DIVERSIFIED THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION
EQUIPPING ALL GOD'S PEOPLE FOR GOD'S MISSION
F. Ross Kinsler

One of the extraordinary challenges of the Twenty-First Century is the rise of religion as a major player in the lives and movements of people everywhere. Each religious community separately and all of them together, insofar as is possible, are facing urgent questions about their understanding of and response to the great threats to life in our time. This paper will focus on two global threats to life, economic injustice and ecological destruction, and a third comprehensive and urgent need, the need for healing, peace and integral wellbeing throughout humankind and the biosphere. This analysis, from a socio-economic and biblical perspective, will provide a framework for our consideration of the growing potential of Theological Education by Extension (TEE) and/or Diversified Theological Education (DTE) for the equipping and mobilization of all God's people for human transformation and ecological restoration, i.e., to respond to the growing threats of economic injustice and ecological destruction and to build global and local communities for life, i.e., peace. This is as much a challenge ***to*** as it is a challenge ***from*** the movement we have called TEE or DTE.

In 2008 we published an anthology of case studies to demonstrate the wide diversity of theological education programs around the world. (Ross Kinsler, *Diversified Theological Education: Equipping all God's People*, Pasadena: WCIU Press) Each author or team was simply asked to analyze their socio-economic and spiritual context, summarize their biblical-theological understanding of God's mission/the churches' mission/the mission of their theological education program, and explain the main components of their educational model. There has been no meeting among the writers of these case studies, because they are widely scattered around the globe, but we hope that they will be the first to take up the challenges that arise out of this anthology. We can all see that the diversification and consolidation of the TEE/DTE movement offer enormous potential. Previous reports and anthologies have demonstrated the widespread growth of this movement, primarily in terms of the numbers and kinds of people who are gaining access to theological education and ministry. We believe it is now time to press upon those of us who are already in the movement, upon all who are in any way related to theological education, and upon the churches in general, the challenge to take up massively the challenge to equip all God's people for God's mission in terms set forth here in this chapter.

Christianity is of course a massive movement. The question we must ask here is whether Christians are using their enormous potential to pursue today's struggles for life--human life and the life of the biosphere. This leads us to ask whether the churches' leaders are being equipped to lead their congregations and all their members and organizations in that struggle. At this point we then turn to decentralized, locally based theological education programs among those whom the churches and their communities have too often marginalized, to discover whether there is new hope for personal, ecclesial, social, and ecological transformation, not from the top down but from the

margins to the center of the church's institutional life, to the church as movement. All forms of theological education hold major responsibility to incorporate and equip God's people for God's mission. The danger is that programs dedicated to "higher" academic "levels" of training and research may disqualify and marginalize local leaders. Our hope is rather that these "professional" pastors and theologians might play strategic roles in resourcing and equipping locally based, extension and diversified theological education networks.

GLOBAL CHALLENGES

From the struggle against Apartheid in South Africa to a worldwide call for justice

Thirty years ago the primary challenge for the churches of South Africa and one of the critical challenges to churches everywhere was Apartheid. The consultation that gave birth to the TEE College in Johannesburg was itself, I believe, "illegal," because it was inter-racial. Racial and socio-economic change has taken place in South Africa since then, with much to be grateful for and no doubt with deep, enduring problems. But today we face what has been called global Apartheid with many local and regional expressions of racial-economic-gender-ecological injustice.

I would like to focus briefly on this global challenge from the perspective of a recent experience within one of our church families, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC). That body, which embraces 218 Reformed, Presbyterian, Congregational, and United denominations with 75 million members in 107 countries, chose for its 2004 General Council meeting in Accra, Ghana the text John 10:10: "...that all may have life in fullness." Something powerful happened at that meeting, which led the participants to call upon their own and other churches and ecumenical bodies to covenant for justice in the economy and the Earth. The Letter from Accra to the churches begins with these paragraphs.

> *Our most moving and memorable moments came from our visit to Elmina and Cape Coast, two "castles" on the Coast of Ghana that held those who had been captured into slavery, as they suffered in dungeons waiting for slave ships that would take them to unknown lands and destinies. Over brutal centuries, 15 million African slaves were transported to the Americas, and millions more were captured and died. On this trade in humans as commodities, wealth in Europe was built. Through their labor, sweat, suffering, intelligence and creativity, the wealth of the Americas was developed.*
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> *At the Elmina Castle, the Dutch merchants, soldiers, and governor lived on the upper level, while the slaves were held in captivity one level below. We entered a room used as a church, with words from Psalm 132 on a sign still hanging above the door ("For the Lord has chosen Zion . . ."). And we imagined Reformed Christians worshipping their God while directly below them, right under their feet, those being sold into slavery languished in the chains and horror of those dungeons. For more than two centuries in that place this went on.*

> *In angry bewilderment we thought, "How could their faith be so divided from life? How could they separate their spiritual experience from the torturous physical suffering directly beneath their feet? How could their faith be so blind?" Some of us are descended from those slave traders and slave owners, and others of us are descendants of those who were enslaved. We shared responses of tears, silence, anger, and lamentation. Those who are Reformed Christians have always declared God's sovereignty over all life and all the Earth. So how could these forbears of Reformed faith deny so blatantly what they believed so clearly? Yet, as we listened to the voices today from our global fellowship, we discovered the mortal danger of repeating the same sin of those whose blindness we decried. For today's world is divided between those who worship in comfortable contentment and those enslaved by the world's economic injustice and ecological destruction who still suffer and die.*

The Letter from Accra goes on to affirm, "the world today lives under the shadow of an oppressive empire," i.e., "the gathered power of pervasive economic and political forces throughout the globe that reinforce the division between the rich and the poor." "This is not just another 'issue' to be 'addressed.' Rather, it goes to the heart of our confession of faith. . . . How can we say that we believe that Jesus Christ is the Lord over all life and not stand against all that denies the promise of fullness of life to the world?" (For other WARC documents, especially "Covenanting for Justice in the Economy and the Earth," see *www.warc.ch*)

Those who participated in the Accra meetings and many others who have joined them to covenant for justice in the global economy and in the Earth believe that this calling is as urgent as was the call of the Confessing Church in Germany in the 1930s and 40s against National Socialism (Nazis) and the call to denounce the ideology of Apartheid in South Africa as heresy and its practice as sin in the 1970s and 80s. I believe that we must invite all theological education programs, beginning with those at the bottom through those at the top, in poor and wealthy countries, to clarify their vision and prioritize their curricula in these same terms. We hear that 30,000 people die every day of hunger, perhaps twice that number die unnecessarily every day if we include curable diseases, contaminated water, and other effects of extreme poverty, especially in Africa. (We have to remind our friends in the U.S. that the daily global toll of death by hunger is ten times the loss of life in the U.S. on that one fateful day, September 11th, 2001.)

From ecological destruction to "the Great Work for this generation"

Ecologist and poet Wendell Berry explains in his book, *The Art of the Commonplace,* that Christianity has been for over 500 years largely complicit with or indifferent to "the rape and plunder of the world." Another ecologist, Thomas Berry, expresses the extraordinary challenge faced by our generation in passionate terms in his book, *The Great Work: Our Way into the Future.*

> *We find ourselves ethically destitute just when, for the first time, we are faced with ultimacy, the irreversible closing down of the Earth's functioning in its major life systems. . . . with biocide, the extinction of the vulnerable life systems of the Earth, and geocide, the devastation of the Earth itself.* (104)
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> *The labor and care expended over some billions of years and untold billions of experiments to bring forth such a gorgeous Earth is all being negated within less than a century for what we consider "progress" toward a better life in a better world.* (164)
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> *The Great Work now . . . is to carry out the transition from a period of human devastation of the Earth to a period when humans would be present to the planet in a mutually beneficial manner.* (3)

To bring this eloquent, lofty challenge down to earth and to people like us, we turn to Kenyan Wangari Maathai, Nobel Peace Prize laureate for 2004. Her trajectory began in 1977 with a tree-planting campaign in response to devastating deforestation and widespread unemployment. Her work later became known around the world as the Green Belt Movement. She won a seat in Kenya's Parliament with an unprecedented 98% of the vote and also became Assistant Minister for the Environment. On receiving the Nobel Peace Prize she commented, "Protecting the global environment is directly related to securing peace." She articulates for all of us the integral relationship between peace, justice, and creation in a brief article for the September 2005 *National Geographic* magazine entitled "My Seven" concerns for Africa: Environment, Empowerment, Education, Good Government, Sustainable Development, Employment, and The Future--"to create a world that honors and rewards women."

Surely theological education, especially Theological Education by Extension and Diversified Theological Education, must carry major responsibility for taking up this challenge among and beyond the churches, which will require a paradigm shift for many, from an almost exclusively individualized concept of salvation to a personal and collective and ecological understanding of the Reign of God--before it is too late. Important resources come to us from the indigenous peoples of Africa, Latin America, and elsewhere, for their cultural and spiritual heritage values the integrity and integration of all life--person, family, community, the land, nature as a whole, and the world of the Spirit. Our churches and theological institutions will want to work, locally and regionally, with projects such as the Green Belt Movement, of which there are many, as we all struggle for justice, peace, and the integrity of creation.

From individualized and privatized healing to integral and systemic wholeness

No one can ignore the historic role of the Christian movement in the development of scientific medical resources with amazing achievements among those who have access to these resources. At the same time all of us must be astounded at the failure to provide basic, appropriate healthcare among the vast majority in Africa and other Three-Fourths World countries and even among significant poor populations in the so-called First

World. Not too long ago it was said that a mere one billion dollars would have been sufficient to permanently eliminate the scourge of malaria, but it did not happen, and now it will take many times as much, if indeed it is now possible. Studies indicate that the great pharmaceutical companies have developed thousands of new medicines in recent years, but those related to tropical diseases, where the needs are most urgent, are just a handful. Retroviral drugs are still inaccessible for most AIDS patients in many countries.

British Prime Minister Gordon Brown notes that thousands of African children die unnecessarily every day, that 25% of those deaths could be prevented by providing a $4 mosquito net for each child, that half of all malaria deaths could be prevented by providing diagnosis and drugs costing $0.12 per person. The disease underlying all the others is, of course, poverty. So Brown calls on the rich countries to complete debt relief for the poorest countries, to increase development aid to achieve the Millennium Development Goals for health and education and gender equality, and to reduce global poverty by half by the year 2015. But he notes that these goals, adopted by the rich countries in 1999, have already fallen behind miserably.

> *On present progress in Sub Saharan Africa, primary education for all will, at best, be delivered not in 2015 but 2130, 115 years too late; poverty will be halved by 2150, 135 years too late; and avoidable infant deaths will be eliminated by 2165, 150 years too late. This is too long to wait for justice, too long to wait when infants are dying in Africa while the rest of the world has the medicines to heal them. ("What is Morally Unjust Cannot be Economically Correct,"* envío*, March 2005, 50)*

> *What began as the greatest bond between rich and poor of our time is at risk of ending as the greatest betrayal of the poor by the rich of all time. As a global community we are at risk of being remembered not for what we promised to do but for what we failed to deliver, yet another set of broken hopes that break the trust of the world's people in the world's governments. (50)*

Top-down solutions, locally and globally, are most likely to fail. Among poor and wealthy countries unjust distribution of economic and healthcare resources prevails. So we must turn, sooner or later, to grassroots, community-based movements, where our churches can offer a mission and a message of integral wholeness, *shalom*, real human development. And we must ask our theological formation programs, especially TEE and DTE, what resources and models and curricula they can offer in response to these vital and urgent challenges of our time.

GOOD NEWS FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

We turn now from critical analysis of today's world to the biblical roots of our faith in order to find Good News for our time and for our people, i.e., for all God's people. We have noted that the two great threats to life in the 21st Century are economic injustice and ecological destruction, both of which are driven by the corporate-led, imperial, global economy, both of which bring immeasurable threats to the life of this and

future generations. When we read the Bible with a concern for economics and ecology, we discover a vital thread for life running through the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures. It has been called Sabbath Economics or Jubilee Spirituality. Following is a brief introduction to this economic-spiritual paradigm, which offers Good News for the 21st Century and which may provide a new vision for theological education in our time.

Jubilee and justice

Let's begin by re-reading some biblical texts that have often been spiritualized so that their economic message is lost.

> First, we observe that Jesus himself, after fasting for 40 days, is tempted (tested) to make stones into bread, and he responds to the devil, "One does not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." (Mt. 4:4) It almost seems that he places "spiritual" matters or "spiritual" bread above "physical" bread and "physical" hunger. Then we find that Jesus is here quoting Dt. 8:3, which refers back to the manna story (Ex. 16), which is the first lesson for the former slaves, just delivered from Pharaoh's Egypt, about how to live in freedom. They must take only what is needed, no more, no less, and this is what the **Sabbath Day**, which is first introduced in this very passage, is meant to teach God's people. This is in direct rejection of "free enterprise," which encourages and enables some to take more than they need and forces many into poverty and even slavery. In Mt. 4:4 Jesus makes this connection in order to show us, not that bread is unimportant, but that we are to ensure that all have enough bread and none of us has more than enough. This is the critical word that comes from the mouth of God.
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> Next, we turn to the story of Jesus' anointing in preparation for his crucifixion and burial. The disciples complain that the ointment should have been sold and the money given to the poor, but Jesus challenges them with these enigmatic words, "You always have the poor with you." (Mt. 26:11) It seems as if Jesus discounts or minimizes their concern for the poor. But then we note that he is here quoting Dt. 15:11, which says that "there will never cease to be some in need on the earth," but it also says in v. 4 that "There will be no one in need among you" if you obey the **Sabbath Year** mandates to cancel debts and free slaves every seventh year. So in Mt. 26:11 Jesus affirms that beyond charity there is a more fundamental responsibility to break the chains of poverty by reversing the economic mechanisms that produce wealth for a few and increase poverty for many, most notably the debt/slavery system.
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> Lk. 4:16-21 is a key passage, located at the outset of Jesus' ministry. Here Jesus identifies himself and his mission with Is. 61:1-2a: Good News to the poor, release to the captives, sight to the blind, and liberation of the oppressed, ending with the proclamation of the year of the Lord's favor. This seems to be a reference to the **Jubilee Year** (Lv. 25), which called for not only the cancellation of debts and liberation of slaves but the return of mortgaged lands, i.e., the

redistribution or restitution of lands and homes to all the families of Israel in the 50th Year, a "super Sabbath Year." It is remarkable that Luke's narration of Jesus' ministry begins not with a reference to the Kingdom of God, as do Matthew and Mark, but with this Nazareth synagogue story and its reference to "the year of the Lord's favor." Luke's Gospel does refer frequently to the Kingdom of God, but at this critical point in his narrative he chooses to identify that Kingdom with the Sabbath-Jubilee call to radical justice.

From this point we cannot but go on to the Book of Acts, which was also authored by Luke, for we find that the key passage in Acts, parallel to the Nazareth sermon in Luke, is the story of the coming of the Holy Spirit, which includes sharing in worship and table fellowship "day by day" and the distribution of the believers' possessions "as any had need" so that "there was not a needy person among them." (Ac. 2:43-47, 4:32-35) Empowered by the Spirit, they practiced the **Sabbath Day** mandate to share equitably, as in the manna story, "day by day," the **Sabbath Year** mandate to overcome the mechanisms of poverty by canceling debts and freeing slaves (no doubt the believers who were debt slaves were being released), and the **Jubilee** mandate to redistribute their possessions so all could have life in fullness. This is an essential clue to the mission of the early church throughout the Book of Acts, for Jesus' followers down through history, and for us today in our unprecedentedly unjust and unequal world.

Does social-economic justice, as set forth in the Sabbath and Jubilee texts, occupy a central place in our curricula, especially among our decentralized students, who can lead their congregations and communities in their struggles for justice, equality, and life in fullness?

Jubilee and creation

If we were to trace the Torah passages (Covenant Code, Deuteronomic Code, Holiness Code) dealing with the Sabbath Day, the Sabbath Year, and the Jubilee Year, we would find that many of these passages include the mandate to give rest to the land and those who work the land, humans and laboring beasts, and even to provide for the landless poor, aliens, and wild animals in the fallow years.

For six years you shall sow your land and gather in its yield; but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, so that the poor of your people may eat. You shall do the same with your vineyard and with your olive orchard. Six days you shall do your work, but on the seventh day you shall rest, so that your ox and your donkey may have relief, and your homeborn slave and the resident alien may be refreshed. Be attentive to all that I have said to you. Do not invoke the names of other gods, do not let them be heard on your lips. Ex. 23:10-13

Remember the Sabbath Day, and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work--you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your

> *livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath Day and consecrated it.* Ex. 20:5-11
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> *On the seventh day God finished the work that God had done, and God rested on the seventh day from all the work that God had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that God had done in creation.* Gn. 2:2-3

God rested the seventh day of creation, blessed it, and hallowed it. And the Sabbath Day became a permanent memorial and covenant for God's people, who are to regard that day and all of creation as a holy responsibility. We are to serve and worship God through the preservation of planet Earth for the life of all its inhabitants. What are the ways in which this challenge is taken up in our churches through the leadership of our theological education programs?

Jubilee and *shalom* (wholeness, wellbeing, peace)

In response to the devastating state of the poor in our world, we again turn to the Jubilee message of Jesus. What we find in Jesus' ministry is not only healing for individuals who are sick, paralyzed, blind, possessed of demons, even dead, but the formation of a healing, caring, sharing community. This dimension of Jubilee has not often been taught, even less practiced.

> Consider first the man with paralysis in Mk. 2:1-12. He was disabled not only by the paralysis but also by the social marginalization that came with his physical limitations, by the prejudices of the Purity Code of the Pharisees that identified his disability as the result of sin, by the poverty and debts that came from his inability to work and from spending on ineffectual cures, and above all that came from the Temple monopoly on purification rites. So when Jesus told him (three times), "Your sins are forgiven," he revealed to this man and to all who were there that the coming of God's Reign meant that he and they could be released from the sins of popular prejudice, the Purity Code, family debts, and Temple rites. The term "release" (*afiemi*) which is used here appears in other Sabbath-Jubilee texts such as Lk. 4:18-19 (twice) to refer to the release from prison, debts, and oppression as well as illness and sin.
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> The story of the rich man, who apparently was very religious and who ran to Jesus in order to be sure of his eternal life, ends on a tragic note, for he rejects Jesus' call to sell his possessions, give the money to the poor, and follow him. (Mk. 10:17-22) But then Jesus tells his disciples two times, "How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter God's Reign." Then he adds the analogy of the camel and the eye of a needle, and the disciples, utterly astounded, respond, "Then who can be saved?" Jesus says, "For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible." The story then takes a surprising turn. Peter, no doubt out of desperation, cries out, "Look, we have left (released,

> *afiemi*) everything and followed you." And Jesus responds, "Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left (released, *afiemi*) house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the Good News, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age . . . and in the age to come eternal life." For most of us this is a mystery, simply because we have never really understood or practiced Jubilee, for if we "release" into the community our possessions, as Jesus asked of the rich man, not just abandon them, we will in effect have access to a hundred times more family and possessions--as the disciples were just beginning to experience and as they understood more fully at Pentecost. (Mk. 10:23-31)
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> The problem of the rich man is explained in a series of Jesus' sayings in Mt. 6:19-34, which deal with economic-spiritual issues in Jubilee terms. Laying up treasure in heaven rather than on earth means to release them for the work of God's Reign, not literally "in heaven" but precisely here on earth. The healthy eye sees and desires God's Reign rather than selfish gain. The rich man thought he could have eternal life and keep his possessions (his god), but Jesus says, "You cannot serve God and wealth." Perhaps most difficult to imagine is the final, longer saying about living like the birds of the air or the lilies of the field with no concern for tomorrow. The only way that could happen amidst the awful poverty of Jesus' day--or in our time--was and is to become part of a community in which all care for all mutually, as Sabbath economics teaches us, i.e., to seek first God's Reign and God's Justice (Mt. 6:33).

Do our decentralized theological education programs contribute significantly to the formation of recognized leaders in the congregations who can lead their people into a deeper experience of community, sharing, caring, and healing?

MANDATES AND MODELS OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

A movement for change

The Theological Education by Extension movement began in the 1960s with the primary purpose of giving access to a much wider circle of clergy, laity, and ministerial candidates, men and women, for theological education and ministry. More precisely, it affirmed that theological education should give priority to local leaders who demonstrate their calling and dedication through their service and should not require them to be uprooted from their diverse cultural contexts, extended families, economic base, and ecclesial communities and responsibilities. More fundamentally, it was founded upon the belief that ministry is commended to the people of God through baptism and discipleship, not to a professional or clerical class through schooling, credentials, and ordination. This movement soon demonstrated that large numbers of people, especially the natural leaders, women as well as men, older as well as younger, less and more highly schooled, poor as well as non poor, who had been largely excluded from formal theological studies, can and will respond to the TEE challenge and pursue serious theological studies, largely at their own expense and under often difficult circumstances. That story is told through

another anthology, *Ministry by the People: Theological Education by Extension*, which was published in 1983 by the WCC and Orbis Books.

In July 2004 a small group of theological educators, the Steering Committee of TEENET, met at the Vancouver School of Theology in British Colombia and approved the proposal to gather a new collection of analytical reports of what we have been calling Diversified Theological Education. We believe that there has been a significant shift away from earlier polarization between TEE and residential programs and concepts of theological education toward an increasingly diverse use of methods, models, and concepts of theological education, often combining centralized and decentralized elements. The challenge is to build theological learning systems with diverse methods and models as needed and available. The case studies in this volume offer an enormous variety of possible elements and combinations.

This whole development of Diversified Theological Education takes on real meaning when we consider its potential, at all levels but especially at grass roots levels, for theological-biblical-ministerial formation with a Sabbath-Jubilee perspective. Can people of faith with minimal schooling and marginal economic and political power capture that vision and take up their calling as God's people to struggle for fullness of life for themselves and all God's children? What basic tools, skills, and concepts do they need to pursue this calling effectively?

It can be argued that the poor and marginalized are precisely the ones most apt to understand the global challenges and pursue the Good News as set forth above. The fundamental ingredients for this kind of theological education are socio-economic analysis of the local and global context, biblical-theological foundations for responding to that global and local context, and pastoral or missional action in keeping with this kind of socio-economic analysis and these biblical foundations. This has been called the hermeneutical circle, and it is often set within a framework of spirituality and discipleship. In their consideration of the case studies presented in this book and their own programs of theological education, readers will want to examine these basic ingredients over and over again. This should not be undertaken simplistically. In fact some of us have chosen to add the notion of an "epistemological rupture" as essential for the authenticity of our socio-economic analysis, our biblical foundations, and our pastoral or missional action. This epistemological rupture or breakthrough does not exclude but goes far beyond the traditional pietistic and individualistic understanding of conversion. It is an integral conversion to the Reign of God in our lives and all of life in this world.

In recent years the peoples of Latin America have emerged from a period of deadly military oppression only to find themselves overwhelmed by the global and regional domination of corporate, "free trade" capitalism, otherwise known as re-colonization, the new imperialism. In this context the heritage of Catholic and Protestant missions has left their churches somewhat ill-equipped for critical social analysis, relevant biblical understanding, and effective missional guidance--with the notable exception of base communities, liberation theology, and some of the ecumenical and charismatic movements in the region. The contribution of programs such as those

mentioned above must be measured in terms of their ability to mobilize hearts and minds and hands, throughout the ecclesial movements, for socio-economic, ecological, gender, and racial justice.

Educational components

With the proliferation of TEE and DTE program designs, which can be a healthy response to our diversities of contexts, church traditions, and mission priorities, it will be important to hold onto some of the basic learnings that have emerged over the last 40 years. TEE began to develop a distinctive educational design out of pragmatic necessity and along the way discovered very important components for any effective learning system, theological or otherwise, but especially appropriate for grass roots ministerial formation among local church leaders. In Guatemala, since our students were local church leaders, heads of families, mostly employed in secular jobs or subsistence farming, scattered over large areas, we could only plan to meet with them once a week or twice a month at locations accessible for them, though some travel for them and more for our faculty was often necessary. Since those meetings could only last for two or three hours, we had to use that time for discussion and debate, not for lectures or monologue. This in turn meant that the students had to be able to get the basic course content (cognitive, affective, practical) on their own in preparation for each group meeting. So we devised basic self-study materials for the relevant "academic" levels and cultural contexts. The third component, in addition to daily individualized study and weekly or bi-monthly group discussion, was on-going, practical testing or application of the substance and issues of the course material in the students' local ecclesial and social contexts.

At an opportune moment Ted Ward, an educator at Michigan State University met with leaders of the TEE movement and articulated a basic curriculum design that matched our experience and facilitated the communication of the TEE concept. We call this design "the rail fence analogy." It refers to the three basic components mentioned above, and it focuses on the combination and balance of these three components. One rail represents on-going daily or weekly individual home study with appropriate materials and assignments. The other rail, parallel to the first rail, is the on going practical application or testing or utilizing of the material being studied in the local church and/or community. The third element, represented by posts holding up, in parallel, the two rails, is the weekly or twice monthly group meeting, with a local or visiting facilitator, to review, clarify, and discuss the material studied and to share experiences with that material in their local context. There are two critical questions regarding this analogy. One is the purpose of the fence, which will determine its size and strength, whether it is meant to keep horses or dogs or chickens, etc. The other is how best to combine and balance the three elements. If the posts are widely separated or too frail, they will not be able to hold up the rails. If the rails are two heavy or too thin or wrongly spaced, they may be unable to fulfill their function.

TEE and DTE programs are generally designed to prepare local church leaders to guide their people into faithful discipleship and mission. They should be carefully

designed with appropriate self-study materials, constant practice, and regular opportunities to integrate and confirm learnings from these two elements through meetings with peers and a facilitator. If the materials are confusing or abstract or simplistic, or if group meetings are too widely separated or irrelevant or boring, students will be discouraged, and many will drop out. When the three basic educational components are ideally combined and balanced, participants are constantly challenged to work effectively toward their mission, the church's mission, God's mission.

The rail fence analogy is just one way to identify the essential components--their combination and balance--for TEE and DTE programs. In some contexts audio or visual materials may be more effective than or in combination with written materials. Some programs are beginning to use the Internet and CDs, which offer extensive resource material and also can offer group contact over wide distances on a regular basis. In many contexts regular face to face encounters are considered to be essential. The possibilities for practical or missional action are almost unlimited, as are the possibilities for individual and group assignments emerging out of the study materials and the regular group meetings. As Ted Ward indicates, something almost magical happens when the three educational components come together and the mission of the rail fence is realized. This charismatic experience can take place--with the right ingredients--among old timers and/or new comers, among highly schooled and/or little schooled, among peasant farmers and/or urban professionals, among women and/or men. The case studies included in this volume provide a great variety of examples.

Mission paradigm

Many Christians and many churches maintain, as we have suggested, a mission paradigm that is individualistic and pietistic, that gives priority to individual "salvation" and "spiritual" or religious practices, and that ultimately focuses upon eternal life after death. We have chosen in this chapter to follow a mission paradigm that focuses on the biblical mandates associated with the Sabbath Day, the Sabbath Year, and the Jubilee, because they deal with fundamental economic and ecological realities that are preeminent in our time, that are the primary threats to life in the Twenty-First Century, that are largely beyond the reach of traditional mission paradigms, and that are eminently biblical and spiritual matters. This paradigm does not minimize the personal relationship with God, but it may in fact call into question any understanding of salvation that ignores or minimizes these realities. The critical question for this paradigm is, What was Jesus' understanding of God's mission? And this leads to the question, What does it mean to follow Jesus in today's world? It leads us to what Jesus called "the greatest and first commandment," which is "'You shall love your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind' . . . and a second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as your self.'" (Mt. 22:38-39, Lk. 10:27, Mk.12:30-31)

It is interesting to note that Jesus very rarely mentioned eternal life, and in the most prominent case, the Parable of the Judgment of the Nations, Matthew 25:31-46, he gave priority not to correct theology but action on behalf of the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, and the prisoner. His ministry on behalf of the "little ones"-

-the poor, women, the sick, and the possessed--was at the same time a denunciation of the powerful and the rich and the structures of oppression and marginalization, including the Temple in Jerusalem, which was a major institution for the support of the Roman Empire. As Walter Wink has explained so powerfully, when Jesus told Pilate, "My Kingdom is not from this world," he really meant, "My Kingdom is not of this domination system." (John 18:36) From the beginning of his ministry Jesus announced the coming of God's Kingdom precisely to bring Good News to the poor, the prisoners, the blind, the oppressed, the deaf, the lame, the lepers, and even the dead, and to challenge and transform the domination system of First Century Palestine. (Lk. 4:18-19, 7:22-23)

To follow Jesus in our time, which is our primary concern, we need to consider whether our programs of theological education are equipping local church leaders to defend and support the weak and also to practice non-violent resistance and begin to transform the structures and institutions of domination, locally and globally. This perspective raises many questions about our curricula, our biblical foundations, our mission vision, and our actions for justice in the economy and *shalom* in the Earth.

It is evident, for example, that professional, Western models of healthcare will not in the foreseeable future be able to provide adequate services among the expanding poor populations of **Africa**, where 15,000 children die daily for lack of clean water, basic nutrition, and preventive healthcare. Grassroots health education and community development combined with Theological Education by Extension might transform that situation, if in fact a new holistic vision of God's mission could bring together those three parallel movements that depend primarily on local leaders.

In **Latin America** Christian base communities have brought powerful renewal to the predominant Catholic Church, and some of the Pentecostal churches have done something similar among Protestants, but both are in danger of being eclipsed by other worldly movements and TV evangelism, recently linked with this worldly prosperity theology. There is an urgent need among all ecclesial sectors for holistic, critical biblical foundations for faith and life in the 21st Century, especially at the local level, in the struggle for ecclesial and social and ecological as well as personal transformation. Formal and non-formal theological education at grassroots levels may be the key.

Europe and **North America** still invest enormous resources in formal theological education, but the contribution of these institutions in the formation of prophetic churches is questionable. The primary threats to life in this Century, economic polarization and ecological destruction, seem to advance unimpeded by moral challenges in these two regions, which are the prime movers and chief beneficiaries of the global domination system.

Conditions vary widely in **Asia**, but ruling elites there as elsewhere seem to seek increasing access to and benefits from the global economic empire at the expense of their own people. Even China's socialism is said to be caught up in a feverish

drive to compete in production and consumption along with the West, and India's skilled professionals are being bought up by the West. Meanwhile Asia's tigers emulate the best and worst of Western capitalism. What is the contribution of theological education in these contexts?

One of the most promising examples of poor people who are escaping from the most extreme forms of poverty was highlighted by the awarding of the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize to Bangladesh's "Banker of the Poor," Muhammed Yunus, and his Grameen Bank for their leadership in the microcredit revolution. When Yunus discovered that the very poor were trapped in a cycle of debt and poverty because they did not qualify for bank loans, he began to offer them loans as small as $27 to start a business with the oversight of five member peer groups and the bank's field workers. After three decades the Grameen Bank has 6.6 million borrowers, 97% of them women, with 2226 branches among Bangladesh's 71,371 villages. The standard interest is 16%, but the bank has recently offered Bangladesh's 50,000 beggars interest-free loans of about nine dollars to buy bread, candy, and other items they can sell to supplement their income from begging. The bank has made more than $5.7 billion in loans averaging $130 and claims a repayment rate of more than 98%. Perhaps most surprising is the fact that these borrowers make up about two-thirds of the bank's depositors. Could not this example be taken up by grass-roots theological education programs, especially in poor countries, with students who would study basic economics and work with microcredit agencies as part of their preparation for and leadership in mission as integral human development? (*Los Angeles Times*, October 14, 2006, A1)

Another example is the Heifer Project, now Heifer International (*www.heifer.org*), which for almost 60 years has offered a very attractive and very credible model of human development that is overcoming poverty even among the poorest of the poor in 50 countries. The basic concept is called "Passing on the Gift." Heifer provides a cow, a pair of goats, or a few chickens to one family; that family promises to give its first new female cow, goat, or other offspring to another family; and self-perpetuating chains of sustainable economic growth spread through communities as recipients become donors. The idea is so attractive that Heifer has been growing almost 20% a year to a budget of more than $50 million, largely through small donations. Some faith communities in rich countries hold Christmas markets that challenge their members to make animal gifts through Heifer in lieu of presents on behalf of family and friends and in their names, which brings them, too, into the struggle against poverty around the world. Could not TEE and DTE students participate in Heifer and similar programs as part of their formation in ministry and mission?

Perhaps the most critical dimension of today's global economy is the increasing concentration of local, national, and global trade in the hands of corporations, whose sole motivation is to produce wealth for their investors at the expense of poverty for vast sectors of the population and ecological destruction for the planet. The "free trade" ideology underlying this reality simply negates the Sabbath and Jubilee mandates and foments greed and wealth concentration. The churches, other faith traditions, and many social movements need to work together to reverse this trend and build mechanisms of

"fair trade" that give priority to social justice and ecological integrity and *shalom*. This too can be an essential part of the new mission paradigm of Theological Education by Extension and/or Diversified Theological Education.

CONCLUSION

This paper raises many, many possibilities and questions for theological education as a whole and TEE/DTE in particular. It sets forth a socio-economic analysis of fundamental, urgent needs that this generation must deal with; it offers a biblical foundation based on a Sabbath/Jubilee reading of the Bible; and it ends with a paradigm of missional theological education that responds to this socio-economic analysis and the biblical foundation. At each stage in this process we have noted that priority should be given to the theological formation of local leaders, especially those who have traditionally been marginalized, because they are the ones most apt to follow the way of Jesus and most able to understand and respond to the challenges and the needs of holistic salvation.

This paper is an adaptation of the opening chapter of the book with the same title, mentioned at the outset. The case studies that make up the rest of this book invite readers to examine reports of a limited but significant number of programs of Diversified Theological Education, to learn from their experiences and reflections, and perhaps to consider new possibilities for their own vision and practice of theological education. The case studies may offer boards, faculty, and students of theological institutions material for discussion, debate, and planning. They may then broaden that discussion among church leaders who are or should be seriously engaged in the support and oversight of theological education among pastors, ministerial candidates, and/or lay people. At the very least they should raise critical questions and issues about the mission of theological education, the mission of the churches, God's mission in today's world.