

**GLOBALISATION OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION AND THE FUTURE OF
THE CHURCH IN AFRICA: SOME CRITICAL REFLECTIONS TOWARDS
EDINBURGH 2010 AND ITS AFTERMATH**

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the nature of theological education in Africa, which, for the most part, has been along denominational lines designed to create little empires for the churches at the expense of others. The argument of this paper is that in the twenty first century the church in Africa must seek new models of theological education. The fact that we live in a global village in practically all aspects of life, it has become imperative that theological education should be pushed beyond denominational lines and beyond confessional ideologies to the point where it addresses the problems and needs of humanity as a whole.

Key words: Globalisation, cultural globalisation, multiculturalism, Edinburgh 1910, Edinburgh 2010, ecumenical theological education, indigenisation, missiology, the Great Commission.

1. Introduction

Theological education is very important in the life of the Church in Africa. It is true that the Church can do without formal academic theological education, as is the case in African Independent Churches, but it could do so at its own peril. The fact that the three fold nature of the ministry of Christ involved teaching, demonstrates clearly that theological education is an integral part of the ministry of the Church. This paper argues that in the twenty first century the Church must seek new ways of doing theology, as a result of the changes that have been brought about by globalisation. The paper first addresses the issues of globalisation and then elucidates on the need to develop modes of theological education that can meet today's challenges in the ministry of the Church in Africa. This paper is based on the theoretical assumption advanced by Art Deyo that if any ministry is to stay alive in a changing world, it needs to develop an understanding of the forces reshaping the globe as well as the implications of those forces for that ministry. This is because like the ocean tides, change drivers cannot be controlled nor can they be ignored, but they can be used (Deyo 2001:375).

2. Globalisation and the Church in Africa: Prospects and challenges

In the contemporary world the word globalisation has become almost a household term. This is because its impact both positive and negative is felt in many parts of the world both in developed and developing countries, in urban and rural areas. Globalisation has permeated every aspect of human life material as well as spiritual across the continents of the world. It appears that there is no single sphere of human life which is immune to the effects of globalisation politically, economically, socially, culturally and spiritually. In this section of the paper I shall attempt to define the term globalisation and analyse its impact on world mission especially in Africa where the church is growing in leaps and bounds

By most accounts, globalisation has been defined as “the process of transformation of local or regional phenomena into one. It can be described as a process by which the people of the world are unified into a single society and functions together” (<http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Globalisation> (5/16/09)). Scholars have noted that this process is a combination of economic, technological, socio-cultural and political forces.

Paul Hopper has identified three ways in which people understand the word globalisation. For our purposes we are interested in two of these namely globalisation in terms of economic expansion and globalisation as a form of cultural integration. According to Hopper, from an economic perspective, globalisation is viewed as the integration of global economy with its emphasis upon open markets and the breaking down of national borders. In this perspective, production is viewed as a global process evident in the growing volume of international trade, the greater mobility of capital, information and people, increased levels of foreign direct investment and the heightened importance of multinational corporations and transnational corporations (Hooper 2007:6). From a cultural perspective, globalisation is viewed as an integration of cultures of the world. This process is marked not only by the greater intensity and extensity of cultural flows in the form of the movements of peoples, ideas, symbols and images, but also by the greater velocity with which they travel from one place to another which in turn serves to deepen forms of global connectedness (Hooper 2007:6).

Hopper has observed that this pattern is a result of a number of developments chiefs among which are the significant and ongoing improvements in transport and transport infrastructures. According to Hopper, jet airlines, the construction of roads and rail networks across the globe, containerised shipping, the dramatic rise in ownership of cars and other vehicles have all facilitated forms of global interconnectedness. It has been noted, for example, that improvements in aviation have contributed to the development of tourism and shifting patterns of migration while major advances in communication and information technologies mainly in the areas of telephone, computing and digitization, ensure that international communication is both cheaper and instantaneous. Again, Hopper notes, through a combination of other factors such as satellites, fibre-optic cabling, the greater access worldwide of television, radio, and the spread of the internet means that local and regional cultures have now a global reach. This outreach of local and regional cultures has also been possible because of the emergence of powerful international media corporations. Underlining all these developments has been the continuing expansion of international capitalism evident in the spread of the global market and the incorporation of new countries into it and the heightened role and influence of business in the contemporary period (Hooper 2007:29).

In this paper, our focus is not so much on economic globalisation but on globalisation as a meeting point of human cultures. It has been noted that one of the impacts of globalisation has been the growth of cross-cultural contacts, which has heralded the advent of new categories of consciousness and identities, which embody cultural diffusion and the desire to participate in a “world culture”. In the last quarter of the 20th century we have seen the spread of “multiculturalism” and easy access to “cultural” diversity (<http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Globalisation> (5/16/09)).

It is acknowledged in this paper that multiculturalism, as one of the outcomes of globalisation, is here to stay. There is no chance of going back to cultural isolationism. The current seems to be heading full speed towards total globalisation. It has been noted, for example, that more than 500,000 people are on the planes every day and that thousands and thousands of people are on the move from one area of the globe to another at one given time (<http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Globalisation> (5/16/09)).

There is a general agreement among scholars that globalisation both economic and cultural has brought tremendous changes into the world unparalleled before. Some of the changes are beneficial to the total development of humankind while others are detrimental to the very existence of human beings. We live today in a scientific world which has produced a number of wonderful things. But at the same time, as Paul Blackman has pointed out, “science can produce medicine and flush toilets; it can also produce weapons of mass destruction, global pollution, dehumanized lifestyles, unjust economic systems, dysfunctional families and disintegrated societies” (Blackman 2001:373).

In the same vein, Art Deyo has argued that “today, virtually every area of our lives is being twisted and turned by forces beyond our control. Demographic, technological, economic and political changes are unravelling the very fabric of the family and society” (Deyo 2001:373). Deyo has observed that there are a number of forces or change drivers that are causing unprecedented changes today both good and bad. These include demographics in the sense that there has been a phenomenal increase in world population beyond the six billion population mark. Again, technological changes are reshaping the world. For instance, the world is being wired up with the number of internet users doubling every six months. Young people today feel at home using computers, video games and T.V distance learning is becoming increasingly popular. But also along with these benefits, modern technology has been a disaster in the sense that the TV and the internet have brought into the home unsolicited sex movies, pornography, violence and deviant behaviour that have affected lives of millions of children. In addition to this, the economic changes, apart from creating goods and services the amount of which is unheard of before in human history, they have created a huge gap between the rich and the poor. Finally, today than ever before, political changes have brought a great deal of instability in a number of countries some of which have degenerated into open armed conflict. As a result, millions of people have been internally and internationally displaced and experiencing in untold suffering.”(Deyo 2001:376)

Petros Vassiliadis, in agreement with Deyo, has observed that Globalisation has brought along its own vicious structures and dynamics, which have resulted in poverty, marginalisation and oppression. (Vassiliadis 2008:2) This is in line with Barack Obama’s hypothesis that “the face of globalisation is contradictory. The Internet and television can bring knowledge and information, but also offensive sexuality and mindless violence. Trade can bring new wealth and opportunities, but also huge disruptions and changing communities. In all nations...this change can bring fear. Fear that because of modernity we will lose control over economic choices, our politics, and most importantly our identities—those things we most cherish about our communities, our families, our traditions, and our faiths” (Obama 2009;14).

Mark Russell has noted that Christians have reacted differently towards globalisation. On the one hand, there are those who praise globalisation as a move of God to enable the completion of the Great Commission within the next generation or even the next few years. On the other hand, there are many others who denounce the forces of globalisation, especially the economic aspects, for enabling the exploitation of the poor by the rich (http://www.lausanneworldpulse.com/the_medarticles.php/526/11-2 (18/8/9)). This last point has prompted Molefe Tsele to argue that globalisation is a serious challenge to faith and especially to the Church in Africa. This is because the economic disparities created by globalisation are not conducive to the confession of a common world when the rewards of globalisation continue to produce unjustifiable levels of concentration of economic power in the northern hemisphere and creates disparities between the north and the south (Tsele 1998: 17).

I concur with Tsele that the Church in Africa is indeed faced with a number of challenges as a result of globalisation. It has created, among other things, increasing levels of poverty, environmental degradation, violence, loss of identity, tribalism, classism, civil wars, the spread of HIV and AIDS pandemic and the breakdown of African traditional values such as the extended family and the primacy of community ties.

Having said this, however, it should be admitted that globalisation has been of great benefit to the Church in Africa. It is important to note that though the expansion and growth of Christianity in Africa is attributed to the evangelizing efforts of foreign missionaries, who brought Christianity to Africa in the 19th and 20th centuries, in recent years, the explosive nature of Christianity in Africa is credited to the Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches and their innovative ways of preaching the Gospel. Their success is attributed to the use of satellite television channels in evangelism using both English and native languages (<http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Globalisation> (5/16/09). In so doing, they are reaching thousands of Africans, who are yearning for spiritual and physical healing as well as material prosperity which the Mainline Churches are failing to deliver.

Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches see globalisation as an ally in the spread of the gospel. It is argued, convincingly, that the church in Africa is growing in leaps and bounds as a result of modern satellite and Internet communications, which have resulted in the emergence of mega churches. It is pointed out that this is not a new thing for in the history of Christianity, global events and the natural flow of transportation and communication have always affected the spread of the Gospel. There seems to be a seed of truth in this argument for as Russell has noted, in the early Church it was the elaborate road networking developed by the Roman Empire that helped speed up the spread of the gospel after the day of Pentecost. Similarly, Christopher Columbus' attempts to discover a trade route to India, was instrumental in the spread of the gospel to the Americas. In the same vein, John Wesley saw trade routes as one way through which the gospel would spread throughout the world (http://www.lausanneworldpulse.com/the_medarticles.php/526/11-2).

It appears to me that the tremendous growth of the Church in Africa today is a result of the impact of globalisation on the continent. According to the Centre for the Study of Global Christianity, the Southern Hemisphere is taking the lead in growth figures for worshipers. Africa is leading in this race with more than 390 million Christians, three times more than 35 years ago. Further statistics show that according to the projection of the current trend, the number of African Christians is likely to grow by another 200 million by 2025 pushing the figures to 633 million. This is in sharp contrast with the number of European Christians, which is expected to shrink by 17 million over the next two decades due to the aging congregations and declining church services (**Jenkins 2002:1**). This is in line with Philip Jenkins' contention that "over the last century.....the Christian world's centre of gravity has been shifting inexorably southwards, to Africa, Asia and Latin America. Today the largest Christian communities on the planet are to be found in Africa and Latin America. A "typical" contemporary Christian may be a woman living in a village in Nigeria or in a Brazilian favela (Jenkins 2002:1).

3. The inadequacy of traditional forms of theological education in the era of globalisation

Theological education in Africa is as old as the Church itself. On the basis of the tenets of the Great Commission, as stipulated in Matthew 28:18-20, Christian churches have, since their inception, introduced formal theological education in theological colleges. Theological institutions have become the backbone of Christian evangelism throughout Africa. The

importance of theological education in Africa is seen in the fact that there are numerous theological institutions across the continent, which have been established to meet the need for well-trained church ministers in different church denominations namely, Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, and others. In order to underline the importance of theological education in Africa, a number of universities have also established departments of theology and religious studies, which cater specifically for theological and religious education.

Although traditional forms of theological education have achieved a great deal in the training of ministerial candidates, they have, in the era of globalisation, proved rather inadequate. It appears that there are five major weaknesses of traditional theological education. In the first instance, theological training for church ministry has been along denominational lines in accordance with the historical traditions of a given church. Competition has been high on the agenda designed to outscore and even eradicate churches that are considered false. In most instances, it has been anti-ecumenical, inward looking, sowing hatred, inciting violence and protectionist.

Coupled with this, in most theological institutions the curriculum for theological education has been Christian bound. It has been dominated by Biblical studies with emphasis on the literature of the Old and New Testament, Biblical theology and Biblical interpretation. Apart from Biblical studies a great deal of emphasis has been placed on church doctrines covering much of the patristic period, scholastic theology, theology of the Reformation, history of Christian missions, sacramental theology, the planting of the churches in Africa, homiletics, Christian ethics, pastoral studies and the liturgy. In some instances western philosophy has been the prerequisite for doing theology proper.

In addition to this, because of its emphasis on the Bible, little attention has been paid to cultural studies, environmental issues, socio-economic development, scientific advances, democratisation, gender equality, multiculturalism, contextualisation, philosophy of the indigenous people such as *ubuntu* or *botho* (personhood), local spiritualities, and issues related to human sexuality something that has proved fatal in the era of the HIV and AIDS pandemic in Africa.

Moreover, its lack of sensitivity to gender equality has led to the production of “Patriarchal Theology” in which men dominate all the structures of authority and power in the churches at the exclusion of women who are relegated to secondary positions in decision making process and places of leadership. This has excluded women from participating fully in the ministry of Christ.

Furthermore, because of its emphasis on European and American cultures, the curriculum of theological education in most African institutions is an exact replica of the curriculum that has been a dominant feature in the mother churches overseas. As a result of the missionaries’ emphasis on European and American oriented theology, theological institutions have ended up producing Eurocentric theology, which is out of touch with the effects of globalisation in Africa. Such kind of training has produced church ministers that fail to appreciate the importance of African culture in the life and mission of the Church in Africa.

4. Global theological education for a global church

It is important to point out that the Church is by its very nature global. The globalisation of the church is not a new phenomenon. It is encapsulated in the Great Commission where Christ commands his disciples to reach the utmost parts of the earth and make disciples of all nations (Mt.28:18-20). It has been observed, for example, that the great creeds of the Christian Church such as the Nice Creed, the Apostle’s Creed, as well as the Athanasius’

Creed confess the “catholicity” of the Church both on the matters of being and geographical location. The *oikoumene* to which the church belongs is the whole earth. In the contemporary world the Church in Africa is in the grips of new forms of globalisation. Its future, therefore, lies on how it sails through the waves of this world phenomenon. At present, there is an urgent need to develop a global theology for the global church. But at the same time there is a need for the church to translate its theological ethos into the context in which the gospel is being proclaimed (Davis 1984:59).

It appears that the idea of globalised theological education is in line with the ecumenical concept of ‘wholeness’ as manifested in its insistence on the unity of the Church, fullness of life for humanity and the integrity of creation. Sam Kobia, the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches has indicated that, the WCC, for example, has consistently advocated values and practices that are holistic (Kobia 2005: 9). Such values and practices can be acquired through holistic education. Advocates of holistic education have argued convincingly that this type of education is life affirming for individuals and communities. This is because it consists of a set of values and methodologies that enable individuals and communities to learn in integrated ways that relate to their context. That context is now global.

It has been observed by a number of scholars that though the context of holistic education is the global village, its values and understanding of humanity should be a Christian basis. At the same time, however, it must be sensitive to cultural differences, gender relations, religious differences, age differences and sex differences (Kobia 2005:9). I find a lot of wisdom in the contention that “individuals cannot be whole persons on their own. It is in our relationships with others that we also find our community. The relationships that make for the health of communities are as complex as the international interactions within an individual” (Kobia 2005:16).

With this in mind, Globalisation of theological education should take into account the fact that we live today in a broken and shattered world, a world in tension between the north and the south, the west and the east, the rich and the poor, the haves and the have-nots all enmeshed into one single society-the global village. It should be noted that it was the need to heal the broken world that led to the formation of the ecumenical movement in 1910. Sam Kobia has reminded us that “the focus of the ecumenical movement is not only on the healing of the divisions between the churches but working for the unity of human communities and the created order; it is about peace and justice as well as about ecclesiology” (Kobia 2005: 17).

In this paper it is argued that the globalisation of theological education should be looked upon as a divine imperative. This is because, from a theological perspective, it relates well with the present times-the *Kairos* on which we stand today- a broken world littered with national, regional and international conflicts. There is ample evidence that much communal and international conflict is caused or inflamed by our inability to deal with cultural and theological differences. It has been generally observed that human beings tend to look at those who are different, who come from different cultures or who believe and worship differently with suspicion and sometime with hostility. Generally speaking, people do not see those who are different from them as enrichment to the world and from whom they can learn. They see them as a threat. In order to remove this threat, there is always a tendency to force them to change. This attitude breeds intolerance. There is, therefore, a need to institute holistic approaches in theological education that will help individuals and communities to broaden their minds and learn to relate differences in positive ways (Kobia 2005:17).

This is because holistic approach in theological education is compatible with globalisation since “holism” asserts that everything exists in relationship, in a context of

connection and meaning” (Schreiner et al 2005:17). Since holistic theological education is not designed to instil fear, suspicion and hatred among people of diverse cultures and theological differences, it addresses more effectively the negative effects of globalisation such as fragmentation, alienation, competition, violence and gross materialism that pervade much of life in our modern times in the 21st century. A holistic perspective, it is maintained, seeks to heal the many divisions that our civilisations have induced between mind and body, intellect and emotion, rationality and intuition, science and art, individual and community, humanity and the natural world (Schreiner et al 2005:18). Hyacinth I. Boothe has observed that “theological education must enunciate a missiology, which facilitates the birth of a new era of justice, peace, equality, liberty, love, unity and reconciliation for all humanity (Boothe 2008:4).

It has been intimated that in order to be effective, global theological education should be open to all believers, men and women alike. The World Conference of the Association of Theological Institutions (WOCATI) at its Fourth Congress in Tessaaloniki noted that theological education belongs to the whole people of God and not only to the elite and professionals, be it priests, pastors, theologians, or school teachers (Vassiliadis 2008:2). As Samuel Amirthan has pointed out, “ministry is the service of the whole church in the whole world. The concern of theological education is to enable all people, men and women, ordained and lay, to perform their varied ministries in their diverse communities (Amirthan 2008:35). At the Manila Consultation of WOCATI in 1979 it was noted that theological education must ultimately be evaluated in terms of its service to all those for whom Christ died. Thus, in a sense, extends the scope of theological education beyond the borders of the church to people of other faiths (Amirthan 2008:35).

In this vein, it appears to me that while the 1910 Edinburgh Conference retrieved the churches from the cold of denominational isolationism and opened up the possibility of interdenominational theological education, the forthcoming 2010 Edinburgh Conference should thrust the churches into a new era of true ecumenical engagement not only among the churches but also other world religions. Edinburgh 2010 should open a new era in ecumenical relations by encouraging the churches to push the frontiers of theological education beyond the boundaries of their denomination in order to embrace all the three levels of meaning of the word ecumenical—namely, inter-confessional, trans-confessional and meta-confessional. In the first instance, global theological education must be trans-confessional in the sense that it must move away from a parochial or local conscience to a world-wide perspective since God’s primary purpose is to unite all people and things in Christ. This involves addressing not only the social, political, ecological, economic, cultural and religious issues that have been brought about by globalisation, but also acquire a better understanding of other faiths (Amirthan 2008:38).

Secondly, global theological education must be inter-confessional in the sense that it must open up to other confessions rather than concentrating on denominational empire building as is still the case today. It must have a positive appreciation of the riches of other church traditions. This will help the churches to commit themselves to promote the visible unity of the church in Christ (Amirthan 2008:38). At the fourth World Congress of WOCATI, the representatives urged the churches world-wide “to continue to support interdenominational colleges instead of each denomination creating its own separate theological colleges thus risking fragmentation in the landscape of theological education”.¹ In the same vein, they made a strong appeal to the Associations of Theological Institutions

¹ (WOCATI Press release, “Theological education: A radical reappraisal, Neapolis, 31st May to 7th June, 2008, p.5)

“to strengthen interdenominational theological colleges with ecumenical commitment and to find ways to allow participation of minority churches in programmes of theological education” and at the same time “to engage in inter-contextual exchange and networking with institutions of theological education from other parts of the world.”² Vassiliadis has observed that, traditionally, various theological institutions, both those of an academic and university level, as well as the various confessional ecclesiastical seminaries, instead of helping all people on earth to live faithfully in today’s world and have life in abundance; have in fact contributed to a consolidation and armouring of acquired confessional traditions, in many occasions defending the institutional and not the charismatic expression of the Church. This has affected the church negatively because it has led, in most cases, to religious fanaticism (Vassiliadis 2008: 3).

If global theological education is to be successful at this time and age then theologians must, of necessity, enter into honest inter-faith dialogue. There is a need to detach themselves from the old pious, conservative, old-fashioned methods of theologizing as has been the case before and is the case in all Christian traditions today. Theology imparted along confessional lines has run its course. It is no longer relevant. It is questioned from various quarters (Vassiliadis 2008:3). Vassiliadis puts it succinctly thus:

“Our future theological education should primarily refer to reconciliation, and to communion as an ultimate constitutive element of being...It should have relevance to the relational dimension of life, and therefore be in a continuous and dynamic dialogue, not only in the form of theological conversation among churches or Christian communities in order to promote the visible unity of the body of Christ but also with people of other faiths” (Vassiliadis 2008:4).

Vassiliadis has intimated that in order to achieve this, “we need to develop an inclusive understanding of Christology, which does not aim at bringing the nations and the people of other faiths to our religious enclosure but to let the Holy Spirit to use both us and those to whom we bear witness to bring about the Kingdom of God” (Vassiliadis 2008:4).

Thirdly, global theological education must be meta-confessional in the sense that it must take into account the concerns of local communities regardless of whether they are Christians or not. It must address their concerns for social justice, equal distribution of wealth, environmental degradation, breakdown of moral values, criminality and other social issues. There must be a dialogue between the church and the local communities as they struggle against the vicissitudes of life (Amirthan 2008:38).

All this, requires radical pedagogical approaches which will involve, among other things, critical relationship with one’s own tradition in the light of the Gospel, the realization that membership of the church of Christ is more inclusive than one’s own, that no one church is complete in itself without belonging together with the universal church and be ready to take into account the fact that theological education is concerned with the unity of all humanity and must help the churches to be in dialogue with local communities regardless of their religious orientation (Amirthan 2008:38).

Amirthan has postulated that global theological education must help people to acquire and grow in the knowledge of and commitment to human rights, disarmament, strategies for

² WOCATI Press release, “Theological education: A radical reappraisal, Neapolis, 31st May to 7th June, 2008, p.5.

building trust between people, issues involving racism, sexism, classism, the quest for peace, the international economic order, gender issues, ecological issues, poverty, unjust distribution of land, inadequate sanitation facilities, lack of employment opportunities, poor and inappropriate education, and HIV and AIDS (Amirthan 2008:38). The curriculum for theological education therefore, must be organized in such a way that it sensitizes the learners to effectively grapple with these issues as they minister to all the people of God.

Global education must have the capacity to raise the individual's awareness of his or her role in the global ecology, which includes the human family and other aspects of life in the cosmos. The goal of such education should be to open the minds of people in order to acquire an understanding of the causes that bring about conflicts, acquire methods of conflict resolution and at the same time explore issues such as human rights, justice, population pressures, causes of wars and conditions for peace. Global education must also encourage understanding and appreciation of the world's religions and spiritual traditions since they have enormous global impact. One must understand the universal values that they proclaim including the search for meaning, love, compassion, wisdom, truth and harmony (Schreiner et al 2005:88).

It should be noted that in order to be effective, global theological education must take into account the importance of using the mass media in order to penetrate the global village, which is the reality of the world order today. People such as William Brown and Benson Fraser (2001), Steve Shalke (2001), Sterling Huston (2001), Marcus Vegh (2001) to name but a few, have argued very persuasively that one of the great opportunities that the Church has today is the media which can help it to fulfil the Great Commission. It has been observed that globalisation has led to the expansion of the use by people of television, internet, email, radio, film, newspapers, and other forms of digital communication. The Church, therefore, must use these means of communication both for theological education and the planting of the Christian Church in the world generally and Africa in particular.

5. Nothing is real until it is local: Quest for indigenous theologies

We have noted above that the world is becoming increasingly small as a result of globalisation. Global events affect the life of people wherever they are. What is important to note is that globalisation also implies localisation. Globalisation of theological education must also take into account the need for local translability. The Global church must be born again into the social, political, and economic conditions of the place in which it is being planted in order to be meaningful in the lives of local people. Gerald C. Davis has pointed out that the marks of a new church in a new situation must relate to the marks of the society where it finds itself. In order to be sensitive to local cultures the church in foreign land must abandon the original culture from whence it was imported and translated (Davis 1984:59). Global theological education should negate the colonisation of minds intended to impose a dominant system but should promote diverse ways of doing theology in line with local cultures. As the Fourth WOCATI Congress put it:

“We propose a theological education that remains open to new experiences of faith, and to a renewed future, not one anchored to predetermined systems or schemes, nor won over by the ideology of a single system and its deep anthropological implications”.³

³ For a quality theological education: Manifesto” paper presented at IV WOCATI Congress 31st May to 7th June 2008, Neapolis, 2008, p.3).

Vassiliadis has indicated that globalisation requires “openness to the witness of Christians in other cultural situations as they seek to communicate the Gospel in the models of their cultures and openness to the culture within which the theologian has to live out his/her discipleship. Only then can it become.... a channel for spiritual renewal; and only then can it continue to open up deeper understanding of biblical Good News of God’s reign so that we may live faithfully in today’s world” (Vassiliadis 2008: 3) This calls for a spirit of dialogue with local cultures in order to produce indigenous theologies that are relevant in the lives of the people in their social locations, as the gospel tries to transcend local, regional continental and international cultures.

It is in this context that WOCATI, at its fourth Congress in Neapolis, urged the Association of Theological Institutions “to continue innovative programmes of contextualisation of theological education while at the same time being aware of the catholicity of the Church, thus contributing to the quest of the visible unity of the Church”.⁴ This is in line with WOCATI’s mission which for the past twenty years of its existence as a global forum has placed emphasis on contextualisation and catholicity in theological education, of unity and contextual diversity, providing an open forum for dialogue on key issues of the future shape of theological education, such as interaction with contemporary society, interdisciplinary research on new issues like bioethics or interfaith issues, participation of women in theological education and the dialogue between different types of theology within the ecumenical fellowship of churches with the World Council of Churches.⁵

6. Conclusion

This paper has examined the nature and effects of globalisation in the Church in Africa. It has been argued that globalisation has had both good and bad effects in the church. The good effects are that today the church in Africa is growing in leaps and bounds as a result of the easy and fast methods of spreading the Gospel such as television, the internet, wireless communications and fast movements of people from one region to another. At the same time, however, globalisation has had negative effects in the Church in Africa and society at large. These include increasing levels of poverty, tensions between people of diverse cultures, breakdown of moral values, wars and obsession for material possessions. Globalisation has made the world increasingly smaller than ever before. It has been argued in this paper that on the basis of the prospects and challenges that globalisation has brought to Africa, there is a need to develop new methods of doing theology based on ecumenical principles that can empower church ministers to minister effectively to their own people with the awareness that they live today in a global village.

⁴ WOCATI Press release, “Theological Education: A Radical Appraisal”, Neapolis, 31st May to 7th June, 2008. p.5.

⁵ WOCATI Press release, “Theological Education: A Radical Appraisal”, Neapolis, 31st May to 7th June, 2008. p.5.

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