Internal diplomas and degrees are: D.C.P.C.; M.P.C.; I.B.D.; B. Th.; B. Miss; B. Min; B. Mus; M. Miss; M. Th.; D. Th., and D.D.

With the formation of the Asia Theological Association (ATA) in 1970 by the World Evangelical Fellowship (WEF), there seems to have been a shuffle in the arrangement of theological institutions in India. This may be seen at three nature: (i) a few theological colleges which thought themselves as evangelical and Serampore College as liberal withdrew from Serampore and joined the ATA; (ii) some colleges chose to be with Serampore College and ATA, as they found both are viable in their contexts and demands of their church, and (iii) yet there are some colleges which declared themselves as *evangelical* decided by choice to continue to be with Serampore.

They did not withdraw from Serampore affiliation.[8] From the third quarter of the twentieth century there were theological institutions run by Ecumenicals, Evangelicals, Pentecostals, Missionary Societies, and Para-church ministries. Many of them had cooperation with both national and foreign colleges & universities. Apart from these, there are many other institutions which offer short courses on various Christian ministries independently.

The Asia Theological Association (ATA) opened altogether a new avenue of theological education for aspiring candidates. This offered both on-campus and off-campus theological education. The ATA owes its inception to the evangelical movement which swayed Asia in 1950s which gave priority to world evangelization.[9] It realised that education must move towards integrative learning in order that the students become aware of the problems in their complex situations and would learn to device the principle of life for meaningful living. It also aimed at the basic principle of learning: "Train Asians in Asia

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[8] Siga Arles, "Theological Education in India" *NCCR*, CXXX/8, (September, 2010), 438-439. The Senate of Serampore College, however, recently has accepted its B.Th. and M.Div. degrees in order to appear its qualifying exams as a process towards the integration .As the Executive appreciated the action so also it cautioned any haste in recognizing the courses of ATA as the university status of Serampore should be protected. It also suggested that mutual cooperation, and participation, in Consultations and Seminars arranged by Senate/ATA should be encouraged; and the policy regarding double affiliation should continue. Colleges accredited with ATA should be discouraged to be affiliated to the Senate. Cf. The Minutes of the ATA-SSC meeting, as approved by its members, be received and adopted. Resolution IV, (Appendix-IV),EC/66/12, (EC, Nov. 2012).

[9] Bruce Nicholls, "The History of ATA: Personal Reflections", in Bong Rin Ro, Ken Gnanakan and Joseph Shao, *et. al.* (eds.), *New Era New Vision: Celebrating 40 years of the Asia Theological Association* (Quezon City [Philippines]: Asia Theological Association, 2010), 10.

by the Asians."[10] Thus, the theological institutions accredited by ATA are much higher than any other affiliating/accrediting body.

There are many more theological institutions in India which are outside the Senate of Serampore College and the Asia Theological Association fraternity. They are accredited to National Association for Pentecostal Theological Education (NAPTE), or National Association for Theological Education (NATE), or International Association for Theological Education (IATE). Apart from these, there are many theological training institutions which come under the India Missions Association (IMA) and Indian Institute of Missiology (IIM). There are also some parachurch organizations which run theological institutions. They offer theological education through extension (TEE) through churches in different towns and villages. A centrally located theological institution or church would adopt this method in imparting theological education by sending its own full-time faculties to teach required courses (B. Th.; BD/M. Div.; M.A. and M. Th.). The courses are taught and exams are conducted both through *objective* and *subjective* mode of studies.

There are some established Indian Universities, e.g. Madras University, Pondicherry University, Mysore University, etc. which offer theological studies even up to the doctorate level under the Department of Christian Studies. Some of them are run by the respective state, like Madras University is run by the Government of Tamilnadu; while some of them are directly controlled by the Central Government, like Pondicherry University. These type of universities are secular in nature and maintain the secular fabric of the country.

There are yet some other universities which are relatively new and

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[10] Cf. Akio Hashimoto, "Foreword", in Bong Rin Ro, Ken Gnanakan and Joseph Shao, *et. al.* (eds.), *New Era New Vision: Celebrating 40 years of the Asia Theological Association* (Quezon City [Philippines]: Asia Theological Association, 2010), 6.

offer theological education/Christian Studies from undergraduate to post-graduate levels leading to the doctorate level. They are: Sam Higginbottom University of Agriculture, Technology and Sciences (SHUATS), Allahabad (U.P.); Martin Luther Christian University (MLCU), Shillong (Meghalaya); and North East Christian University (NECU), Medziphema (Nagaland). They are secular in nature and directly under the Government of India. These universities offer relatively handsome scholarships to the candidates to meet their academic expenses.

**Theological Education as of now**

Certain characteristic features of the present theological education, irrespective of its offered diplomas/degrees and administrative *Body*, in India may be seen as mentioned below:

**a) Degree-oriented**

The end-result of all theological institutions is to offer diploma or degree, although their purpose of offering such education has been motivated and moulded by some great commitment and goal of the Biblical teaching. There is nothing wrong in their diploma/degree, because the students work hard to complete their courses, and in appreciation of their hard work and the credit of completing the course successfully, they must be awarded. If students' aspiration for theological education is only to attain diploma/degree, then there is a possibility of their being diverted from their commitment to the Lord.

**b) Campus-centred**

Except some external courses along with TEE program, almost all theological training is campus-centred. There are good reasons behind and bad effects of such practices. Some of the good reasons are: strict spiritual upbringing, disciplined life including maintaining

study hours, opportunities to relate with others from different background, etc. The possible adverse effects are: secluded life from the world, not knowing how to socialize, cannot adjust even at one's home, leading an artificial life, becoming narrow-minded, etc. There is a tendency to induce among the students a separate campus-culture, which is alien to the society around. Faculties, however, to some extent are exception. As long as theological education continue to be campus-oriented, there is every possibility that such exclusive attitude will continue.

**c) Expensive**

The expense level is kept so high in all theological colleges, as if, theological studies are meant only for the financially solvent people. In reality, the picture is something different. It is the people who come for theological studies are from financially backward or people from the margins. While some institutions offer generous scholarship, some offer work-scholarship, while still others provide pocket money. When denominational card is played at the time of admission, students belonging to the same denomination enjoy extra privileges. Quite often it is found that committed and eligible candidates are deprived from theological education because of its exorbitant expenditure.

**d) Theologically western in nature**

Some of the theological colleges are either directly sponsored or engaged in teaching *theology* that exists in the West. Sometimes even the theological colleges in the West might discontinue their certain *theology* as obsolete, yet this part of the world would conveniently continue to use them. This proves not only that Indian theology is 50 years behind the West but also asserts that we are incapable of producing our own theology suitable to our own Indian contexts. Further, following the theological curriculum of the West, it has

proved our incapability to resist colonial domination on the Indian culture, history, theology and mind. This prompted Wati Longchar to comment, "It is a fact that the present education system in Asia as well as in the global south is an integral part of colonial legacy".[11] This is equivalent to committing suicide academically and theologically.

**e) Contextualization of theology**

During the last quarter of the last century, India has witnessed the birth of Indian Christian Theology, although in the form of high-caste Christian Theology. This posed challenge to the majority of the Christians who hail from the marginalised communities. They dared to create their own theology out of their experience in which they met God, walked and conversed with God, and in many contexts, they overthrew the dominant construct of God replaced by their Dalit and Tribal God who lived and reigned their lives from eternity to eternity. They found their God from *within*, they did not have to wait for God from *without*. This phenomenon emerged during the last two decades of the last century.

**f) Lack of local issues in curriculum and practice**

Most of the theological colleges develop their own worship style in their own sanctuary without any exception on Sundays. Some colleges either do not take initiative to send their students to the local churches or do not understand the necessity of keeping relationship with the churches for the spiritual growth of the students. Students *grow* academically, but without proper spiritual nourishment from their respective churches. Moreover, sometimes this issue of maintaining relationship with the churches (and the local contexts) does not reflect in theological curriculum, and hence is neglected in their practice.

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[11] Wati Longchar, "Transforming theological education for peoples in the margins", in *SATHRI JOURNAL: A Journal of Contextual Theology*. Edited by Limatula Longkumer. Vol. XII, No. 1, 2018, 91.

**g) Lack of female ratio**

Most of the churches show their reluctance in selecting and sending female candidates for theological training, because they do not agree and accept that female believers have any role to play in the ministry of the church. Therefore, female students are decreasing and becoming disproportionate to the male students in theological colleges, with a few exception to one or two theological colleges in the northeast India where female students are almost equal in number to their male counterpart, and one college in South India where female students have separate classes of their own. Female theological educators are also not equal in number with their male counterpart in theological colleges for obvious reason, even though they are qualified and well-equipped (sometimes better equipped) theologically and otherwise.

**h) Lack of rural concern**

Most of the theological colleges are either built in or based on urban context. Their courses are also founded on urban design and to meet urban demand. Rural concern is totally ignored. Students are trained even with a desire to serve the urban need. There is hardly any urge among the theological graduates to be posted in the rural context. Moreover, even if they are posted in rural areas they find themselves unfit not knowing how to cope in that context. The existing theological curriculum do not equip them to meet rural challenges.

**i) Lack of nationalistic nature and patriotic pattern**

Some theological colleges do not have something special nationalistic in their curriculum, apart from hoisting national flag during Independence Day and Republic Day, and declaring these days as holidays. Issues like the contribution of some Christian leaders during the Independence Movement and their sacrifice for the nation as patriots, etc. do not get proper focus either in their curriculum or in their teaching. It is unfortunate that, of late, the

term "nationalistic" has been tarnished by some political parties and their ideologies where *patriotism* experiences suffocation. Most of the theological institutions, on the contrary, instil patriotic values within their students in order that they might take active role in the nation-building as patriots.

**j) Lack of interreligious relationship**

Apart from the courses like "Introduction to Major Religions", "Primal Religions", "Hinduism", "Islam", and "Jainism", there is hardly any effort to have an interreligious understanding and cooperation and cohabitation. No doubt, courses on *Introduction* to such major religions provide a fair range of knowledge on these religions, but how such relationship with the adherents of such rich religions can be made effective has not found enough focus. In a religiously pluralistic and sensitive country like India, particularly when she is passing through such a disturbing and challenging phase, how important it would be had such type of course been introduced!

**k) Lack of margins' perspective**

Theological institutions, including TEE, do not take seriously offering courses that concern people at the margins. They are marginalised even in theological institutions for theological studies. Quite a good number of such institutions do not have even qualified teachers to offer such courses. Authorities of these institutions sometimes pay deaf ears to the petitions of employing qualified faculties in such field of studies.

**Strengths and weaknesses of existing theological education**

With the existing structure and system of theological studies, the church and the society experience and encounter unique situations. A few of them may be stated here:

**A. Strengths:** Every aspect and steps of theological education has

its *good* and *bad* impacts, which may be described as strengths and weaknesses.

a) **Theology in the context is on making:** Mainline Protestant theological institutions are becoming alert about the irrelevancy of the existing theology, and the need of introducing contemporary theologies. People from different backgrounds, contexts in multiple settings, diverse methodological approaches, and inclusive socio-religious concerns are becoming the major focus of the present theology today. All this is heralding a new dawn of theology in the making in the Indian contexts.

b) **Indian theological books are on print and circulation:** Potential theological writers are getting encouraged to bring out their theological research at every levels of their studies into publication. Whether theological community of authors in a certain theological institution or the theological communities in general find these publications more acceptable as these books are written from their own contexts. New courses at the higher level theological studies have been introduced like Social Analysis, Communication, Dalit Theology, Tribal Theology, Bible Translation Studies, etc. at the Master and Doctorate levels. Even Christian Publishers are coming up throughout the country and encouraging the prospective writers to publish their books. Some of the publishers are, of course, Indian counterparts of the overseas publishers.

c) **Theological education by extension is in progress:** About two decades ago the need for theological education by extension was felt. It started with a simplest scheme and minimum number of students, and now the number of courses offered for different diplomas and degrees is on the steady rise. It is noted that majority of this enrolment to the external studies come from academically elite background. Professors who teach them in regular Collegium find in these new entrants more maturity

in theological thinking and expression than regular theological students on theological campus. It started with Diploma in Christian Studies, and now it has reached to the level of Doctor of Ministry. A decade ago people in the theological circle would not have thought that there could be any course on the translation of the Bible, and that too is now leading to the diploma and degree in the Bible translation. Today the basic diploma is Diploma in Bible Translation (Dip. B.T.), and going as far as Master in Bible Translation Studies (MBTS) preceded by Bachelor in Bible Translation Studies for three-year course (BBTS). People could not think of having any degree in music, but today there is Bachelor in Music (B. Mus) which is offered for three years.

d) **Young generations coming forward for theological education:** Number of theological students is on the rise throughout the country, although it is difficult to say whether getting theological training has of late become a fashion of the day. The young generation find theological studies interesting and innovative. Moreover learning new languages has become quite challenging and transforming to them, while some of them generate passion among them for such studies. Theological educators also find it encouraging to be with the young generation in the classrooms and hearing their feedback in almost all sessions.

e) **Young leadership is on the rise:** As of now, many of the Principals and/or Presidents of these theological institutions are relatively young in comparison to the generations preceding them. There is a trend now-a-days to go for theological studies without any interval or interruption. One of the reasons may be that the young generation decide about the goal of their lives at an early stage. Churches also encourage young generation to go for theological studies. Although some churches screen prospective candidates thoroughly before sending them for

theological studies, most of the churches do not do so. They come of their own and join the churches after completing their basic theological studies. In most of the cases, however, further theological studies done either with scholarship/sponsorship or through extension, which reduces expenditure drastically. Of course, not all theological students get scholarship or sponsorship.

f) **Publication of theological journals is on the rise:** In order to keep the academic achievement of the theological educators steady and fruitful, some theological colleges either individually or regionally started publishing bi-yearly or yearly theological journals. These publications also promote academic relationship among the theological institutions as they exchange their respective journals among them. Some colleges offer copies of this journal to the students freely, while others take very minimum subscription.

g) **Institutional consortium is in the making:** It is encouraging that, despite the unhealthy competition among the theological institutions, there is a sign of hope that some of the nearby institutions, particularly at the postgraduate level, are coming together and forming consortium to strengthen theological education for future generation. And it is doing well. This is, no doubt, a good sign of healthy growth. Yet, nobody can profess what direction it would take in future when challenges on theological education come from different directions due to socio-political changes of our country.

**B. Weaknesses:** Although everything seems to be good, not everything is good. Some of the weaknesses cannot skip our attention, if we review the entire situation thoroughly. The weaknesses may be stated as below:

a) **Unhealthy competition:** When all theological institutions

are out to catch students for their institutions, naturally they intend to play different strategies to *allure* them, beginning from good accommodation and qualified faculties to offering work-stipend and scholarship. All these institutions indirectly indulge in unhealthy competition even to the extent of *buying* qualified teachers from the other institutions by offering better pay and facilities. Although among the indigenous-educated faculties and regional institutions such situation arise seldom, among the West-educated faculties and postgraduate institutions this type of situation is not rare.

b) **Regionalism:** While diversity of our country is her beauty, it becomes a bane when institutions play regional card in admission of students and appointment of faculties, in disciplining the students and distribution of work-load to the faculties. Sometimes, the administration becomes so insensitive and bias that they do not even hesitate to play such card openly.

c) **Linguistic jealousy:** There cannot be any better language than one's own mother-tongue. Yet, this mother-tongue can play devastating role when it crosses the boundary of tolerance, fraternity and unity. Discriminatory attitude to other linguistic groups and cultural adherence, demeaning them in action and gesture, practicing nepotism and nurturing favouritism are the distinct signs of immaturity and insanity. And when such behaviour is displayed in the name of theological studies in theological institutions how embarrassing it becomes!

d) **Financial constraints:** Desire of the heart must go hand-in-hand with the design of the body, and such coordination produces great result. If desire is not fulfilled by honest means then the whole project suffers badly. There is a common tendency among the not-so-solvent families to send at least one of their children for theological studies, but this never materializes because of their financial constraint. Such families suffer emotionally and

spiritually, because their desire does not get fulfilled.

e) **Dearth of theological students:** With the proliferation of theological institutions, many of these institutions suffer from the dearth of students, although initial years of their inception had been quite encouraging and promising. In course of time, however, they realize that getting students for theological studies is difficult, and it requires multilateral approaches and multi-faceted facilities to invite them.

f) **Degradation in theological standard:** Such degradation is found today at different spheres of theological education. Students are not motivated in the classroom situations for different reasons; educators are demotivated in their own ways, practical for theological community is on the steady decline, concept of *practical ministry* has become limited to the students only (even though many of the theological faculties do not have any ministerial experience), many of the faculties come to the class without any preparation (they even don't know that their unpreparedness is detected by their students, and they make fun of them out of their class), many of the faculties do not even consider that teaching is a passion and not profession, and that through teaching only they are *beginning* to learn. The situation at Postgraduate level is also not any exception, it is perhaps worse at certain institutions. As a result of this chain of *corrupt* situation, the entire theological studies and its standard suffer. This nature is prevalent in traditional theological colleges like at ATA and SSC.

g) **Misleading church in appointment and administration:** When the entire theological education passes through such a state of confusion by the mushrooming of theological institutions, the church suffers equally in its decision making, particularly in regard to the appointment of new candidates and administering the entire system. One set of graduates

come with so-called *spiritual* nourishment, while the other set comes with educational feedback. While one set appears to be spiritually non-compromising and appealing, the other appears to be accommodative and aspiring. While one focuses on the spreading of the Gospel, the other focuses on the rooting of the Gospel on the local soil. If taken seriously both of their endeavour for theological pursuits and practices, none may be ignored or undermined. Yet the church hardly can do justice to both; she has to choose one between these two. Who is going to release them from this incumbent situation!

**Proliferation of Theological Institutions**

There is a general feeling that in the states where percentage of Christians is relatively high, number of theological institutions multiplies for reasons and without reasons. Yet, this is not always so. There are instances where theological institutions creeped in under the camouflage of some kind of training, general education, music school, even health centre. Many factors are responsible for such proliferation of which a few may be stated below:

a) **Suppression and loss of identity:** The existence and control of Brahminical and Western theology had long been impacting negatively the theological milieu of and product in India. Students from the marginal community found themselves fish out of water in theological colleges. They had very little to learn for their community, and very little to apply for their socio-cultural and spiritual growth. In their class they were forced to learn theology of others than being encouraged to form theology of their own community. They felt suppressed and their identity robbed. The only way to salvage their identity and develop their theology was to have theological college of their own. This resulted in counter theology and processed in numerical growth of theological institution and class.

b) **Denominational identity:** There is a general tendency among the promoters and leaders of certain Christian denominations based on the West that establishing theological colleges is the best means of promoting their denomination they founded or belong to. They do not necessarily have any intention in expanding Christendom and Christian faith. Therefore, in the states like Nagaland and Kerala proliferation of theological colleges is on the rise, and gradually Mizoram and Meghalaya are following the suit. Such tendency is strongly found among the Baptists and evangelical-minded colleges.

c) **Business enterprise:** Financially solvent some elites come forward to establish theological institution, because it carries social prestige, religious dignity, and financial gain. Their influence in the socio-religious realms becomes a talk of the town. They attract students from all levels of the society. In some of the states, particularly Nagaland, Mizoram, and Meghalaya candidates having theological degrees are regarded well and placed in higher position with dignity, even at the public sectors. This encourages some financially rich and religiously sensitive to open new theological institutions in their areas.

**Positive Impact of Proliferation of Theological Institutions:**

The word *proliferation* has, no doubt, its negative connotation, yet it has made some positive impact on the theological education as a whole. They are:

a) **Becoming conscious of weaknesses:** As a matter of fact, when multiple institutions come up in the vicinity, the existing institutions feel challenged about their existence. They try to find out their weaknesses and loopholes in their administration as well as standard of education. They get encouraged even to re-evaluate their theological curriculum for better acceptance and application.

b) **Feedback from the churches:** Theological colleges all on a sudden become conscious of the existence of the churches. They seek feedback from the churches about the performance of their graduates. They enquire about their strength and weaknesses. They even seek churches' recommendations so as to what should be incorporated in their curriculum. At times churches even make a critique on their existing theological curriculum before they recommend anything new.

c) **Creating theological environment:** Establishing new theological institution creates a new feeling among the neighbourhood. This feeling matures in contributing a theological ambience in the local area. This soothes the neighbourhood and generates spiritual thrust among the young generation to pursue theological studies. Youths in the churches become proactive in their commitment and service. Some even get enrolled for theological studies.

d) **Accrediting/affiliating bodies begin assessment process:** It is more than a particular theological institution that the accrediting and/or affiliating bodies become conscious of their standard and performance. They begin assessing their existing structure including curriculum, and if need be, they opt for preparing new curriculum, and even offering new diploma or degree on a newly ventured discipline.

e) **Financial gain:** If the newly established institution sought permission to be accredited or affiliated to the existing accrediting/affiliating body, then this contributes substantially to their financial gain.The accrediting/affiliating bodies do not discourage proliferation of theological institutions.

f) **Missional approach to theological education:** Self-evaluation of the established theological institutions and their accrediting/affiliating bodies have realized that along with the academic excellence missional approach to the theological education has

to be made to maintain a healthy balance. Otherwise, their graduates will be prepared only for Sunday Worships, and not for Monday to Saturday activities and involvement. A missional approach to the entire theological curriculum is gradually taking shape in both curriculum and classroom situations.

**Negative Impact of Proliferation of Theological Institutions**

Proliferation of theological institutions impacts negative ways. Some of these negative impacts may be seen below:

a) **Dilution in standard of theological education:** Newly established theological institutions usually do not concentrate on the standard of education. Their focus remains mainly on their upcoming planning of overall growth and range of publicity. They declare their policies and claim on the Bible-base theology. And at the end they demand their uniqueness in equipping students with Christ-centred theology for the mission of the church. Christians in general appreciate this approach and respond positively. Within a few years of time, however, they realise that this does not serve the purpose, because they do not meet the requirement of the church and the society. This so happens when such institutions are family-run and managed.

b) **Cooperation is replaced by competition:** The basic tenets of theological institution, i.e., trust and cooperation, are lost as a result of proliferation of theological institution. Each suspects the other and becomes more interested to know about the others than their own. The existence of a healthy atmosphere in theological institutions gradually begins to disappear. This happens so where institutions are based on Christian denominations, which are financed by their counterparts in overseas. Whatever ecumenical fellowship these denominational counterparts might have in their respective countries and whatever International Conferences, fashioned in the style of Edinburgh, they might have organized

and attended, they do not support and encourage any kind of ecumenical attempts in India.

c) **Deviation from people's life:** The colleges in general do not involve in people's struggle and focus on the people's vocation. Thus, whatever they impart through their institutions does not relate to people's practical life and vocation. They concentrate more on the other world than this world. Therefore, even after the completion of their theological studies, the graduates of these institutions remain unemployed not knowing even what they would do next. They are left without any clue how to maintain *this worldly* life. They do not find any connection between what they had been taught and what they face now. They get frustrated and tend to live an artificial life. Their life becomes more or less self-inflicted.

d) **Back to the original state:** Young people who once came to these theological institutions to undergo theological training and experiencing *transformation* in their life, return to their respective homes mostly without any substantial change. Some of them do not give up their old addiction and make any serious commitment to Jesus Christ, which the college authorities might have at times condoned. Now that they are graduated and no more under the administrative control, they tend to go back to their old habits. Their parents, assuming that their children have been made *new*, leave them up to their whims and fancy. The last condition becomes worse than their first condition.

e) **Undisciplined in the name of disciplined:** Parents who thought so far that sending their uncontrollable children to theological institutions would make them good and disciplined, soon realize how wrong was their decision. It affects in two ways: First, parents did not allow their children know how difficult it was for them to raise money for their child's theological education. The children, after admission blackmail and squeeze their

parents financially and enjoy their life there. Second, children go for theological studies without any personal commitment, but only to satisfy their parents desire. And the end-result, therefore, becomes very dissatisfying and devastating.

**Some findings:** From the field survey and the points made above on the basis of the historical critical method, we can delineate the following findings:

a) Theological education has its root in the Indian soil from the first century CE, and thereby theological institutions emerged in India in different disguise.

b) Theological institutions have different nomenclature offering different diplomas and degrees suitable to different persons and purposes.

c) Proliferation of theological institution has different implications, both good and bad, on the social, ecclesial, theological and moral areas of the Christians as a whole in India.

d) Theological education (from diplomas to doctorate) is offered through both internal (on-campus) and external (off-campus) ways, and the number of entrants in off-campus theological studies is on the rise.

e) Finance is one of the major challenges for theological studies, although there is a growing sign of sponsoring one's own child for such education.

f) Theological education at times seems to be under the grip of sectarian forces, particularly when language and peoples groups matter, yet this is not a threat, because all understand its adverse effect and know the way how to come out of this jostle.

g) Young generation is more attracted to theological studies, but are not adequately guided and monitored due to the lack of proper supervision.

h) Standard of theological education is on the decline, although there are local resources, like more books are written by the local researchers and scholars, theological institutions are bringing out their own journals, etc.

i) There is a dearth of female students in almost all theological colleges and nobody seems to take it seriously, mainly because there is hardly any prospect for female theological graduates.

j) Proliferation of theological institutions is very evident in the Indian scenario. This has many implications on the socio-religious life of the people. Something has to be done in order to challenge this proliferation.

k) Missional emphasis and approach to the theological education is taking place gradually. And thus curriculum formation and classroom situation is experiencing transformation.

l) The affiliating bodies of the theological institutions need to come together in order to resolve this issue of proliferation.

**Recommendations:** On the basis of the findings, it is time now that some recommendations are made for future course of action. A few of them may be stated here:

**a) Theological education must be a *People's Movement*:** If theological education has to survive and do well to its own context, then by all means it must be made a *People's Movement*. It should be a movement by making each Christian, irrespective of denominations, aware of its importance not only in Christian life but also in the life of the Indian nation. The life and ministry of Jesus was neither bound within his society nor around his disciples, although it was developed within his context, and his disciples became part of his ministry. The Ascension and the Pentecost events bear testimony to it. The disciples became proactive in their faith and commitment, and the theologians

today are to carry that mantle which was received from the disciples, and the disciples received from the Lord.

b) **Transformative theological curriculum need to be prepared:** Curriculum of theological education must be prepared in such a way that it prepares leaders who would serve poor and the marginalised, stand for justice and protect human rights. The theological curriculum should take into account the theological-social world along with rural and community developmental issues. The theological "colleges must design a theological curriculum to produce committed persons rooted in *liberative religious and Christian traditions who are hard-working, self-sufficient, truthful, courageous, skilful community organizers and spiritual leaders*.[12]

c) **Theological institutions should be turned into *Means*:** The question may be raised, if this theological education has to be made a movement, what should be its means? And it is to assert that all theological institutions – irrespective of their affiliations, offered degree and/or diploma, and their theological standard – should become the means of this *Movement*. This would serve mainly two purposes, one, all institutions should become responsible to their call and service, and two, all should work towards the same goal unitedly. The educators in this process can become great assets by themselves, provided they understand the role they have to play in this regard.

d) **All theological educators must be sensitive towards their profession and turn it into their passion:** When profession and passion meet together, they can work wonder. Together they can turn all past gory into present glory by bringing strategical planning and their execution. Harmony among the educators and solidarity among the institutions would bring that anticipated goal.

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[12] *Ibid*., 104

e) **Churches have a great role to play towards this goal– proposing financial viability and promoting proper screening:** Theological institution is a vital organ of the church which contributes towards its sustenance. The question, however, remains how far the church assists theological institution towards its sustenance![13] The church can act in two different ways: one, sensitize all members about theological education and the role they can play to make it effective by inviting them to contribute generously towards theological education and create a fund from where eligible candidates would be sponsored and theological institutions would be supported; and two, decide along with her Executive Committee the course of action for selecting and appointing appropriate person for church activities. This would remove all passive attitude and actions of the members towards theological studies and theological institutions. The challenges before the church today are: continue to proclaim the Gospel, move from disunity to unity, from soul-winning to transformative mission, from condemnation to the celebration of diversity of cultures, from condemnation to cooperation, from exploitation to preservation, and from passivity to collective solidarity-resistance.[14]

f) **Public's role in theological education:** When theological education contributes to the common good both socially and politically, the public play their respectable role towards theological education and theological institutions. The history of Christianity testifies that whenever Christianity played prophetic

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13 Ernest W. Talibuddin, *Bishop's College: Transition and Continuity* (Kolkata: ISPCK, 2010), 190.

14 Wati Longchar, "Rethinking Mission Beyond Edinburgh 2010: Implications for Churches", in Solomon Rongpi (Ed.), *Mission and the local congregations*. Essays in honour of William Carey's 250th Birth Anniversary. (Delhi: ISPCK, 2011), 30-34.

role and intervened in the socio-political power to protect and defend the marginalised and other vulnerable groups, she reached her height.[15] Felix Wilfred perceives, "The quality of theological education in an institution is to be judged by the extent it facilitates the emergence of more and more 'organic theologians' who will be trail blazers, different from 'traditional theologians' who will serve the maintenance of the system … and guide the process of theological formation. The present conditions in our Asian societies invite us to a radical transformation of theology and theological education for an engaging mission and Christian witness".[16]

g) **Gender balance must be brought and maintained in theological institutions:** Although at present it seems almost next to impossibilities to bring gender balance, the process must begin now; or else it would never be achieved. This balance must be brought in selecting candidates for theological training, for higher theological studies, in appointing church and theological institutions at every level of requirement; and in using inclusive language at all official, ecclesiastical and behavioural structure of the church and society. This would altogether create a new society with gender balance. Therefore, the "…existing theology needs to be critically analysed on gender discriminations which has been carried out for centuries. This calls to transform our theology, Christian education and theological education, pulpit ministry and worship as well as inclusive language must be inducted".[17] This would produce a new society altogether.

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15 Felix Wilfred, *Asian Public Theology: Critical Concerns in Challenging Times* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2010), 256.

16 Felix Wilfred, *Asian Public Theology*… , 260.

17 Limatula Longkumer, *Christian Education for Transformation: Foundations, Approaches and Effective Teaching* (Kolkata: The Author, 2017), 245-246.

h) **Creating and promoting interdenominational and interreligious ethos in and through theological education:** The simplest step towards creating, practicing and promoting interdenominational and interreligious ethos would be to invite educators from respective faiths while imparting doctrine of these major religions, and making them *bonafide* member of the faculty, provided they meet the required teaching qualifications. In other words, creating an ambience of ecumenism is the need of the hour. Yet, the question remains, "… wider *ecumenism* for what: change, alteration or transformation?"[18] Observing holidays during the major religious festivals would not only be showing respect to them but also promoting interreligious relationship among all. Celebrating national festivals together alternatively in different religious campus with prior arrangement can be a unique method. One thing must be made clear, that all religious leaders have to agree with this point or else any attempt from one end would be proved futile and short-lived.

i) **Evangelizing Ecumenism:** The post-Edinburgh 1910 events and recommendations have been so wide and versatile that implementing those recommendations became challenging for the theological institutions. The agenda for ecumenical theological educationcan be sharpened in precise terms as follows:

1. Adjusting institutional capacities of theological colleges and faculties to growing demands for theological education.
2. Questioning and reshaping the patterns of (theological) education expenditure in churches, agencies and governments
3. Quality improvement in theological education

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[18] Ernest W. Talibuddin, *Bishop's College: Transition and Continuity* (Kolkata: ISPCK, 2010), 191.

4. Inter-contextualization and ecumenical orientation in theological education
5. Diversification of theological education with regard to changing patterns in the global ICT context.[19]
6. Promoting a new system of global solidarity partnership for theological education.[20]

**j) Aiming at transformation:** Theological institutions have to aim at brining transformation in the society through their proposed curriculum, co-curricular activities, consultations, and conferences. Their intention must be to bring transformation from competition through cooperation to cohabitation, from person's perception to public precipitation, and from individual's support to society's strategy.[21] The areas where transformation is required are: transformation in thinking, in attitude, and in action, and thus the transformation can stand as the cooperative transformation, the substitutive and substantive transformation, and the result-oriented transformation.[22]

**k) Voice of the Faculty Council and/or Affiliating Body towards reform:** Since Faculty Council acts as the Administrative Body of the theological institutions and its decision is binding to the entire community of these institutions, their opinion must be sought and accordingly steps must be taken. In case, the owner of

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19 ICT = Information and Communication Technologies.

20 Dietrich Werner, *Theological Education in World Christianity: Ecumenical Perspectives and Future Priorities* (Kolkata: PTCA, 2011), 46-50.

21 Pratap Chandra Gine, "Doing mission in contemporary context of India", in H. Vanlalauva (Ed.), *Doing Mission in India Today* (Kolkata: Department of Research/SATHRI, 2012), 6-9.

22 P. C. Gine, "Biblical model of transforming leaders: New Testament perspective", in Narola Imchen (Ed.), *Weaving Patterns of Ministry for Women in North East India*. Women Studies Series No. 3. (Jorhat: Women Study Department, ETC, 2004), 124-135.

the institution is an individual and/or a private body, appropriate steps can be taken accordingly. Likewise, affiliating body can play significant role in this matter. If a kind of administrative cooperation is established between the diverse affiliating bodies, and if they start working towards this goal, this will widen the horizon of theological studies and the standard of theological studies would be elevated to a greater level. Mutual agreement, understanding of cooperation in developing educational principles, and discovering methods of their implication would necessarily create a new history and form a new ethos of theological education, and cooperation among the theological institutions.

l) **Incorporating value education in theological education:** The common educational traits are information, knowledge, wisdom, intuition, and revelation; and theological education had been to some extent engaged in following these traits. What is required, however, today is right education, "… to an individual's intellectual, physical, emotional, social, and spiritual development. It would help them evolve into a person with holistic vision and growth, culminating in preparing a happy future for an integrated human."[23] This type of theological education would promote an atmosphere where people would be discouraged to contribute in the proliferation of theological institutions. It would also profess an atmosphere where educational institutions would work harmoniously for people's good.

m) **Take firm steps stopping proliferation of theological institutions:** It is in no way good to see mushrooming of

[23] Dr. (Sr.) Pushpa Joseph, "Education in Values: Strategies and Challenges for Value Education", in Ranjana Banerjee, Neeta Dang and DebikaGuha (Eds.), Dynamics of Values(Kolkata: Loreto College & Departments of B.Ed. and Education, 2013), 69.

> theological institutions in one designated area or in the same neighbourhood. It is selfish as well as suicidal. One has to take control of this situation, and make best use of the available resources – both human and otherwise. This would initiate a new chapter in the history of theological education. It would upgrade the standard of theological education and revitalize the confidence level of the theological institutions. Under certain situations, however, amicable settlement can be made; i.e., undergraduate and mother-tongue institutions can be promoted in viable areas, whereas the postgraduate level of institutions may be concentrated in some major theological institutions which have both qualified human and other resources. Competitive attitude can be productive if these postgraduate institutions are established in geographically distant areas. Confederated institutions must be within a short geographical vicinity which would be viable from both time and expense points of view.

As retrospection is an act of self-reflection so reformation is a determination for rectification. Hence, these two must meet in the present scenario of proliferation of the theological institutions in the Indian contexts. It has been revealed how proliferation of theological institutions has adversely impacted the quality of theological education, inter-church relation, inter-denominational cooperation, institutional fraternity, ecclesiastical involvement, social influence, public response, political goodwill, and spiritual growth. This, therefore, has to be curved towards greater inter-institutional understanding and develop such a holistic theology that would cater the need of the theological graduates, churches, society, public demand, national expectation, and divine expectation. In order to attain such goal, the institutions must resolve to prepare their strategic plans for future implementation. Two of such strategic plans, namely ATA and SSC, may be seen as future model of such strategies that others can ponder over.

**Strategic Plans: 1. Asia Theological Association**

The section on strategic plan of the ATA begins with the statement: "ATA invites all theological schools, churches, associations, corporate organizations and individual believers to rally in support of this shared vision. Let us join hearts, hands and resources to help ATA implement this strategic plan for the future". This statement simplifies the definiteness of direction and devotion of the ATA theological institutions. Such an attempt may be considered as a gift to ATA to the Asian theological institutions on its Golden Jubilee which is knocking at the door. This is expressed in its four-dimensional plan: i) To *identify key critical contemporary issues commonly shared by churches in Asia* in the next three to five years; ii) To organize and run theological consultations annually on key contemporary issues in partnership with regional and local Christian and theological partnership; iii) To strengthen the work and influence of national and local theological and church associations by supporting key theological agenda; and iv) To partner with national and local churches and theological associations, and global or regional quality education networks, to create platforms and opportunities for mutual fellowship and sharing.[24] This takes care of almost all areas what modern theological educators could think about. One thing that this Strategic Plan lacks is its openness to invite public involvement and demands. This, however, does not in any way undermine the goodwill of ATA that has been expressed.

**Strategic Plans: 2. Senate of Serampore College**

Strictly speaking, the SSC has not yet prepared and presented any Strategic Plan like that of the ATA. What it has done in essence is it has extended its cooperation with other theological bodies as part of

[24] Bong Rin Ro, Ken Gnanakan and Joseph Shao, *et. al.* (Eds.) *New Era, New Vision: Celebrating 40 years of the Asia Theological Association* (Quezon City [Philippines]: Asia Theological Association, 2010), 162-164.

its strategic planning. Thus, it has opened the way to the graduates of ATA to appear Qualifying Exams for their further studies under the Senate of Serampore College. It is only the beginning of its strategic step. Reform in curriculum formation; organizing Pedagogical Seminars at all levels of studies; Transforming the entire Format and System of Examination; introducing Common Evaluation System; systematising conduction of examination in two different segments; offering Diplomas and Degrees in Bible Translation, Music and Missionary Training Programme; approving doctoral degrees even for Tribal, Dalit, and Women Studies; introducing Common Entrance Test for the prospective doctoral candidates, etc. are a few of these areas that indicate that the Senate of Serampore College is thinking seriously for her strategic future plan. International relationship with both ecumenical and evangelical organizations and indirectly cooperating with the organizations like Bible Society of India and Wycliffe International are the signs of transformation in the nature and operation of the Senate of Serampore College. In other words, it may be said that the SSC is acting in four ways: preparing, presenting, promulgating and activating her Strategic Plans simultaneously.

**Conclusion**

Theological education can never be stagnant. It is changeable and subject to change in the pattern of the context where it functions – the people and their culture, on-campus and off-campus, and the trainers and the trainees. There cannot be one-time theology to be applied generations together, because context changes in course of time, and theology changes accordingly. It is the educators who take these changes into consideration, outline the changes in the classrooms, device future plan of action in their writings, sharing their thoughts in seminars and consultations, and implement them in their respective colleges, churches, and the society at large. With this retrospection let reformation begin in the context of the proliferation of theological institutions in India.

# Appendix – A

## Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| **AETEI** | Association of Evangelical Theological Education of India |
| **ANZATS** | Australia and New Zealand Association of Theological Schools |
| **ATA** | Asia Theological Association |
| **ATESEA** | Association for Theological Education in South East Asia |
| **ATS** | American Association of Theological Schools |
| **ATU** | Asian Theological Union of ATESEA |
| **BD** | Bachelor of Divinity |
| **BMiss** | Bachelor of Missiology |
| **BTE** | Board of Theological Education |
| **BTESSC** | Board of Theological Education of the Senate of Serampore College |
| **BTh** | Bachelor of Theology |
| **DipBT** | Diploma in Bible Translation |
| **DTh** | Doctor of Theology |
| **DWM** | Diploma in Worship and Music |
| **EFI** | Evangelical Fellowship of India |
| **FFRRC** | Federated Faculty for Research in Religion and Culture |
| **IATE** | International Association for Theological Education |
| **ICETE** | International Council for Evangelical Theological Education |
| **IMA** | India Missions Association |

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|---|---|
| **IMI** | Indigenous Missions of India |
| **MDiv** | Master of Divinity |
| **MPhil** | Master of Philosophy |
| **MTh** | Master of Theology |
| **NAPTE** | National Association for Pentecostal Theological Education |
| **NATE** | National Association for Theological Education |
| **NCCI** | National Council of Churches of India |
| **NCCR** | National Council of Churches Review |
| **NEI** | North East India |
| **NEICC** | North East India Church Council |
| **NIPGTS** | North India Institute of Post-Graduate Theological Studies |
| **NJPGRC** | NavJyoti Post Graduate and Research Centre |
| **PhD** | Doctor of Philosophy |
| **SSC** | Senate of Serampore College |
| **TEF** | Theological Education Fund |
| **TEP** | Theological Assistance Program |
| **UGC** | University Grant Commission |
| **WEA** | World Evangelical Association |
| **WEF** | World Evangelical Fellowship |
| **WOCATI** | World Conference of Association of Theological Institutions |

## Appendix B
## ATA accredited Colleges

1. Academy of Integrated Christian Studies, Aizwal, Mizoram
2. ACTS Academy of Higher Education, Bangalore, Karnataka
3. Agape College, Dimapur, Nagaland
4. AG Tamilnadu Bible College, Madurai, Tamil Nadu
5. All Nations Theological Seminary, Siliguri, West Bengal
6. Andhra Christian Theological College, Hyderabad, Telangana
7. Antioch Biblical Seminary & College, Pondicherry, Puducherry
8. Asia Antioch Seminary, Guwahati, Assam
9. Asia Evangelical College & Seminary, Bangalore, Karnataka
10. Asian Bible College, Cochin, Kerala
11. Asian Christian Academy of India, Hosur, Tamil Nadu
12. Baptist Seminary of South India, Bangalore, Karnataka
13. Bethel Bible College, Punalur, Kerala
14. Believers Church Theological Seminary, Tiruvalla, Kerala
15. Berean Baptist Bible College and Seminary, Bangalore, Karnataka
16. Bethel Faith Spark Bible College, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu
17. Bethel New Life College, Bangalore, Karnataka
18. Biblical Theological College & Seminary, Bangalore, Karnataka
19. Buntain Theological College, Kolkata, West Bengal
20. Calcutta Bible College, Kolkata, West Bengal

21. Calcutta Bible Seminary, Kolkata, West Bengal
22. Center For Global Leadership Development (SABC), Bangalore, Karnataka
23. ChilChil Theological Seminary, Kanglatongbi, Manipur
24. Church On The Rock Theological Seminary (COTR), Andhra Pradesh
25. Clark Theological College, Mokokchung, Nagaland
26. Doon Bible College, Dehra Dun, Uttaranchal
27. Doulos Bible Institute , Shillong, Meghalaya
28. Discipleship Bible College, Dimapur, Nagaland
29. Eastern Bible College, Dimapur, Nagaland
30. Ebenezer Bible College, Kaduthuruthy, Kerala
31. Ebenezer Theological Seminary, Kollam, Kerala
32. Evangelical College of Theology, Churachandpur, Manipur
33. Federated Theology Program of North East India, (FTP – NEI), Dimapur, Nagaland
34. Filadelfia Bible College, Udaipur, Rajasthan
35. GGM's Indian Theological Seminary, Chennai, Tamil Nadu
36. Gilead Evangelical Theological Seminary, Bangalore, Karnataka
37. Golden Crown College, Dimapur, Nagaland
38. Good News Mission Bible College, Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu
39. Good Shepherd College of Cultural Studies, Secunderabad, Andhra Pradesh
40. Grace Bible College, Churachandpur, Manipur
41. Hindustan Bible Institute & College, Chennai, Tamil Nadu

42. Hope Bible College, Ahmednagar, Maharastra
43. India Baptist Theological Seminary, Kottayam, Kerala
44. India Christian Bible College, Cochin, Kerala
45. Jubilee Memorial Bible College, Tamil Nadu
46. IPC Kottayam Theological Seminary, Kottayam, Kerala
47. India Bible College and Seminary, Kerala
48. Kerala Christian Theological Seminary, Kerala
49. Karnataka Institute of Theology (AG), Chitradurga, Karnataka
50. KORIN Theological College and Seminary, Kolar, Karnataka
51. Lakeview Bible College and Seminary, Chennai, Tamil Nadu
52. Life Transforming College International, Siliguri, West Bengal
53. Logos College of Theology, Trivandrum, Kerala
54. Madras Assembly of God Bible College, Chennai, Tamil Nadu
55. Madras Theological Seminary & College, Chennai, Tamil Nadu
56. Mahima Bible Institute, Pune, Maharastra
57. Maranatha Theological Seminary, Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh
58. Maranatha Veda Patasala, Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh
59. Maranatha Bible Training Institute & College, Chennai, Tamil Nadu
60. Mission India Theological Seminary, Nagpur, Maharastra
61. Mt. Zion Bible Seminary, Kerala
62. Nagaland Bible College, Nagaland
63. New Life College, Bangalore, Karnataka

64. New India Bible Seminary, Kerala
65. New Life Biblical Seminary, Kerala
66. New Life School of Mission, Vishakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh
67. New Theological College (NTC), Dehra Dun, Uttaranchal
68. Nichols – Roy Bible College, Shillong, Meghalaya
69. North India Institute of Theological Studies, Mohali, Punjab
70. Olive Theological Institute, Tiruvalla, Kerala
71. Peniel Bible Seminary & Missionary Training Centre, Eranakulam, Kerala
72. Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Dehra Dun, Uttaranchal
73. Reach Out Theological Seminary, Kottayam, Kerala
74. Restoration Theological College, Imphal, Manipur
75. Rhema Bible College, Palakkad, Kerala
76. Rhema Revival Bible College,Tamil Nadu
77. Servanthood Bible College, Nagaland
78. Shalom Bible Seminary, Kohima, Nagaland
79. Sharon Bible College,Tiruvalla, Kerala
80. Sielmat Bible College, Manipur
81. Soul Winning Mission Theological Seminary, Kerala
82. South Asia Institute of Advanced Christian Studies (SAIACS), Bangalore, Karnataka
83. South Asia Leadership Training and Development Centre, (SALT-DC), Madhya Pradesh
84. South Asian Institute of Leadership and Cultural Studies, (SAILCS), Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu

85. South India Baptist Bible College & Seminary, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu
86. Southern Bible College, Tamil Nadu
87. The Salvation Army Human Resource Development Department in India, Kolkata, West Bengal
88. South India Bible Seminary (SIBS), Karnataka
89. Susamachar Theological College & Seminary, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh
90. The Association for Theological Education by Extension (TAFTEE), Bangalore, Karnataka
91. Trinity Bible College, Karnataka
92. Trinity College & Seminary, Manipur
93. Trivandrum Bible College, Tiruvanandapuram, Kerala
94. Union Biblical Seminary, Pune, Maharastra
95. United College of Theology & Mission, Dimapur
96. Vision Theological Seminary, Tamil Nadu
97. Withee Bible College, Dimapur, Nagaland

## Appendix – C
## Affiliated Colleges/Seminaries under Senate of Serampore College

1. Academy of Integrated Christian Studies, Aizawl - M. Th, BD
2. Aizawl Theological College, Aizawl – DTh, MTh, BD, BCS, DCS, DCPC
3. Allahabad Bible Seminary, Allahabad – BD, BCS, DCS
4. Advanced Institute For Research on Religion And Culture (ARRC), Hyderabad – MTh, BTh
5. Andhra Christian Theological College, Hyderabad – BD, BTh, MCS, BCS, DCS
6. Baptist Theological College, Nagaland – BD
7. Believers Church Theological Seminary, Thiruvalla – BD
8. Bethel Bible College, Guntur – BD, BCS, DCS
9. Bethel Bible Institute, Salem – BD, BCS, DCS
10. Bishop's College, Kolkata – BD, and DTh & MTh (through NIIPGTS)
11. Clark Theological College, Mokokchung – MTh, BD
12. Calcutta Bible Seminary, Kolkata – BD, BTh
13. Calvin Institute of Theology, Andhra Pradesh – BD,
14. Concordia Theological Seminary, Nagercoil – BD
15. Dharma Jyothi VidyaPeeth, Faridabad – BD, DCPC
16. Eastern Theological College, Jorhat – DTh, MTh, BD, BCS, DCS
17. Faith Theological Seminary, Manakala – DTh, MTh, BD, BCS, BMiss
18. Federated Faculty for Research in Religion and Culture (FFRRC), Kottayam – DTh, MTh

19. Gossner Theological College, Ranchi – BD, BTh
20. Gujarat United School of Theology, Ahmedabad – BD
21. Gurukul Lutheran Theological College, Chennai – MTh, BD
22. Harding Theological College, Meghalaya – BD
23. Indian Theological Seminary, Chennai – BD
24. India Bible College & Seminary, Thiruvalla – BD
25. John Roberts Theological Seminary, Meghalaya – BD
26. Karnataka Theological College, Karnataka – BD, BCS
27. Kerala Theological Seminary, Kerala – BD
28. Kerala United Theological Seminary, Trivandrum – BD
29. Leonard Theological College, Jabalpur – BD
30. Manipur Theological College, Manipur – BD
31. Madras Theological Seminary & College, Chennai – BD, BCS
32. Malankara Syrian Orthodox Theological Seminary, Kerala – BD
33. Mar Thoma Theological Seminary, Kottayam – BD, and DTh & MTh (through FFRRC)
34. Mar Thoma Episcopal Jubilee Institute of Evangelism, Tiruvalla – BTh
35. Master's College of Theology, Visakhapatnam – BD, BCS, DCS
36. Methodist Bible Seminary, Anand – BTh, BCS
37. Mennonite Brethren Centenary Bible College, Shamshabad – BD, DCS
38. Missionary Training College, Aizawl – BMiss
39. NavJyoti Post Graduate and Research Centre (NJPGRC), Faridabad – MTh

40. New Theological College, Dehradun – BD, DWM
41. North India Institute of Post Graduate Theological Studies (NIIPGTS), Serampore – DTh, MTh
42. Orissa Christian Theological College, Odisha – BTh
43. Orthodox Theological Seminary, Kottayam – BD, DWM; and DTh& MTh (through FFRRC)
44. Santal Theological College, Jharkhand – BTh
45. SameekshaVidyapeet, Nagpur – BMiss
46. Serampore College, Serampore – BD; and DTh & MTh (through NIIPGTS)
47. St. Andrew's Theological College, Dhaka – BTh, BCS, DipBT
48. St. Thomas Orthodox Theological Seminary, Maharashtra – BD
49. Southern Asia Christian College, Tamilnadu – BD
50. South India Biblical Seminary, Bangarapet – BD
51. Tamilnadu Theological Seminary, Madurai – MTh, BD, BCS, DCS
52. Theological College of Lanka, Sri Lanka – BTh, BD Comp, DCS
53. Trinity Theological College, Dimapur – BD
54. Trulock Theological Seminary, Imphal – BD
55. Union Biblical Seminary, Pune – BD; and MTh (through NJPGRC)
56. United Theological College, Bangalore – DTh, MTh, BD
57. United Theological Seminary of Maharashtra, Pune – BTh, DCS
58. Witter Theological College, Wokha – BD
59. Yavatmal College for Leadership Training, Yavatmal – BMiss

# Proliferation of Theological Educational Institutions in Asia: A Response

**Deenabandhu Manchala•**

At the outset, I would like to express my deep appreciation to PTCA and FTESEA for this timely initiative and for their desire to promote relevant and credible trends in theological education in Asia. Thanks also for inviting me to respond to the presentations. I also want to congratulate and appreciate researchers for their meticulous work. I am sure that you would all agree with me that their presentations with insights and concrete challenges from the ground have indeed enriched and provoked us to think concertedly. Before I begin, let me mention a couple of things about the perspectives from which I would like to interact with their conclusions. Firstly, as a close observer of the trends in theological education as part of my ecumenical vocation at different levels and contexts, I have always argued for contextually and experientially-rooted methodology and

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content of theological education in Asia. To that extent, I have been critical of the current trends of excessive clericalism, captivity to western methodology and content, tendency to opt for dominant religio-cultural resources in the name of indigenization, and the seemingly superficial interactions with public issues and social movements. Secondly, I strongly believe that theological education is an instrument of training people for God's mission and that it nurtures people and churches with an alternative consciousness about life and the world. Theological education will benefit only if it interacts with all others who are already engaged in God's mission – the social movements, academia, grassroots organisations, etc. In other words, theological education must evolve out of partnerships and cannot be mere coaching in Christian doctrine and church management. My response to observations on proliferation will stem from these two vantage points. I will only comment on challenges and concerns that are common to all papers.

**Proliferation! Why not? Why is it a problem?**

We learn from all study papers that even though Christians are minority communities in a predominantly multi-religious Asia, the number of theological schools are disproportionate to their numbers. For e.g., Lenta from Indonesia tells us that while 90% of Muslims only have 700 clergy schools, the 7% Christians have 365 schools. This points us to recognise the reality of the distinct nature of Christian faith which varies and assumes distinct expressions according to the specific ways in which its sources of faith – scripture, doctrine and tradition, are interpreted. The consequent expressions rely heavily on education and formation, influencing the meanings and pursuits of Christian presence, witness, *diakonia* and mission.

Furthermore, churches do not only serve a purely theological function. Social identities and cultural moorings play a major role. While living in Geneva, I became aware of many small Christian

communities forming themselves as congregations on the basis of their distinct geographical, cultural, linguistic and confessional identities. There were Dutch, Swedish, German and Norwegian Lutheran congregations, and there were also Japanese, Ghanian, Ethiopian, Chinese, Korean congregations. In the US, I find a number of CSI congregations formed as per linguistic identities. Social and cultural identities - language, ethnicity, region and including caste, class and race, play a major role in the way people prefer to practice their faith in community. Theological seminaries are an extension of these ecclesial expressions perpetrating their social identities and ecclesiastical traditions. We are aware of quite a few theological schools catering to distinct ethnic, linguistic or confessional communities. Lal Tin Hre of Myanmar and Pratap Gine from India, explain, there is also narrow regionalistic and denominational mind-set that is often in operation.

Besides these, there are also varying approaches to the practice of Christian faith as per social and economic locations, and geo-political contexts. There are those who emphasise a great deal on personal piety, Christian expansion, prosperity gospel, and material success. Some are conservative and exclusionary in the way they organise themselves. There are also many and constantly multiplying Pentecostal, post-denominational, independent and charismatic churches, each with its own distinct theological self-understanding and understanding of the wider realities. These too seem to make proliferation inevitable.

Alongside all these, we must also recognise the need of theological institutions in view of the rapid numerical growth. As long as churches multiply and numbers grow, theological institutions will also multiply because every ecclesial expression wants to maintain its distinct doctrinal and pedagogical positions. How then do we address proliferation not as a problem but as an opportunity for partnership?

**Why and how Proliferation is a problem?**

Lenta has told us that many Indonesian seminaries in the past were established by collectives and institutions - synods and churches but are now being established by independent actors and initiatives from the North America and South Korea. These are not accountable to any church or church collectives. They often show scant regard for local theological resources and are insensitive to the political ramifications of their theologies and the consequent expressions. In many places, like in India, these groups pose serious problems to churches through their irresponsible assertions and actions with disdain for other living faiths. The right-wing groups are increasingly becoming extremely eager to retaliate. Mainline churches are often at the receiving end because of the irresponsible behaviour of some of these Christian fundamentalist groups. Christians, therefore, are not just minorities but threatened minorities in many Asian contexts today.

In a context marked by religious fundamentalism and the concomitant political visions, obscurantism, ritualism, and oppressive religious cultures like patriarchy and caste privilege, are finding their way back. Some of these Christian groups also package such superstitious, oppressive religious beliefs, and seem to reinforce exclusion, rejection and otherworldly attitudes. Instead of transformation, these Christian groups reinforce the status quo forces. Therefore, proliferation need to be addressed not only for safety and survival but also for the credibility and relevance of Christian presence and witness. In fact, all the research papers point precisely towards this as the yardstick to measure proliferation, i.e., whether it is transformative, credible, and relevant.

**Responding to the challenge**

In the light of our conversation on proliferation, which I believe has been objective, I want to share a few insights for further reflection on our responses.

Firstly, it seems necessary to evolve processes to invite institutions and their sponsoring bodies for conversation, and mechanisms to hold themselves accountable. Larger bodies such as ATA, ATESEA, ATEM, SSC, PERSETIA, etc., can play a decisive role in initiating these processes. These conversations on proliferation need to take place also at local levels.

Secondly, we need to interrogate the terms – 'seminary' and 'college'. Many of our theological institutions seem to use these names with hardly any distinction. 'Seminary' implies formation of pastors, mostly for ordained or priestly ministry. Such an approach leaves out the need of training the laity for various mission engagements. 'College', on the other hand, can also promote dispassionate intellectualism and a detached attitude towards the church. It is perhaps time that we began a debate on this distinction to help clarify the nature of God's mission, the role of church and the part that theological institutions play.

Thirdly, in many contexts in Asia, theological institution cannot merely remain as service providers to the institutional/organised churches. The emerging understandings of church in relation to the world, point towards the theological task of interpreting the trends of the world to the people of the church so that they are able to discern what God wants them to do. There are no such instruments and institutions among churches in many contexts. Unfortunately, many theological institutions do not see this responsibility as part of their calling.

And fourthly, such a broader understanding of the role of theological education implies facilitating partnerships - within and among churches, church institutions, people's movements, and secular academy. In return, they are able to evolve themselves as networks of partners for God's mission. When narrow and oppressive religious fundamentalism is tearing the fabric of the society, it is necessary that theological communities bring together progressive

forces, including from other faith traditions in an effort to uphold the essential principle of God's mission - the sanctity and integrity of all of God's creation. In that, theological communities become catalysts of an alternative vision of the world.

In closing, let me assert that proliferation or plurality is not a problem. As an Asian and Indian, I can embrace all that. But my interest is to explore with you for ways in which we enable mutual accountability in order that theological education and Christians witness builds and not breaks communities.

# Part II

# Challenges and Prospects of Theological Education in Asia

# Challenges and Prospects of Theological Education in Bangladesh

**Albert Sundararaj Walters•**

## 1. Introduction

One of the many theological issues which has and will continue to occupy much time and work in Bangladesh is the question of ecclesiology, particularly the educational mission of the church. In facing its task and carrying out its calling, the Church should seriously consider the challenges and prospects of theological education in the context of twenty-first century Bangladesh society which is undergoing phenomenal political, economic and socio-cultural changes.

The educational mission of the church is part and parcel of the function of the church as *koinonia*, a community to manifest the unity of God in Christ. Therefore, it forms an integral part of the mission and service of the church. Moreover, theological education and all other ministerial formation programmes are an important part of the educational mission of the church. It is through theological

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education that the church prepares those who will become pastors, evangelists, catechists, teachers, etc. for the equipping of the saints and for work of ministry (*diakonia*) for building up the body of Christ (*koinonia*).[1]

Theological education in Bangladesh is growing despite various political, social, economic and religious issues. The situation in the country is highly complicated and globalization has made it even more complex. The question arises, however, as to how Christians are addressing the challenges and opportunities in theological education in such a context. It cannot be denied that there is indeed a proliferation of theological schools in Bangladesh in recent decades. Despite some trends in upgrading of study programmes, there seem to be huge challenges facing theological educators and the education mission of the church. Are the programmes, the theological institutions etc. providing suitable formation for individuals to develop so that they can bring about change in the church and in society? In the midst of a proliferation of theological schools and institutions, can the church play an innovative role in nation-building?

The underlying purpose of this presentation is to offer an overview of the challenges and prospects for theological education in Bangladesh. In order to understand the subject matter in its proper perspective, an outline of Christianity and the Church is provided against the backdrop of the country's political, socio-economic and religious context. The existing situation of theological education and the challenges faced will be explored. This paper argues that there needs to be a critical rethinking and re-visioning of the educational mission of the church in Bangladesh so as to shape and promote social and spiritual transformation. It is envisaged that this work will stimulate further research and assessment regarding theological

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[1] Judo Poerwowidagdo, *Towards the 21st Century: Challenges and Opportunities for Theological Education* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1993), 21.

education in a largely Islamic context such as Bangladesh.

## 2. The Country, Christianity and the Church: An Overview

Bangladesh is the world's eighth most populous country (160 million as of 2015) and it is also the most densely populated. The country experiences extreme poverty and important governance and infrastructure challenges. Other key issues include child health and nutrition, education, gender, climate change and corruption. Especially pertinent are rural poverty, marginalized populations, and the welfare of children and women. Violence against women, particularly domestic violence, is a pervasive and persistent problem and may have increased in recent years.[2]

However, Bangladesh has made significant advances in human development and has seen sustained economic growth over the last few years. The economy is driven by a growing export-oriented garment industry and is set to achieve the government's goal of attaining middle-income status by 2021. Goldman Sachs has pinpointed Bangladesh as one of the 'Next Eleven' emerging economies.[3] Bangladesh has made remarkable progress in reducing poverty. Based on the international poverty line of $1.90 per person per day, it reduced poverty from 44.2 percent in 1991 to 13.8 percent in 2016/17. In parallel, life expectancy, literacy rates and per capita food production have increased significantly. Rapid growth enabled Bangladesh to reach the lower middle-income country status in 2015. In 2018, Bangladesh fulfilled all three eligibility criteria for

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2 Sohela Nazneen, Naomi Hossain and Maheen Sultan, "National Discourses on Women's Empowerment in Bangladesh: Continuities and Change," *IDS Working Paper 368*. (Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies, 2011), 12.

3 "Beyond the BRICs: A Look at the 'Next 11." Goldman Sachs, April 2007. Available at: http://www.goldmansachs.com/our-thinking/archive/archive-pdfs/brics-book/brics-chap-13.pdf.

graduation from the UN's Least Developed Countries (LDC) list for the first time and is on track for graduation in 2024.

While the income growth, human development and vulnerability reduction efforts to date have been extraordinary, Bangladesh faces daunting challenges with about 22 million people still living below the poverty line. The World Bank has identified job creation as the country's top development priority. Bangladesh needs to create more and better jobs for the 2 million youths entering the job market every year. To do so, Bangladesh will need to remove the barriers to higher growth posed by low access to reliable and affordable power, poor transportation infrastructure, limited availability of serviced land, uncertain and complex business regulation, rapid urbanization and vulnerability to climate change and natural disasters, among others.[4] Bangladesh also continues to face the challenge of enabling millions of illiterate adults to learn to read and write. Only 57.7 percent of Bangladeshis aged 15 and older are assessed as being literate.[5]

However, despite the advancement, over the last five years or so a number of incidents have threatened to disrupt the country's economic progress and human development. There have been deadly events of communal violence, political deadlock, and targeted killings of atheists and bloggers. These incidents highlight the point that religion plays a significant role in fermenting social and political tensions in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh presents a surprisingly diverse faith landscape with some main religious traditions represented among its population. The major religion in Bangladesh is Islam (90%) comprising about

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[4] The World Bank in Bangladesh. Last Updated: April 05, 2018 Available: http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/bangladesh/overview Accessed 15-08-18.

[5] World Vision Australia, "Country profile: Bangladesh 2015". Available: https://www.worldvision.com.au/docs/default-source/school-resources/country-profile-- bangladesh.pdf?sfvrsn=0 Accessed: July 12, 2018.

104 sects.[6] A significant 9% of the population adheres to Hinduism. Other religious groups include Buddhists 0.6%, (mostly Theravada), Christians (0.3%, mostly Roman Catholics), and Animists (0.1%).[7] Secularism was a foundational tenet of Bangladesh's 1971 constitution though Islam was declared the state religion in 1988. But this move has been challenged through petitions and in the courts several times.

The constitution provides for the right to profess, practice, or propagate all religions, subject to law, public order, and morality. It also states that every religious community or denomination has the right to establish, maintain, and manage its own religious institutions. Although the government publicly supports freedom of religion, in recent years there have been increasing incidents of attacks and discrimination against religious and ethnic minorities. Hindu, Christian, and Buddhist minorities experience discrimination and sometimes violence from the Muslim majority.[8] This hostility has complex social and historical dimensions, but political events are, in large measure, the spark. Peace and communal harmony are growing concerns, with many religious dimensions.

2018 is a significant year as it marks the five hundredth centenary of arrival of the first Christians in Bangladesh. Christianity made its first definite inroads into the region in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. Portuguese traders and Roman Catholic missionaries

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6 Mohammad Wahiduzzaman, "A Quest for Secular Bangladesh." *International Journal of Advanced Research in Management and Social Sciences*, 5, no. 4, (April 2016), 43-66. Available: www.garph.co.uk IJARMSS. Accessed: July 18, 2018.

7 Wikipedia, "Freedom of religion in Bangladesh." Available: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freedom_of_religion_in_Bangladesh. Accessed: July 28, 2018.

8 Md. Rajib Hasnat Shakil, "Systematic Persecution of Religious Minorities: Bangladesh Perspective" *IOSR Journal of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, 7, no. 3 (Jan-Feb 2013), 09-17.

came and settled in Chittagong in 1518 and built its first churches. William Carey, the first Protestant missionary to arrive in Bengal in 1793 ushered in a new missionary era in Bengal. With Carey came the Baptist Missionary Society (British) in 1793, followed by Church Missionary Society (British) in 1805, Council for World Mission (British Presbyterian) in 1862, Australian Baptist Mission in 1882, New Zealand Baptist Mission in 1886, Oxford Mission (British Anglican) in 1895, Churches of God (American) in 1905, Seventh-Day Adventists in 1919, Assemblies of God in 1945, Santal Mission (Lutheran) in 1956, Bangladesh Mission of the Southern Baptist Convention (American) in 1957, and Association of Baptists for World Evangelism (American) in 1958. After the War of Independence in 1971, there was an influx of more Protestant missionary societies into Bangladesh.[9] Besides evangelism, these societies also planted churches, established and ran various educational, healthcare, and welfare institutions and organizations.

Roughly half of the Christian population in Bangladesh is Roman Catholic. At present, the number of Protestants in Bangladesh is estimated to be around 200,000 which is about 30% of the total Christian population.[10] The Protestants are divided into a variety of denominations: Assemblies of God, Bangladesh Baptist Fellowship, Bangladesh Baptist Sangha, Bangladesh Lutheran Church, Bangladesh Presbyterian Church, Christian Brethren, Church of Bangladesh (Anglican), Church of God (Anderson), Garo Baptist

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[9] WWL 2018 Church History & Facts – BANGLADESH Available: https://www.opendoors.no/Admin/Public/DWSDownload.aspx%3FFile%3D%252FFiles%252FFiles%252FNO%252FWWL-2018-dokumenter%252FBangladesh-Church-Facts-andHistory.4gfOosszcAhVJLMAKHaYMAIYQFjAAegQIAxAB&usg=AOvVaw2cUxbrAG0CmEivN5uglAJB Accessed: Aug 1, 2018.

[10] Patrick D'Rozario, "Catholic Church in Bangladesh." November 25, 2017. Available: https://www.popebd.info/2017/11/25/catholic-church-bangladesh/. Accessed: June 26, 2018.

Convention and Seventh-day Adventist Church.[11] There are also a number independent churches and some cater to Christians with a Muslim background.

The National Council of Churches in Bangladesh (NCCB) is a Christian ecumenical organization founded in Bangladesh in 1949 as the East Pakistan Christian Council. It is a member of the World Council of Churches and the Christian Conference of Asia. NCCB is a coalition of 15 Protestant churches, promoting unity and fraternity. The National Fellowship of Churches, Bangladesh is another major Protestant church forum comprising 19 member churches. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Bangladesh and the Protestant fellowships formed a common forum in 2011: The United Forum of Churches that draws representatives from all member associations. During times of natural disasters, political upheaval and national crises, Catholics and Protestants have worked hand in hand.

The people of Bangladesh and the government in general appreciate the presence of Christians and have a positive attitude towards the community. The nation recognizes the contribution and sacrifices that Bangladeshi Christians have made especially during the period of the liberation struggle in 1971 and, in the years following independence, for the reconstruction of the country. The contribution of the Catholic and other churches in the field of education, health, social development, charitable works, and the socio-economic growth of the population is still widely recognized and appreciated.[12]

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[11] Christianity in Bangladesh. Available: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity_in_Bangladesh. Accessed: July 5, 2018.

[12] In Agenzia Fides, "Christians are discriminated against in society but play a valuable role," 22 January 2018. http://www.fides.org/en/news/63606ASIA_BANGLADESH_Christians_are_discriminated_against_in_society_but_play_a_valuable role.

Christians have lived for centuries in harmony with the Muslim majority population but a recent rise in Islamist extremism has left religious minorities in Bangladesh living in fear. Many say it has never been more difficult to practice their faith in the Muslim-majority country. Christian leaders say many have left Bangladesh in recent years as the community increasingly finds itself targeted by Islamists.[13] Members of minority religions have been attacked and killed as well, like a Hindu priest in February 2016 and a convert to Christianity in March 2016. The tension between the secular values and radical Islam is growing rapidly, as shown when protesters forced the removal of a sculpture of a woman personifying justice from outside the country's Supreme Court building in May 2017.[14]

The Ministry of Religious Affairs administers three funds for religious and cultural activities: the Islamic Foundation, the Hindu Welfare Trust, and the Buddhist Welfare Trust. The Christian community, however, has consistently rejected government involvement in its religious affairs. The government observes most major religious festivals and holy days of Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and Christians as national holidays. Through additional security deployments and public statements, the administration promotes the peaceful celebration of Christian, Hindu, and secular Bengali festivals. It is noteworthy that the government has taken steps to promote interfaith understanding. It has also helped support the Council for Interfaith Harmony, an organization created in 2005

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13 The Japan Times, "Fear stalks Bangladesh's Christians as Islamic extremism surges," Nov 28, 2017. Available: https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/11/28/asia-pacific/fear-stalks-bangladeshs-christians-islamic-extremism-surges/#.W1gmfNIzbIU. Accessed: July 25, 2018.

14 Julfikar Ali Manik and Ellen Barry, "Statue of Woman Removed From Bangladesh's Supreme Court" *The New York Times*, May 26, 2017. Available: https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/26/world/asia/bangladesh-statue-justice-supreme-court-islam.html. Accessed 31-07-18.

with a mandate to promote understanding and peaceful coexistence among different communities. The council is the only organization with representation from all of the religious faiths in the country.[15]

## 3. Theological Institutions in Bangladesh

Christian religious education is offered in Bible schools and intermediate seminaries to Secondary School Certificate (SSC) pass students while Higher School Certificate (HSC) pass students are admitted in major seminaries and theological colleges. Managed by Church organisations of different denominations, the theological colleges offer Bachelor's and Master's degrees to successful candidates. There are twenty main theological institutions, schools and training centres in Bangladesh including two Catholic seminaries. Most of the colleges listed below are members of the Theological Association of Bangladesh (TAB).

### Brief Description of Main Theological Institutions[16]

1. *A G Bible College*

Started in 1995, it is a denominational institution of the Assembly of God Church Mission in Bangladesh. Besides the three-year Diploma in Theology (Dip. Th.) course, two other short programmes are offered: a Discipleship Training course for three months and ten days conducted three times a year; and a one-year basic training course for teachers. Most of the students at the College are registered for the Dip. Th. Programme. There are plans to upgrade to the B.Th. level with accreditation from ATA. A G Bible College is a member of the Theological Association of Bangladesh (TAB).

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[15] "Bangladesh" Available: https://www.state.gov/documents organization/171752.pdf Accessed: July 12, 2018.

[16] For much of the information in this section, I am indebted to David Anirudha Das, "The Development of Theological Education in Bangladesh: Problems and Challenges." *The Ecumenical Review*, 64, no. 2 (July 2012), 169f.

2. *Agape College*

Since its inception in June 2003, the College has been committed to equipping new believers, especially those from the Muslim background. The students follow TEE courses run by College of Christian Theology Bangladesh (CCTB) and SEAN courses along with their one-year Diploma in Ministry programme of 24 subjects. The teaching staff consists of several qualified national and expatriate teachers. Agape College is an inter-denominational institution, though inclined more towards Baptist doctrinal theology.

3. *Bangladesh Adventist College and Seminary*

Bangladesh Adventist Seminary and College (BACS), established in 1969, is a Seventh-day Adventist sponsored institution. From humble beginnings it now instructs over 900 students in its elementary, secondary and college programmes.[17] BACS offers the Bachelor of Arts in Religion and is overseen by the Southern Asia-Pacific Division, one of the thirteen regional organizations of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church .

4. *Bangladesh Institute of Christian Theology*

Bangladesh Institute of Christian Theology (BICT) is an evangelical, interdenominational college with the aim of providing quality training to Christian men and women. BICT incorporates academic, ministerial, spiritual, and personal formation as part of the student's experience. BICT was founded and established under the leadership of Michael Adhikari in 1997.[18]

BICT offers a one-year Certificate in Theology course and plans

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[17] Available: https://www.adventistuniversities.com/adventist-universities/asia/bangladesh-adventist-seminary-and-college/. Accessed: July 30, 2018.

[18] Available: http://bictbangladesh.org/about_us.htm. Accessed: July 25, 2018.

to start a two-year Diploma in Theology programme and a short training course for Church workers in ministry. BICT is an active member of the TAB and maintains a close connection with the Biblical Graduate School of Theology, Singapore which has its roots in Bible-Presbyterianism.

5. *Bangladesh Theological Seminary*

BTS was founded by John Sircar in 1989. BTS offers two courses in English language and is affiliated to two Institutions in USA: Masters of Theological Studies of 96 credit hours, and Bachelor of Arts of 140 credit hours. Except for John Sircar, all the twelve regular visiting faculty members are expatriates. BTS is an inter-denominational institution and is not affiliated to any particular Church. However, the seminary follows Baptist doctrinal theology and is a member of TAB. BTS is associated with Northwest Baptist Seminary, Washington and Piedmont Baptist College, North Carolina, USA.

6. *Baptist Bible College of Bangladesh*

The Baptist Bible College of Bangladesh (BBCB), a ministry in leadership training, gives in-depth teaching to Christian high-school graduates. Courses include practical Christian service assignments. BBCB graduates receive a diploma upon finishing each section of the three-year curriculum.[19] BBCB is working towards partnership with Davis College, New York to enhance the accreditation of the Bible College ministry in Bangladesh.[20]

7. *Baptist Theology Academy*

The Baptist Theology Academy (BTA) is a theological Institution of

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[19] AOB BANGLADESH. Available: https://www.aobbangladesh.org/node/7 Accessed: July 25, 2018.

[20] BBCB Strategic Partnership with Davis College. Available: https://www.aobbangladesh.org/node/91 Accessed: July 25, 2018.

Bangladesh Baptist Church Sangha (BBCS). BBCS is the oldest and largest Protestant denomination in Bangladesh. Its origins go back to the work started by William Carey in 1796. BBCS was establish to train pastors, deacons and lay leaders to strengthen the Church spiritually and train new coverts who are not very much educated. This academy mainly teaches the Baptist doctrine, through the subjects like The life of Jesus Christ and His teaching, and Pastor's Character and Calling.[21]

8. *Center for Religious Studies*

The Center for Religious Studies (CRS) was started by the Presbyterian Church of Bangladesh in 2004. The aim is to equip church planters to reach out to Muslim background believers (MBBs). Graduates are trained to plant churches among MBBs and instruct them through courses on Islam, Christian Doctrine, Practical Theology and legal system. CRS offers a one-year residential Diploma in Comparative Religions course. There are ten part-time teachers at CRS. The Centre is a denominational institution of the Presbyterian Church Mission (American) in Bangladesh, though it is open to students from other churches.

9. *Christian Discipleship Centre*

The Christian Discipleship Centre (CDC) was founded in 1979 by an Indian missionary Biswanath Acharyya Chowdhuri and his wife Vijaymala Chowdhuri. CDC is a full time residential, non-denominational Christian teaching centre for men and women. Courses are practically based and additional subjects include leadership, children's ministry, primary school teaching, adult literacy, basic health care, and income generation skills.[22]

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[21] Available: http://www.bbcs.org.bd/institutions/baptist-theology-academy-bta.html. Accessed: August 2, 2018.

[22] Christian Discipleship Centre, Bangladesh. Available: http://www.wouk.org/ministry/discipleship.php. Accessed: July 22, 2018.

CDC offers a 40-week Diploma in Christian Ministry course. The Centre has also introduced short courses on spiritual and socio-economic skill-building for Church workers who are engaged in practical ministry. CDC has eight full-time faculty members with several visiting teachers. From its inception till 2006, a total of 621 students including 196 women, have completed various courses at CDC. 20% of their annual budget is covered by local sources. CDC is an inter-denominational institution and is not affiliated to any particular church. CDC plays a leading role in TAB and is an active member of the Association of Theological Education in South East Asia (ATESEA).

10. *College of Christian Theology Bangladesh*

The College of Christian Theology Bangladesh (CCTB) was established in 1968 by representatives from sixteen national church and mission organisations. CCTB thus became the first interdenominational theological training institute in the country. The first courses offered were at Certificate level, followed by the Diploma level. These courses were taught in two weekly or monthly seminars. To meet the needs of the growing churches, the Theological Education by Extension (TEE) programme was started in 1976. Since then, more than 4,500 students from different denominations have completed various courses through this programme.

In 1992 a ten-month residential component was added to the section studied through TEE, creating a mixed-delivery B.Th. programme accredited by ATA in 1997. In 2005 an M.A. in Christian Studies was added in collaboration with the Asian Institute of Theology, Bangalore, India and accredited by ATA.[23] The mission of CCTB is to equip men and women through theological training,

[23] Asia Theological Association. Available: http://www.ataasia.com membership/accredited-membership-list/ Accessed: June 26, 2018.

mentoring, and practical ministry to be servant leaders and scholar saints acting as salt and light amongst their communities.[24] CCTB is an inter-denominational Institution with twenty-two churches and Christian organizations affiliated to it. CCTB is an active member of TAB.

CCTB also plays a key role in *TEE Bangladesh* by training local church leaders.[25] Many churches in Bangladesh do not have the funds at their disposal to enable their young members to spend a number of years studying at a theological college or Bible school. To this end the TEE (out-of-school Christian training) was set up. Here the school comes to the student and not the other way round. What this means in practice is that the student has the necessary books at his/her disposal and works through a given number of lessons at home, according to an agreed timetable. He/she then arranges a tutorial with the mentor, generally a pastor or missionary, who goes through the material with the student, discusses parish work with him/her and organizes the exams. CCTB offers regular training courses for the tutors and compiles training materials. Two-week intensive courses are offered locally or at the college itself. This gives students the opportunity to complete a course in just a couple of weeks that would normally take three months.[26]

11. *Faith Bible School*

Faith Bible School (FBS) was founded by Salmon Swapon Bose in 2002. Swapon and his wife, Rachel first started FBS to reach out to the Muslim population and to train people to share the Gospel, to

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[24] Available: http://www.ataasia.com/visit-to-college-of-christian-theology-bangladesh/ Accessed: June 26, 2018.

[25] Available: http://www.lmi-bangladesh.org/?page_id=20.

[26] LMI Bangladesh – Liebenzell Mission International. Available: http://www.lmi-bangladesh.org/?page_id=16. Accessed: June 26, 2018.

plant churches, train pastors for the newly planted churches, and to provide spiritual growth through conferences and seminars. Swapon and Rachel also created other ways to share the Gospel through the Centre, such as, yearly youth camps, a child sponsorship program, and church schools. They also developed a mission team that works throughout Bangladesh. FBS seeks to disciple believers so that they can go out and share the Gospel in the world. Many of the students are new believers and have converted from Islam or Hinduism.

FBS runs a one year, residential programme in order to prepare men and women for fulltime ministry. There are plans to upgrade to the B.Th. level. The School is a denominational institution of the Faith Bible Church in Bangladesh. FBS is a member of TAB.

12. *Gloria Theological Seminary*

Gloria Theological Seminary (GTS) was set up by some Korean missionaries in 1996. GTS trains young men and women to support the Churches in Bangladesh through residential theological training. GTS is committed to building self-supporting, self-governing, self-propagating and self-reliant church and sustaining evangelization in Bangladesh. GTS offers two programmes, called GSPT and GBRI. Under the GSPT programme, courses offered are: Master of Ministry, Bachelor of Ministry and Diploma of Ministry while the Bachelor of Theology is conducted under GBRI programme. As part of their curriculum, students are required to be involved in outreach evangelism. Most of the faculty members are from Korea. GTS is an inter-denominational Institution and not affiliated with any particular Church though most of the teaching staff and leaders come from the Reformed Presbyterian Evangelical Church of Korea. GTS is a member of TAB.

13. *Grace Presbyterian Theological Seminary*

GPTS was founded by Saidur Rahman in 2004 catering mainly for converted students from the majority community. The seminary

offers Certificate of Theology and Diploma of Theology courses each running for ten months. All faculty members are locals with many coming from the Muslim background.

14. *Holy Spirit Major Seminary*

HSMS was formally established in August 1973 by the Roman Catholic Bishops' Conference of Bangladesh and is commonly known as Catholic Major Seminary. The main objective of HSMS is to conduct spiritual and ministerial formation of future priests in the local context. The Holy Spirit Major Seminary is a Philosophical and Theological Institute affiliated with the Pontifical Urbaniana University in Rome. It offers two years of Philosophical and four years of Theological studies for the graduate students.[27] HSMS also carries out research on contemporary and ecumenical issues. The seminary is a member of TAB.

15. *Isa-e Theological Institute*[28]

ITI was founded in 2006 by Pastor Abdul Mabud Chowdhury, a believer from the Muslim community. The goal is to equip church members and potential leaders from other denominations with theological training so that they could duplicate this training in their own localities. This objective is based on Ephesians 4:12 "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ."[29]

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[27] Emmanuel K. Rozario, "Priestly Formation in the Context of Bangladesh According to the Teachings of the Catholic Church since Vatican II." Available: http://stt.catholic.ac.kr/DATA/STTBOOK/1436492360240.pdf Accessed: July 11, 2018.

[28] See also Isa-e Church Bangladesh. Available: http://www.faith2share.net/network/network-members/isa-e-jamat. Accessed: July 26, 2018.

[29] Annual Report 2017 Isa-e Church Bangladesh. Available: http://wrfnet.org/sites/default/files/Isa-e%20Church%20Bangladesh%20Annual%20Report%202017.pdf Accessed: August 21, 2018.

ITI offers a one-year Diploma in Ministry residential course. The main focus is to reach out to members of the majority Muslim community. After completion of the Diploma course, some students continue with the higher Bachelor of Theology degree. The B.Th. course is done in collaboration with the extension programme of St Andrew's Theological College, Dhaka which is affiliated to the Senate of Serampore College (University), India.

ITI is a theological institution of Isa-e Church Bangladesh, one of the major Muslim background believers' churches in the country. ITI is actively involved with TAB. Most of the students come from the Muslim background though admission is open to students from other denominations.

16. *Living Waters Training Center*

Living Waters Center (LWC) was established by the Bible Students Fellowship of Bangladesh (BSFB) in 2003. LWC provides training facilities for those who are unable to attend traditional Bible Schools or Colleges located outside of Bangladesh. The reason is that many do not meet the educational requirements and/or they cannot afford the time away from their sources of income. LWC thus provides a venue for training local evangelists, pastors, local church leaders, elders, women, youth, and children's ministries, teacher training, micro-credit and primary health-care programs, pastors' conferences, and a multitude of other events.[30]

**17.** *Methodist Theological Seminary*

The Methodist Theological Seminary (MTS) is a programme of the Bangladesh Methodist Church Trust. 'The Mission of Methodist

[30] Bangladesh Center for Spiritual Formation. Available: https://buck4good.com/project/bangladesh-center-for-spiritual-formation/. Accessed: July 30, 2018.

Theological Seminary is to assist men and women to become devout followers of Christ and to fulfill the great commission by enabling them to know Jesus more fully and intimately through the careful study of God's Word along with the highest academic excellence, and providing practical training relevant to each individual God-given calling.'[31]

In August 1984, Rev. Nibaron Das (later Bishop) started a Methodist Church at his residence with twelve believers gathered for worship. Then a theological training center, Kumran Bible School, was initiated in 1991 by Kum Ran Methodist Church in South Korea. The school was upgraded and named Methodist Theological Seminary. Bishop Nibaron Das is honorary principal. The school continues to be supported by Synpoong Methodist Church, Kumran Methodist church and Korean friends.[32]

There are two courses offered in the Bengali medium at MTS: Diploma in Theology (Dip Th.) and Bachelor of Theology (B Th.). The duration of the Dip. Th. programme is two years including a one-month field internship during the semester vacation. On completion of the Dip. Th., students may be admitted to the B.Th. course. The B.Th. is also a two-year programme with a one-month field internship during the semester break. The main emphasis is providing training for new converts to be equipped to carry on church ministry and planting of new churches in village areas. MTS is a denominational institution of the Methodist Church in Bangladesh, though admission is open to students from other denominations. MTS is an active member of TAB.

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[31] See Methodist Church Bangladesh. Available: https://methodistchurchbangladesh.org/mts/. Accessed: July 25, 2018.

[32] World Methodist Council. Available: http://worldmethodistcouncil.org/about/member-churches/name/bangladesh-methodist-church/ Accessed: July 12, 2018.

18. *St. Andrew's Theological College*

St. Andrew's Theological College, founded in 1976, is the training institute of the Church of Bangladesh.[33] At first, the college was started for students who did not have the required academic qualifications to study at Bishop's College in Kolkata. It began as a residential programme but gradually expanded to include non-residential courses to train catechists and other lay-workers as well as potential priests.

From 1988, SATC became a full-fledged college that could offer residential and non-residential courses for the Bachelor of Theology degree. It catered for ordinands as well as external students in Bangladesh. SATC was recognized and registered by the Senate of Serampore College (University) in India for the B.Th. external programme. The College also simultaneously started a lay people's course for development of lay leadership. With further development, in 2002 a new one-year Diploma in Social Ministry was introduced to train Community Development Workers.

Over the years the following courses have been offered at SATC:

- Bachelor of Theology – 3-year residential course to prepare priests or pastors.
- Bachelor of Theology – 5-year extension course to prepare church leaders & pastors.
- Bachelor of Christian Studies – 5-year extension course in English medium.
- Diploma in Bible Translation – 2-year extension course.

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[33] See Church of Bangladesh Theological & Liturgical Committee. Available: http://churchofbangladesh.org/ministry/theological-board/ Accessed: July 20, 2018. See also Ian S. Markham, J. Barney Hawkins IV, Justyn Terry & Leslie NuñezSteffensen (eds.), *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to the Anglican Communion* (West Sussex UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 240f.

- Diploma in Social Ministry – One-year residential course for rural pastors and catechists.
- Lay Peoples Course – 6 months extension Bible study course.

SATC is a denominational institution of the Church of Bangladesh. However, admission is open to students from other denominations as well. Since the inception, SATC has been offering courses related to contemporary socio-political and cross-cultural issues. The college upholds an ecumenical vision and it plays a leading role in TAB.

19. *St. Joseph Seminary*

The minor seminary of St Joseph in Dinajpur is one of the oldest in Bangladesh.[34] In 1948 the Archbishop of Dhaka Diocese founded the seminary with four students. Only Roman Catholic students aspiring to be priests from the six dioceses, were admitted into the seminary. During the four-year course, students study theology at the seminary and at the same time follow secular education at Notre Dame College. The St. Joseph Seminary is a denominational institution of the Roman Catholic Church in Bangladesh.

20. *The Salvation Army Officers Training College*

The college was started in 1993 to provide theological training mainly for the Salvation Army officer couples. Students follow the TEE Diploma course of CCTB. The total yearly budget is covered by foreign support. The College is a denominational institution of the Salvation Army Church in Bangladesh and is a member of TAB .

## 4. Contemporary Challenges to Theological Education in Bangladesh

In the midst of rapid socio-cultural, technological, and economic

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[34] Sumon Corraya, "Bangladeshi Catholics celebrate the 50th anniversary of the minor seminary of Dinajpur," *AsiaNews.it*, Feb 14, 2014, http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Bangladeshi-Catholics-celebrate-the-50th-anniversary-of-the-minor-seminary-of-Dinajpur-30328.html

changes, seminaries and theological schools in Bangladesh are entering a new era. As such over the last couple of decades some remarkable changes and developments have been taking place in almost all theological institutions. Though these changes and developments are not so many in the areas of their theological scholarship level, it is encouraging to see efforts being made to standardize curriculum, improve physical or logistic facilities, increase students' enrolment, strengthen faculty development, etc.[35] Along with these changes and developments, we can also identify the many challenges these institutions face. Issues related to theological education in Bangladesh are numerous.

*Western Theology*

Bangladesh has a history of colonization. It is out of this historical reality that theological educational institutions have emerged. British colonization created among Bangladesh Christians a tendency to assume without question that the western theology that came with the colonizers is still appropriate to use, even though the colonizers have long gone. What Bangladeshi Christians must come to see is that the way things are should not be accepted uncritically. What must be seen is that the country's colonial history has influenced both the understanding of theology as well as how that theology is taught. It must be acknowledged that much of the theology that is taught and the educational techniques that are used have come from the way the colonizers did it.

*Lack of qualified local faculty*

Many theological institutions in Bangladesh lack qualified faculty members who can make informed decisions about theological education within the framework of the philosophical, epistemological,

[35] Das, "Development of Theological Education," 169f.

ecclesiological and missional destiny of the church in the local as well as the global context.

*Poverty*

Poverty is a significant issue that affects the theological education agenda. The gap between the rich and poor is fast widening in Bangladesh. Poverty is the root cause of many injustices and much violence in the country. Poverty should become a central concern of every theological institution and Bible school. After all the mission of Jesus first and foremost had to do with a preferential option for the poor (Mt 25). The challenge for theological education is to recognize that poverty and accompanying degradation of the environment should be given a central place in theological programmes, since these realities affect the people at every level.

*The Impact of Globalization and Urbanization*

Globalization in the most basic term is globalization of the market. Market-driven capitalism is taking off and accelerating phenomenally in Bangladesh. The other related aspect of globalization is mobility of labor. The mixture of demographics, economics, conflicts, climate change and famine mean that families are often on the move. People move often in their quest for employment and higher living standards. Theological education has an obligation to recognize the impact of this reality, which is considerable. Towns and cities in Bangladesh are much more diverse with many ethnic groups as well as significant numbers of Muslims, Buddhists, Christians, Hindus and others. So what does globalization mean for theological education? Graduates of seminaries need to be able to relate to diverse communities, so some awareness of other faith traditions is also important.

*Ecological Crisis*

Based on the latest United Nations estimates, the current population of Bangladesh is more than 166 million and 36.5 % of the population

live in urban areas.[36] This means the land area will be taxed beyond its limits leading to an ecological crisis. The need for a convincing theology of eco-justice, family planning and birth control has to be addressed. Related to the population growth is the growth of economic activities to sustain such a huge population. And due to improved living standard, there is also an increase of automobiles in Bangladesh. This means increase in pollution level. What bearing does this challenge have on theological education?

*Issue of Religious Pluralism*

Theological education cannot be oblivious to the norm of religious pluralism. Pluralism challenges the churches to put theological education persuasively to their audiences of various religious traditions. How are Christians in Bangladesh to respond to Islam, for instance? Theological education should take Islam as a serious challenge. The response cannot be a quick fix by reacting to Islam as a competing faith or belief system. The theology of the future must incorporate a fresh understanding of pluralism. We need to acknowledge that an authentic theological vision will be open to all cultures. One of the most valuable things an institution can do, if it has not already done so, is to clarify its mission statements and the values it wishes to encourage throughout the institution.

*The Challenge of Ecumenism*

The Christian community in Bangladesh which makes up less than half a percent of the total population, reflects division (or divisiveness) along denominational lines. The large variety of Christian denominations within a small Christian population has caused considerable difficulty for the ecumenical spirit to prevail. Churches can and should work together in unity, despite their

[36] Worldometers. Available: http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/bangladesh-population/ Accessed Aug 21, 2018.

disagreement on some matters of faith and practice.

One prevalent issue is aggressive and unethical proselytizing by fringe churches and evangelical groups that poses a danger to Christians and threatens unity among churches. Some churches convert people by luring them with money or other financial incentives. This is a dangerous trend, which divides the Christian community and makes Christians the target of religious fundamentalists.[37] Theological education must address the phenomenon of ecumenism – the issue of the unity of Christian churches in Bangladesh. Seminaries and theological institutions should help promote cooperation and dialogue among the country's various Christian denominations with greater ecumenical spirit and true Christian unity as its goals.

*Gender Justice Issues*

Bangladeshi women have been struggling to establish their rights in family, society and in the state. Women are still facing discrimination, exclusion and injustice and have negligible influence in decision-making processes. Discriminatory laws and policies hinder formal equality and socio-political conditions prevent women from exercising their rights. Furthermore, violence against women makes women socially vulnerable and prevents them from fully participating in society. However, women's opportunities and public participation in Bangladesh have changed significantly in recent decades. Issues related to gender justice need to be addressed in the seminary curriculum.

## 5. Re-visioning Theological Education in Bangladesh

In order to understand theological education in its proper perspective there is a need to look at the relationship between theological schools

[37] Rock Rozario and Stephan Rozario, "Christian unity is a matter of survival in Bangladesh." *UCA News*, January 23, 2017. https://www.ucanews.com/news/christian-unity-is-a-matter-of-survival-in-bangladesh/78165

and the church in Bangladesh. Theological educators and other stakeholders need to explore the multifaceted and rapidly changing relationships between theological schools and the congregations they serve. Some hard questions that need answers are: Do the churches in Bangladesh give significant importance to developing theological education? How well are the schools meeting the needs of the churches today? What can we say about the kind of leadership the churches will need in the future? What kind of preparation will those leaders require? How would the accrediting bodies need to change to allow this future to become a reality?, and the like.

Theological education remains the lifeline of the Church since the entire activity of the Christian church is directly proportional to the quality of theological education that both leaders and members receive. Experience has shown throughout the history of the Church that weakness or slackness in the life of any Church can be traced to its theological seminaries and institutions. As such, theological schools and churches need each other and seminary education is the fundamental basis and cornerstone of any development programme of the church. Theological schools are intellectual centres for the church, but it does not follow that they are its primary centres of learning. Some crucial lessons are best learned in parishes and congregations. Seminaries need to take seriously the faithful learning that occurs in congregations and parishes, and as centres of intellectual life, learn from the church's learning.

Theological education as a process does not occur in a vacuum rather it occurs in the context of the church and of society. Theological education is part of the churches' ministry. Though a seminary operates mainly within the church, it is not limited to her four walls. Because theological education leads to ministerial formation, there is a need for a closer interaction between the theological institutions and the churches. Listening to each other's views, critical negotiation between their faith experience and meanings, respecting each other's traditions, finding new and creative ways and striving towards an

understanding of a holistic ministry - these are a few characteristics of an interactive relationship.

The following are some pointers and insights for theological institutions and related accrediting bodies in Bangladesh to consider. These materials are presented with the hope that they can encourage and challenge all stakeholders in the common work of preparing leaders and people of God for the church in this time of unprecedented change.

*Equipping the People of God*

One major drawback of the traditional system is that it limits access to theological education to only a few selected people. This is happening in a time when churches in Bangladesh need more trained leaders. Not only is there a need for theology students to be solidly grounded in the faith, sound theological teaching is vital and urgently needed also for lay Christians. Theological colleges are meant to educate the entire people of God so that authentic Christ-centered communities are formed. This dimension of theological education needs to be recognized and strengthened. It is also accepted that the mission of the church has to be praxis oriented and contextual, demanding total commitment with changed life-style of the whole people of God.[38] As Dr Wati Longchar argues: "… theological education cannot be narrowly limited to ministerial training programmes of the churches alone; rather it involves equipping the whole people of God. It is laos – the whole people of God. It is an ongoing process in which the whole people of God are empowered for formation and transformation of all communities. It searches to build a just and inclusive community in the context of people of other faiths and ideologies."[39]

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[38] Ravi Tiwari, "New Initiative in BD Curriculum 2010," Available: www.senateofseramporecollege.edu.in/new-initiatives-bd-curriculam.pdf. Accessed: July 26, 2018.

[39] See Wati Longchar (ed.), *Ecumenical Theological Education in Changing Context: Problems, Challenges and Hopes* (Jorhat: ETE-WCC/CCA)

*Beyond the Classroom: Engaging the World*

The objective of theological education is to seek to develop to the fullest potential the physical, mental and spiritual personality of the student. And so there needs to be fresh thinking in theological education discussions regarding what happens outside the classroom, beyond the four walls of the theological institution. TE has to move from class-room to out-of-class learning, from teacher-centred learning to student-centred learning. This out-of-class learning has to move far beyond field education. Because of a dependent partnership between church and seminary, theological education begins with an involvement of the theological community with the mission of the church 'out there', and moves from there into the classroom. TE is thus anchored within the life of the church, and the classroom becomes a crucible, working model, or laboratory of the world out there.[40]

*Quality of Theological Teachers and Students*

This point emerges as a natural extension to the classroom discussion. Theological institution should ensure that its teachers are able and equipped to teach in ways that enable the institution to achieve what it wishes to in this new and changing climate. It is significant to note that the recurring emphases should be on teachers and students as 'co-learners' or 'co-pilgrims.'

*Adequately Trained Faculty*

Many (if not the majority) of the local faculty of theological institutions in Bangladesh lack adequate qualifications to teach. A number of theological institutions still depend on expatriate teachers.

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[40] Robert Banks, *Reenvisioning theological education: exploring a missional alternative to current models*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W B Eerdmans, 1999), 161-162

Many local faculty members have received their training in the West, and predominantly in North America or Europe. Even those who have received their advanced training in Asia have often been trained by westerners, or at least studied in a western-dominated curriculum. Though their exposure to the West can be viewed positively, the influence of the West has sometimes made these faculty members less sensitive to their own local contexts. They must be 'reoriented' to the realities of Bangladesh and be able to relate to their own contexts once again.

*Contextualized Courses and Curricula*

Directly related to the challenge of relevant faculty is that of appropriate courses and curricula for the Bangladesh context. The curriculum for theological education is best conceived within the pastoral and missional practice and life of the church, and then integrated within the mission and life of the theological institution, which is itself in constant dialogue with the mission of the church. In other words, the life and mission of the church determines the shape of the theological school's agenda and curriculum.

Unfortunately, most of the teaching of theology in Bangladesh continues to be a perpetuation of western theological models. The biggest problem is the hermeneutical gap – a gulf between orthodoxy and orthopraxis and a problem to integrate doctrines into the thought system of the Bangladeshi recipients. The faculty very often rather unthinkingly assume that the extensive western-oriented training he/she received is what the Bangladeshi students should also receive. To offer contextualized courses and curricula will mean a radical re-thinking of what the local situation is and what the students really need to learn. Context-oriented teaching methodology has to be preferred than the content based. The time is ripe for local theologians to not only create a theology (or theologies) that is contextually relevant but also historically correct, and one which gives a sense of stability and integrity to Bangladeshi Christians.

Furthermore, theological texts published in the West do not adequately address specific contextual issues in Bangladesh. It must be acknowledged, however, that Isa-e Theological Institute has produced a number of text books in Bengali for lay leadership training. This literature is widely used by other denominations as well. In order to help fill this textual void annual theological forums could be organized for theological and seminary faculty, students and informed lay people. Forum topics could include: doing theology in the Bangladesh context; dialoguing with people of other faiths; the church and poverty and so on.

The challenge of contextualization also holds true for many theological institutions in Bangladesh that operate with Bengali (Bangla) as the medium of instruction. There is a continuing urgent need for culturally and linguistically appropriate programmes and resources for theological education. The plea of Edinburgh 1910 for theological literature and education programmes to be made available in vernacular languages has been overshadowed by the historic development of English as the preeminent colonial language globally. Outside the realm of English it is still difficult to gain international recognition or to find opportunities for communicating indigenous theological knowledge.[41]

The following are some of the contextual realities that should receive greater attention in curricula development: gender justice and women's studies; poverty; social inequality and injustice; hunger and diseases – especially HIV & AIDS; climate change and eco-justice, etc. Other areas that need attention are: domestic violence; conflict resolution/management; rights of women and children; theology of

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[41] Dietrich Werner, "Theological Education in the Changing Context of World Christianity—an Unfinished Agenda," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 35, no. 2, (April 2011), 92–100. Available: http://www.internationalbulletin.org/issues/2011-02/2011-02-092-werner.html. Accessed: 03 July 2018

development; studies that nurture peace, reconciliation, dismantling a culture of violence; human rights etc. Theological institutions should be relevant in their curricula. Curricula should regularly be revised to see if it is still addressing the needs of the students, the church and the community that the institutions serve.

*Lifelong Theological Education*

In the conclusion of his 1957 study of theological education, H Richard Niebuhr wrote that: "[t]he greatest defect in theological education today is that it is too much an affair of piecemeal transmission of knowledge and skills, and that, in consequence, it offers too little challenge to the student to develop his [sic] own resources and to become an independent, lifelong inquirer, growing constantly, while…engaged in the work of the ministry".[42]

It must be acknowledged that it is impossible for any theological institution to provide their students with everything they will need for ministry in their years at the institution. Equally, it is impossible for the wider church to attend to the ongoing, lifelong theological education of its pastors, teachers and other leaders through any kind of continuing education program. There needs to be a partnership between the theological school and the wider church to develop and incorporate ongoing theological education into the programs and life of the theological school. It is important that life-long theological education be taken seriously as a matter of necessity.

*Self-supported Theological Education*

As David Das points out only "a few colleges have taken effective initiatives to mobilize their own or local resources for various activities."[43] International partners and mission agencies have and

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[42] Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Eugene OR, USA: Wipf& Stock Publishers, 2001), 23

[43] Das, "Development of Theological Education," 169f.

continue to play a crucial role in supporting many of the theological schools in Bangladesh. Self-supported theological education is crucial since financial dependency and dependency on the power of knowledge leads to dependency in thinking as well. Intellectual exchange needs to be mutual and respectful. Theological schools should work together to accelerate the efficiency of utilizing financial and personal resources in teaching to raise church leaders who will serve Bangladesh communities. It is time for churches to take ownership and responsibility for their theological institutions.

*Distance Learning*

The cost of theological education in Bangladesh is high and this restricts many potential students access to full-time in-campus training. As such distance learning and correspondence courses should be explored further as viable alternatives. In fact, institutions such as Christian Discipleship Centre has established a Communications Department to enhance media ministry. The College of Christian Theology in Bangladesh has been successfully running Theological Education by Extension (TEE) courses and the progress has been remarkable. This is found to be the most effective and contextualized method of instruction throughout the country.

Distance education systems using pre-recorded or packaged materials can be established to deal with increasing educational needs that cannot be met by traditional systems. Correspondence studies using printed materials that may be supported by tape recordings, videos, computer use etc. should also be made available. Technological advancement has increasingly radicalized higher education in many parts of the world. Technology will also help democratize theological education and make it more accessible. The offering of on-line study programs may increase enrolment and help theological institutions remain relevant to the churches and society. However, one persistent challenge in Bangladesh is the discrepancy in internet speed which affects accessibility to information resources.

*Ecumenical Theological Education and Learning*

Seminaries should not only teach ecumenism as a required subject but the ecumenical spirit should prevail as an overall ethos of the seminary. Ecumenism is lacking because many of the theological institutions in Bangladesh have been founded by their respective denominations or related organizations. And so they are mandated to promote their denominational vision, history and thrusts. Consequently, their curricula tend to emphasize self-preservation and self-propagation, through such subjects as evangelism, church planting and church growth.

Ecumenical learning on the other hand, enables students, while remaining rooted in one's own church tradition, to become open and responsive to the richness and perspectives of other churches. This in turn enables them to become more active in promoting unity, openness and collaboration between and among churches.

About ten years ago the Ecumenical Theological Education Fund was started by the National Christian Council of Bangladesh (NCCB) with support from Ecumenical Theological Education desk of WCC. It was established in order to promote greater ecumenical cooperation and to ensure fostering of ecumenical theological education in the country. The Theological Association of Bangladesh (TAB) has also to some extent brought institutions into closer ecumenical cooperation. The Roman Catholic theological institution, namely Holy Spirit Major Seminary, occasionally arranges seminars and issue-based meetings with other theological institutions. St. Andrew's Theological College has been involved in interfaith dialogue with Dhaka University as well as with the Interfaith Dialogue Commission of the Catholic Church. However, these initiatives are rather few and far in between.

Theological institutions should also work towards a wider ecumenism relevant for Bangladesh. To do this, firstly there needs

to be a shift from competition to cooperation among churches and Christian denominations. A resurgence in denominationalism is in fact reviving the spirit of competition and rivalry between and among churches. Thus, intra-faith dialogue among the various Christian denominations and theological institutions remains a great need. Secondly, churches and seminaries must move from condemnation to dialogue and cooperation with diverse religions. The many problems and issues in Bangladesh need to be addressed together. Thirdly, there must be a shift from isolation to collaboration with civil society groups and people's movements. Wider ecumenism cannot ignore the movements for justice and peace in order to bring about change. Fourthly, there must be a conscious effort to move from disintegration to integrity of creation. There is a need to affirm the inter-connectedness, inter-dependence and inter-relatedness of God's creation. Ecumenical theological education must promote the very important concern that the whole of God's creation includes the whole inhabited world and the relationships of all creatures therein, regardless of differences and diversity.[44]

Theological education is undergoing tremendous change. Congregations continue to change. Given these and other changes, congregations are hungry for practical strategies and denominations are groping for effective responses to pressing problems. Theological schools are designed to ask hard questions at a time when churches want answers. The church needs theological schools to help it define the reason for her faith. The task before theological institutions in Bangladesh is to get involved in shaping intellectual thinking of the nation and to provide a credible critique of political and economic

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[44] See Hope S. Antone, "Ecumenical Formation in Theological Education: Asian Perspectives," in Dietrich Werner, David Esterline, Namsoon Kang, Joshva Raja (eds.), *Handbook of Theological Education in World Christianity*, (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2010).

development. Theological institutions should recognize new ways of learning, reflecting, teaching and evaluating. The faculty and students should seek to understand together the Christian faith in the context of other faiths and its relevance to the diverse socio-cultural context as they work alongside churches and the people in Bangladesh .

## 6. Conclusion

Theological education is a process of equipping and molding God's people for a variety of leadership roles in church and society. The task before us is not as simple as it seems. For one thing, theological education is a far more complex and varied subject than it might at a first glance appear, and there is a wide and diverse range of views regarding the nature, focus and scope of ministerial formation.

Presently Bangladesh is experiencing seismic changes at multiple levels and at various fronts. If the Church and Christians in Bangladesh are to be ready and equipped to respond to the challenges of the country today, a re-imagining and a re-visioning of theological education is a non-negotiable component. And it must be affirmed that any re-visioning should include the following three basic directional elements: wholesome balance, contextual relevance, and holistic transformation.[45]

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[45] James Massey, "Ecumenical Vision: Perspectives of Indian Seminaries," Available: cca.org.hk/home/ctc/ctc-xxv-1-2/53-60_james_massey.pdf

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# Challenges and Prospects of Theological Education in China

**Manhong Melissa Lin•**

## General Situation

Since 1981, 22 seminaries and Bible schools have been either reopened or opened in China. From the perspective of enrolment, these theological institutes are divided into three levels: Nanjing Union Theological Seminary (NJUTS) which enrolls students nationwide; five regional seminaries, each of which enrolls students from its own region; and the rest of the provincial seminaries or Bible schools, each of which enrolls students from its particular province. Some specialized courses, such as the sacred music programmeme and the programmeme for the deaf run by certain seminaries have started to enroll students nationwide.

According to the design, these 22 schools are divided into two categories. There are nine seminaries and Bible schools that run a three-year or two-year programme, while the rest of the seminaries

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offer a full undergraduate programmeme, including NJUTS which also grants master's and doctoral degrees. NJUTS is run by the CCC & TSPM , while the provincial theological institutes are led by the provincial lianghui , and the regional ones by the lianghui in their respective regions.

Currently, there are nearly 3800 students studying at these theological schools. Baptized Christians with high school diplomas who have been church members for at least one year and are called to serve the church full time, and who have the recommendation of the local church and the endorsement of the local or provincial CC & TSPM are eligible to apply for the undergraduate programme or lower. To be admitted, applicants need to pass the entrance examinations in four or five subjects (depending on the different theological schools), an interview, and physical examination. With the same requirements, those who apply for the master's programme in NJUTS should also have either a four-year seminary or secular university education, and those who apply for the doctoral programme should have a Master's degree either in theology or another subject in liberal arts. There is no age limit for admission to NJUTS, while other schools still do not generally enroll students over 35, which makes the average age of all theological students under 30.

The curriculum of these schools covers biblical, theological, historical and practical theological studies and some liberal arts courses, but the number and level of the courses offered vary from school to school. There are over 280 faculty members, most of whom have Master's degrees, with a dozen also holding doctoral degrees.

There have been more than 23,500 graduates from the 22 seminaries and Bible schools since 1985. Most of the graduates from the provincial and regional theological schools, together with those who have attended the undergraduate programme in NJUTS, have returned to their home churches to serve. Many graduates of NJUTS with an M.Th. degree have become faculty members in various

theological institutes.

NJUTS, with nationwide enrolment, is the model for many other seminaries and Bible schools in China in terms of curriculum plan, faculty development, library development and so forth. NJUTS started to run both the four-year undergraduate and the three-year graduate programme in 1981, the Th.D. in 2016 and the D.Min. in 2017. It started to confer Bachelor's and Master's degrees in 1995. Due to the separation between education and religion, no degree from a religious institute in China is accredited by the Ministry of Education, but is recognized in religious circles. NJUTS joined the Association of Theological Education in Southeast Asia (ATESEA) in 2015 and is in the process of being accredited by ATESEA. There are 21 full-time faculty members and a handful of visiting professors teaching over 450 students. By 2020, the total number of students will exceed 500, including 90 students in the M.Th. programme and around 10 doctoral students. Currently three faculty members have either Ph.D. or Th.D. degrees, while another three are pursuing their doctoral studies overseas; the rest hold Master's degrees. The doctoral programme of NJUTS depends heavily on visiting professors who are well-established scholars in their fields. The library has a collection of over 60,000 volumes, not including digital resources, such as ATLAS and CNKI. NJUTS also runs a three-year correspondence course with an enrolment of nearly 3000 to train lay leaders.

## Challenges and Prospects

### 1) The Needs of the Church and Curriculum Revision

Theological education in China has made immense progress since 1981 in many areas, including campus facilities, faculty and library development, and school management. However, it has also faced challenges in these areas and in teaching quality, curriculum revision and some other areas as well.

When the theological schools were reopened or opened after 1981, their top priority was to train young clergy for the pulpit in order to meet the basic needs of the congregations. For a fairly long time, whether a sermon was well received by the congregation had been almost the only criteria of judging whether a pastor or evangelist was qualified or not. With the rapid change in Chinese society and the development of the churches, the needs of the churches have gone far beyond pulpit service, though the Chinese church remains a church of the Word and proclamation. Even the expectation of having a good preacher of the congregation is very different from or much higher than that 30 some years ago. Nowadays, in many urban churches, due to urbanization, church members often come from all walks of life, ranging from rural migrant workers to well-established white collar staff, from illiterate grannies to college students and well-educated elite, from the jobless to the entrepreneur. It is truly challenging to prepare one Sunday sermon that will speak well to the spiritual needs of thousands of Christians with different backgrounds. Moreover, the congregation expects much more from the clergy in pastoral care than just pulpit service. How the theological education can effectively prepare the seminarians for their future ministries is absolutely challenging. What is more challenging is that theological education is not merely to meet the needs of the congregations, but also to foresee the needs of the churches and provide necessary guidance. Theological education should be prophetic. Hence, curriculum revision is a demand that needs to be met and the process of curriculum revision needs to be sped up. A slightly revised new curriculum was discussed three years ago, but has not yet been adopted. In fact, curriculum revision is not a one-time event, but a constant and ongoing project, which not only has to keep up with the changes in the churches and society, but also to help bring transformation to the churches and society.

**2) Teaching Quality, Development of Academic Discipline, and Faculty Development**

Curriculum revision is crucial, but what is more challenging is whether the theological schools will have quality faculty members to offer the necessary courses. Even within the current curriculum, not all theological schools have specialized faculty members for each course.

A few years ago, I visited a seminary offering a three-year program and I talked to a faculty member there. He told me that he had to offer seven courses per semester, covering biblical, historical, theological and liberal arts studies. It is not surprising for a faculty member to offer a course that is not his/her specialty, but to have one person covering such a wide range of teaching subjects and offering so many courses in one semester can be quite unusual. It made me seriously wonder about the teaching quality of this particular seminary. Nevertheless, this faculty member is not alone. A shortage of teaching faculty is a common challenge for all theological schools in Mainland China. Recruiting new faculty members is a pressing need of the theological schools, but the deeper concern is about whether or not the schools can secure those in the fields where they have the greatest need.

The MTh program of NJUTS serves as a training base for new faculty members of the theological schools in Mainland China. When our graduate students choose their majors, they mainly depend on the school's educational resources and their own academic interests. More and more graduates have been expected to return to their home provinces which have recommended them and sometimes have even offered direct financial support for their study in NJUTS. Some graduates will join the faculty of the theological schools in their home provinces, but those whose academic disciplines can fit in with the needs of the theological school there are very few. Very often, these new graduates will need to start to offer new courses by

doing their own self-study as they construct their courses and prepare their lessons. Since it is the provincial CC & TSPM that send their students to NJUTS, it would be much more likely for the theological schools to have better faculty members if they could make a plan for their students based upon the needs of their theological schools while also incorporating the students' academic interests before the students choose their majors in the master's program. Such a strategic plan could help improve the teaching quality of theological schools and use the limited educational resources more effectively.

Another strategic plan that should be made is that of developing necessary academic discipline for each theological school. For quite a few years, six among 20 faculty members in NJUTS, were specialized in the area of systematic theology. NJUTS is certainly not alone. Not only should the number of faculty members in each discipline in a theological school be more balanced, but the national and provincial CC & TSPM and theological schools should also intentionally train faculty members with solid doctoral degrees in each different discipline, to lead the healthy development of all the disciplines. Needless to say, having five PhD holders in five different fields can definitely play a much more significant role in building a balanced set of disciplines than just having them all in one single area of study. The continuous building of a healthy balance between junior and senior faculty members is also an important element in the development of each academic discipline.

The developing of the various academic disciplines is actually not just the task for any one particular theological school; it requires the joint efforts of all the theological schools. Although 11 seminaries in China offer an undergraduate program with a very similar curriculum, the same course taught at different seminaries can vary in many ways, including the course requirements, teaching materials, reference books, reading list, teaching quality and so forth. If the CCC & TSPM can organize seminars inviting faculty members from each discipline to discuss and create a standard syllabus for

each course for theological schools offering the same level programs, that will make a great contribution to the development of academic disciplines in theological education in China. Since each syllabus should also keep up with the times, revising the syllabi should become a regular practice. In short, effective faculty development and quality control in teaching are two very important elements for improving theological education in China.

**3) Library Development**

To well equip theological students, library development cannot be ignored either. What is provided for the students to read will definitely shape the minds of the students. What does a quality theological library look like? It should have a rich and updated collection, fine facilities, and an environment that will attract students to use it. The development of libraries in the 22 theological schools is very uneven. Generally speaking, the facilities of the libraries have improved greatly, but the collections are not comprehensive enough and some are out of date or not sufficiently focused on the current needs of theological study. To manage the collection well requires librarians who not only have professional training in library science, but also solid theological training, relevant theological perspectives and great commitment. Nevertheless, very few librarians can meet such requirements while professionally trained library staff are few.

**4) Shaping the Theological Perspectives**

As we all know, theological education shapes the theological perspectives of the future clergy who will lead the congregations, the constituent parts of the Chinese Church, to be more relevant to the Chinese context and to renew themselves in a changing society. Hence, Theological Reconstruction and Christianity *Zhongguohua* should continuously be emphasized and taught at theological schools. A concise introduction to show their significance for the Chinese Church is as follows:

During the first two decades after the reform and opening , the church put its priority on the return of the church properties, the reestablishment of the church institutions, the training of clergy, the printing of the Bible and the establishment of ecumenical relations. Nevertheless, for maintaining unity, the theology taught by the fundamentalist missionaries in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that shaped the Chinese church remained unchallenged. Such theology was negative and otherworldly in its thinking because it deemed that humanity and human society were totally depraved and therefore worthless and hopeless. Christian hope basically lay in the other world, and the most important earthly obligation for Christians was to convert people in order to gain heavenly reward and to work out personal salvation. God was portrayed as a divine punisher who was hard to please and only in favor of the select few. It also taught that Christians and Christian nations were blessed and the rest were condemned; thus a distinctive line had to be drawn between believers and non-believers. Such theological thinking obviously became a hindrance for the Chinese Church to develop further.

Bishop K. H. Ting, the most important Chinese Christian leader of the twentieth century, whose role in the Chinese church could not be duplicated, initiated the process of Theological Reconstruction for the Chinese church in 1998. He deemed it was time to bring Chinese Christians back to the essence of Christian teaching by challenging and decolonizing the Western theological discourse taught by the fundamentalist missionaries, so that the Gospel could be properly preached and understood in the Chinese context. His hope was that through the theological reconstruction, a Chinese Christianity that was faithful to the biblical teachings, that highlighted God's inclusive love, and that focused on Christians' ethical and moral responsibilities could emerge.

Ting made great efforts to promote the Theological Reconstruction by widely discussing and sharing his theological

reflections with church leaders and theological educators at all levels in China and his ecumenical friends as well. He reflected on a wide range of theological themes, but here only his most well-known and important arguments will be briefly illustrated.

Ting asserted that a negative or pessimistic worldview was not the Gospel, and an overemphasis on sin or the human fall would not be compatible with the God whose name is love. Ting stressed that God's grace far surpasses human sin, just as the impact of Christ on humanity is infinitely greater than that of Adam. With God's grace and love, Christians will have the strength and courage to carry out their social and ethical responsibilities in the world as an embodiment of their Christian faith.

Ting emphasized that God's love is God's most important and most fundamental attribute, above all other attributes. God's love is the love reflected in the cosmic nature of Christ, who gave up his life for all and whose domain, concern and care are universal. The love of the Cosmic Christ is God's all-inclusive love which extends all over the world to all of God's people.

To help rid Chinese Christians of an image of God as a divine punisher, Ting deliberately pointed to the image of mother to describe God and God's love (e.g., Isaiah 66:13, 49:15, and Psalm 131:2). By using the image of mother, Ting demonstrated that God's love does not coerce, but works through education, persuasion, transformation and sanctification.

Ting criticized the over simplistic and even distorted interpretation of justification by faith leading to spiritual pride and antinomianism. Ting claimed that believing in God and converting people are not the only dimensions of Christian faith. Justification cannot be used as an excuse for Christians to escape their social responsibilities and to avoid integrating into the whole community. Christians' good works do not merely aim at expanding the church, but more importantly at following the Cosmic Christ's example of

serving others. Ting strongly argued for a doctrine of sanctification alongside the doctrine of justification.

The Theological Reconstruction advocated by Bishop Ting aroused some debate in the very beginning due to the response of the fundamentalist wing in the church. After two decades, however, through thousands of conferences, essay presentations and sermons, more and more clergy and Christians have come to appreciate the significance of Theological Reconstruction and to support the positive changes and healthy development it has brought to the Chinese Church.

To deepen Theological Reconstruction and make Christianity more relevant to the Chinese cultural, social and political context, the Ninth National Chinese Christian Conference in 2013 proposed the promotion of Christianity that is *Zhongguohua* (Christianity in China must be Chinese in orientation, i.e. further contextualised). A Five-year Outline Plan to Promote Protestant Christianity's *Zhongguohua* was released by the CCC & TSPM in March 2018. The goal of further contextualization is to develop a Chinese church that exalts Christ and maintains unity, that is faithful to biblical truth and rooted in Chinese culture, that has a contextualized theology relevant to the Chinese social and political context, and that is courageous in taking up social responsibilities. It is to realize the transformation from 'Christianity in China' to 'Chinese Christianity.' Some of the major tasks of this further contextualization include building up a solid theological foundation for it by deepening Theological Reconstruction, continuing to standardize theological education and accelerate the pace of personnel training, using Chinese cultural forms to express faith, engaging in social service, and practicing the core values of Chinese socialism, which are prosperity, democracy, civility, harmony, freedom, equality, justice, the rule of law, patriotism, dedication, integrity, and friendship.

# Challenges and Prospects of Theological Education in the Philippines

**Victor Aguilan•**

What is a Seminary? The word "seminary" developed from the late Middle English Latin word *seminarium* meaning "seed-plot", a nursery in which to cultivate plants. Hence, a seminary is a place to cultivate and nurture people. A seminary provides the environment which facilitates growth and development so that the graduate will be mature in Christ and ready for the work of ministry which lies ahead.

The traditional training of pastors is to send them to Bible colleges or seminaries. The Philippines now has many Bible schools and seminaries. A research is done to list the number of Protestant and non-Catholic Institutions and Training schools as 367 in all as of 2004, and this number is growing at an average of 15 new schools yearly.[1]

Today theological schools in the Philippinesare facing several

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[1] Kohl, Manfred. (2005). The Church in the Philippines. A Research Project with Special Emphasis on Theological Education. Manila, RP: OMF Literature. P 22

challenges. Many of these have been identified in the past. However, several issues continuously reappear: lack of adequate facilities, especially libraries and texts; low quality of students; dominance of western curricula and pedagogies; the challenge of rapidly changing contexts; desire for financial viability; and most prominently, the need for high-quality theological faculty. This paper focuses only on the following problems:

**Sustainability and Affordability**

The first issue that comes to mind is the challenge of sustainability of quality theological education. Running a theological school is not free. To sustain its operation, seminaries in the Philippines must find a way to generate revenues. Like any school in the Philippines, the primary source of revenues is the tuitions. There are two ways of increasing tuitions – volume or value- increase the number of students or increase the rate of tuitions. I have not done a comparative study of the tuition fees of the various theological schools in the Philippines. To give an idea the cost of tuition in Silliman University is P30,000 (B.Th/M.Div) – P50,000.00 (M.TH/Th.D.) a semester. Some Bible School cost less than P20,000/semester. If we add other costs such as other school fees, board and lodging, and allowances the total expense would reach P60,000 to P200,000.00/semester.[2]

Commercialization of theological schools in the Philippines reflects the general character of Philippine educational system. Seventy percent (70%) of private tertiary schools are privately run. Theological schools donot receive government subsidy. Hence, theological schools are dependent on tuitions paid by students, parents, and sponsors.The market approach to education has turned a public service into a commodity. Education is a business. It is a commodity which is sold to the consumers. Good education costs

[2] SUDS Brochure. See Dr. Jeaneth Faller. SUDS Dean's Report (P100.00 = $2.00 thus P30,000 = $600.00)

much (expensive) and those who want that kind of education must be willing to pay for it.

The implication of commercialization to theological schools is grim. To increase tuition and other fees of seminaries could drive away students who are responding to the call considering that theology is no longer a career that ensures a monetary gain. The challenge to seminaries in the Philippines is to find sustainable revenues not just to maintain operation but also to deliver quality services. Many theological schools continue to depend on foreign and denominational partners. Are Churches willing to pay for the cost of theological education?

**Competition and Fragmentation**

Commercialization of Philippines theological schools also generated competition, fragmentation and exclusivism. Competitions among theological schools is now a trend even among sister schools. Take for example the five formation centers of the United Church of Christ in Philippines; we compete in the recruitment of students, and resources.

The proliferation of theological schools, e.g., Bible schools, Korean theological colleges, have highlighted the fragmentation and exclusivism of theological schools. Many theological schools are linked primarily to one denomination or tradition. Some denominations have strictly enforced the selection of schools where their students should undergo ministerial training.

Fragmentation is perhaps most noticeable between conservative Evangelical and mainline Protestant institutions. Conservative evangelicals have organized the Asian Theological Association, and the Philippines Association of Bible and Theological Schools (PABATS) so as not to be associated with ATESEA.[3] Although, there

[3] Ro, Bong Rin. 2008. "A History of Evangelical Theological Education in Asia (ATA): 1970-1990." *Torch Theological Journal* 11 (1): 24–44.

are some schools are both members of ATESEA and ATA.

**Globalization and History of Colonialism**

Globalization has influenced university education in Asia. Students are being oriented and prepared to achieve superiority and success in the global field. There exists a symbiotic relationship between the university and the business environment. Those universities that understand this relationship spare no effort to get various business enterprises to support university programs. Because of our history of colonialism and foreign dependency, higher education for globalization in the Philippines serves not the nation and its people but those foreign national enterprises. In effect, the Philippine educational system is restricted to serve the leading capitalist enterprises of the world, including those in the industrialized countries of Asia. However, today Philippine Christianity has been seduced by globalization. It embraces "capitalist spirituality." In the words of Jeremy Carrette and Richard King, authors of the book *Selling Spirituality: The Silent Takeover of Religion:*

> It can be characterised as a wholesale *commodification* of religion that is the selling-off of religious buildings, ideas and claims to authenticity in service to individual/corporate profit and the promotion of a particular worldview and mode of life, namely corporate capitalism.[4]

In the 21st century, the practices, texts, and belief systems of ancient traditions are now routinely transformed into commodities and exploited for their cultural capital with the purpose of increasing consumption and corporate profit. Carret and King continue

> Marketing 'the spiritual' allows companies and their consumers to pay lip-service to the 'exotic,' rich and

[4] Jeremy R. Carrette and Richard King, *Selling Spirituality : The Silent Takeover of Religion* (London: Routledge, 2005), 15.

> historically significant religions of the world at the same time as distancing themselves from any engagement with the worldviews and forms of life that they represent. Religion is rebranded as 'spirituality' in order to support the ideology of capitalism.[5]

It uses spirituality to promote the interest of global corporations. Moreover, in the era of globalization capitalist spirituality is exported to non-Western as neocolonial tools of colonizing the "other" and their traditional knowledge systems.[6] Capitalist globalization is systematically seducing the heart and minds of the Filipino people through the various ideological apparatuses – schools, media, and religions. It has transformed everything into a commodity for sale. Health, education, culture, happiness, relationship, identity are all for sale or believed to be accessible in the market. We can see this, for instance, how the 'indigenous' festivals like the *Ati-atihan* of Kalibu, *Sinulog* Festival of Cebu and *Dinagyang* of Iloilo have been transformed. First, taken over by the Christians, these celebrations became the celebration of the child Jesus and now commodified and taken over by consumerism. These festivals are marketed by corporations and state-agency for tourists and consumers alike. With money, everything can be bought for consumption. Prosperity or material acquisition becomes the goal of life.

The coming of neo-charismatic or neo-Pentecostal movements specifically the prosperity gospel from the United States is changing Philippine Christianity both Catholic and mainstream Protestant denominations. These neo-charismatic movements advocate individualism, prosperity, and consumerism.[7] Culturally, they export forms

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5 *Ibid*., 17.

6 *Ibid*., chap 3.

7 Kate Bowler, *Blessed : A History of the American Prosperity Gospel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

of U.S. culture and, at the same time, they attack the indigenous culture as pagan, devil worship, and anti-Christ. Some Filipino church leaders have started mimicking the liturgy, message, and theology of this movement.[8]

The promises of material prosperity and quick fortune have become the goal of life. People expect religion to make them rich and prosperous. This theology often referred to as the "prosperity gospel,"[9] identifies Christianity with capitalism. It argues that Jesus was rich and that He would like his followers to be rich, too. These religious groups that promise prosperity, wellness and health attract a large number of people like the *El Shaddai*[10] and *Jesus is Lord (JIL)*[11] that attract millions of followers. It is safe to say that prosperity theology is now the new Christianity.

These Western prosperity gospel groups have reinforced what Historian Renato Constantino calls Americanization or Westernization of the Filipinos.[12] Filipino Christianity continues to mimic Western Christianity. This can be observed in the discipline

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8 *Ibid*., 320-321. see also Joseph Suico, "Pentecostals in the Philippines," in *Asian and Pentecostal : The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia*. , ed. Allan Anderson and Edmond Tang (Oxford: Regnum, 2005).

9 Bowler. Prosperity gospel is known also as the "health and wealth" and "name it and claim it" gospel.

10 *Ibid*., 230-231. See also Katharine L. Wiegele, "The Prosperity Gospel among Filipino Catholic Charismatics," in *Pentecostalism and Prosperity : The Socio-Economics of the Global Charismatic Movement*., ed. Amos Yong and Katy Attanasi, Christianities of the World (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 171-188.

11 Filomeno V. Aguilar Jr., "Experiencing Transcendence: Filipino Conversion Narratives and the Localization of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity," *Philippine Studies* 54, no. 4 (2006).

12 Renato Constantino, *The Filipinos in the Philippines, and Other Essays* (Quezon City,: Filipino Signatures, 1966). and Renato Constantino, *Synthetic Culture and Development* (Quezon City: Foundation for Nationalist Studies, 1985).

of theology that remains captivated to the English language. Western theology is regarded as the only way to understand Christian faith. Filipino theologians unconsciously accept the superiority of the Western (globalized) theology. Renato Constantino's essay remains relevant today for Filipino theologians: "The imposition of the English language was the opening wedge to our cultural domination. With English as the medium of instruction, our young people fell under the spell of America. With the language barrier disposed of and system of education oriented to American practices, American standards and values became an important part of our intellectual make-up."[13] Language is a powerful tool of cultural and spiritual formation. The use of the English language in Filipino theology has divorced people from their religious culture and spirituality. It also serves to discriminate and disadvantage those who could not speak the language.

More so, the seduction of Philippine Christianity by globalization is eroding the Filipino sense of national identity. It is the re-colonization of the mind to fashion a new type of colonial mentality. According to the theories of Fanon[14], Freire[15], and Constantino,[16] the effect of colonization is the internalization of inferiority imposed on a person by the colonizer. Under globalization, colonial mentality has been transformed to globalized mentality. While a colonial mentality makes one feel inferior as a Filipino, a globalized mentality has no consciousness of being a Filipino. As a consequence, the notion of nationhood and the ideals of nationalism have receded from the Filipino consciousness to a mythical time that has no connection with the real world.

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13 Constantino, *The Filipinos in the Philippines, and Other Essays*.

14 Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Harmondsworth,: Penguin, 1967).

15 Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, New rev. 20th-Anniversary ed. (New York: Continuum, 1993).

16 Constantino, *The Filipinos in the Philippines, and Other Essays*.

The challenge to theological schools in the Philippines is to develop a curriculum that is appreciative and critical of our culture. Dr Jose de Mesa, a professor of Systematic Theology at the Dela Salle University, has expressed the need to integrate a hermeneutics of appreciation to theological education with regard to cultural identity and integrity, stressing the importance of self-respect in the colonial setting of the Philippines. Quoting de Mesa at length:

> This form of hermeneutics includes a number of elements. It embraces a broad understanding of culture as a worldview representing the fundamental perspectives and values of a people, and culture as a set of institutions and structures consisting of patterned modes of social relationships of this human community. It incorporates, too, an approach to culture which, methodologically, not only looks at this way of life primarily from the insider's point of view, but also focuses first and foremost on the life-giving elements that can be found in it. To this end we suggeste[d] a set of attitudinal principles which those who wish to inculturate the Faith can follow in order to develop an emphatic "listening heart" to the strengths of the culture…
>
> In interpreting reality, the hermeneutics of appreciation which we envision is one that utilizes a combined cultural and social analyses. Though insight into the why of specific behaviors is a *sine quo non* that cultural analysis provides, present-day understanding of the structural or institutional elements of culture also demand procedures worked out by social analysis. The emphasis of this integrated form of scrutinizing reality remains the positive, life-giving elements which are latent equally in the beliefs, values and customs of people as well as in the social structures of their society.
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> A hermeneutics of appreciation, moreover, requires also a methodology for "doing theology" which ensures that the

> appreciative stance will the foremost in the dynamics and process of theological reflection…

Thus in practice, a hermeneutics of appreciation would use its own indigenous resource (myths, symbols, stories, music and vernaculars), embrace the multi-religious context of one's heritage, and nourish the imagination by listening, seeing and appreciating the beauty in diversity of one's culture and the culture of others.

**Curriculum**

Most theological institutions in the Philippines recognize that the training must address many curriculum issues to prepare students for effective service in the church. As I visit local church leaders, both pastors and laysexpressed that the seminaries should provide their students with more practical skills.Sometimes, people ask whether ministerial training is an elitist form of education that excludes "less qualified" candidates. *Theological education should focuson the specific tasks of communicating the gospel through preaching, enhancing interpersonal relationship skills and liturgical-sacramental performance*. The need was to equip dedicated individuals with practical technical skills in delivering the simple message of the gospel. It was enough that they could speak with certainty the Protestant conviction that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone. It was believed that it was not necessary for them to learn the critical tools of biblical interpretation, systematic theology or Church history.

There is a perception of a growing gap between academic theology and the church that has led to much theology focusing on issues which appear to be disconnected from the life, ministry, and mission of the church. Seminaries should offer tools, skills, or " how to" guide in running the church. Some lay leaders I have talked to have mentioned that seminary students need more practical training in administration, management, human relation, etc. Some students believe that for regular church members, weekly sermons alone were

sufficient for their spiritual nourishment.

Another issue is the duration of the training. Some churches or individuals cannot give three to four years of for formal training. In addition, admission requirements of formal training are obstacles to some prospective pastors. Short residential courses and off-campus require a level of maturity and responsibility on the learner. This would require a better recruitment of students which is not taken seriously by churches. Some lay leaders consider the seminary as rehabilitation or reformatory school to remold and reshape students with behavioural challenges.

**Prospects and Opportunities**

These challenges to theological schools in the Philippines have opened opportunities. To mention the following:

***Partnership***

Protestant theological education in the Philippines faces many challenges. Proliferation, fragmentation, and competition among theological schools in the Philippines have created the opportunities for partnership andother forms of collaboration. We can enhance our existing cooperation. Explore and develop academic programmes irrespective of our affiliations/accreditations.We could also share educational resources such as library, journals and best practices. This is being attempted by the five formation centers of the UCCP to develop a system of cooperative theological education through the sharing of resources and faculty members. There is also the need to strengthen the national association for theological education in the country. It should have competent and committed leadership; regular contributions from member institutions to establish financial self-reliance; and regular programs for the association members that should be relevant and practical.

Another area of the partnership is with the Churches. The

relationship between the Church and the seminary is also of paramount importance. The seminary must take the feedback, criticism, needs and practices of Churches seriously. The seminary should exercise its prophetic task and critical scholarship. Schools can also consider partnership beyond the denominational line. It is a partnership that is multi-denominational.

In additions, theological schools in the Philippines should explore a multilateral partnership. We cannot deny that partnership has been with the West and the sharing hasbeen one-sided. This one-sided relationship is a legacy of the Western missionary movement intertwined with colonialism. Today, there is an opportunity for partnership to be multi-lateral, from North to South, First World to Third World, South to West and South to South. It is an opportunity to re-evaluate existing partnership with the West to ensure that the relationship is free from colonial captivity. Western dependency should be criticized. Theological schools form the West should be sensitive about this concern. Decolonizing the existing partnership should be on the agenda when discussing a partnership with the West especially with the former colonial master. ATESEA can play an important role in facilitating this type of multi-lateral partnership.

***Local Support***

It is acknowledged that nearly all institutions have seen a decline in funding from abroad. The challenge of sustainability opens up the opportunity to rely on local support. Theological schools in the Philippines have relied on operational support from local resources. These resources include tuition payments and fees. These payments come from parents, relatives, friends and benefactors. Other schools and churches have established scholarships to subsidize direct tuition and other fees. The opportunity to tap local support is there. The challenge is to include in the seminary's work fund and resource generation. Hence, the need to equip people on the task of income

generation and fund-raising. Financial viability of theological school requires additional revenue sources beyond what the students can pay.

A theological seminary can achieve its vision of providing excellent theological education when it recognizes the importance of having enough resources, well-maintained facilities and physical assets, and provide decent compensation to its faculty and staff. Church partners must be mobilized to invest in theological education.

***Curriculum Development***

Another opportunity is revisiting the existing curriculum. The Divinity School regularly evaluates our existing curriculum every five (5) years. It gives the school the opportunity to see the direction of the program to be relevant and faithful. For example, in our Master of Theology in mission studies, we have incorporated leadership development and governance (e.g., management skills, organizational development, strategic planning, financial planning) alongside courses in biblical-theological knowledge and ministry skills.

Another option might be for the schools to offer short-term training courses for lay leadership in churches. Theological education is not only for pastoral ministry. Lay people are expressing interest to be theologically equipped and knowledgeable. Some have enrolled for the personal enrichment of their careers. Also, theological schools could consider integrating information technology in the syllabus. The present curriculum is quite difficult for many prospective students because of the length of the program. The best examples may be hybrids of technology-enabled distance education coupled with residential instruction and field education (e.g., IAAS).

An alternative curriculum could also be designed with a flexible schedule to fit the needs of the students who could be admitted or because if the duration of the program. This will not

replace the residential program. The curriculum will be different from the seminary curriculum as well as the course requirements. It will consider the immediate needs of the pastors and churches. This curriculum will entail the development of adjust faculty in the field to partner with the faculty of the Seminary. A team-teaching approach may be develop for this kind of curriculum.

**Conclusion**

The challenges to theological education mentioned are the following sustainability, fragmentation, globalization and curriculum are not new. These are recurring issues. These challenges have opened up opportunities to theological schools in the Philippines such as: strengthening and developing new forms of partnership, tapping local support, and developing curriculum to relevant and faith to the mission. The challenges and prospects discussed in this paper require empirical validation. The research is still on-going.

# Challenges and Prospects of Theological Education in Thailand and Mekong Region

**Chuleepran Srisoontorn•**

## Introduction

The Mekong Sub-region is a natural economic area bound together by the Mekong River, covering 2.6 million square kilometers and a combined population of around 326 million. The countries are Thailand, the People's Republic of China (PRC, specifically Yunnan Province and Guangxi Zhuang Region). Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos and Viet Nam. Socially, the Mekong region is comprised of multi-ethnic countries.

The Mekong region has changed rapidly in economic, political and religious ecological aspects. There are numerous issues in regard to theological education in this part of Asia. I will point them out in this article.

Many scholars have made valuable contributions from various perspectives. Consequently, a number of models for theological education have emerged over the past five decades. However, in

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which ways do these models contribute toward relevant theological education for Thailand and Mekong region today? What is it that makes something "theological education"? The obvious answer for many is that it is the content. That is, it is education that is specifically about theology, about God (or, for some, about the experience of God). One cannot really discuss the defining characteristics of theological education without also paying attention to the people involved. D. John Hall asserts, "Theology is what happens when the two stories meet."[1] Doing theology in this perspective means letting God and the world meet with each other.

The word "Theology" comes from a combination of two Greek words" *theos* ("Theo") and *logos* ("logy"), which means study about God-knowing/understanding about God. Moreover, theology is the study of religion, especially the Christian faith and God's relation to the world; it is a religious theory, or system of belief.[2] Theology is the study of religious faith, practice and experience; especially the study of God and his relation to the world.[3] Theology in this sense is meaningful in understanding what God is, and how God is relating to God's entire creation.

C. S. Song once wrote, "Christian Theology is human speech about God; it is always related to concrete historical situations." He explains further that theology [itself] is not transcendent language; it is interested language, always reflecting the goals and aspirations of a particular people in a definite social setting.[4] John England said: "All theology is a discerning of the divine in the human being—the

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1 Douglas John Hall, *Thinking the Faith: Christian Theology in a North American Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), p. 91.

2 Encarta Encyclopedia 2002, in Dictionary, sv. "Theology."

3 Webster's *Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*,sv,"Theology" (Springfield, Massachusetts: Merriam-Webster Inc., 1986), p. 1223.

4 Chong Seng Song, *Doing Theology Today* (Mysore: The Christian Literature Society, Wesley Press, 1976), p. 17.

signs of God-in-Jesus Christ in the world—and are a reflection upon and a response to that. So its source is found in every place, time and level of human life".[5]

Samuel Ngun Ling wrote, "Asian theology is to be understood as a theology of continuing transformation of the context by the gospel of Christ. It is therefore important to know whether theology in Asia is a text-oriented or a context-oriented theology. Asian theology should be in the former position, and it is trans-contextual theology".[6]

Doing Asian theology involves respect for Asian cultural values. Gospel comes only through human culture, history and language. No Gospel has been revealed to us in a vacuum and culture-free situation. The Gospel of Christ is not like an alien ball that would roll down accidentally from heaven, rather it is a reality that becomes fully incarnated into human nature in order to express itself through human language, culture, and history. Christian Gospel cannot exist by itself without employing culture as its vehicle of expression.[7]

The aim of this article is to give an overview of the challenges and the prospects for theological education in Thailand and Mekong region currently. This will enable practitioners to make informed decisions about what the challenges of Asian realities are contextually and then search for a relevant mission paradigm with ecumenical commitment in theological education in Thailand and Mekong region today.

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5 Yap Kim Hao, "Intercontextualization: Releasing the Theological Frog from underneath Coconut Shell", *Asian Journal of Theology* Vol. 4, No. 1 (January, 1990), p. 45.

6 Samuel Ngun Ling, "Contextual Teaching Methodologies: Evaluation and Proposal for Myanmar Context," in *Engagement*, vol.1 (Judson Research Center, MIT, December 2004), 29.

7 *Ibid*, p. 47.

## Thailand and Mekong Region Context

### THAILAND

Thailand, officially the Kingdom of Thailand, formerly known as Siam, is a unitary state at the center of the Southeast Asian Indochinese peninsula composed of 76 provinces. At 513,120 km2 and over 68 million people, Thailand is the world's 50th largest country by total area and the 21st-most-populous country. Its capital and the largest city is Bangkok, a special administrative area. Thailand is bordered to the north by Myanmar and Laos, to the east by Laos and Cambodia, to the south by the Gulf of Thailand and Malaysia, and to the west by the Andaman Sea and the southern extremity of Mekong region. Its maritime boundaries include Vietnam in the Gulf of Thailand to the southeast, and Indonesia and India on the Andaman Sea to the southwest. Although nominally a constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy, the most recent coup in 2014 established a de facto military dictatorship.

The current population of Thailand is 69,195,378 as of Wednesday, August 1, 2018, based on the latest United Nations estimates.

Currently, Religion in Thailand (2015 census) [3] Buddhism (94.5%) Islam (4.29%) Christianity (1.17%) Other (0.04%).

Theravada Buddhism is by far the most prominent organized religion in the country.

### MYANMAR OR BURMA

Myanmar (formerly Burma) is a Southeast Asian nation of more than 100 ethnic groups, bordering India, Bangladesh, China, Laos and Thailand. Yangon (formerly Rangoon), the country's largest city, is home to bustling markets, numerous parks and lakes, and the towering, gilded Shwedagon Pagoda, which contains Buddhist relics that dates back to the 6th century.

The current population of Myanmar (formerly Burma) is 53,894,566 as of Wednesday, August 1, 2018, based on the latest United Nations estimates.

Religion in Myanmar (2014 Myanmar Census) Buddhism (87.9%) Christianity (6.2%) Islam (4.3%) Hinduism (0.5%) Tribal religions (0.8%) Other (0.2%) No religion (0.1%)

Theravada Buddhism is by far the most prominent organized religion in the country.

## CAMBODIA

Cambodia is a Southeast Asian nation whose landscape spans low-lying plains, the Mekong Delta, mountains and Gulf of Thailand coastline. Phnom Penh, its capital, is home to the art deco Central Market, glittering Royal Palace and the National Museum's historical and archaeological exhibits. In the country's northwest are the ruins of Angkor Wat, a massive stone temple complex built during the Khmer Empire.

The current population of Cambodia is 16,264,209 as of Wednesday, August 1, 2018, based on the latest United Nations estimates.

Religion in Cambodia (2010) Buddhism (97%) Islam (2.0%) Folk religion (0.5%) Christianity (0.4%) Non-religious (0.2%) other religions (1.8%)

Theravada Buddhism is by far the most prominent organized religion in the country .

## LAOS

Laos is a Southeast Asian country traversed by the Mekong River and known for mountainous terrain, French colonial architecture, hill tribe settlements and Buddhist monasteries. Vientiane, the capital, is the site of the That Luang monument, where a reliquary reportedly houses the Buddha's breastbone, plus the Patuxai war memorial and

Talat Sao (Morning Market), a complex jammed with food, clothes and craft stalls.

The current population of the Lao People's Democratic Republic is 6,969,133 as of Wednesday, August 1, 2018, based on the latest United Nations estimates.

Religion in Laos (Pew 2010). Buddhism (66%) Laotian folk religion (30.7%) Christianity (1.5%)

Theravada Buddhism is by far the most prominent organized religion in the country.

**VIETNAM**

Vietnam, officially the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, is the easternmost country on the Indochina Peninsula in Southeast Asia. With an estimated 94.6 million inhabitants as of 2016, it is the world's 14th-most-populous country, and the ninth-most-populous Asian country. Vietnam is bordered by China to the north, Laos to the northwest, Cambodia to the southwest, Thailand across the Gulf of Thailand to the southwest, and the Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia across the South China Sea to the east and southeast. Its capital city has been Hanoi since the reunification of North and South Vietnam in 1976, with Ho Chi Minh City as the most populous city.

The northern part of Vietnam was part of Imperial China for over a millennium, from 111 BC to AD 939. An independent Vietnamese state was formed in 939, following a Vietnamese victory in the Battle of Bạch Đằng River. Successive Vietnamese imperial dynasties flourished as the nation expanded geographically and politically into Southeast Asia, until the Indochina Peninsula was colonized by the French in the mid-19th century.

The current population of Viet Nam is 96,566,780 as of Wednesday, August 1, 2018, based on the latest United Nations estimates.

Religion in Vietnam (2014): Vietnamese folk religion or not religious population (73.2%) Buddhism (12.2%) Catholicism (6.8%) Caodaism (4.8%) Protestantism (1.5%) Hoahaoism (1.4%) Others (0.1% ).

## Brief History of Theological Education in Thailand and Mekong Region

### THAILAND

Known as Siam until 1939, Thailand is the only country in southern Asia that was never under colonial rule. It dates its history as a national kingdom to 1238. The constitutional monarchy was established in 1932. During World War II, Thailand was loosely allied with Japan. The latter half of the 20th century was marked by a number of military coups. In 1995, a new democratic government was elected. Thailand is a Buddhist country. The king is the protector of Thai Buddhism and a symbol of national identity and unity. A majority of the population is Thai, with smaller groups of Lao, Chinese, tribal people, and Malays, who are Muslim. Tensions with some Islamic groups in the south erupted in 2004 and 2005. Thailand has built a modern and performing economy, based on the production and export of rice, rubber, jewelry, textiles, electronic and other manufactured goods, and tourism. In the remote rural areas subsistence farming is still the main source of livelihood. Catholic missionaries began working in Siam in the 17th and Protestants in the 19th century. Many other churches and groups came after World War II. In spite of these efforts, Christians remain a small minority. The Church of Christ in Thailand and the Karen Baptist Convention are the largest Protestant churches. The Church of Christ and the Catholic Church have a joint committee. The Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand regroups a large number of Pentecostal and other churches and groups.

## MYANMAR

The name of the country was changed in 1989 from Union of Burma to Myanmar. The first Burmese empire was founded in the 11th century. It was invaded by the British in the 19th century. After the Japanese occupation during World War II, the country became sovereign in 1948. From 1962 to 1990 it was ruled by a military dictator, and subsequently a military-controlled government was formed. Mass protests in 1988 were violently repressed, but it did result in democratic elections in 1990, won by the National League for Democracy (NLD). However, the military refused to step down and since then has kept tight control of the country. The leader of the NLD, Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi, was under house arrest for 15 years. The population of Myanmar is made up of many different ethnic groups. In the north, armed opposition to the central government has been going on for decades. The military was accused of imposing forced labour and committing many other human rights violations. Myanmar's economy is based on agriculture, gems, timber and oil. The majority of the population is poor peasants and workers. Catholic missionaries entered the area in the 16th century and Protestant missions began in the 19th century. The largest church is the Myanmar Baptist Convention. The Assemblies of God and numerous other Pentecostal and Evangelical churches are active and growing. The Myanmar Council of Churches is the ecumenical body. There is an Evangelical Christian Fellowship.

## CAMBODIA

In Cambodia during the sixth century, people known as the Khmers established an empire that lasted for several centuries. During the colonial period the area was ruled by the French. Cambodia obtained its independence in 1953, but was heavily affected by the war in neighboring Vietnam and by a communist insurgency movement known as the Khmer Rouge, that captured the capital in 1975. Due to this, 75 percent of all teaching staff and 96 percent of university

students were killed. It is estimated that at least 3 million people died during the four years of the regime. The Khmer Rouge attempted to eradicate all religions: some 90 percent of Buddhist monks and nuns perished and an unknown number of Christians were killed. The Khmer Rouge declined rapidly in the mid-1990s and a coalition government was formed after national elections in 1998, which brought renewed political stability. Christianity came to Cambodia in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Several Independent churches were established during the twentieth century, and the New Apostolic Church is currently the largest Christian denomination in Cambodia.

## LAOS

Laos is entirely landlocked on the southern Asia peninsula. Myanmar and China lay to the north, with Vietnam to the east, Cambodia to the south and Thailand to the west. Laos was first united under one government in the fourteenth century. In 1713 internal conflict led to the division of the country into three kingdoms, leaving the country vulnerable to aggression. After a long struggle to maintain independence, Laos became a French colony in 1893. Attempts were made to regain independence following the formation of the Communist Party of Indochina. This party led groups in Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam in their struggles for self-determination. Laos became a constitutional monarchy in 1947, and in 1949 it was granted limited self-government within the French Union. Laos independence was recognized by the Geneva Agreement on Indochina in 1954. Despite this agreement the Laotian government remained unstable for years.

Laos is one of the least developed countries in Southeast Asia. Currently, there are no railroads and just over 2000 km of paved highways. This lack of infrastructure makes disaster relief difficult, particularly as flooding is common.

Christianity in Laos began with Italian Jesuit missionaries in

the seventeenth century. All the major Catholic mission centers are located on the border with Thailand. Beginning in 1950, the Catholic mission shifted its focus to the mountain people. The first Protestant missionaries - Swiss Brethren who translated the Bible into the vernacular - arrived in 1902. Overseas Missionary Fellowship workers strengthened their work after 1957. Of the Protestant groups, the most successful is the Gospel Church of Laos. During the 1970s the communist government took over all Catholic schools, orphanages, residences and churches, and eliminated religious education. All foreign missionaries were forced to leave. Though the current law allows freedom of religion, the government controls all public meetings and requires that they be registered.

**VIETNAM**

Protestantism was introduced in 1911 at Da Nang by a Canadian missionary named R.A. Jaffrey. As part of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, over 100 missionaries were sent to Vietnam, assisting the faith's growth in the country. During French colonization, Protestantism was not encouraged. However, it started to spread slowly. By 1928, thirty pastors were authorized to operate in the country by the French local government. Later on, the first Protestant organization recognized by the Vietnamese government was the Evangelical Church of Vietnam: North in 1963. By 1967, Protestant communities were represented mainly within South Vietnam. Those communities included the French Reformed Church, Anglican–Episcopalian, Christian and Missionary Alliance, Baptists, Churches of Christ, Worldwide Evangelization Crusade, and Seventh-day Adventists. Other Protestant associations were also represented in some social services and welfare agencies. In 1967 there were 150,000 Protestant adherents in South Vietnam,

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[8] Protestantism in South Vietnam, US Navy, Bureau of Naval Personnel, Chaplains Division, 1967 [14] Compass Direct (2002-09-20). "Vietnam Protestants Call Conference 'Miraculous'". *Christianity Today*. Retrieved 2006-07-21.

representing about 1% of the total population.[8] Several Protestant church properties were confiscated during the communist takeover of South Vietnam in 1975, including the seminaries in Nha Trang and Hanoi. Hundreds of Protestant churches were also destroyed in this period.

All Protestant denominations in Vietnam were gathered by local communist government into a single organization called the Evangelical Church of Vietnam in 1975, which had around 500,000 official members in 1997. However, in 1988 a house church movement began when some active pastors were expelled from the official churches. One of the most prominent pastors was Tran Dinh Ai, whose movement reached 16,000 members and 165 churches (by 1997).

## Challenges

Theological education in Thailand and Mekong region context is currently facing a number of challenges, namely: Poverty and Health Crisis, Religious Pluralism, Ethnic Diversity, Ecological Problems, Disease and Disasters, Globalization and Global Empire Building, Gender Justice Issues, Colonization, Spirituality, Identity and Power Struggle, Victims of Trafficking, and Persons with Disabilities. It is against these contextual challenges that the relevance of existing models for theological education must be tested.

### *Poverty and Health Crisis*

The Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) is a major global rice producer and exporter but its population suffers from serious levels of poverty and malnutrition.

Spanning six countries – China, Myanmar, Lao PDR, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam – the region is home to 336 million people. Nearly 60 million of them are involved in rice production, growing collectively over 44% of the world's rice. All of the countries, except China, are net exporters of rice.

The extent of poverty in the world is described in these words: nearly one billion people, almost one out of every four persons on earth live in a state of "absolute poverty". They are trapped in conditions so limited by illiteracy, malnutrition, disease, high infant mortality and low life expectancy as to be denied the very potential with which they are born. Almost 20 million people die each year of starvation or hunger related illnesses.[9]

Poverty is difficult to define because of its relative and subjective nature. Nevertheless, poverty is defined here as insufficient resources available for "the fulfillment of basics human needs required adequately sustaining life free from disease, misery, hunger, pain, suffering, hopelessness and fearing…."[10] This definition is chosen because it describes succinctly the situation of the poor.

Landlessness - there is significant and increasing land scarcity in the Delta. Landlessness was found to be more of a consequence of poverty.

Women - where the women were found to receive lower wages and in certain provinces in the Mekong Delta, the trend to move from rice production to shrimp farming had an adverse effect on women, as this is considered to be the work of men. We can see that poverty in Thailand and Mekong region is a far more complex social and economic situation than what existed before.

Poverty remains a fact of life despite the economic programme of nations. However the economic improvements are not stable. There have been economic up-turns and downturns. Jesus' saying that "The poor you will always have with you…" (Matt. 26:11, NIV)

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[9] *Issues and Answers: Hunger* (Nashville: The Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, n.d.), p.1

[10] Julio De Santa Ana, *Towards a Church of the Poor* (Mary knoll: Orbis Books, 1981), p.76.

is historically and globally relevant. Faith, health, and healing are central to God's divine grace and purposes for humanity. Health is more than physical or mental well-being of a person, and healing is not primarily an outcome of only medical care or treatments. This understanding of health coheres with biblical-theological traditions. This message is embodied in the life, acts, and message of Jesus Christ. Health, in the sense of wholeness, is a condition related to God's promise. Wholeness is not a static balance of harmony but rather it involves living-in-community with God, people, and God's entire creation. The Bible recounts many instances where Jesus healed people with various infirmities but, equally important is that he restored people to their rightful places within the fabric of the community. Healing in the broad sense is the central part of Jesus' mission. Healing is more about the restoration of wholeness than about correcting something perceived as defective.

Poverty is a big theological issue that will affect our theological educational agenda. The gap between the rich and poor is widening rapidly in these parts of Asia.

### *Religious Pluralism*

Religious Pluralism is a major challenge to theological education in Thailand and Mekong region is the issue of religious and cultural pluralities. Thailand and the Mekong region contain diverse faith traditions. These diverse faith traditions have enriched Thailand and the Mekong regions' Christian theology with peculiar religious insights and inspirations. Nevertheless, the missionaries' traditional negative approach to other faiths, particularly towards Buddhism, helped shape the pattern of theological education in Thailand and Mekong region. As an effect of the missionaries' tradition, the previously common form of doing Christian theology and theological education in Thailand and Mekong region has been largely confined to ecclesiology, proselytized form of mission, and

maintenance model of church ministry. It is here at this point that the nature, structures and visions of theological education in Thailand and Mekong region call for a new paradigm shift from the exclusive missionaries' traditional form of education to an inclusive and multifaceted form of education.[11]

The Church in Thailand and Mekong carries out its mission in a diverse context. Asian churches and the ecumenical movement have articulated their vision of new evangelistic tasks from time to time. However, emerging Asian contexts, especially Asia's pluralistic religious contexts, warrant renewed thinking in areas of witness and mission in a multi-religious Asian context. Christian witness and mission in a pluralistic world should include engaging in dialogue with people of different religions and cultures. The Churches in Thailand and Mekong region need to rediscover its mission in order to be fully involved in concentrating on the manifestation of the kingdom of God in its fullness. They should center on rediscovering the emerging musicological trends in Asia and identifying areas of possible co-operation among Asian churches for their united witness and mission in The Church in Thailand and Mekong region; and articulating a new vision of ecumenical mission and vision in Asia's pluralistic religious contexts, engaging in dialogue with people of other faiths.

William Chang highlighted three important challenges and needs for the churches in Mekong area, namely: (1) capacity for inter-faith dialogue, peace and reconciliation, particularly in the context of escalating violence in the communities; (2) capacity for theological education, reflection and formation for effective ministry of the churches in proclaiming the Gospel through people's languages; and

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[11] Samuel Ngun Ling, "Contextual Teaching Methodologies: Evaluation and Proposal for Myanmar Context," 29.

(3) capacity to be united and be dynamic, in order to serve the needs of the people.[12]

***Ethnic diversity*** is a unique feature of Thailand and Mekong region society. Such an amalgamated living of multi-religious and cultural diversities has often caused problems and challenges in building a community of peace and harmony between religious communities, especially between minority Christians and majority Buddhists in Thailand and Mekong region.[13]

Majority of the Christians in Thailand and Mekong region comes from tribal/ethnic groups such as Karen Kachin, Chin, Lisu, etc. Only a handful come from the ethnic group which has a predominantly Buddhist background. In the past, ethnic Christians attempted to reconstruct missionaries' traditional theology or to indigenize Christianity in Thailand and Mekong region. However, most of these attempts were concerned more with the form rather than the content of the gospel. While it is important for ethnic Christians to employ such cultural forms for effective communication of the Christian gospel among them, it may not fit the situation of Buddhists, as their context is radically different from the ethnic primal religious context. This means that the contents of the Buddhist context, especially the Buddhist understanding of life and death, selfhood, spirit, and ultimate reality have to be taken very seriously in doing Christian theology in a Buddhist context.

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[12] William Chang, the Secretary of Asia Desk of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has been the Moderator of the MMF since 2013. As an ecumenical organization in the region, the General Secretary of CCA was invited to attend this meeting, during which she introduced the ministry of CCA.

[13] Samuel Ngun Ling, "The Encounter of Missionary Christianity with Resurgent Buddhism in Post-colonial Myanmar," in *Quest*, vol. 2, no. 2 (November 2003), 64-65.

***Gender Justice Issues***

The rising cases of violence against women and children, as well as issues aimed directly at marginalizing women from mainstream activities, the evident gender deficit in organizations and institutions, and the circumvention of women's quest for equal rights and opportunities have become a growing concern in Asia. Gender justice issues compel us to accept the truth that women are human beings created in God's image. Furthermore, issues of gender diversity are certain to have an impact on churches in the region within the lifetime of students engaged in theological education currently.

***Ecological Problems, Disease and Disasters***

Today, Asia witnesses a rise of inequalities; disparities in opportunities become enormous and societies become unbalanced in the distribution of wealth, power, employment, health care, and education facilities. The exploitation of natural resources and unsustainable development policies cause more frequent and intense natural disasters, loss of biodiversity, forced displacements, and humanitarian crises. In such situations, people lack adequate support for peaceful living.

These ecological and health problems have become common in Asia today. The recent tsunami, flash floods and earthquakes have taken away thousands of lives and left the living devastated. The outbreak of Avian Flu and the resurgence of diseases (like Tuberculosis. Dengue and Malaria), once thought to have been eradicated in Southeast Asia, have once again resurfaced in epidemic proportions. HIV & AIDS are affecting families, communities and nations and they challenge us to re-examine our ministerial formation program. Furthermore, uncontrolled and one-sided exploitative economic development projects have brought with them various ecological crises. "Ecological concerns have often been neglected or conveniently sidelined".[14]

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[14] Emmanuel G Singgih, *Critical Asian Principal: A Contextual Theological Evaluation*, Indonesia, 2005, p. 7.

### *Victims of Trafficking*

Unemployment and rampant poverty have made Asian countries turn into major migrant-sending countries without adequate protection of migrant workers' rights. Migrant workers from Asia have become victims to unscrupulous people in the global labor market and are subjected to many forms of violence, abuse, and sexual exploitation. The number of migrants crossing borders within Asia, and beyond the borders of Asia, in search of financial opportunity and human security is rapidly increasing.

There is a troubling paucity of examining the plights of Asian migrant workers with regard to health care, which is a basic tenet of human rights. Migrant workers go through enormous emotional and psychological trauma on account of being away from their families and of their often-sub-human living conditions. They are unable to be joined by members of their families for several years and are not able to travel back as their passports are often confiscated by their employers. Of all the migrant workers, women are the worst victims. Thousands of Asian migrant women are working as domestic workers, in inhumane living conditions in different Asian and Arabian Gulf countries.

Human Trafficking, or trafficking in persons, is unfortunately thriving in the form of modern day slavery, globally; Asia is not an exception to this reality. The 2014 Global Slavery Index (GSI) found that there are nearly 36 million victims of human trafficking worldwide, of which 23.5 million, nearly two thirds, are from Asia. The UN Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking estimates 2.5 million people are in forced labour (including sexual exploitation), of which 1.4 million are in Asia and the Pacific. The majority of trafficking victims are between 18 and 24 years of age. Total profits from worldwide forced labour and sex trafficking could be as high as U.S $150 billion annually.

The trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation has been the most commonly recognized form of trafficking. Yet many, if not more, men, women and children are trafficked for forms of labour exploitation, such as work in factories, in agriculture, construction, fisheries, textile, and mining industries, and for domestic servitude and care services. Traffickers frequently target children for begging, domestic servitude, adoption, removal of organs and petty street theft. Poverty, unemployment, war, natural disasters, gender inequalities, discrimination, gender-based violence, desperation, cultural and social frameworks are good predictors of vulnerability to being trafficked. However, those who fall prey to traffickers may also be wealthy, relatively educated and from urban centers. While international trafficking is often in the spotlight, people who are trafficked may be transported internationally, regionally or, as is the case with many trafficked persons, within their own national borders

### *Colonization*

Most Asian countries have a colonial experience. Asia's post-colonial realities and emerging neo-colonial attitudes are matters that should be given a renewed emphasis in combating abuse, imperialism and exploitation. "Neo-colonialism is now disguised in the form of economic domination."[15] Neo-colonialism also employs cultural hegemony in both subtle and glaring ways. The principle of 'decolonization' must be implemented in making people "aware of the colonizing command and dominance that is around us and in us. We need to engage consciously and continuously in decolonizing all alienating and imposing influences."[16]

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[15] Wilfred J Samuel, *Review of the Critical Asian Principle –Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore Region*, 2006, p. 3.

[16] *Taiwan Area's Critical Response to the Critical Asian Principle* (CAP) of ATESEA/SEAGST, Taiwan, 2006, p. 8.

### *Spirituality*

With the increasing influence and impact of materialism, secularism, and liberalism in the post-modern era, Asian countries continue to experience challenges and stagnation in spirituality. These include loss of focus in discipleship and spiritual formation, loss of indigenous wisdom, character and values, and infiltration of western culture and ideology through the neo-Pentecostal and new religious movements' influences.

### *Persons with Disabilities*

One in every six persons in Asia has some form of disability and they number about 650 million. This number is expected to rise over the next decades due to ageing populations, natural disasters, conflicts and war, chronic health conditions, road accidents and related injuries, poor working conditions, and other factors. Despite the constant increase in their number, persons with disabilities tend to be unseen, unheard, and uncounted. They are often excluded from access to education, employment, social protection services, and legal support systems, and are subject to disproportionately high rates of poverty and sexual abuse. They continue to face barriers in their participation as equal members of society. Disability affects hundreds of thousands of families in Asia. The two-way link between poverty and disability creates a vicious circle. Poor people are more at risk of disability because of lack of access to good nutrition, health care, sanitation, as well as safe living and working conditions. Once this occurs, people face barriers to education, employment, and public services. In many contexts, churches also have not properly recognized people with disabilities in their congregations or communities. However, Jesus loved, cared for, and protected people with disabilities in his society. Jesus strongly disputed the connection between sin and blindness, saying, "It was not that this man or his parents but that the works of God might be made manifest in him" (John 9:3). Jesus healed

the blind man, but first, Jesus gave him dignity and self-respect. All people with or without disabilities is created in the image of God and called to be in an inclusive community, in which they are empowered to use their various God-given gifts. Persons with disabilities have great capacities and gifts to be shared in the household of God, which should be a "caring and inclusive" community. The church community is called by God to embrace persons, including those with disabilities, exercising their spiritual gifts.

**Prospect**

Asian theologians are today being challenged to make (a) paradigm shifts in doing Asian ChristianTheologies by rediscovering their socio-cultural heritages, philosophies, ways of life and emerging social, political, economic, religious and ecological challenges and issues as theological hermeneutics to reinterpret contextually.

The prospect on theological education is presented within the following categories:

First, theological education in Thailand and Mekong region should enable local communities to discover their own dignity, rights, identity and help them to engage in new ways of doing theology out of their socio-political and religious-cultural experiences.

Second, doing theology in Thailand and Mekong-region should reflect engagement with the sufferings of the Asian people in order to provide hope for the marginalized. These issues include Poverty and Health Crisis, Religious Pluralism, Ethnic Diversity: Ecological destruction Identity and Power Struggle, Globalization and Global Empire Building, Gender Justice Issues, Colonization, Spirituality, Identity and Power Struggle, Victims of Trafficking, Persons with Disabilities. Doing theology from a perspective of struggles, experiences and visions of the minority ethnic people in Thailand and Mekong region would be inevitably important for doing theology of liberation – wholeness that always embraces social, economic,

cultural, political and ecological dimensions of life.

Third, doing theology in Thailand and Mekong-region should have responsive engagement with the diverse Asian contexts, should not ignore the historical significance of the encounter of Christianity and Buddhism – Christian-Buddhist dialogue, interrelations, mutual impacts and interactions. Theravada Buddhism is by far the most prominent organized religion in Thailand and Mekong-region. In fact, we cannot do contextual theology without referring to the historical and socio-political realities – peoples' experiences, movements and suffering. No living theology can be developed without referring to the past history of the context. Interfaith dialogue as well as intra-faith communion and communication is necessary for the fullness of life and the well-being of society.

Fourth, any theological education developed in Thailand and Mekong region must be liberating and not oppressive in terms of its academic impact. The central focus should be to set at liberating the poor, the oppressed, and the marginalized, to heal the broken society, and to be in solidarity with the powerless and the poor in their struggles for justice, peace and freedom.

Fifth, theological education in Thailand and Mekong region should enhance capacity-building in order to serve people experiencing disaster, conflict, and disease as well as those people who suffer physical, emotional, and mental disabilities.

Sixth, to do theology in Thailand and Mekong-region there is a need for theological education networks to come together, learn from each other and work together and come up with a mutual support mechanism to strengthen leadership formation program of the churches, to do theology in Thailand and Mekong-region there is a need for theological faculty development, promotion of Asian theologies, and production of resources for theological education in Asia.

Seventh, to do theology there is a need to bring Asian theologians together under one umbrella and promote a common platform for Asian theologians to come together to share life and work of various expressions of ecumenical and practical theological education in Asia and beyond.

Eighth, theology in Thailand and Mekong-region should enrich theological education at the continental level by sharing and exchanging interests, experience and research which involve various fields of theological agendas .

Ninth, it should bridge the gaps between the Churches and the theological institutions in renewing and reinvigorating the life and mission of the Church and of theological education and Christian movement in Asia

Tenth, theology should enhance the co-operative process of theological studies and reflection among committed Asian theologians who are prepared to deal with critical Asian issues as part of the Asian theological agenda.

Eleventh, doing any theological education developed in Thailand and Mekong region must be liberating and not oppressive in terms of its academic impacts. The central focus should be to set at liberating the poor, the oppressed, and the marginalized, to heal the broken society, and to be in solidarity with the powerless and the poor in their struggles for justice, peace and freedom.

Twelfth, doing theological education in Thailand and Mekong region should enhance capacity-building in order to serve people experiencing disaster, conflict, and disease as well as those people who suffer physical, emotional, and mental disabilities.

Thirteenth, in doing theological education in Thailand and Mekong region the teaching methodologies should follow three suggestions made by Samuel Ngun Ling.

1. In seminaries and Bible schools [teaching methodologies] need not be reproductive or imitative of the West. They need to be remodeled or reconstructed in forms and ideas relevant to Thailand and Mekong ethnic and Buddhist contexts.
2. Subjects in theological seminaries and Bible schools should be academic as well as issue-oriented. Subjects studied in the classes should reflect relevant experiences in life beyond the class and *vice versa*.
3. Aspects of theological themes and concepts studied in seminaries and Bible schools should be holistic, inclusive, and ecumenical. Usage of ideas, terminology and modes of expressions should be always non-offensive and tension-free.

Fourteenth, there is a need to engage in inter-contextual exchange and networking with institutions of theological education from other parts of the world.

## Conclusion

Theological education in Thailand and Mekong region needs to take into account the values of the underlying traditional worldview of different people as a high-value which has to be taken very seriously including the following: Responsive engagement with the diverse Asian contexts; Critical engagement with indigenous cultures and wisdom for the preservation and sustenance of life; Reflective engagement with the suffering of the Asian people; Restoring the inter-connectedness of the whole creation; Interfaith dialogue as well as intra-faith communion and communication for the fullness of life and the well-being of the society; Enhancing capacity building in order to serve people experiencing disaster, conflict, and disease as well as those people who suffer physical, emotional, and mental disabilities. We are encouraged by the sense of belongingness together in this global fellowship.

# Part III

# Theological Education in University Context and Priorities of Networking

# Challenges and Prospect of Theological Education in the Context of Secular Education in Christian Colleges/Universities

**Huang Po Ho•**

## Introduction

Christian religion has its history of interaction with social-public domains. It is a religion developed from the mission of Jesus, who was sentenced to death for his challenging messages–not only to his contemporary religious communities, but also with strong political implications to the ruling authorities and as well people's life. Christianity was made state religion in different countries in different periods of human history. However, along the history, Christianity has been also confronted being categorized and constrained to a spiritual (other worldly), individual, and private characteristics; and was segregated from the public domain of society. The most recent trend of forces to push Christian religion to its privatized status started from the Enlightenment movement, which was essentially a movement of rationalization impacted by the development of new technologies and sciences. The contemporary liberal theologies

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launched from Schleiermacher, who has shifted the foundation of theology from biblical and ecclesial authorities to that of individual experiences, is one of the key factors to open the backyard door for Christianity to recede from the public domain of the society. His famous theological statement to define faith as "feeling of absolute dependence," though not necessarily a privatization of a religion, it nevertheless provides a theological impression for Christian religion to be categorized into private domain. In his *Addresses on Religion* (1799), he wrote:

> Religion is the outcome neither of the fear of death, nor of the fear of God. It answers a deep need in man. It is neither a metaphysics, nor a morality, but above all and essentially an intuition and a feeling ... Dogmas are not, properly speaking, part of religion: rather it is that they are derived from it. Religion is the miracle of direct relationship with the infinite; and dogmas are the reflection of this miracle. Similarly belief in God, and in personal immortality, are not necessarily a part of religion; one can conceive of a religion without God, and it would be pure contemplation of the universe; the desire for personal immortality seems rather to show a lack of religion, since religion assumes a desire to lose oneself in the infinite, rather than to preserve one's own finite self.[1]

Meanwhile, the trend of globalization that contributed to the formation of global village intensified the human interaction, and awakened up the consciousness of pluralism to begin from the developed countries, and particularly those metropolitan cities. The role of a religion in the society invited not only debates on the question of "inter-religious relation," but also challenges to the extant relationship between "church and state" (or religion and state).

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[1] Quoted in Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism* (Praeger University Series, 1961), 26.

When the United States of America had to amend its Constitution[2] for the prohibition of (Christian) religious practices in the public places, which for sure was not simply out of theological reflection of a single religion, but was a response to the issue faced by multi-religious society. Theologies acted to enforce the policy.

While the prohibition for religious practice to be organized in public place has been considered a progress policy to secure religious freedom for a plural religious society, it does not equal to the privatization of a religion. Yet it is implicitly accounted. By privatization, we mean that religion has to be treated as a private affair that should not play a role in public life. One of the theological arguments to support this position is exactly pressed on the spiritual nature of religions. It is spiritual; therefore, it must be individual or personal matter. Ironically, while the liberal wing of theologies have their potential to contribute the privatization of Christian religion through their tendency to be concert with liberalism and secularization by its attempts to modernize theologies adapting the new contexts faced by church and people, the evangelical wing has, from the opposite side, to also contribute to the issue by upholding the spiritual world, and deny totally this worldly concerns.[3] This is to say that the controversy on "Public religion vs. Private religion" is not an issue divided into the so called liberal and evangelical, but difference within both theological trends. In another words, the striving for the

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[2] It wasn't until the early 1960's that prayer in public school was "outlawed" by a new interpretation of the U.S. Constitution. In fact, the history of the U.S. includes prayer and Bible readings in all sorts of public places, including schools. In 1782, the United States Congress passed the following resolution: "The Congress of the United States recommends and approves the Holy Bible for use in all schools."

[3] Taking pluralism as example, while the liberals take it seriously to assert religious freedom for all different religions in the society, thus give supports to the separation of Church and State, the conservatives by totally neglecting the present world system have the position to withdraw from political concerns.

religion to swim back to the public domain of society, is taking place concurrently in both liberals and conservatives, though not with the same motivation and purpose.

Nevertheless, while these debates were taking place in North America and Europe, Christianity has been introduced to the Asian world in principle as a private affair. While early missionaries had concentrated their intention on personal "Soul Saving," the public forces of Asian society mostly considered Christian religion an alien, foreign religion associated with colonial powers, and was not welcome to take part to the political and social issues of Asia.[4] Many Churches in Asia, after taking roots in the Asian soil, have striven to be prophetic through their critical engagements with the public affairs of the society. It is however restrained from their being minority, Christian churches in Asia remain marginalized from the public domain.

One of the signposts to evaluate the social status of Christian religion in Asia is whether its faith expressions (theology) can be considered a public issue. Theological educations in Asia were mostly initiated by the western mission boards or individual missionaries on the purpose of training Gospel preachers to strengthen and extend their evangelical ministries to the Asian world. These theological institutes were, in their beginning, confined within church domain and seldom had scholarly interactions with other disciplines of academic affairs in their societies. It resulted in theological degrees as but a licenses of church's domestic affair, nothing to do with human exploration of truth and knowledge. Thus, theological educations were not included in the higher education system of the society. Though western universities have their root in Christian monastery or theological education institute, however, models of university

[4] Besides the charities and social welfare that the churches doing uncritically to support the status quo.

system introduced to Asia were those after they had gone through the debates of academic freedom which led to a process of secularization of higher education.

Most of the universities in Asia do not consider or not being permitted to accommodate theological discipline as one of their areas of studies, except very few countries such as the Philippines and Korea.[5] Probably affected by the 911 terrorist incident happened in New York, it was only recently that more countries in Asia gradually open their doors for theological education to be accredited along with other higher education disciplines. Taiwan, Indonesia and Thailand[6] are new members of this small club, however their accredited degrees remain under master's degrees.

## Theological Education Implemented in University System and Its implications in Asia

In the case of Asia, theological education to be accredited by the national (governmental) accreditation bodies has its implication of public recognition of the academic status of theology discipline, and which will automatically affect the public status as well Christian ministries and service programs in their society. In the case of Taiwan, these effects include:

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[5] Even in these two countries, theological education is still very much marginalized. India has a special set up for a senate of Serampore to be attached with the Serampore College that takes care of the significant number of seminaries across India for their degree accreditation and recognition. Other countries in south Asia are in a situation even worse than other regions.

[6] Though Payap University has a theological school earlier as a particular case in the country; however, its theology degrees were accredited by ATESEA instead of the Thai government. The government of Thailand has only recently allowed the Bangkok Institute of Theology to be merged into Bangkok Christian University as one of its faculties, and agreed to accredit both degrees on B.A. in theology and M.A. in Theology.

1) The implication of that degree holders are able to pursue advanced degrees of different studies in their educational system, or be permitted to serve in the positions offered by the public sectors. In some cases, they are allowed to assess public resources for their personal research or service programs.

2) Those theological educations being implemented in the university system will enjoy its privileges of benefits through interdisciplinary studies together with other disciplines in the university, better resource supports in terms of financial, library resources, and personnel from both university and government. It means also that they will have better circumstance and chance to develop theological scholarship to the qualification of academic excellence.

3) The public recognition of theological degrees has its significance also for public status of Christian church in Asian society, and also for the legitimacy of Christian mission and programs among the people. While theological degree holders are accepted to be teaching in the universities, and serving as civilian officers, a formal forum for conversations on Christian faith and social public issues will be certainly created. Theological scholars will eventually be given more platforms to address public issues. Christian message will not be considered any longer a gossip within church wall.

4) With the capacity of interdisciplinary education implements in the university for theological education, churches' pulpits will gain more confidence to be enhanced, and transformed into a platform for prophetic messages touching on the public discourses.

The aforementioned significances of theological education implemented in the university system with governmental accreditation are envisioned in the contexts of Asia (not without

caution), where churches and theological education have been severely marginalized in the society. Whether this envisioning will be achieved is not doubt, depending on how this new model of theological education is operated in Asia, and how much experiences that European and North American has gone through are learned, and taking into considerations by the Asian theological educators.

**Asian Struggling for the Public Recognition of Theological Scholarship**

Since the theological education in both Europe and North America was rooted in their educational tradition as an essential part of higher learning to their citizens and society, their challenges emerged mainly with the process of secularization and pluralization taking place in their societies. How to keep Christian faith and its theology from marginalization in the society and higher education circumstance, and be honestly and faithfully explore the knowledge of truth for the equipment of servants of Gospel, are the struggles confronting theological educators in both continents. While European and North American theological education are threatened tumbling from their olden days' glorious position, Asian theological education has its opposite route of struggling.

As mentioned above, theological education in Asia was started as a training program to train people for the spreading of knowledge of a foreign religion. It disembarked in Asian land as a marginalized, if not an illegal educational enterprise. Though many of these theological institutes received strong supports from their Western theological education partners, over the years, they have been struggling to gain a foothold in their society, and a legal and visible identity to serve their people with Gospel truth.

Already mentioned, Christian populations are absolute minority in all Asian countries, except the Philippines and Korea. They are mostly struggling with their segregation and alienation from the

societies. Theological educations, are thus, confined within the church wall, and considered a religious domestic affair. It is therefore seeking a public recognition, and to get theological education and theological scholarship into the public education (university) domain become a symbol of public image of Christianity in many countries of Asia.

Except handful theological schools under university system in Korea and the Philippines,[7] most theological education institutions in Asia are not accepted in the educational panel of state accreditation; thus, their degrees are not recognized publicly in their society. Even though they are striving to be accredited by regional theological associations, such as ATESEA (Association for Theological Education in South East Asia) and ATA (Asian Theological Association), these outcomes of accreditation are not accepted to the governmental education system of the respective countries. It is only very recently, an encouraging development has been taking place in several Asian countries, such as Indonesia, Thailand, and Taiwan. Theological educations are considered eligible for public accreditation by their state educational system. Theological scholarship is allowed to be included as one of university disciplines. Nevertheless, challenges started, and issues are even more complicated than that of European and North America.

[7] There are also divinity schools in both Chinese University of Hong Kong and Payap University in Thailand, however in Chinese University Hong Kong's case the Chung Chi divinity school has been put under a department of religious studies which belong to Liberal Art College of the university, and the McGilvary School of Theology has been an exceptional case in Thailand. Its M.Div and B.Th degrees are not accredited by the Thai government but by ATESEA. The Thai government has changed its policy to better accommodation of theological education in Thailand context from year 2012.

**A State Controlled Christian University Model of Theological Education in Asia: The Case of Taiwan**

Asian countries were colonized by different countries from Europe and North America. Their political structures and educational systems are learned from, if not totally inherited the previous colonizers. However, regardless which political system is observed, education ministries are highly controlled irrespectively in all Asian countries, in particular the Confucian culture influenced countries. Modern university systems in Asia were imported from Europe and North America; yet, lack of cultural encouragement of academic freedom, almost without exception, universities are put under the governmental supervisions, either through political/legal intervention, accreditation control or financial subsidy policies. Private universities are popular, and encouraged by most of the governments which allow Christian universities to be established in the region except several strong Muslim popularized countries, such as Malaysia and Pakistan. However, theological scholarship in the university is still very skeptical to the government and leaders of public educational system.

Considering the complexity of the difference in political systems and educational traditions existing in Asian countries, the following observations on a state controlled private university model are based on experiences in Taiwan.[8] Hoping that the case will be able to share some common concerns from Asian experiences on the model of university related theological education in Asia.

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[8] In order to look into the Asian wide situation of the theological education within university system, this writer has under the sponsors of Fund for Theological Education in South East Asia (FTESEA) and under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and the National Science Council, to plan a international conference on "Re-visioning The Mission of Theological education in Asia" from June 17-20, 2012, inviting deans of divinity schools in Asian Christian universities to exchange and sharing different experiences.

**A) Background**

Though colonized by Japanese for half a century (1895-1945), Taiwan didn't get on the train of national independence after the Second World War. Instead, it was fallen into the hand of the Chinese regime that was defeated in the civil war of China. It resulted in transplanting a central government of whole China to the small island. The colonial nature of the political system had strictly controlled the education from the elementary school towards higher learning. Religious study was prohibited in the universities. It took 43 years for the first department on religious studies to be established in Fu-Jin Catholic University (1988).[9] The first theological institution to be recognized by Ministry of Education was only after 2008 – the Chang Jung Christian University.[10]

The first general higher education institute in Taiwan was established in Japanese colonial period (1928) – the Taipei Imperial University, which is today the National Taiwan University. However, Japanese influence on university structure didn't last after the war. The structures of the university in Taiwan in its later development after the World War II are mostly a copy from the universities of the United States, except that it has been put under tight controls of the government. The first private university, Tung Hai University was founded in 1953,[11] which is also a Christian University.

**B) Challenges Faced by the State Controlled Universities**

Universities in Taiwan can be distinguished as national universities

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[9] See website of the department of Religious study, Fu-Jin University at: http://www.rsd.fju.edu.tw/ introduction.jsp (accessed on April 25, 2012).

[10] Chang Jung Christian University School of Theology is the first theological school recognized by the Ministry of Education of Taiwan government, and as well first theological institute operated under university system in Taiwan.

[11] Tung Hai University was granted permission for its establishment at 1953; however the first batch of students were admitted at 1955.

and private universities, or as general universities and technological universities. They are all put under the superintendence of the state Ministry of Education. The former classification has its financial implication, and the latter, the objective and nature of universities. However, education has been regarded highly political according to Confucian tradition of politics. The government, regardless of different regimes in its history, has never loosened its hand on the educational organizations. These classifications are confused, if not distorted under the circumstance of using education as instrument for the service of politics, and by the phenomenon of "layman to lead experts." Just to list a few examples here as references:

1) Although consistently declaring the principle of "university autonomy," and in fact has indeed making a progress for the board of governors of the university to be more responsible to their domestic administrations during last couple of years, the Ministry of Education has firmly controlled the development of a university, Just to name a few: the size of university (in terms of student numbers), the tuition fees, disciplines or departments to be set up or to be removed, the qualification of the faculties, and even to change a name of a department. All these are not done through the existing regular accreditation evaluation, but are requirements of approval in advance; and process of application usually takes years long.

2) The classification for the national university and private university is made according to the nature of founding body and its financial sources, and thus, its constituency of governing body. It is, however, the fixed numbers of students and fees to the private university that become a punishment to the individuals who have the ideal to contribute to the education. The national universities spending the taxes of poor have been pushed to be the aristocrat schools, serving small number of elites who mostly come from the rich families that are able to sustain additional learning programs for their children. Poor kids lacking education resources are forced to attend the

private universities, and paying double fees for their education. This creates an outrageous injustice in the society; deplorably, this unjust situation has been continued in the higher learning community without significant challenges from the intellects.

3) The decreasing of birth rate has stirred up competition between the universities, which is re-enforced by the governmental commissioned accreditation organization that adheres to the short-sight governmental policy that has its eyes exclusively on economic labors' market. Thus, the purposes and objectives of higher education are misled through the accreditation indicators. The so-called technological and general universities are thus confused, and are contending against each other for the students as well as their accommodations of departments and disciplines. The higher education has been deviated to but job training factories. The disciplines of humanity, philosophy, and religion that do not aim at an immediate labor markets are gradually marginalized, if not totally disappeared from the universities.

These are just a few observations of the challenges facing today's higher education in the society of Taiwan. And it is against this background that we are striving to have theological education be included into the scene.

**C) A New Journey for Theological Education: Promising or Cursing?**

As mentioned, it was not until 1988 that the first department on religious studies was included into the university system. Also, it was only in 2008 that theological scholarship received a place in the university and higher education realm. The experiment of religious education in the university setting has proven, at least in current situation, a failure attempt. The already few of the departments of religious studies and philosophy are either struggling in the margin of higher education realm or being shut down by the universities. Can theological education survive in this unhealthy university

circumstance?

A conference for divinity school deans in Asia on the theme of "Re-visioning Theological Education in Asia" was held to be support this research project, under the auspices of The Foundation for Theological Education in South East Asia, and the Formosa Christianity and Cultures Research Center of Chang Jung Christian University, and also sponsored by the Ministry of Education of Taiwan. The Conference call has laid the following rationale for the explorations. These covered not only the struggles of theological education in Taiwan, but also common experience in Asia:

Theological education is encountering new challenges in Asia. An urgency to construct an Asian epistemology informed by the Asian realities and priorities are one of the primary challenges that theological education encounters. In the place of the radical disjuncture between religion and secularism as proposed by Western logical constructs, Asian thoughts locate conviviality between different systems of knowledge and traditions of learning. This unique Asian approach is now reflected in the changes taking place in the centers of higher learning. Universities in Asia are showing far greater openness to the study of religions and several universities have started Department of Theology or Divinity Schools within their premises.

The new departments, however, are faced with several challenges. It is an uphill task to legitimize the presence of theological departments within the secular academic tradition. Since the term academic is often equated to the inquiries of the objectives sciences this task becomes complex. Furthermore, in the traditional wisdom religion and theology seldom falls in the category of academic. For those rational minds where truth is limited to verifiable empirical realities theological thinking is rather an obscure terrain. Theological faculties connected to the departments of theology within the Universities therefore are engaged in an ongoing conversation to develop holistic

understanding regarding people's search for meaning.

Redefining what is variously called as mission of the church and the theological education is another challenge that the emerging Divinity schools in the Universities are confronting. Majority of the Divinity Schools are ecumenical in nature. While the inter-denominational character offers freedom to develop curriculum and pedagogical structures for the university based Divinity Schools, the absence of any organizational relationship with a denomination puts the onus on them to verbalize its mission in non-ambiguous terms. Compared to a denominationally controlled seminary, the task of defining and re-visioning the mission is a major challenge that the Divinity School established within the universities to overcome.

This task becomes tedious because Divinity Schools are accountable to two different sets of audit. Being in a university system, Divinity Schools have to be accredited by the Ministry of Education and thus need to satisfy the parameters set by the Ministry. In majority of the cases in Asia, Ministry of Education under the secular democratic system considers the empirical objective evaluation as the only road for knowing truth. Accreditation standards established by the Ministry are not informed by the specificity of theological thinking and rationality. And as a result, Divinity schools are subjected to serious limitations in developing independent pedagogies. On the same time, Divinity Schools should be accountable to the Church, not just to one denomination, but to the various different denominations and faith persuasions. This dual accountability is very unique to Divinity schools attached to the Universities.

Asian Schools are also challenged by the specific context of Asia in formulating its mission priorities. Asian context has two characteristics; plurality and massive poverty. A theological education which fails to account these two sides of Asian realities will fall short of making any contribution to the collective search of

the churches and people to locate meaning for their existence. The mission therefore needs to be reconstructed to offer more visibility to this cardinal phenomenon.[12]

Five objectives were also enumerated as the following:

1. To appraise the mission of theological education in the context of its accountability to the secular academic world and the Church;
2. To restructure the mission of the church and its theological formation with respect the pluriform realities of Asian societies;
3. To explore an inter-disciplinary pedagogical structure for theological learning within secular context;
4. To critically analyze the Asian realities and explore new ways of doing theology that takes context seriously; and
5. To strategize future collaboration of ecumenical and ministerial programme between various Divinity Schools established in the Universities in Asia.[13]

It is hoped that through these common efforts, new journey initiated to the theological education in Asia will be gain a solid steps in a right track.

**Ways for an Exit**

Theological education has developed in a long historical struggling with profundity of experiences engaging with different contexts and circumstances, glorious, and servility. There were times for celebration and times for mourning. Nevertheless, it has never been caught by despair. The new reality facing us is explained both as opportunity

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[12] This text is quoted from the rationale of the international conference on "Re-visioning Theological Education in Asia" held from June 17 to 20, 2012. This conference was co-organized by this writer and two of my colleagues from Chang Jung Christian University (Huang Po Ho, MP Joseph and Chuang Yatang).

[13] *Ibid*.

and threats. Instead of being holding on the negative conditions, we may learn from experiences, gone through by our partners of theological educators in Europe and North America, to seek a way out, and to initiate a relevant model for our time and contexts. Based upon the enlightenment–the struggling took place in Europe and North America, and also considering the special higher educational conditions in Asia, the following attempts can probably provide a basic direction for the university related theological education to go further:

1) Considering the strengths discovered from North American model of the co-existence of new university divinity schools and independent denominational seminaries, that provides a check and balance function for theological scholarship between pure scientific oriented and confessional bounded methodology of studies, the current move of the governments in Asia to allow Christian universities to accommodate theological education within their structure is an encouraging development. The churches and theological educators should continue to strive for a more just position of theological discipline in the higher learning environment of Asia.

2) Theological scholarship depends on higher learning and profound researches. It is, though, a new attempt in Asia to accommodate theological scholarship into the university setting. Theological education has been practiced longer than any of the current university disciplines. Asian university divinity schools should make all efforts to implement higher degrees of theological programs, such as Th.D. and Ph.D., so that research energies for theological scholarship will be strengthened.

3) Considering the irresistible trend of secularization in the university settings, in the case of Asia, it is an attempt for theological education to step into the secular domain. An international or global web of cooperation is thus critical for

theological scholarship to be deepened and sound among the university disciplines. International solidarity and cooperation can be done in various levels, includes sharing of resources, exchanges of personnel – both of teaching faculties and students, joint research projects etc. To respond to the globalization impacts, the idea of international mobile curricula for theological degree programs should be taken into consideration.

4) A critical balance between keeping distance from and close tie with the denominational churches is of the touchstone for the theological education to be faithful both to its scholarship, and as well its primary calling. University setting granted divinity schools better position, compared to the independent denominational seminaries, to resist the undesirable intervention from the church authorities; however, it also easily caused the alienation in between. Special attention should be given to this area of concern.

5) Last but not least, worldwide theological institutions are presently facing common challenges of financial crisis. University divinity school, though, comparatively easier to assess public resources than an independent seminary, has suffered loosing stronger supports from the denominational churches. The minority scenario of Christian population in Asia has constrained the pool of theological education resources. The divisions of confessional denominations, schools of theological advocacies, and even just because of the difference of missionary sending bodies that created multitudinous insignificant theological institutions, have worsen the situation. A strong solidarity, thus, is urgently needed among the theological schools that can break through the divisions, and building up a frame for mutual sharing of theological educational resources in all levels of national, regional, and global sphere.

# ATESEA – Priorities and Challenges

**Tan Kim Huat•**

## Introduction

The Association for Theological Education in Southeast Asia (ATESEA), formerly known as the Association of Theological Schools in South East Asia (ATSSEA), was established in 1957 in Singapore with sixteen schools as founding members.The ATESEA has pioneered in establishing an Asia-wide venture of cooperation among the theological schools in the areas of research, consortium programs for advanced studies, seminar-workshops for lecturers and heads of schools, and other forms of innovative programs.

In 1966, the South East Asia Graduate School of Theology (SEAGST) was established as part of its faculty development program for its member schools. In cooperation with the member schools of the Association, SEAGST has conducted programs of advanced theological studies and granted the degrees of Master of Theology (M.Theol.), Doctor of Pastoral Studies (DPS) and Doctor of Theology (D.Theol.).

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In 2009, the name of South East Asia Graduate School of Theology (SEAGST), the educational arm of ATESEA was changed to ATESEA Theological Union (ATU). As part of the restructuring of the organization, ATU turned over the offering of the Master of Theology degree program to the seminaries which have the capacity to run the program. Beginning 2010, ATU has focused its offering on the Doctor of Theology administered in the twelve (12) Centers for Theological Excellence. The centers are member schools of ATESEA which have the resources to operate the program.

Currently, ATESEA has a total membership of 93 member schools from 13 countries including China. It embarks on ventures that address the fundamental challenges of theological schools and their various concerns. The Association's programs and events have been focused on the five major thrusts of development: Faculty, Leadership, Accreditation, Library, and Publication.

## A. FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

Based on the results of the accreditation visits in the last 4 years, only 15% of the 86 member schools evaluated are offering doctorate degree program, while only 19% are offering Master of Theology degree program.

Under the faculty development thrust, ATESEA has strategized its implementation through the ATESEA Theological Union (ATU) Programs and Annual Teachers' Academy.

### 1. ATU Doctoral Programs

Since 2013, ATU has produced seventeen (17) doctoral students in partnership with the schools. Three more are expected to graduate before 2021. Aside from strengthening the faculty force of their respective seminaries, graduates of the doctoral program are now serving as lecturers and academic deans of their seminaries. They have also integrated contextualization and the guidelines for doing theologies and teaching methodologies in the courses they teach.

1.1. *Methodology Seminar*

The Methodology Seminary is a one-week intensive study of the Guidelines for Doing Theologies in Asia as a framework for the doctoral study program. Doctoral students need to be familiar with the content and challenges of doing contextualization. Participants are expected to:

1. articulate the content, method and issues of contextualization and its value in their study programs;
2. share the output of their research proposals in the colloquia;
3. draft the working title, objectives, scope and limitation of the dissertation including the purpose and arguments in defense of the research proposal .

1.2. *Doctoral Colloquium*

The colloquium for doctoral students is a follow up program to the Methodology Seminar. Students at the colloquium present their research proposals, and receive feedback from experts and also fellow students. The papers, which reflect the diverse cultural and religious contexts of Asia, can enrich the students' understanding of the Asian contexts. The colloquium offers positive direction that is essential in defining the clear focus of the dissertation.

1.3. *Teachers' Academy*

An annual program of ATESEA, the Teachers' Academy is designed for faculty members for their professional development. The academy helps the participants to update their knowledge on some discussions/issues in their areas of disciples . It also provides them the opportunity to improve their teaching skills and methodologies as well as strategies for learning assessment.

Eighty percent (80%) of the participants of the previous Academy rated the program as highly beneficial/relevant to their work.

1.4. *Short-term Research Grant*

With an increasing need to equip faculty members in the area of writing, publication, and research, a provision for a short-term Faculty research project is granted to selected faculty members by application. The program aims to strengthen research quality of the faculty members and encourage them to publish their research works.

## B. LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT

### 1. Conference for Librarians

It is noted that majority of librarians managing and supervising the library resources of the seminaries are not professionally trained. ATESEA has organized conferences for Theological Librarians so that participants will be able to:

1. acquire skills in organizing information resources and implementing the standardization of access and retrieval of library collection;
2. identify and describe the effective strategies of managing the theological library;
3. articulate and demonstrate skills in preserving and conserving Asian resources and the use of Information Technology in library resources; and,
4. establish a list of contacts of librarians and partners within and outside Asia.

In these conferences, the participants considered the topics discussed as very relevant and useful in their current responsibilities. Librarians were also challenged to develop their information technology skills and continue to collaborate with other theological librarians in the Southeast Asia. Majority of the participants expressed that their seminaries have limited budget allocation for the purchase of updated books and journals. In order to address this challenge, they encouraged inter-library resource sharing, and online sharing

of theological resource materials. They are looking forward to exploration on creating an Asian digital network as an avenue for library resource sharing.

### 2. Master in Library and Information Science in Theological Librarianship Program

The Master in Library and Information Science with Specialization in Theological Librarianship (MLIS in TL) is a graduate degree program designed to provide continuing education to librarians of theological schools in Asia who are not professionally trained .

As of April 2016, twelve (12) have graduated from the Master of Library Information Science with Specialization in Theological Librarianship at Central Philippine University, Iloilo City, Philippines. Graduates of the program are serving their respective seminaries and implementing innovations in library management based on their learnings.

As of June 2017, another twelve (12) librarians are enrolled in the said scholarship program and they are expected to graduate this 2019. With the increased competency of librarians in managing libraries, theological schools will become more efficient in providing better services to meet the needs of pastors, churches and communities for library information resources.

## C. LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

### 1. Conference for Heads of Schools

Most heads of schools have been appointed to lead the seminaries with limited knowledge and experience in administration. Most of them have expressed the need for a continuing education in understanding their role of exercising their delegated leadership and knowing the principles of good governance.

### 2. Conference for Academic Deans

Academic Deans expressed the need for continuing education

especially because they are in charge of the academic programs of the seminaries. As academic leaders, they hold big responsibilities that require needed management skills and better understanding of the needs of the faculty and students, as well as the requirements to maintain standards of higher education in the context of the current development in education.

**3. Conference for Finance Managers**

Many of the schools are facing financial challenges. For quality theological education to take its effect, the finance managers/ officers need also to enhance their skills in the light of the demand for transparency and accountability of managing the resources of the theological institutions

**4. Conference for Women**

Some countries in Asia still view women as a marginalized group. As such, Asian women in the ministry and theological education need to be empowered. They need the presence of other women for encouragement and renewal of vision and passion. The conference brings together Asian women educators and women in the ministry to share their theological reflections on various issues they have encountered in their ministries. This also provides space to discuss pertinent Asian issues and theological responses from an Asian feminist perspective.

## D. ACCREDITATION

Accreditation was one of primary reasons why ATSSEA was established in 1957. As a recognized accrediting agencies in Asia, ATESEA provides this service to all its member schools with the following aims:

1. to ensure that standards of quality theological education programs of schools in the region are maintained; and
2. to encourage the schools for the continual improvement of their educational programs.

It is noted that 100% of the schools visited were able to address the areas of weaknesses identified by the accreditation teams in the previous visit. Also, it is observed that 100% of the accredited degrees of the schools visited have been re-accredited. This indicates the importance of accreditation in the development of faculty, improvement of instruction and establishing good governance.

## E. RESEARCH AND PUBLICATION

### 1. Asia Journal of Theology

The *Asia Journal of Theology* is a joint publication of ATESEA and the Board of Theological Education of the Senate of Serampore College [University]. A peer-reviewed journal, AJT is published biannually in April and October. It addresses the need of seminaries for resources based on Asian matters. AJT encourages Asian biblical scholarship and theological thinking and how to relate the Gospel to the cultural, historical and religious situations in Asia.

### 2. Seminar for Writers

Asian theological schools lack resource books / researches written in the Asian context by Asian writers. The writers' workshop aims to increase knowledge and skills of Asian lecturers on writing academic papers and encourage them to pursue academic writings and publish their academic works; and create a pool of writers.

### 3. New initiatives

3.1. *Book on Women's Issues*

The result of the accreditation visit reveals that theological schools lack Asian resources on Women and Gender issues based on the results of the Accreditation visits to the member schools. Thus, a publication of book on Women in Asia aims to: encourage women writers to share their reflections, stories and academic research; increase awareness on issues facing the Asian women and how

theological schools, churches and community should address them; and promote Asian Women scholarship and leadership.

3.2. *Book on Christian Education*.

Participants to the 2017 Teachers' Academy acknowledged that theological schools lack Asian resources on Christian Education. Thus, a textbook on Christian Education in the Asian context is needed to encourage awareness and development of Christian Education in the schools, churches and community.

The publication of the Christian Education textbook aims to:

1. encourage Christian Educators to share their knowledge on Christian Education;
2. increase awareness on the practices, opportunities, as well as challenges of Christian Education in various countries in Asia; and,
3. promote knowledge and thoughts on Christian Education in Asia.

## F. NEW DEVELOPMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN ASIA

ATESEA Theological Union (ATU), formerly known as the Southeast Asia Graduate School of Theology (SEAGST) will stop granting degrees after 2021.This is due to the new development in the educational system in some Asian countries where theological institutions are required registration and recognition/accreditation of their degree programs, by their Ministry of Education. To avoid conflict with the government or threat of closure, many seminaries have been pressured to abide by the regulations. SEAGST/ATU degrees are not recognized by some current Asian governments like Indonesia and Hong Kong. The primary reason is that ATU has no campus and buildings/facilities of its own.

This new development is critical to the future of the ATU graduates as it affects their employment. Given the above grounds

and circumstances, the following actions were approved by the General Assembly in 2017:

1. ATU will cease admitting doctoral students with immediate effect. However, in recognition of the contribution of ATU (and SEAGST) in fostering theological education in an Asian setting, and promoting fellowship and exchange of Asian theologians, ATU will continue to play a critical role in the formation of doctoral students. This will ensure a corporate identity among ATESEA members.
2. The following current programs will be continued after the cessation of ATU as a degree granting institution:

2.1. Methodology Seminar. All accredited institutions at the doctoral level are expected to send their doctoral students to the Methodology Seminars.

2.2. Colloquium for Doctoral Students. This is strongly recommended for doctoral students of accredited institutions.

2.3. Scholarship Assistance. Candidates may apply to ATU for the award upon the recommendation of the member schools of ATESEA. It is expected that member schools will partly support their sponsored candidate.

2.4. Study Outside the Region. Programs of individual candidates in some fields may have the option to study outside the region. ATU or the sending schools will negotiate with particular institutions enlisting their cooperation.

3. Setting up of Centers Of Research (CORE). The vision is for strong research centers, perhaps with niche emphasis, to be set up so that Asian students would no longer feel compelled to consider going to the West for research sourcing and coaching. The Board of Trustees identifies what areas of research or programmes to be carried out.

This year, the identified area in the offering of the Doctor of Theology is Christian Education. This program will be based at Silliman

University. Silliman University will grant the degree.

The other area of focus of Center of Research will be continuing education of Christian Educators. The focus of the study will be on Christian Education and Spirituality. Part of the program will include presentation of academic papers, exposures. Eighty percent (80%)of the speakers should be local. Participants will be open to others outside Asia, not only academicians, but also for practitioners.

The ATU Senate has recommended to designate the Divinity School of Chung Chi College as the Center Of Research (CORE) in the field of Christian Education for training in partnership with other seminaries.

We are in the process of creating another Center of Research for Inter-religions Studies as part of ATESEA's continuing effort to provide address the demand for faculty development. This will be decided by the Board before the end of this year.

## G. AREAS FOR FUTURE COOPERATION WITH OTHER PARTNERS

**1. Faculty Development**

- Joint Program
- Study Outside the Region
- Participation in any programs of ATESEA
- Research
- Faculty Exchange

2. Library Sharing (on-line)
3. Centers of Research (Training, Doctoral Study)
4. Accreditation Exercise

# Senate of Serampore College (University) Priorities and Challenges

**S.K. Patro•**

## Introduction

The Serampore College was founded in the year 1818 by the great missionaries of the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS), namely William Carey, Joshua Marshman and William Ward. They were the Bible translators, educationists, social reformers, ecumenists, inclusivists. That is one of the reasons, why William Carey is considered as the Father of Modern Mission. William Carey was the one who brought printing press, started newspapers, translated Bible and even Hindu Scriptures; instrumental in reforming Hindu society, became pastor for the first Lutheran congregation in Serampore, taught Bengali, Marathi, Sanskrit, invented many plants and aquatic species.

Today the Serampore College is celebrating 200 years. From the beginning, Serampore College offered theological education alongside other branches of studies. In 1827 the Royal Denmark Government under the Charter made Serampore College the University, which is considered to be the first modern University

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in Asia. In the year 1918, under the Act of Bengal State of the Indian Republic, the Council of Serampore College was advised to constitute a Senate in order to offer various branches of studies including theology and confer degrees. The Council by constituting the Senate decided to offer theological education and reserved the right to offer other branches of studies open for the future. For last 100 years the Senate of Serampore College is functioning as a University and offers various theological programmes. The Senate is truly an ecumenical body and its affiliated colleges belong to various traditions and denominations. All protestant denominations are part of the Senate of Serampore College – the orthodox, ecumenical, evangelical, charismatic-pentecostal and free churches. Theological seminaries and colleges are affiliated to the Senate of Serampore College (SSC) and their candidates receive their degrees which is recognized world over.

In last 100 years SSC have trained more than 40000 candidates. Today there is no church in India, big or small, which is not impacted by the theological education of the Senate of Serampore College. Today, there are over 800 theological teachers and more than 12000 students spread over 55 Colleges, 4 federated faculties and scores of institutions and examinations centres. The Senate functions like any other universities. The only difference is that it is a theological university, the first of its kind in the world. It complies with the Indian universities' broad regulations and the Senate of Serampore College is answerable to the Government of India and to the State (Provincial) Government it its academic administration. For examples, Right to Information, Policy Against Sexual Harassment, Liberal (not to be understood as 'liberal theology') Education etc. are to be implemented in the seminaries/ colleges. However, Senate also maintains its distinctiveness by offering courses, designing regulations and syllabus, giving freedom to constituent colleges to offer courses of their denominational thrusts and 'theological persuasions'. The

Syllabi are designed in such a way it creates space the seminaries/ colleges to orient their theological methodology, perspective and approaches suiting their context, traditions and denominations. However, under one national structure, there is a standardized policy and quality control in order to give emphasis on contextual theologies, religious pluralism and ecumenical emphasis with the threefold formation of students, namely, academic formation, personal (spiritual formation) and theological formations.

The Senate of Serampore College carries out the task of imparting theological education of the Council of Serampore College. The Senate of Serampore College has four wings which functions with delegated autonomy when it comes to academic administration, but centrally planned and designed under one national structure.

1. The Senate of Serampore College centrally monitors the programmesof theological education. Currently, the following programmes are offered by the Senate of Serampore College:

    a. Diploma in Worship & Music (DWM)
    b. Diploma in Bible Translations (Dip. B T)
    c. Diploma in Clinical Pastoral Counselling (DCPC)
    d. Bachelor of Theology (B.Th)
    e. Bachelor of Missiology (B.Miss)
    f. Bachelor of Bible Translations Studies (BBTS)
    g. Bachelor of Divinity (BD)
    h. Master of Theology (M.Th)
    i. Master's in Clinical Psychotherapy (MCP)

    The Bachelor of Divinity is our base programme and all our curriculum and regulations are designed based on Bachelor of Divinity programme. Candidates register for their BD programme after their first theological/secular degrees. It is a four year residential programme. M.Th is a teaching degree. The BD syllabi has 5 broader clusters namely,

**Biblical Cluster** (Old Testament and New Testament);

**Theological Cluster** (Christian Theology, Christian Ethics, Social Analysis, Women's Studies)

**History & Missions Cluster** (History of Christianity, Missiology)

**Religions Cluster** (Hinduism, Islam, Primal Religious Traditions and other religious Traditions)

Christian Ministry Cluster (Christian Education, Worship and Preaching, Homiletics, Communications)

All the branches of the clusters are offered as specialized branch of studies at the Master and Doctoral level.

2. Senate Centre for Extension and Pastoral Theological Research (SCEPTRE):

   SCEPTRE carries out the extension programmes such as the Diploma in Christian Studies (Dip C.S), Bachelor of Christian Studies (BCS) and Master of Christian Studies (MCS). SCEPTRE plans to introduce two new courses namely Diploma in Contextual Theologies and Diploma in Christian Education. The Dip CS and BCS are open to other faiths' believers. There are scores of College and approved examinations centers that offer the external programme.

3. Research/ South Asia Theological Research Institute (SATHRI):

   It is the research wing of the Senate and offers Doctor of Theology (D.Th) and Doctor of Ministry (D.Min). There are currently 9 centers where doctoral programmes are being offered.

4. Board of Theological Education of the Senate of Serampore College (BTESSC):

   BTESSC is the advisory body that advises on theological education. It works as a liaison between theological education

and church. It holds seminars and consultations and helps in designing and evaluating theological education programmes. The Senate of Serampore College is working closely with the churches. We are guided by our constituents churches while designing the programme.

Finally, the Senate of Serampore College as the leader serves not only India but also has colleges located in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal and we receive candidates from Myanmar and Bhutan for studies in India. In the recent years we have collaborated closely with theological stakeholders such as ATESEA, ATA. The Senate of late has recognized various degrees and diplomas and with minimum qualifying requirements candidates from other streams are invited to do higher theological education. Saturation of theological education is a challenge and the growth of theological institutions though is an important milestone, at times they can be counterproductive, especially in a religiously plural world. There is a need of control and regulations of theological institutions. Americanization of theological education meaning, offering all kinds of theological degrees under a no hold, no bar for any academic prerequisite only creates confusions. Today in India, we have all kinds of theological degrees that are being offered.

On the issue of saturation of theological education, I would like to outline few practical suggestions. All these are from the Indian context, however they may be relevant to other national contexts:

1. Colleges located in North India where Christian presence is only 0.05% in 80% of population in India, there is a need to regulate the colleges in order not to vitiate the interfaith harmony.
2. The Colleges in North India are mostly vernacular colleges and they need to be encouraged with resources, teaching faculty and study materials in vernacular languages.
3. Saturation of theological colleges in South and North East India

should be regulated in order to maintain academic integrity and accountability. Foreign mission often in their zeal to start a seminary are not sensitive to the local context nor understand the need of the churches located in the region.

4. The mission agencies and para-churches are facing their own challenges, in terms of their goal settings, human and financial resource, institutional leadership.
5. Churches are still reluctant to employ women candidates.
6. There is a need of having a statutory body in each nation that would regulate the accrediting agencies and individual theological schools' to prevent the saturation of theological institution that are competitive, unhealthy and divisive.
    a. It should frame policies to regulate the establishment of theological institutions.
    b. The Statutory body must also insist all individual colleges to get accredited to one of the accredited/affiliated institutions for the sake of maintaining discipline in imparting theological education.
    c. Nomenclatures, Diplomas and Degrees must have uniformity and must have minimum years of course/ academic work.
    d. Independent institutions do more harm than help in the cause of theological education for the simple reason, there is no accountability to the local Christian communities and churches. The places like Chennai, Bangalore, Kerala, Nagaland, Meghalaya and Mizoram where Christians' presence is substantial can have many seminaries but they do not help raise ministers according to the need of the churches.
    e. In Asian context where Christianity is minority, theological

education must be regulated and ecumenical fellowship between seminaries in a region be strengthened.

f. Faculty must be trained with sound theological foundations and relevant field exposure.

g. Candidates should be exposed to the Asian realities by giving emphasis on contextual theologies, encouraging to promote ecumenical fellowship and appreciating religious pluralism.

h. There should not be any competitive nature of promoting theological education, rather there should be role of the institutions to be very prophetic.

# APPENDICES

## Listener's Group Report

Altogether 27 participants from ATESEA, ATA, ATEM, PERSETIA, SSC, SPATS, and CCC-TSPM attended this hisstoric conference. A participant from the University of Victoria, South Africa and 4 theological educators from FTESEA including H.S.Wilson, Executive Director of FTESEA, PTCA Program Committee members, and United Board of Higher Education in Asia attended the conference. The program covered five components: first, the "Assessment of theological education" presented by five countries; second, "Theological education challenges and prospects" from five countries; third, Asia-Pacific theological support mechanism among theological associations by four stakeholders - ATESEA, SPATS, SSC, ATA; fourth, challenges and prospects of theological education in the context of secular education in Christian colleges/universities and finally, sharing from ecumenical partners - FTESEA, UB and GM (Asia-PacificForum-North America) for possible partnership and strengthening theological education in Asia & Pacific.

**Some contextual issues and challenges from the presentations and discussions**

a. Diversity of Asian context in terms of cultures, race, languages and religions calls for new form of theologial education. Amidst diversities, we recognized some common problems and needs in theological education – financial constraints, lack of contextual concerns, inadequacy of western model of theological education

in Asia, etc.

b. Theological education is for formation of the whole people of God; it should not be narrowly confined to training of clergies. In the context of poverty and different forms of violence, we need multi-forms of theological education that cater to the needs of both urban and rural contexts.

c. Religious pluralism and interfaith issue, massive poverty and marginalization, globalization and migration, human trafficking, gender issue, LGBTIQ, climate justice, urban-rural divides, and one-sided mission enterprises are some major concerns in theological education. This further demands new curriculum and pedagogy.

d. Proliferation of theological education has some positive values, but proliferation of theological institutions without willing to cooperate each other is a threat for the churches in Asia. It is happening all over Asia though the factors/reasons of proliferation may be different from country to country and context to context. Proliferation of institution brings competition and fragmentations among the denominations and institutions in terms of resources and quality theological education.Unhealthy competitions between the evangelical and ecumenical institutions are also severe in some context.

e. Christians are a minority community in the midst of majority religions and so theological education needs to take religious pluralism seriously in Asia. It was noted that some institutions operate demonizing the other religious tradition.

f. Many theological institutions in Asia are initiated by western mission boards/individual missionaries in the past and later by local churches or individual groups. Majority of the theological schools are denominational, ethnic-linguistic based theological institutions and to some extend denominationally based curriculum is followed. Theological accreditating bodies need to

work out a policy that protect diversity of different traditions.

g. Contextualization of theological education is an urgent need in Asia because traditional western fourfold patterns of theological education is still dominant and it is not liberative and transformative in Asian context. Asian contextual concerns are different and it is difficult to insert/integrate new emerging courses. Asian theological educators must seriously engage in developing curriculum locating in Asian context, especially people in the context. We cannot talk about transformative theological education without addressing the problem and issues faced by the people in the margins. This calls for restructuring or developing alternative theological curriculum viable to Asian realities as life-affirming, and transformative.

h. Women's issue in theological education is a serious concern in Asia due to patriarchal and male dominated church and societal structures. Attempts have been made by many theological institutions to promote women in theological education, but more efforts need to be made. Women's leadership development is still to be considered as priority.

i. Accreditation and quality control of theological education is another serious concern confronting all the stakeholders of theological education in Asia. Not only that, there is a serious need for collaboration and networking among the stakeholders of theological education in Asia – church, accrediting bodies, faculty, wider community for theological enterprises, quality control, partnerships and sharing of resources.

j. Financial constraint is a serious concern that many institutions are facing. How to develop self reliance and sustainability of theological education?

k. There is a gap between church and theological institutions, how to make church as stakeholders of Theological Education.

l. In some regions in Asia, theological education is under the

control of State university. Government funded theological schools/colleges like Indonesia, Korea, Taiwan where govt. plays a critical role in accreditation process. While in some regions govt. has no interference in running theological education especially in individually and churches sponsored institutions.

**Constraints**

1. Theological Education is operated within the denominational paradigm and so it becomes difficult to come together for wider participation. Denominational differences in the west should not create problem in Asia. All efforts must be made to do away with denominational colour. Chinese model of Post-denominational theological school is an alternative in Asian context.
2. Ecumenical and evangelical prejudices and tensions hinder mutual learning and collaboration in theological education in Asia. More dialogue needs to be initiated among theological educators.
3. Western model of theological education limits to include contextual issues in TE curriculum.
4. Theological education is not broadly defined, still understood as training for church clergies that cannot contribute much to social transformation in Asian realities.
5. There is a gap and lack of partnership and collaboration among the accrediting bodies.
6. Criteria for accreditations are guided by western paradigms which need to be changed according to Asian context.
7. Lack of integrated, interdisciplinary and community transformative approach to education. In many Asian context, the so-called "Pure Theology" is not relevant. An alternative needs to be worked out.
8. Theological education in multi-religious and multi-cultural context is not much emphasised. Classical and dominant

tradition is uncritically emphasized and imposed undermining diversity.

**Future Partnership**

1. Proliferation of institution is a serious concern which divides resources, creates competitions among the colleges, threatens sustainability and development. There is a need of evolving a structure where institutions collaborate for sustainability and quality theological education in Asia.
2. To promote mutual learning and collaboration, there is a serious need of a Forum of Asia-Pacific Theological Networks. The Forum should aim towards promoting partnerships, resources sharing and contextualization of theological education.
3. Considering Asian economic, cultural and multi-religious context, there is a need to launch/organize pilot curriculum program to develop innovative curriculum. We need a paradigm shift from philosophical-cognitive development to community transformative approach in theological education.
4. Promote more exchange programs for doctoral students and faculties in Asia.
5. Support faculty development especially those who are interested in community development studies. Give priority to those scholars who are interested to do research in Asian issues in Asia.
6. Theological Resources and digital library resources sharing to be given priority. Library support and service providers can be shared among the institutions for sharing library resources. ATLA or other digital library resources may be made use of.
7. Teacher's institute on transformative theological education be given priority.
8. Encourage to publish the proceeding of the conference for wider reflection and debate.

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