

# **THEOLOGICAL CONSULTATIONS YAOUNDE (14 – 17 February 2010), and KINSHASA (14 – 17 March 2010)**

## **REPORT COMBINING THE KEY ISSUES RAISED IN YAOUNDE AND IN KINSHASA**

A theological consultation bringing together the heads of institutions of theological education in francophone Africa was held from 14<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> February 2010 in Yaoundé, facilitated by AACC and CEVAA (Community of Churches in Mission). The absence of representatives from the DRC theological institutions presented a challenge to the organisers. For this reason, Professor Simon DOSSOU, Director of the Department of Theology at AACC, was sent to Kinshasa for a meeting originally intended to give feedback from the Yaoundé consultation, but the Kinshasa meeting became a session of in-depth reflection from 15<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> March 2010. Following a detailed study of the report from the Yaoundé meeting, the Kinshasa participants together with the AACC delegates, agreed to produce a further document taking into account the particular realities faced by the DRC institutions. From the detailed reports of the two consultations (attached) the present combined report has been drawn up.

The heads of the following institutions took part in these meetings:

### **In Yaoundé :**

- Université Protestante d'Afrique Centrale (UPAC), Yaoundé
- Université Lumière de Bujumbura, Burundi
- Faculté de Théologie Protestante de Brazzaville Congo
- Institut de Théologie de l'Eglise Anglicane de la Province de l'Océan Indien
- Institut Supérieur de Théologie d'Abidjan Cote d'Ivoire
- Institut Protestant des Arts et Sciences Sociales de Butare, Rwanda (Faculté de Théologie Protestante)
- Institut Supérieur de Théologie de Ndoungué, Cameroun
- Institut Supérieur de Théologie Dager de Bibia, Lolodorf Cameroun
- Institut Supérieur Presbytérien Camille Chazaud Sangmelima, Cameroun
- Institut Luthérien de Théologie de Meiganga, Cameroun
- Institut Baptiste de Formation Théologique de Ndiki, Cameroun
- Ecole de Théologie de Kaélé, Cameroun
- Editions Clé Cameroun
- Cevaa, Communauté d'Eglises en mission (Community of Churches in Mission), Montpellier, France
- All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), Nairobi, Kenya.

### **In Kinshasa**

- Université Protestante au Congo (UPC) ;
- Faculté de Théologie Evangélique de BOMA (FACTEB) ;
- Université Presbytérienne Sheppard et Lapsley du Congo (UPRECO/Kananga-Ndesha) ;

- Université Protestante de l'Ubangui (U.P.U.) à Gemena ;
- Université Libre des Pays des Grands Lacs (ULPGL/Goma) ;
- Université Simon Kimbangu ;
- Université Shalom de Bunia ;
- Université Chrétienne de Kinshasa (UCKIN) ;
- Université Protestante de l'Equateur ;
- Université Evangélique en Afrique (UEA) ;
- Université Méthodiste au Katanga;
- Faculté de Théologie Protestante de Brazzaville
- Institut Supérieur Théologique et de Développement de Yakusu ;
- Institut Supérieur Théologique d'Idiofa ;
- Institut Supérieur Théologique Booth (I.S.T.B.) à Kinshasa Salongo
- Institut Supérieur Théologique Anglican (I.S.Th.A) à Bunia ;
- AACC (All Africa Conference of Churches), Nairobi, Kenya
- The two 'focal points' of the Great Lake Ecumenical Forum (GLEF) of the DRC
- A member of AACC Executive Committee

### **Meditations, Bible study and interaction**

The first day's meditation in Kinshasa dealt with the need for Churches and Christians about the last judgement. It will indeed come one day, and that we will be judged on the basis of our social commitment towards the poor and the oppressed. The Bible study, based on the encounter between Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:30), developed into a discussion about the revitalisation of our institutions using the model demonstrated by the two actors in the story – a model to imitate. The exchanges which followed the Bible study served to enrich, edify and facilitate the understanding of the passage.

### **Admission criteria for Astheol**

In the context of revitalising and improving the quality of theological training in francophone Africa, the participants at the Kinshasa consultation evaluated the importance of an admission criterion. To this effect the following requirement was agreed for each institution seeking to become member of the Astheol:

- Having legal recognition from the appropriate ministry (the State);
- Registration only available to students holding the State diploma or equivalent
- Possession of a library with a minimum of at least 5,000 volumes;
- Having at least two permanent accredited professors in the academic staff
- Producing a scientific journal on a regular basis
- Having the capacity to contribute financially to enable the Association to function.

With these criteria in mind, the meeting recognised the urgent need for the theological training institutions to network and to create a theological association for the whole francophone Africa. They also considered the priority areas of cooperation between the said institutions on a south-south basis, and a north-south basis.

## **The future of Astheol in francophone Africa**

The question of Astheol's future in francophone Africa remained a fundamental concern for the participants at the Kinshasa consultation, just as it had been for those at Yaoundé. So Yaoundé's thinking around the subject was of interest to Kinshasa.

## **The problem of the integration of the continent and its position in international relations**

On the question of the integration of Africa and its position in international relations, the Yaoundé group recommended that the institutions of theological education should continue to be a melting pot where the unity of the churches and the unity of the nations can develop. The Kinshasa group, however, felt that they should also promote a spirit of self-reliance (financial autonomy) as a means of reducing poverty and dependency.

## **The emergence of new universities developing from theology faculties**

The emergence of new Christian universities in francophone Africa constituted a challenge in the Yaoundé consultation, whereas in the context of the DRC the question did not arise in the same way. The participants at the Kinshasa consultation said that in their country Christian universities preceded the public universities. Even those created in the context of the 1990 liberalisation are not in such financial difficulties. Indeed, these universities offer a quality theological education even in the case of State-controlled institutions.

## **Recommendations**

- a. At Yaoundé it was recommended that a continent-wide meeting be organised to reflect on the place of theological education within the new Christian universities, with particular attention to the identity of African theology. However, at Kinshasa it was felt that the emphasis should be given to the issue methods in the context of interdisciplinarity.
- b. **Develop cooperation between the theological education institutions and Christian universities**

An agreement for cooperation should be concluded between the church related institutions which award university degrees at least on bachelor degree level and beyond. In the first instance, these would need to be identified. Then it would be a matter of arranging meetings between the members of the academic staff: deans, academic secretaries and lecturers, first to enable to know one another and then to exchange information and interact about their own qualifications and specialities and to immerse themselves in the LMD system. (Licentiate "Degree", Masters, Doctorate)

## Harmonisation of programmes

The harmonisation of programmes is a necessity, in view of the LMD system. Both, Yaounde and Kinshasa consultations recommend:

- that a seminar about the LMD system be organised targeting all the francophone theological education institutions, so that it may be introduced in a coordinated manner.
- Encouraging lecturers to publish their syllabuses and works of reference in line with their specialisations –Yaoundé particularly emphasised this.
- That the institutions should organise meetings to elaborate teaching plans and other research tools.

## Creation of a Scientific Council of Accreditation and Standardisation (SCAS)

The idea of a Scientific Council of Accreditation and Standardisation was accepted by all participants. The Kinshasa participants voiced their concern for the DRC to play an active part in such a council. It was proposed that the SCAS drafting guidelines will include Professors : Anyabod, Ngoy Boliya, Joseph Sita, Nathanael Ohouo, Marcellin Dossou, Kuye-Ndondo and Philippe Nkanku Tunbezele.

## Relaunching Astheol

In Yaoundé, the goals of the Astheol were recalled. Astheol should act as a melting pot where all the francophone theological institutions could meet in order :

- To get to know each other
- To work in synergy in order to be effective rather than all working in different directions
- To have a programme which is accessible to all through the publication of course notes
- To identify the specialisations of the professors to enable the exchange of professorships and thus a standardisation of course levels.

However, the lethargy that has overtaken Astheol fallen for some years now, particularly in West Africa, has hindered its activities.

To give a new boost to Astheol, the two consultations **recommend** the following:

- that the institutions make financial contributions for the effective functioning of Astheol. Astheol's Relaunch Committee will be able to set up a system for the effective management and use of these contributions.
- that the frequency of the meetings be agreed upon.

A working group for the relaunching of Astheol, from the Yaoundé side, was set up for one year consisting of : Rev Dr Emmanuel Anyambod Anya and Rev Dr Pierre Nsecke. Its mandate shall be:

- To revise the statutes;
- to prepare the project of cooperation between the institutions;

- to prepare the next meeting of theological institutions (The ecumenical partners were requested to facilitate this meeting as they have done in the past).

Addressing the relaunching of Astheol, the participants at the Kinshasa consultation explained that for the DRC the word 'relaunch' was inappropriate; for them the tradition of meetings continues to be observed in that country, even though the pattern of meetings may have become irregular.

### **Setting up research tools**

Both Yaoundé and Kinshasa consultations expressed the desire that an "Astheol plan" be drawn up for the production of theological literature and for the circulation and sharing of contextual theological knowledge. The bigger picture will be to enrich universal Christian theology through life experience and through the witness experience of the churches of the 'South'. The production of such a contextual theological literature must cover all disciplines of theological teaching. It is recommended that the institutions undertake to include Astheol's theological publications if any, in their lists of reference in libraries. In addition, each institution should order these in quantities proportionate to the size of their student population.

### **Recommendation:**

- a. The institutions will have to identify the specialisations of their lecturers
- b. To identify the editors of the books and journals they produce; this to link the Editions CLE to any other publishers for a better coordinated work of editing, publishing and distribution.
- c. The consultations invited the Department of Theology of AACC to coordinate the programme of production of theological literature liaising with Editions CLE and other publishing houses.
- d. The revival of the 'Flambeau' Journal. From now on this journal will appear twice a year. An editorial committee has been set up comprising: Dr Priscille Djomhoue, Dr Daniel ZOO ZOO, Dr Timothée Gandonou, Dr Mushila, Dr Anastasie Maponda, Dr Levi Gangura, and, in an advisory capacity, Dr Simon Dossou, Dr Tharcisse Gatwa and Dr Samuel Désiré Johnson.

### **The development of libraries**

An experimental project to create a network of the libraries of theological institutions (Réseau d'Information, de Documentation et de Communication RIDOC) is presently in abeyance.

### **Recommendation:**

- a. Both the Yaoundé and the Kinshasa consultations request that CEVAA takes the lead in sponsoring RIDOC, seeking the involvement of other ecumenical partners and all the francophone institutions.
- b. That the churches and ecumenical partners including CEVAA be aware of the valuable resource that Editions CLE and other publishers represent in the process of producing theological literature, a grassroots theology, interfaith and theological dialogue, even in other academic disciplines.

## **The financial viability of the institutions**

In most cases the institutions are ill equipped in buildings and infrastructures; in other cases, the little they have need reparations. In general, the tuition fees do not cover the costs of the institution at the time the contributions from the ecumenical partners decrease.

**Recommendation:** theological institutions should develop programmes for their financial autonomy.

## **Cooperation between theological education institutions**

South-South inter-university cooperation is a vital domain in the life of a university theological institution. The question how theological education institutions can get to know each other, so as to share their visions and experiences is crucial.

### **Recommendation:**

- a. that more meetings be organised to facilitate encounter between theological education institutions
- b. that all theological education institutions – whatever their category - undergo a census. AACC and CEVAA have been asked to assist with this.
- c. to encourage the institutions to create their own websites, and, in particular to encourage them to visit these sites
- d. a fair distribution of different fields of research (at PhD level) between different institutions, as had been recommended by Astheol as from the beginning.
- e. To record the number of lecturers according to their speciality, and to revive the cooperation between lecturers teaching the same subjects; to establish modules and syllabuses – according to Yaoundé.
- f. To encourage cooperation in the publication of multi-author research– according to Kinshasa.

## **South-North Cooperation**

Both consultations took note of the document on the synthesis of the discussions between the lecturers of the theology faculties of Montpellier, Paris and Strasbourg, concerning theological cooperation with the faculties of the South. The Yaoundé consultation analysed it in depth.

The participants took on board the remarks and suggestions from that document.

### **Recommendation:**

That space should be created not only to hear a unilateral speech originating from those contexts who so often are unaware of the reality of the church of the 'South', but also to embark in a process of self-appraisal that allows to bring together both suggestions and mutual questioning as to the relevance of the theologies we

produce, the models and methodologies we pioneer both in the South and in the North.

### **Centres of excellence and of research**

The reasoning behind the choice of UPAC as a centre of excellence and research was not convincing according to the participants at the Kinshasa consultation. Indeed, UPAC does not pre-date UPC, and does not possess more advanced infrastructures than UPC. If one was to take into account seniority and the quality of the infrastructures, then it is UPC that would qualify to house such a centre, say the Kinshasa participants. This question however would need to be raised in further encounters.

### **Dynamics to adopt for doing “theology differently”**

The following areas were listed with a view to encouraging ongoing debate:

- a. Overcoming linguistic barriers, which presently hinder our communication and our life together.
- b. Getting beyond the masculinisation and polarisation of the institutions.
- c. The integration of women and youth
- d. Networking on the continent including the lay training centres.
- e. Christian education: children, particularly in the Sunday Schools.
- f. Special attention to be given to church choirs.

These points were accepted unanimously; Kinshasa consultation insisted that people should remain closely attached to the context.

### **Questions outstanding**

Two outstanding questions remain and it is wished that they be dealt with during the next ASTHEOL meeting:

- a. Who are members of ASTHEOL? Is it the Protestant Universities or the Faculties of Theology?
- b. Which of the following names should be appropriate: **ASTHEOL Est**, or **ASTHEOL Afrique Centrale** (Gabon, Centrafrique, Burundi, Rwanda, Congo Brazzaville and the D R Congo).

### **The Kimbanguist Church**

The Kinshasa consultation was attentive to and concerned by the present theological confusion within the Kimbanguist Church. Since the faculty of theology of the Kimbanguist University is a member of ASHEOL the concerned is justified. This Church continues to struggle with the issue of whether it remains within the ecumenical family. The University has a similar problem.

## **Date and venue of the next ASTHEOL meeting**

It is strongly recommended that the ecumenical partners – AACC and others – consult each other to facilitate the next meeting of the ASTHEOL (Yaoundé and Kinshasa groups at once), in Nairobi for March 2011.

The Yaoundé Consultation acknowledges the spirit of cooperation shown by CEVAA and CETA in launching the very first consultation to revitalise the theological training institutions.

The Kinshasa Consultation for their part also acknowledged the initiative taken by AACC to share with them the results of the Yaoundé Consultation, thus enabling them to be actively involved in these important reflections on the future of the theological training institutions in Africa.

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Compilation of the different reports from the two consultations made in Nairobi, 17<sup>th</sup> March 2010.

AACC Director of Theology, Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations

Annexes: Complete list of participants  
Rev Dr Karamaga's Presentation