

Expect great things from God – Attempt great things for God!

The Serampore vision for integral education, the Ecumenical search for a theology of life and the future of theological education in World Christianity

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1) Prelude : Knowing about God – the core of theological education¹

1. Respected Master of Serampore College, dear Registrar, officers of BTESSC, Your Eminences, Bishops, pastors, students and guests, dear sisters and brothers in Christ.

It is a great privilege to have been invited to give you the official address on this very solemn occasion, the Convocation of the Senate of Serampore College at the place where almost 200 years ago the history of this prestigious institution of higher education in India started with the humble, yet amazing and far-reaching beginning of what later became to be called the work of the Serampore Trio. As their history in a unique way relates to a particular understanding of education and what it means to know God in Asian cultures, let me begin by narrating a short illustrative story from Jewish tradition:

A story about Rabbi Scholem

2. The story was told of Rabbi Scholem, who was the most respected and most honorable religious teacher in the whole country, someone who had a huge number of disciples and big audiences each day. Rabbi Scholem had the habit of leaving his house at dawn every morning because he would go outside the town in order to meet Adonai, to encounter God.

This was his practice every morning, since some time already.

One of his most devoted disciples, who held Rabbi Scholem in high esteem, heard about this practice. From then on he was seized by an unquenchable curiosity - what on earth would a pious young theologian, even a disciple of Talmud lessons, desire more in his life, than to encounter and see God himself and that too every day!

And so it happened that one day this young disciple plucked up courage, got up before dawn and sneaked towards the house of the Rabbi. He hid himself behind a mulberry tree and waited in the darkness. And indeed: Sure enough, as dawn broke, he saw Rabbi Scholem silently opening the door of his house, putting on his chapeau/hat, and walking towards the edge of the town. The disciple followed him silently at a distance.

Having left the city the Rabbi however headed hastily towards an old, shabby hut. He knocked on the door, while at the same time pushing it open cautiously. He entered the hut, closing the door behind him. "Wow!", the disciples remarked to himself: "This is the place where the Rabbi would be meeting with God. This is the venue where he encounters Adonai! I want to have a closer look at what happens." He crept towards the shabby hut and found a small hole in the wooden old door through which he could easily see into the small room inside.

What he saw however took his breath away.

3. In the dim interior he could see a skew-whiff old bed on which lay an old woman. He saw that she had raised herself up and was watching what the Rabbi was doing for her. And what was the Rabbi

¹ Gratitude is expressed to Isaac Behera for final English language editing of this essay.

doing? He was on his knees, in front of an old stove, which was right next to the old fragile bed in the hut. He had put some firewood in the stove and had expertly lit it with matches. He blew into the glow until the wooden pieces were set ablaze. Then he added pieces of wood, one by one, so that soon the hut was warm and comfortable. Then the Rabbi put on a kettle of water, waited till it had heated and shared a cup of warm tea with the aged woman. The Rabbi sat and talked with the old woman, and in the course of their conversation both had a laugh over a joke that he had narrated. When it was time to leave he shook her hands and hugged her. There was joy on her aged face. Then he left quietly.

That same day the disciple told his comrades: "It is true. Every morning Rabbi Scholem goes out of the city and encounters God. I have seen this with my own eyes."

4. You might be smiling at this end of the story as you might ask yourself: What is the significance of this heart-warming story for theological education? I think there are three points:

- a) Theological education is always based on and related to the eagerness to know God. Where there is no curiosity to encounter the living God, whether on the part of the teachers or on the part of the students, there is no theological learning. Only where processes of theological education give space to the deeper and existential search and quest for an encounter with the living God will they have real significance and become vital for the Church and for the learning journey into its ministries of His Church into the world. I hope that all of you, graduates today, know this unquenchable thirst and longing for knowing God and for sharing this longing in journeys of listening and accompanying with others. If in all the complex procedures, readings, methodologies and examinations of theological education the inner core of what this business is all about gets lost or suffocated, i.e. the very deep longing and curiosity to encounter the living God, something is wrong with theological education. Knowing about God, to meet the totally Other who is nothing but unconditional love to each and everybody, particularly the vulnerable, is at the core of theological education. The Jewish story is a good reminder therefore (what Miroslav Volf has stated) that "Especially today when the world is awirl with globalization processes, our greatest challenge as theologians and theological educators is to keep God at the center of what we do. If we succeed here, we will succeed, even if that success gets stifled by lack of funds, obstructed by inadequate pedagogy or lack of sensitivity to the context, and marred by faulty institutions and warped institutional cultures. If we fail here, we'll fail utterly, no matter how brilliantly we do as fund-raisers, institution-builders, cultural analysts, and teachers..."²
- b) 5. Secondly I am reminded by this story that theological education is always about a living relationship between a teacher and a disciple. The earliest forms of theological education as developed within Jewish tradition and taken up by Jesus himself were about following the steps of a religious master in a joint pilgrimage with his disciples, literally following him step by step. Whatever has been developed over centuries in terms of precious tools and mediums to transmit important insights of Christian theology - the canonical traditions of the Church, textbooks, iconographic paintings, scholarly publications, theological dictionaries and lately digital collections of theological texts – cannot completely replace the personal and

² See the brilliant article by Miroslav Volf, *Dancing for God: Evangelical Theological Education in Global Context*, in: Dietrich Werner et al (eds): *Handbook of Theological Education in World Christianity*, Regnum Oxford, 2010, p. 721ff, here 723

relational dimension of theological learning which is between a *guru* or religious master and teacher and his disciples. The oriental churches in India have for centuries preserved elements of the Indian tradition of the *Gurukula* education³, which literally means the integration of disciples into the family of the teacher', in order to live with, follow step by step, imitate and to deepen spirituality, prayer and pastoral skills in direct dialogue with a teacher. It is a striking thought that theological education might provide best results and stability, where elements of the *Gurukula* system are combined with elements of the later residential college systems like in English universities such as Oxford and Cambridge (a system followed for instance in the Orthodox Theological Seminary at Kottayam). The personality of the teachers and their spirituality play a decisive role in theological education without however becoming the sole or infallible source of theological learning.

- c) 6. The third lesson I take from this story is probably its key message, i.e. that theological education is always an open-ended process and a journey full of surprises. This is because God makes himself known not without the mystery of love. It is the revealing of the depths of his being once his love is revealed in the encounter with the lowest and most unimpressive ones in the human family: it is when the forgotten, lonely, old woman in this short intimate encounter is treated with respect, with love, that her dignity shines out and is restored in this moment of beauty and tenderness - that is a sign of the presence of the living God in this world.

7. The big 'Other' (with a capital O) can be seen only in the encounter with the small 'other', the despised and marginalized of this world, with those who are beyond the radar of much of the world's attention. The young theologian and disciple mentioned in this story has really seen God at work, the presence of unconditional love restoring dignity and giving a glimpse of hope and joy to someone who is in the darkness outside the city, not noticed by the majority. Rabbi Scholem's gestures were not a very demonstrative and public act, they were instead an unpretentious and very simple, modest but real sign. They were not fit for easy slogans, for new ideologies, or for a public entertainment programme. Where God makes Himself known it is in a word which is touching and transforming, in a gesture which enlightens our soul, it is in these short moments in which love, real comfort and restored dignity become real and meaningful. Perhaps theological education, if rightly practiced can create an openness for these special moments and a prayerful spirit to be attentive to God's transforming words and gestures in unusual places where the 'others' are living in sorrow, loneliness or darkness, where bridges of communication cannot be built by dogmatic formulas, but by a sensitive practice of genuine *diakonia*, by pastoral counseling and living out the love of God.

I have started with this narrative approach as this story also has a personal relevance for me and my journey:

8. Who am I to address this eminent audience, the biggest representative meeting of theological educators in the whole of the Indian sub-continent and probably in the whole of Asia today, was a question that came to mind soon after having received your invitation. What I have been is not much more than the young and curious disciple following his Master and Teacher being motivated by an unquenchable curiosity to know God and to see more from the reality of His presence all around in the world. What I have become today, I can confess with gratitude is not due to my own merits, but

³ See K.M. George, *Theological Education in the Oriental Orthodox Tradition*, in: Dietrich Werner et al (eds): *Handbook of Theological Education in World Christianity*, Regnum Oxford, 2010, p. 624

only due the grace of God who has sent important *'gurus'* into my life, to inspire me, to learn with them and to become open to meet with those who are on the *'other side of this world'*, to see God's presence within and between them.

9. Born into a large family with six children in the northern part in Lower Saxony in Germany I was like the young disciple in today's story, curious to learn and to discover more of what God really is in this world. Having grown up in a normal Christian family, not a pastor's household, but influenced always by the memories of my mother who with her family had been part of what is called the Confessing Church tradition during the Nazi period in Germany and mindful always of the fact that my grandfather was hiding the pamphlets of the Confessing Church circles behind the files of his office, in order not to be discovered by the Gestapo while circulating them in their surroundings, I did not have a role model of what it means to be a pastor within my own family, nor was I under any pressure necessarily to study theology. But the curiosity which marked the young hero of our story had been part of my early years. The **first great learning discovery** and also to a certain extent liberation was the experience gained in a first encounter with an important guru, my school's religious instructions teacher in Oldenburg, who showed me that biblical faith and critical reasoning or even questioning or doubting, need not be contradictory. On the contrary my curiosity about knowing God and the historical background of biblical tradition was encouraged and this has remained an integral part of my thinking. Knowledge and a deep commitment to the Christian faith along with critical knowledge of science, philosophy and secular fields of research have never been exclusive of each other.

10. This in-stilled curiosity and the passion for justice and peace which probably were grounded in the memories of my family and their sufferings during the Second World War (my father's youth was destroyed due to the Nazi regime) led to a **second major discovery in my learning journey** which I would describe as increased interactions with and a deep sympathy for Asian, particularly Indian cultures, theologies and churches. This had begun rather early with my interactions with the *'others'* in our own German context, particularly with Asian students and asylum seekers from Sri Lanka in shabby shelters in Ammerland, with whom I was able to converse in English.

I cannot begin with the main part of my paper without paying due respect to an Indian friend and bishop who happened to adopt me as his disciple and assistant quite unexpectedly in the early 80s during and after my studies at the Bossey Ecumenical Institute outside Geneva. To Bishop Samuel Amirtham and his wife Lily I probably owe the greatest respect and gratitude of my life, as they – across all cultural and national divides - were open to adopting me as young assistant staff in PTE in the World Council of Churches from 1984 to 1985, which provided me with some deep insights into both Asian and global networks of theological education and issues which were key themes in international and Asian theological discourses on theological education during that period, namely *'theology by the people'*, *'theology by extension'*, *'Asian resources for doing theology'*, *'spiritual formation in theological education'*, and later *'viability in theological education'*. All of these continue to be priority themes for contextual theological education in Asia even today. Israel Selvanayagam has appropriately titled his fascinating and rich account of the theological work of Samuel Amirtham in his book *"Samuel Amirtham's Living Theology"*, as Bishop Amirtham lived out his theology in the ways he related to people who are different.⁴

And it is this experienced love and trust which has led on my part to love extended and shared, love towards Indian friends and churches, an interest in theological developments in Asia and a passion for theological education which have become part of my journey both in Germany (with the EMW

⁴ Israel Selvanayagam, *Samuel Amirtham's Living Theology*. BTESSC/SATHRI, Bangalore 2007, 870 pages

commission on theological education), in India (with UTC) and in Geneva (with the WCC/ETE). Theological education is the life-line, the circulation of blood of churches so that their ministries can be refreshed and their spiritualities revived. This has been more than once amply summarized by Samuel Amirtham who writes: *“Theological education in its broadest sense involves the whole people of God, as they reflect on their faith in Jesus Christ, their life together in worship and community, their mission and service in the world and their Biblical and confessional heritage which sustains their life and motivates their action and involvement in the world. Theological education in the narrow sense, involves those members of the church who are responsible for equipping the whole church for mission. While the sharper focus of theological education falls on the smaller group, the broader focus of theological education falls on the whole community. As theology permeates every aspect of the Christian church and the life of every Christian, so theological education must belong to all members of the Christian church and not just to some experts or professionals. It is a corporate act of all people of God. Therefore it can be done only by and with the people themselves, never for them.”*⁵

11. The **third major discovery** in my theological journey was the gradual realization about the incredibly rich and manifold **ecumenical nature of the worldwide church and the ongoing dynamic of its worldwide mission**. I owe this realization to some very prominent theological teachers I had the privilege to meet, to be invited to relate to and then followed as young disciple. One amongst them was Konrad Raiser, with whom I worked at Bochum university and who later became General Secretary of the WCC. Having been brought up a Christian from a Lutheran background, my interactions with witnesses of faith from all around the world during my years both as pastor and as lecturer and ecumenical staff has widened my small horizons in a way which I would never have imagined.

Ecumenism for me still is an ongoing humbling experience as I continue to encounter the living presence of the Spirit of God, costly discipleship and sacrificial love in devout Christians living in traditions of World Christianity we are often ignorant about, or have prejudices about or simply have never met. The reality of God’s church on earth is so much wider and so much deeper than we can encompass and comprehend in our life time! The extraordinary missionary role of women in the history of the Church is so much more than men usually have come to understand⁶: the breadth and depth of liturgical and spiritual tradition in Orthodox Christianity is so much wider than Protestant and Catholic Christianity can comprise⁷; the vitality of new Charismatic and Pentecostal churches so overwhelming⁸, and because of all of these there can never be an end of the theological learning process in terms of World Christianity! What has become the root of my convictions is that theological education must always be centered around the two poles of deepening an understanding both of the *contextuality (or apostolicity)* of the Church (*the ecumenism of space*) as well as of the *catholicity*, the all encompassing fullness and apostolic unity of the Church throughout the centuries (*the ecumenism of time*).

2) Towards Serampore 2018 – recalling the Serampore vision for integral mission and education

⁵ Israel Selvanayagam, Samuel Amirtham’s Living Theology, BTESSC/SATHRI, 2007, page 164

⁶ See the recent fascinating research publication done in cooperation with ETE: Christine Lienemann-Perrin, Atola Longkumer, Afrie Songco Joye (eds), Putting Names with faces. Women’s Impact in Mission History, Abingdon Press, Nashville 2012,

⁷ see the new publication of ETE: Pantelis Kalaizidis, Dietrich Werner et al, Orthodox Handbook on Theological Education and Ecumenism, Regnum , Oxford, 2013, (960 pages)

⁸ See: J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity. Interpretations from an African Context, Regnum Studies in Global Christianity, Oxford, 2013; Julie C. Ma; Wonsuk Ma, Mission in the Spirit, Towards Pentecostal/Charismatic Missiology, Regnum Books International 2010

12. As you have invited me as an official representative of the WCC on this occasion, I extend warm wishes to the whole Serampore family from our General Secretary, Dr. Olav Fykse Tveit and cannot but draw our attention to the fact that there are striking similarities between some elements of the early vision of the Serampore Trio for Christian mission and education and some key convictions of the World Council of Churches which have been reformulated and reaffirmed during its recent assembly in Busan, South Korea, in October/November 2013.

To recall some key elements of Serampore's vision for integral mission and education will be important for your journey towards 2018 when I assume key representatives of World Christianity will be invited to share memories of this most ancient and prominent example of Christian mission in Asia on the occasion of 200 years of the founding of Serampore College in 1818.

While the major bulk of research publications has been on Serampore tradition⁹ (and we cannot claim originality on any of the elements summarized very briefly in the following), I still wonder to what extent *the global and ecumenical significance of the Serampore vision* has been sufficiently highlighted. It would be exciting to collect and to listen to some voices from the ends of the earth interpreting Serampore's history and its global relevance in building up to 2018. Perhaps our reflection can provide a small contribution in this direction.

13. In the main part of my presentation today I would attempt to

- a) First highlight some essential elements of Serampore's vision for mission and education which have relevance for the global discourse on theological education
- b) Relate Serampore's vision to the experiences of the recent Busan assembly of the WCC and the unfolding ecumenical vision for a theology of life
- c) Relate Serampore's vision to ongoing changes in World Christianity and signs of a possible global crisis in theological education in the context of rapid neo-liberal economic globalization
- d) Finally to outline some tentative suggestions concerning imperatives for a sustainable future of theological education in World Christianity

14. While Carey himself was rather skeptical on what Europeans or Westerners could legitimately and authentically contribute to Christian mission and the reading of history and cultures in India¹⁰, I cannot but still admire what I see at work in the early Serampore beginnings, which in essence was about a tri-polar hermeneutical encounter between European (particularly British) culture, Indian cultures and the tradition of the Christian Gospel, itself embedded in ancient Hebrew and Hellenistic cultures. Let me humbly submit – admittedly as a western theologian, though sensitized as an intercultural Missiologist and an ecumenical theologian – what I would see as the six essential elements of Serampore's vision for mission and education which do have continued relevance for the global discourse on theological education, mission and ecumenism in the future:

⁹ See also several essays by the former registrar Ravi Tivari, *Interfaith Study in Secular Context: Revisiting the Serampore Model*, in: JTCA, Vol. 9, 2010, p. 93-105; Ravi Tivari, *Senate of Serampore College (University) at Ninety*, *Asia Journal of Theology*; Oct2008, Vol. 22 Issue 2, p. 400

¹⁰ Carey's skepticism on what Europeans could say and contribute to Christian mission in India and the conviction of the Serampore Trio's preference for Indian evangelists over European missionaries was reflected in his rather realistic though pessimistic perception of the state of European or Western 'Christian' culture: In his *Enquiry* Carey had written: "it is ...a melancholy fact that the vices of Europeans have been communicated wherever they themselves have been; so that the religious state of even heathens has been rendered worse by intercourse with them."; (in: E. Daniel Potts, *British Baptist Missionaries in India 1793-1837. The History of Serampore and its Missions*, Cambridge University Press, 1967, page 39f)

- A) The vision for unity in Christ's mission across all denominational and national boundaries
- B) The vision for holistic mission and missionary education, communicating the Gospel to body, mind and spirit
- C) The vision of multilingual ministries of education, translation and communication
- D) The vision of bringing together evangelism, *diakonia* and social development
- E) The vision of integral education, properly related and bridged between church related education and secular education
- F) The vision of an ecological dimension of Christian mission – planting the seeds of life

A. The vision for unity in Christ's mission across all denominational boundaries

15. While we cannot go into the details on how painful and shameful conflicts and tensions the Serampore Trio had experienced in their time due to the denominational divide, confessional pride, class conflicts and caricatures of other Christians whether from Anglican, Methodist or like themselves from Baptist traditions, our reflection on the Serampore vision from the WCC's perspective cannot ignore the fact that it was Carey's visionary thinking which probably for the first time in Asia has articulated a bold ecumenical vision as early as 1806 which was later termed 'the most startling missionary proposal of all times', namely to hold a meeting of all missionaries from all the different Christian denominations at the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa. Carey in a letter to Fuller had asked the pertinent question:

"Would it not be possible to have a general association of all denominations of Christians, from the four quarters of the world, held there once in about Ten Years? I earnestly recommend this plan, let the first meeting be in the year 1810, or 1812 at furthest. I have no doubt but it would be attended with many important effects; we could understand one another better, and more entirely enter into one another views by two hours conversation than by two or three years epistolary correspondence."¹¹

This vision was articulated 100 years before such a broad-based meeting of missionaries from all Christian denominations was to become a reality in Edinburgh 1910. However tribute can be given to William Carey for being the arch-pioneer of one of the **earliest versions of the ecumenical vision of an interdenominational fellowship of churches in Asia.**

16. During Carey's period the close co-operation between Baptists and Anglicans which Carey tried to develop in Serampore was not always viewed positively in England, and there was the wariness of getting trapped in the danger of becoming absorbed "into the worldly, political religion" of Anglicanism...¹². The double question which this reminder poses to us today is both to Indian Christianity,

- to what extent does this unity in Christ's mission still serve as a priority concern for all Indian churches and the cooperation of all institutions of Christian education and theological formation in this context? The Centenary Celebrations of the NCCI (Golden Jubilee) in this month have given us an opportunity to reflect on these issues.

As well as to World Christianity,

¹¹ D. Potts, p. 53

¹² D. Potts, p. 53

- to what extent is the vision of real and passionate Christian unity in mission still the leading vision of so-called 'ecumenical Christianity' which has followed this early impulse of William Carey and had come together in Edinburgh 1910, thereafter forming the WCC as a global ecumenical umbrella organization in the following decades, but nowadays represents only one quarter of the global Christian family? Or in other words: Is the ecumenical fellowship of churches in danger of getting accustomed to the state of fragmentation in Christianity faced today? Is ecumenical Christianity losing the passion for costly Christian unity, by itself becoming one macro-denomination of 'ecumenically minded' churches, while the energy to reach out to all Christian churches and to form larger alliances for the sake of joint Christian mission in this world is waning?

17. It is also important to remind ourselves about the extent to which Carey, Marshman and Ward had planned Serampore to become a centre of trans-national missions with a strategic relevance to many of the Asian neighboring countries. Carey had far-reaching goals about extending Baptist missions into northern India, Bhutan, Tibet, Assam, Burma, East India, Indo-China and China.¹³ While Serampore missionaries were sent to Assam and to the Kond Hills in Orissa¹⁴ much of their efforts were ultimately confined to Bengal. However vital contacts were established with other Asian countries and cultures providing the basis for the huge ministry of translations performed in Serampore.

B. The vision for holistic mission and integral education, communicating the Gospel to body, mind and spirit

18. When in 1818 the Serampore Trio, specifically Joshua Marshman in collaboration with William Carey and William Ward, founded Serampore College as the vertex and peak of their educational system it was a visible embodiment of their core conviction that Christian mission and education intrinsically belong together. *"Its ultimate purpose was to train Indians to replace Europeans completely as missionaries, and so create a truly indigenous church. Its immediate aim was to give capable youths from all of their schools an opportunity to improve their minds...by supplying them instruction in every branch of knowledge peculiarly suited to promote the welfare of India."*¹⁵ To train Indian youth for church ministries, to increase the biblical knowledge of those already working in preaching and evangelism and to strengthen the Christian identity of those who left the caste system and dared not to be obedient to its restrictive demands were the three essential objectives which inspired the founding of the College.¹⁶ Was Christian mission about the discovery of human dignity in the light of God's love to each human being disregarding his/her caste, ethnic or cultural background, in the same vein Christian mission also implied liberative and transforming education in order to strengthen new Christian identities, to leave behind culturally oppressive customs and caste related bonds, in order to give witness to the transforming power of the Gospel relating to all dimensions of life. It is important to remember today that in the early beginnings there was **no** contradiction between Christian mission and development (as there also was no 'secularist' and isolated, reductionist, purely economic understanding of social development). *"The Baptists and other missionaries efforts (on the contrary) created a pattern for later development", as the Serampore missionaries believed, it was "the duty of a Missionary to do good to the bodies as well as the souls of*

¹³ D. Potts, p. 28

¹⁴ D. Potts, p. 31

¹⁵ D. Potts, p. 129

¹⁶ Marina Ngursangzeli Behera, The Rationale Behind the Founding of Serampore College: Implications for Theological Education Today, in: JTCA Vol. 9, 2010, page 77ff

*man, as far as he has the means in his power.*¹⁷ Serampore was “to be a college that would equip those who were marginalized or discriminated against to lead a life of dignity and self-sufficiency.”¹⁸

The question which comes up in a double sense in relating this Serampore vision to both Indian churches today as well as to churches in the ecumenical fellowship is the same which formed the agenda of the international discourse on theological education during the Busan assembly, namely the transformative character of Christian leadership formation and theological education today: to what extent and how are theological education and leadership formation today really leading to transformative and liberative processes both in church and society which provide a pre-taste of what the values of the Kingdom of God are all about?

C. The vision of multilingual ministries of education, translation and communication

19. It has often be said that one of the most outstanding achievements of the early phase of the Serampore Trio and all its co-workers was that their efforts in education, translation and printing that brought about a revolution not only in Bengali literature and public communication, but was also a huge boost for interest in Asian languages and activities for cross-cultural communication and studies. “Carey himself, aided by various learned Indians and Europeans, is normally credited with the fantastic achievement of having translated the entire Bible in Bengali, Oriya, Marathi, Hindi, Assamese and Sanskrit; and parts of it into 29 other languages,” amongst which they finished partial translations in Burmese, Assamese, Chinese, Balochi (a language of Pakistan, close to Kurdish), Kanarese (or Kannada), Kashmiri, Maldivi, Naipali (Nepali), and Pashto (the language of the Pashtuns in parts of Pakistan and Afghanistan)¹⁹. While it should be stated that the Serampore Trio strongly relied on collaboration with Indian *pandits* and although later the quality and accurateness of these translations were questioned²⁰, “undoubtedly Carey had a tremendous flair for languages as well as the will-power and strength to spend long hours in the drudgery of translation which, despite the faults in his versions, and they are many, has distinguished him as one of the greatest Biblical translators.”²¹

20. For the increased partnership and exchange between Indian theological education and Chinese theological education which will be needed in the 21st century it should not be forgotten that it was Joshua Marshman from Serampore who finished the translation of the complete Bible into the Chinese language in 1822, the first complete Bible to be published in that language, and Serampore saw the very first printing press where the first ever ‘complete set of metal types of the Chinese language’, was developed by John Lawson in Serampore.²²

21. It can hardly be overstated what the significance of this emphasis on translation and understanding of Asian languages meant for the development of Bengali and other languages grammar, literature and popular prose.²³ On a deeper level it is a very fundamental reminder of the fact that all Christian mission and all theological education is rooted in the translatability of the

¹⁷ D. Potts, p. 75

¹⁸ Marina Ngursangzeli Behera, p. 78

¹⁹ D. Potts, p. 79-81

²⁰ D. Potts, p. 82 and 88

²¹ D. Potts, p 80

²² D. Potts, p. 89 and 111

²³ Carey, Marshman and Ward made a huge contribution to the development of Indian vernacular literature, specifically in Bengali. Marshman's history of India and Bengal gave considerable impetus to historical writings in Bengal. Carey not only produced a Sanskrit-Bengali-English dictionary but also grammars and dictionaries in Bengali, Sanskrit, Marathi, Punjabi, Telugu and Kannada, even up to a first universal dictionary of all Indian languages derived from Sanskrit which unfortunately was lost in a fire in 1812. In: D. Potts, p 94f.

Gospel which has made Christianity so remarkably different from other world religions.²⁴ This is because the essential conviction and theological principle is that God, the totally Other, has become human and therefore has become as close and intimate to each and every human language and culture as nobody else has or in other words: God is love in the unfinished process of translation, being communicated cross-culturally. The Christian faith cannot remain alien to any human culture and language.

22. Institutions of theological education and churches in World Christianity today should be reminded that they never should be separated from the ongoing work of Bible Societies both in global and regional contexts, as the task of translating the Bible in all the languages of the globe is far from being accomplished. And the immediate follow-up to such translations that consists of providing sufficient tools and handbooks in vernacular languages for Bible studies and education in local or regional languages is often shamefully neglected due to the dominance of the so-called 'world languages'.²⁵ The role and relevance of the vernaculars in global theological education is a crucial and critical litmus test about how seriously we are taking the ongoing missionary mandate and the task of inculturation of the Church and how far we are actually reaching those who feel at home and within their proper identities only if they are fully equipped to pray, to read and to teach in their own mother tongues.

D. The vision of bringing together evangelism, *diakonia* and social development in witnessing for a caste-free Indian church

23. Seen through the eyes of the WCC which always has been interested in bridging what is sometimes explained as the divide between evangelism and social concerns, it is fascinating to see how close evangelism and the so-called good works, such as aid to the sick and the poor are mutually related in the Serampore mission. Serampore had not only started an extended medical mission but a related hospital was built as well.²⁶ The Serampore Mission also started a bank for savings in 1819, in order to achieve a degree of economic independence and affluence for poor people and by providing for the education of the children, for unemployment and old age.²⁷ The contributions of the Serampore Mission to the upliftment of the poor, towards human rights particularly of children (the struggle against infanticide) and of widows (the struggle against *sati*, the self-immolation or murder of widows) or other 'dreadful practices' are chapters which have their own distinct history.²⁸ Because the Serampore missionaries were the pioneers of the very first female schools in a context, 'where female education was practically unknown because of the superstition that a literate girl would be widowed shortly after marriage'²⁹, such a legacy must continue to be seen in Serampore's deliberate encouragement of women theologians. In view of the enduring problems of caste discrimination in Indian Christianity; it should also not be forgotten that it was the Baptist missionaries who had denounced the caste system "the most cursed invention of the devil that ever existed" and described it as "*a prison, far stronger than any which the civil tyrannies of the world*

²⁴ Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message. The Missionary Impact on Culture*, Maryknoll NY, 1989

²⁵ It should be recorded that important tools for Bible study in India have only been recent in vernacular languages, see for instance: Anugraha Behera, *Interpreter's Dictionary and Concordance of the Bible in Bengali*, Kolkata, 2013; or E.C. John, *Biblical Dictionary in Malayalam*, Bangalore 2010

²⁶ Later Calcutta Medical College which followed was established in 1835, see D. Potts, p. 67

²⁷ D. Potts, p. 70

²⁸ D. Potts, p. 140ff and 144ff

²⁹ D. Potts, p 122f

have ever erected: a prison which immures many millions of innocent beings".³⁰ It was a standing principle of Baptist Serampore Mission that *"from the time their first converts were baptized refused to allow them to maintain caste distinctions, as they believed there was a basic antithesis between caste and Christianity"*.³¹

24. Over and against some contemporary modern (mis)perceptions which view 'Christian mission' as something outdated, pre-modern and socially disinterested and the 'development' of something being modern and at its best if non-committed in terms of any missionary dimension, the lessons which can be learned from the beginnings of the Serampore Mission are still both relevant for churches in all regions of World Christianity: It was authentic and intentional Christian mission which has given rise to social development and overcoming of caste and religious barriers. The big developmental agencies of the West should take note that there is no proper and balanced development without the role of religion being properly reflected and supported, that there is no social and political development without the inner spiritual reconstruction of the dignity and value of each human being, without the discernment between liberating and oppressive values as well as spiritualities and cultural traditions informing them.

E. The vision of integral education, properly relating and bridging between church related education and secular education

25. What is also fascinating to reflect upon for somebody like me dealing with theological education globally is a clear tendency of the Serampore Trio not to dissociate general or secular education from Christian education for ministerial formation. The emphasis was on the comprehensive and integral nature of all realms of knowledge contributing to a contextual understanding of the Gospel for the Indian people: In the words of Marshman: *"They regarded it as the duty of a missionary to obtain as complete a knowledge as possible of the language and religious institutions, the literature, and the philosophy of the people among whom he labored, and to leave a record of his acquisitions, through the medium of the press, for the benefit of his successors. They considered that every contribution to this store of knowledge was an additional facility for the prosecution of missionary labors, and they were anxious that these researches should go hand in hand with the communication of secular and divine truth to the people."*³² Therefore in the original outline it was foreseen *"that pastors should be trained in an institution where secular subjects were also adequately handled and not in a separated seminary."*³³ Alongside those studying for ministerial formation, there were the Science and Arts students which were accepted irrespective of their religious affiliation, and who were however aware that they would be entering a Christian college. But the intention was that future Christian pastors would not become isolated in terms of their specialized religious knowledge, but *"the secular education that is taught in the College was to supplement the theological education that Christian students particularly received so that the objective of turning out well-equipped pastors and preachers would be met."*³⁴

³⁰ John Fountain, one of the pre-Serampore Baptist missionaries had stated this already in 1797, see: E. Daniel Potts, p. 158

³¹ See the comment: „The insistence on the renunciation of caste undoubtedly hindered conversions but some thought this an excellent method for a convert to display his sincerity”, in: E. Daniel Potts, p. 158

³² D. Potts, p. 112

³³ Marina Ngursangzeli Behera, The Rationale Behind the Founding of Serampore College: Implications for Theological Education Today, in: JTCA Vol. 9, 2010, page 83

³⁴ Marina Ngursangzeli Behera, page 87

26. This throws up a critical challenge which is relevant for many church related institutions of theological education in Asia today and in other parts of the world: how far can ministerial formation in church related institutions contribute effectively so as not to become isolated from the larger streams of general human knowledge and critical wisdom? How deliberately are we building joint research and teaching projects with secular universities? How far have we come in terms of the public recognition of Christian theological education as an integral part of comprehensive education and knowledge within Indian and Asian societies, which are not pushed and privatized to a small niche in modern knowledge-driven Asian societies, but are a critical voice within the mainstream of human knowledge development? For the Serampore vision collaboration and dialogue between Christian and secular knowledge always had a critical political function just as education on modern science had a liberative goal and a critical anti-caste stance, which was beyond Christianization and general partition of knowledge.

For the Serampore missionaries this *“had a deeper purpose than just spreading of knowledge: an apologue (apologia) of ‘mankind’s being created all of one blood, and descended from one stock’ was intended to ‘rectify the (hindu) ideas of respecting cast’”*.³⁵

F. The vision of an ecological dimension of Christian mission – planting the seeds of life

27. The final special feature which I would like to highlight with regard to the original shape of the Serampore vision of education is the amazing openness and interest which Carey had developed for issues related to the ecology. Although this was not theologically reflected under this umbrella term, it is remarkable, that Carey had not only developed a clear understanding of how important a role agriculture played in the lives of most of the people in India but also assumed that better agricultural techniques would raise the standard of living of the people and thereby would make them more open to the Christian message. The Serampore Mission had played an important role in the establishment of the **Agri-Horticultural Society** in 1820 which provided education in improved methods for agriculture, better systems of crop rotation and proper use of manure.³⁶ Carey, who had taken an active interest in botany from early childhood founded a noted botanical garden in Serampore and collected seeds from all kinds of plants even to the extent that several Indian species were first identified and named by him.³⁷ He was even active and committed to forestation programmes and for a short time served on the Government Plantation Committee which developed plans for planting new forests and for preserving the old ones.³⁸

28. The question raised from this point is to what extent does current theological education in India as well as in World Christianity pay attention to eco-theology and the integration of issues of land, forests, natural resources and their integrity of creation? Serampore naturally or seen historically could become a centre for an Indian eco-theological movement, a pendant to the oikos-theology movement which has become a new and exciting stream in Korean and other Asian theological thinking.³⁹

³⁵ D. Potts, p. page 121

³⁶ D. Potts, p. 71 and 72

³⁷ “Carey freely exchanged plants and ideas with botanists the world over, and his contributions to the botanical aspects of India’s agricultural development have been deservedly recognized.”(D. Potts page 72)

³⁸ D. Potts, page 75

³⁹ See the following short text on the **Oikos Theology Movement in Korea (Oikos Korea)**

The Oikos Theology Movement in Korea (“Oikos Korea”) is a theological movement searching for alternative theological discourses with the following reasons:

- Human civilization today is unsustainable and therefore is required to be replaced by a new paradigm of life-giving civilization;
- The traditional theological framework, developed on dualistic, anthropocentric, patriarchal, and

3) The Busan assembly of the WCC and the ecumenical vision for a theology of life

29. The significance of these key-elements of the Serampore vision of integral mission and education for current discourses in ecumenism, World Christianity and theological education becomes even more obvious when we recall some of the insights and central convictions articulated during the 10th assembly of the WCC in Busan. Many important aspects about this recent, most representative global Christian gathering which brought together not only WCC member churches, but key representatives of every major family within World Christianity can be reported about. This really was an Asian assembly, tangibly shaped by the realities and key role of Asian churches.⁴⁰ It was one of the youngest assemblies, highlighting the new and active role of young Christians such as one would today see in the majority of the world's churches all around the globe. It was a prophetic assembly which developed and sent out some key messages on vital issues of political and social witness for the churches.⁴¹ But the major theological paradigm shift I see at work with this assembly is a deliberate and strong orientation on a new theology of Life, a cosmic vision of mission and a broadened understanding of our fundamental Christian belief in a God of Life who is the creator of all that lives on earth.

30. The new mission statement has captured this in clear theological language:

*"God did not send his Son for the salvation of humanity alone or give us partial salvation. Rather the Gospel is Good News for every part of creation and every aspect of our life and society. It is vital therefore to recognize God's mission in a cosmic sense and to affirm the whole life, all oikoumene, as being interconnected in God's web of life. As threats to the future of our planet are imminent, what are their implications for our participation in God's mission"?*⁴²

The extended section on a new paradigm of mission with creation ("mission and the flourishing of creation", Art 19-23) is one of well formulated and central theological insights and new orientations which have emerged from this assembly and which deserves to be widely discussed in theological

power-oriented epistemology, is unfit for this alternative life-giving civilization;

- Hence, a new theological framework, which bases itself on relational and holistic thinking like *Sangsaeng* in Asia, *Ubuntu*, in Africa and *Sumak Kawsay* in Latin America as exemplified and thought, must be carved out to support the birth of life-giving civilization.

The "Oikos Korea" has been initiated by a number of committed theologians teaching in various seminaries and universities in Korea with the foci on life, justice, and peace. Currently, all members of "Oikos Korea" belong to the Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK); it is expected, however, that other committed theologians from different Christian traditions will join and make the "Oikos Korea" more ecumenical.

The "Oikos Korea" holds an annual summer theological camp for theological students and pastors who are interested in the work of justice, peace, and life-giving ministry. We expect that this school could be developed into an international ecumenical summer school that can provide a platform for alternative theological thinking for a life-giving civilization and culture that is emerging out of the shadow of the "Empire," greed, and industrialism.

See also: video on oikos theology seminar in South Korea: <http://youtu.be/BkKnOPep7RM>

⁴⁰ The role of the Korean churches and their overwhelming hospitality should be particularly mentioned as well as their deep missionary commitment as the largest missionary sending churches in current World Christianity.

⁴¹ Such as on: Politicisation of Religion and Rights of Religious Minorities; Human Rights of Stateless People, Theological Foundations of Just Peace, on Peace and Reunification of the Korean Peninsula and on Climate Justice. See: <http://wcc2013.info/en/resources/documents>

⁴² Together Towards Life. Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes, Art 4. Published on: <http://wcc2013.info/en/resources/documents/preparatory-documents>,

circles and to be explored with regard to its implications for theological education in World Christianity in the future.⁴³

31. There were several occasions during the assembly proceedings where this emphasis on a new cosmic understanding of mission and care for creation, the new interest in eco-theology and climate justice was taken up, both during the final message of the assembly⁴⁴, in the exceptional sermon from Father Michael Lapsley from South Africa at the end of the assembly⁴⁵, as well as in the Busan unity document⁴⁶ and in reports from the ecumenical conversations.⁴⁷

32. The ecumenical movement clearly has read *disturbing signs of our time* which point to an alarming situation in the world and an urgent need to overcome the anthropocentric reductionism in some of the theological traditions at work in the understanding of mission and the Church:

- during the Busan assembly many were aware of the nuclear disaster in neighbouring Japan and the unprecedented contamination of sea water and much of the land, while at the same time several other Asian countries continue to maintain a large number of nuclear power plants which in terms of safety and long-term sustainability concerning the issue of nuclear waste disposal give rise to many unanswered questions;

- hundreds of species of both plants and animals are disappearing at an accelerated pace from the face of the earth⁴⁸;

⁴³ For a detailed introduction into this new mission statement see: Atola Longkumer, "Together Towards Life": The New Mission Statement 2012 of CWME/WCC and its Relevance to Asian Ecumenism and Mission, in: Hope Antone, Wati Longchar, Hyunju Bae, Huang Po Ho and Dietrich Werner (eds): Asian Handbook for Theological Education and Ecumenism, Regnum Publisher, Oxford, 2013, p. 186-195; see also: Thematic issue on the new mission statement IRM Vol. 102, 2013; see also: Metropolitan Geevarghese Coorilos, God of life, lead us to justice and peace: some missiological perspectives, in: IRM Vol. 102, 2013

⁴⁴ The assembly message in one key para reads:

„4. God our Creator is the source of all life. In the love of Jesus Christ and by the mercy of the Holy Spirit we, as a communion of the children of God, move together towards the fulfillment of the Kingdom. Seeking grace from God we are called, in our diversity, to be just stewards of God’s Creation. This is the vision of the New Heaven and Earth, where Christ will “fill all in all” (Eph 1.23).

5. We live in a time of global crises. Economic, ecological, socio-political and spiritual challenges confront us. In darkness and in the shadow of death, in suffering and persecution, how precious is the gift of hope from the Risen Lord! By the flame of the Spirit in our hearts, we pray to Christ to brighten the world: for his light to turn our whole beings to caring for the whole of creation and to affirm that all people are created in God’s image. Listening to voices that often come from the margins, let us all share lessons of hope and perseverance. Let us recommit ourselves to work for liberation and to act in solidarity. May the illuminating Word of God guide us on our journey.“

⁴⁵ In his closing sermon Michael Lapsley said: „The crucified and risen one invites us to look at and touch one another’s wounds – to listen and to hear the pain of each other and so become one. But it is not just the human family that is riddled with pain – it is Mother earth herself that is crying out more and more desperately. How many more natural disasters have to happen before we realize that the future of human life on this planet is in jeopardy? Surely something which so many indigenous cultures always understood has to go, as fast as possible, to the top of the agenda for all of us on planet earth.“

⁴⁶ See Busan Unity statement, particularly section 1 and 2, in: <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/2013-busan/adopted-documents-statements/unity-statement>

⁴⁷ See particularly the reports from Ecumenical Conversation No 12: Ecological Justice: Churches Call For Climate Justice

⁴⁸ Between 1850 and 1950 one animal species vanished every year; in the 1980s one animal species vanished per day; today, one animal species vanishes per hour and within 50 years, 25% of the animal and plant species will have vanished due to global warming. (Won-Seong Park, Towards Life Enhancing Civilization in Asia, in: Melisande Lorke/Dietrich Werner (eds), Ecumenical Visions for the 21st Century, GETI Reader, Geneva 2013, p. 74)

- glaciers are melting with worrying speed leading to rising sea levels which are threatening countries with low coastlines such as in the Pacific and Bangladesh;⁴⁹

- Environmental pollution in Asian countries such as China as well as in major cities of other Asian nations has reached unbearable levels suffocating huge populations, particularly the elderly and children; at the same time the fastest growing economies in Asia, namely India and China, still claim and receive exceptions from binding global commitments to carbon emission reduction goals.⁵⁰

- floods, storms and environmental disasters are on the increase every year turning thousands of men, women and children into environmental refugees or internally displaced persons. 200 million climate refugees are expected to exist in 2050 if the current trend continues.

To summarize:

33. The assembly in Busan has confirmed more strongly than ever before that the push towards and present state of the project of global modernization is not at all on a healthy and sustainable course but “humanity has become the subject of its own possible self-destruction”⁵¹ at the start of the Third millennium after Christ. With interrelated signs of the climate catastrophe multiplying it has become clear as well, that climate change is not only a moral and ethical issue but also a spiritual challenge, as the inability to continue normal life in islands which are below sea levels, or the inability to continue normal harvesting because salted water destroys the plantations, and the increased frequency of massive and terrifying storms and hurricanes wiping out whole cities, towns and villages make people start questioning their experiences of a gracious God who has declared creation to be good. The ecumenical movement therefore has the task and capacity to work on and inspire a new global value system based on a deeper understanding of God and an integral theology of life which is capable of motivating and inspiring a global transformation of our attitudes towards creation and the guiding values of our societies.⁵² The common search for a theology of life at the same time provides new points of common learning and dialogue with much of the indigenous theological and religious traditions in Asia and in other parts of the world.⁵³ Busan has given voice to the hope of Asian theologians, „that Asian churches and theologies, together with others in the global South, could make possible an ecumenical contribution to building a life-enhancing civilization beyond the current human civilization which is becoming more and more destructive.“⁵⁴ Asian church contexts are specifically gifted to identify important resources for deepening an ecumenical theology of life in an interdisciplinary and interreligious dialogue, which should be based on

- Biblical traditions of understandings of life and creation;
- Ecclesial and denominational traditions in the understanding of life and creation;

⁴⁹ The polar ice is 40% thinner than 40 years ago and global warming is advancing 10 or 20 years faster than expected earlier. (Won Seong Park, a.a.O. p. 74)

⁵⁰ The countries contributing most to the 2012 change in emissions were China (71% increase), USA (26% decrease), India (21% increase), and Japan (11% increase). See also footnote 59:
<http://www.globalcarbonproject.org/carbonbudget/13/hl-full.htm#regionalFF>

⁵¹ Geiko Mueller–Fahrenheit, *God’s Spirit, Transforming a World in Crisis*, NY/Geneva 1995, p. xi

⁵² See for a deeper analysis of the theological implications of the assembly theme ‘God of Life, lead us to justice and peace’ Dietrich Werner, *Giving Glory to the God of Life in the context of 21st century Christianity Ecumenical Perspectives on the AACC/WCC assembly themes for 2013*, published Nairobi, AACC 2012

⁵³ See among many others: Wati Longchar, *Returning to Mother Earth: Theology, Christian Witness and Theological Education. An Indigenous perspective*, PTCA Series No 4, Kolkata 2012, particularly: W. Longchar, *Ecumenical Responses to Ecological Crisis: An Indigenous Peoples Perspectives*, p. 43-68

⁵⁴ See for instance the contribution of the South Korean oikos-theology network, represented in Seong-Won Park, *Towards Life-Enhancing Civilization in Asia: Korean Perspectives*, in: Melisande Lorke/Dietrich Werner, *Ecumenical Visions for the 21st Century. A Reader for Theological Education*, WCC Publications 2013, P. 73-79

- Indigenous, cultural and religious Asian traditions in the understanding of life and creation⁵⁵;
- Knowledge generated on the understanding of life and the process of nature in modern science and ecology.

34. The ongoing search for a comprehensive theology of life will be part of the proposed *global pilgrimage of churches towards justice and peace* which is foreseen for the post-Busan period.⁵⁶ Important contributions on an ecumenical theology of life have been already articulated in various parts of Asia.⁵⁷ The role particularly of the fastest growing economies in the world, India and China, in really accepting their own responsibilities in setting binding commitments to CO2 emissions for the years ahead (instead of receiving special treatment again and a free ticket to continue with carbon emissions) and the need for their churches to become active promoters for more multilateral climate justice should be underlined.⁵⁸ Getting engaged with a comprehensive theology of life is both an academic as well as a spiritual task: The Lutheran World Federation therefore has called for the significant initiative to have a day of fasting on the first day each month for developing a responsible theology of life in the context of climate change and climate justice until the next global meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 20) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change negotiations in Lima, Peru, in December 2014.⁵⁹

35. For me an ecumenical theology of life is nothing less than a new and exciting embodiment of the core task of ecumenical formation, namely to enable Christians and young theologians, to *„communicate the whole Gospel, with the whole church, to the whole world‘*. Nothing less is demanded from the present generation working on ecumenical formation in theological education than to enable the next generation *„to continue the task of covenanting not only with God, but also with the rest of God’s creation. The covenanting mission of humans is expected to manifest in the life-sustaining mission by taking care of God’s oikos. The most important goal and concern in our life and ministry should be to seek how we could preserve life and the life-giving oikos.“*⁶⁰ A formation for

⁵⁵ See several examples in: Samuel Longkumer, Learning from Asian Religious Traditions for Eco-Justice, in: Asian Handbook for Theological Education and Ecumenism, p. 311-323

⁵⁶ See one key recommendation of Busan ecumenical conversation No 12 on climate justice: “Since a conversion is required – a radical change, a metanoia of our hearts, minds, lifestyles and our relationships with God and with our neighbour near and far, now and in future-- we envision a pilgrimage to justice and peace for God’s creation that puts at its centre climate and ecology. This will require a holistic approach and action on the social, economic, political, spiritual and ethical dimensions so as to ensure the enjoyment of full human rights and dignity by all, without destroying the planet in the process. Through the fellowship of churches on a pilgrimage for justice and peace for God’s creation, we will transform hearts and minds.” (Report of EC 12)

⁵⁷ See for instance: H. Vanlalauva, God of Life, Lead us to Justice and Peace. Theological Reflections in the Context of India Today. A National Colloquium Papers, SATHRI 2012;

⁵⁸ According to the recently released [Global Carbon Project](http://www.globalcarbonproject.com) we find China (27 percent) and India (6 percent) to be among the world’s four largest emitters of carbon dioxide, along with the United States (14 percent) and the 28-nation European Union (10 percent). However the Indian government in collaboration with China and Brazil have blocked binding commitments for increased reductions of emissions in the recent Warsaw climate summit 2013 with the argument, that developed countries should first go ahead in exercising their responsibilities for tangibly reducing the carbon dioxide emissions. See: http://india.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/11/25/indias-negotiator-says-climate-treaty-talks-partial-success/?_r=0

⁵⁹ The call for fasting for climate justice offers religious communities an opportunity to address concerns for climate change in the lead up to the Conference of the Parties (COP 20) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change negotiations in Lima, Peru, in December 2014. See: LWF Press Release 2013-138, in: <http://www.lwf-assembly2003.org/lwf-interspire/display.php?M=3574&C=1d11e38c965e575416f10b58150d0a9c&S=1140&L=22&N=1197>

⁶⁰ Isaac Mar Philoxenos, God of Life, Lead us to Justice and Peace, Concluding remarks, in: H. Vanlalauva, God of Life, Lead us to Justice and Peace. Theological Reflections in the Context of India Today, page 168

sustainable life-styles, for responsible citizenship and for just peace-making is the demand of our time in history.⁶¹

36. An orientation to this *oikos*-theological framework is not just a fashionable and occasional addendum to an unchanged theological curriculum. It is an integral challenge to all disciplines in theological education. It also implies setting aside all group politics, on whatever partial identities they may be based, denominationally, caste- or culture-wise, or gender-based, and to contribute to one common task and ecumenical concern for a comprehensive theology of life. Theologies related to group identities (Dalit theology, Tribal Theology, Feminist Theology...) have a certain legitimate value and relevance in affirming the rights and cultural identities of those who have been marginalized. But they should not tear apart the unity of the Church (neither the unity and corporate identity of a teaching community in a given theological college). Nor should they endanger the coherence and interconnectedness of Christian theology as a whole, as every branch of theology has to relate to the ecumenical task of theology as a whole and to contribute something to the new ecumenical project in the 21st century, to develop a common theology of life for all of creation on this earth.

4) Changing landscapes of World Christianity and a Global Crisis in theological education? – New challenges for Christian leadership formation in the context of searching for sustainable values in facing neo-liberal economic globalization

37. The ecumenical task of developing a common framework and basis for an ecumenical theology of life is even more critical if we look at the stage in which World Christianity finds itself at the beginning of the 21st century. How can we as Christians influence the course of the present global developments and the inner logic of rapid modernization if World Christianity cannot speak with one voice? Here in Serampore we need to state that World Christianity as a whole is further away from the original vision of William Carey - that mission-minded Christians from all denominations should come together to learn from each other to speak and act with one voice - than 200 years ago. Today we do not have around 300 Christian denominations which might have been the case at the time of William Carey, but more than 40,000. Despite the churches organized in the ecumenical movement with the WCC having achieved much together in terms of a common understanding of baptism, Eucharist and ministry, the nature of unity in diversity and key elements of an ecumenical social ethics, they represent only one quarter of the current global family of Christian churches, one half of which is from the Roman Catholic background and about one quarter from Evangelical or Charismatic/Pentecostal background.

38. To work towards a common agenda for a global theology of life and a pilgrimage of all churches towards life-giving witness for justice and peace is an enormous ecumenical as well as an interdenominational task. The Busan assembly was - though not a full expression – but nevertheless a foretaste of some of the dramatic changes in the landscape of World Christianity today which makes the call to develop an ecologically sensitive and justice oriented theology of life even more urgent. If you carefully read the words of greetings from the other global Christian organisations in Busan, i.e. the World Evangelical Alliance, the World Pentecostal Fellowship, the Lausanne Movement, the Roman Catholic Church, the Global Christian Forum⁶², you could come to the conclusion, that – despite all differences in theological emphasize and style – the climate of openness

⁶¹ See interesting debates of missiological and ecumenical scholars in the West: Glen H. Stassen, Rodney L. Petersen, Timothy A. Norton (eds), *Formation for Life. Just Peace-Making and Twenty-First Century Discipleship*, Pickwick Publications, Oregon, 2013

⁶² See words of greetings, also from interfaith partners on: <http://wcc2013.info/en/resources/documents>

and interest for a deeper theological collaboration has never been so good between those within the WCC and those other ecumenical partner organizations outside. But it is well known that tensions and miscommunication on regional and local levels still hinder, hamper and slow down the urgently needed cooperation on a common theology of mission and life between the various families within World Christianity.⁶³

39. Are systems and institutions of theological education in Asia, in India and in other parts of the world prepared for the challenges of changing World Christianity in the 21st century? Are they properly equipped to contribute to the efforts for widening the common ground between *all* parts of the Christian family (and beyond) and to seek common basis for a comprehensive theology of life which alone can provide a stimulus for the transformation of value systems in modern Asian societies and a counter-balance over and against destructive ideologies of consumerism, materialism and unlimited economic growth at the costs of all creation?⁶⁴ The debate on stability, ecumenical orientation and the sustainability of theological education and its different types is in full swing.⁶⁵ World Christianity is in dire need of continuing efforts for international and ecumenical Christian leadership formation such as the Global Ecumenical Theological Institute (GETI) done before and alongside the Busan assembly.⁶⁶

40. Recent data on changes in World Christianity⁶⁷ suggest, that Christianity in Asia is expected to grow faster than any other religion in Asia between 2010 and 2020, as it will likely grow at an average 2,1% annually, more than twice the rate of growth for the general population (0,9% in Asia). Although Asia remains the continent with the smallest percentage of Christian populations in comparison for instance with Africa and the US, the number of Christians per forecast in 2020 is 420 millions (9,2%) (in 1970, in Asia 95 million Christians or 4,5% were counted,). One of the most important features of this change is the well-documented growth particularly of Christians from Charismatic, Pentecostal and Independent Church types, as in 1970 this group (the so-called

⁶³ See particularly the enlightening and critical article by Siga Arles, Relations between Ecumenical and Evangelicals in Asia, in: Asian Handbook for Theological Education and Ecumenism, p. 94-106

⁶⁴ The issue and challenges of alternative 'value education' was rightly highlighted as a key challenge for the future of inter-religious education in Asia, see: H.G. Mithra, Restructuring Value Education in a rapidly Changing secular society, in: JTCA Vol. 9, 1010, p. 107-118; It is remarkable that leading non-Christian scholars from Asia are indicating increased skepticism, that Christian cultures in the US and the West are strong and deep enough to provide a sufficient answer for the crisis of moral values which is experienced everywhere, particularly also in rising China, and propose Confucian moral reconstruction as the key solution to the world's value and ethical orientation crisis. Profound scholarly positions like this demand and deserve a sound Christian response in order to underline the potential of Christian tradition to still provide answers to the world's crisis in value and ethical orientation (see: Young-oak Kim/Jung-kyu Kim, The Great Equal Society. Confucianism, China and the 21st Century, World Scientific, Singapore 2014;

⁶⁵ See for instance: Daniel O. Aleshire, Earthen Vessels, Hopeful Reflections of the World and Future of Theological Schools, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 2008; Thematic Issue Theological Education in Mission, IRM Vol. 388, April 2009, WCC Geneva; Huang Po Ho, Mission from the Underside: Transforming Theological Education in Asia, PTCA/SATHRI/SCEPTRE 2010

⁶⁶ See GETI website: <http://www.globethics.net/de/web/gtl/geti>; and GETI on facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/geti2013>

⁶⁷ See for further information: Wesley Grandberg-Michaelson, From Times Square to Timbuktu. The Post-Christian West meets the Non-Western Church, Eerdmans Publishing, Grand Rapids 2013; Sebastian Kim and Kirsteen Kim, Christianity as a World Religion, London 2008; also: World Christian Database: <http://www.worldchristiandatabase.org/wcd/>

Renewalists) were estimated at 5,1% of all Christians, having grown to 25,8% of all Christians in 2010 and is expected to grow to 27,8% of World Christianity in 2020.⁶⁸

41. I do not know whether demographic statistics and forecasts on how the overall numbers of theology students as well as their ecclesial composition might be looking like exists or can be generated within the Senate of Serampore College. Strategic planning for the future of theological education in Asia demands that we develop a sober and clear picture of what we might be confronted with in some 20 to 50 years from now. Are available institutional frameworks and resources for theological education sufficient to cope with the raising demand in future? Do we develop national or regional strategic master plans for the development of theological education, including the developments of strategic partnerships between emerging theological educational systems and established theological educational systems, in the next decades like has been suggested several times in talks with representatives from churches and ecumenical organizations in important neighboring countries such as Bangladesh, Pakistan, Myanmar, China and Nepal?⁶⁹

42. A recent global research project on trends and challenges in theological education in World Christianity, which was based on digital questionnaires and answered by more than 1700 experts in theological education worldwide, has shown some alarming signs in terms of the stability, accessibility, leadership and trends of decline in theological education. The complex data has been summarized in a short report and was introduced during one of the ecumenical conversations in the assembly in Busan.⁷⁰

Some of the results the research has clearly shown are:

- There are not enough theological schools in those parts of the world where Christianity is growing rapidly (Africa, Latin America, and parts of Asia).
- Theological education is financially unstable in many parts of the world. Only 2% of the respondents from Asia saw theological education in Asia being stable, while almost 70% saw theological education as financially unstable or even in a financial crisis.
- Growth is seen in Evangelical and Pentecostal/Charismatic theological education; there is a decline in mainline Protestant and Roman Catholic traditions.
- There is significant interest in online theological education in some parts of the world, but many theological educators consider traditional formats more appropriate.
- Cross-cultural communication and practical skills related to ministry are the areas respondents would most like to see added or strengthened in theological education.
- The "integrity of senior leaders" is seen as the most important element in determining quality in theological education.⁷¹

This means, that although it might be a generalization when we speak of a global crisis in theological education, there are clear signals that theological education in many contexts is not yet fit to answer the urgent pastoral needs for growing Christianity in a major parts of the world, nor sufficiently

⁶⁸ Gina A. Bellofatto and Todd M. Johnson, Key Findings of Christianity in Its Global Context, 1970-2020, IBMR July 2013, p. 158 and 159; also in: <http://www.gordonconwell.edu/resources/Global-Context-of-Christianity.cfm>; and: <http://www.nayajeevan.org/resources/images/GlobalContextSummaryRpt.pdf>

⁶⁹ See national surveys on the needs and challenges in theological education in 18 Asian countries: Dietrich Werner, Training to be ministers in Asia. Contextualizing Theological Education in Multi-Faith Contexts, PTCA Series No 3, Colcutta, No 3

⁷⁰ Global Survey on Theological Education. Summary of Main Findings. For WCC 10th assembly, Busan 30 Oct. to 8th November 2013. See: <http://www.globethics.net/web/gtl/research/global-survey>

⁷¹ Further details and documents on the international study report on theological education, including first commentary papers from various regions of the world on the findings, are included in the website folder on ecumenical conversation 6 in the Busan assembly: see: <http://www.globethics.net/web/ecumenical-theological-education/documents?layoutPlid=13227594>

equipped to provide more common ground and basis for an inclusive theology of life which would enable Christianity to contribute more meaningfully to overcoming the ecological crisis on this planet.

Already before Busan one could read in an international study document on the global situation of theological education (from the year 2010):

43. The world study report on theological education from WCC, which was prepared for the Edinburgh 2010 conference had stated, that despite several cases of significant achievements in certain areas of Asian's mission and church history *"new and old challenges in the area of theological education continue and persist to hamper the relevance and accessibility of theological education for Christian mission today. Some crucial challenges seem to be even more dramatic than hundred years ago. Thus there is an urgency for increased and coordinated efforts for international networking and solidarity in promoting theological education in the fellowship of churches. Some would speak of an emerging global crisis in theological education which is becoming increasingly obvious and will be marking the next decades in the 21st century, having the potential of endangering the very future and integrity of World Christianity."*⁷²

5) Imperatives for a sustainable future of eco-theological education in World Christianity – some tentative suggestions

To conclude I wish to put forward a few provisional suggestions for the future of theological education in World Christianity⁷³, at this point mainly formulated for Asia.⁷⁴

1. Theological education is the backbone for integral church development and authentic Christian mission in Asian contexts

44. The WCC had stated on several occasions, "that the concern for the promotion of theological education has been and should remain a priority area of joint witness and cooperation within the global missionary (and ecumenical) movement. ...The task for providing accessible and contextually relevant forms of theological education for each part of the worldwide fellowship of Christian churches is far from being accomplished. On the contrary, at the beginning of the 21st century we are facing a new urgency and increasing demand to cope with the huge challenges, crisis symptoms and fundamental changes of theological education which are caused by the dramatic changes in the landscape of world Christianity."⁷⁵ The international ETE working group had recommended that "Churches should regard the support for theological education (both with regard to lower degrees as well as higher degrees at Master level) as one of their most important priority mandates and obligations. A church *without* proper and qualified theological education systems tends to diminish itself or ends in Christian religious fundamentalism. A church *with* properly developed theological education qualifies itself for greater degrees of interaction and outreach to the different levels and challenges in its society as well as to a deeper commitment to holistic Christian mission. Churches should have a clear sense of ownership of their institutions of theological education without falling into the trap of dominating or curbing them."⁷⁶

⁷² World Study Report on Theological Education 2010, WCC-ETE p. 54

⁷³ See for more extended and general elaborations on the future of theological education in World Christianity: Dietrich Werner, *Theological Education in World Christianity, Ecumenical Perspectives and Future Priorities*, , PTCA Series No 2, Kolkata, 2011, particularly 285ff; also: Dietrich Werner, *Ecumenical Learning in Global Theological Education – Legacy and Unfinished Tasks of Edinburgh 1910*, in: JTCA, vol. 7 and 8, 2008/2009, page 17-61

⁷⁴ Part of this is based on an earlier document which was published as: Memorandum on the Future of Theological Education in Asia 2012, in: Dietrich Werner, *Training to be ministers in Asia. Contextualizing Theological Education in Multi-Faith Contexts*, PTCA Series No 3, Kolkata, p. 307-323

⁷⁵ World Study Report on Theological Education, WCC 2010, p. 18

⁷⁶ World Study Report 2010, p. 27

45. This first key conviction is amply articulated in another paragraph from the aforementioned WCC Study Report on Theological education in 2010 which has underlined the conviction that

“theological education is the seedbed for the renewal of churches, their ministries and mission and their commitment to church unity in today’s world. If theological education systems are neglected or not given their due prominence in church leadership, in theological reflection and in funding, consequences might not be visible immediately, but quite certainly will become manifest after one or two decades in terms of theological competence of church leadership, holistic nature of the churches mission, capacities for ecumenical and interfaith dialogue and for dialogue between churches and society. The transmission of the ecumenical memory and vision to future generations of pastors and church workers is a priority need in many WCC member churches, its continuation is far from being secured at present.”⁷⁷

2. Eco-theological orientation as organizing centre of the theological curriculum

46. If we take seriously what the recent assembly of the WCC has articulated on the new paradigm shift towards a theology of life and if we link this to some of the earlier insights from the original Serampore vision, which included an orientation on agriculture and new forms of relating to nature, we should be careful not to reduce an eco-theological reorientation to just an additional course within one discipline. It is important that the revised Serampore BD Curriculum since 2010 includes a course on “Green Theology”: in the cluster on “Theology”.⁷⁸ However the paradigm shift which is recommended in the Busan assembly demands that eco-theological orientation becomes the organizing and critical centre of theological reflection and curriculum organization, which appears as an integral dimension in all theological disciplines. The South African theologian Ernst Conradi has rightly stated:

“Ecological theology should not be reduced to environmental ethics as a sub-discipline of Christian ethics. Environmental ethics will tend to remain the specialized field of interest of a small group of scholars and activists. An ecological ethos touches on virtually all aspects of life and has implications for all ethical sub-disciplines (e.g. social, political, economic, business, medical, sexual, or personal ethics). Moreover, ecological theology is not only concerned with ethics, but also with Christian doctrine. It is not narrowly focused on the reinterpretation of creation theology, but calls for a review of all aspects of Christian faith – the trinity, God as Father, creation, humanity, sin, providence, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, salvation, the church, the sacraments and Christian hope. ...Almost every aspect of Christian theology has come under the spotlight: Biblical Studies, Biblical hermeneutics, the history of Christianity in its many traditions and forms of expression, Christian virtues and values, preaching, ministry, pastoral care, Christian education, Christian mission, and a theology of religions. There is also no need to add environmental concerns to the already overcrowded social agenda of local churches and ecumenical bodies. Instead, the entire life and praxis of the Church should include an ecological dimension and vision.”⁷⁹

47. Perhaps we need to think about a future network of Asian (and other) centers for oikos-theology⁸⁰ which would collaborate with ecumenical bodies and churches in different contexts on deepening research and developing common resources for this vital project, with Serampore and its

⁷⁷ Global Study Report on Theological Education, WCC-EET 2010, p. 32

⁷⁸ Senate of Serampore College, Faculty of Theology, Regulations and Syllabus related to the Degree of Bachelor of Divinity, Serampore 2010, No. 208, P. 138-144

⁷⁹ Ernst Conradi, Christianity and Ecological theology. Resources for further Research, University of the Western Cape, Sun Press, 2006, page 3f

⁸⁰ See the existing oikotree theology networks: <http://www.cwmission.org/programmes/justice-witness/oikotree/>; <http://www.oikotree.org/>

affiliated colleges becoming one its hubs. If all 50 theological colleges affiliated to the Serampore family would model their institutions and programs as a pioneer project for ecological sustainability in terms of how they deal with solar energy, water protection, care for plants and trees and waste disposal, and if the Senate of Serampore College would develop an annual eco-church award to highlight those churches, colleges and Christian compounds which can be seen as outstanding models of ecological justice, a real impact could be made in Indian Christianity and beyond in this country.⁸¹

3. Strategic ecumenical research and accompaniment partnerships between different settings in Asia and beyond

48. It has been pointed out that the original Serampore vision and mission project was inspired by an impressive attention to countries and cultures in the neighboring regions. It is important to note that the Senate of Serampore College in recent years has become more aware again of the needs and the potential to develop vital links again with churches in Myanmar, in Bangladesh, in Pakistan, in China or in Nepal as far as politically possible, contexts which have completely different standards, resources and histories in Christian leadership training and theological education. One of the crucial tasks ahead in Asia is to explore the most appropriate forms of inner- and inter-regional solidarity between institutions and networks of theological education. What are the different expectations, points of connectivity and potentials for synergies for ministerial formation and theological education? With reduced funding available from outside (the West), creating appropriate and culturally sensitive networks of mutual support and complementarity between the different sectors of Asian Christianity becomes imperative in the 21st century.

Individual theological schools operating in isolation and on separate tracks from each other, even in neighboring situations, is a matter of concern for understanding and practicing what it means to belong to the one body of Christ. The newly created Asian Forum for Theological Education (AFTE), in which all associations of theological schools are invited to cooperate, is an important platform to work out related mechanisms of Asian solidarity in theological education.

4. Overcoming the ecumenical/evangelical divide in theological education in Asia

49. The division between the ecumenical or so-called "liberal" and "evangelical"⁸² orientations in theological education, which in many Asian contexts still continues to influence the institutional landscapes of theological education, are not necessarily inherent in Asian Christianity but have their roots in the west. The so-called fundamentalist-liberal dispute and the split between moderate evangelicals and their ultra-fundamentalist counterparts have their origins in a specific ideological context in the United States of America. They were shaped in the political context of the East-West conflict, and then became globalised and were exported into Asian churches in the decades after the 1950s.⁸³

⁸¹ See the campaign for a Solar Church Network and the "Paintings and texts Art for Climate Justice" developed by the Indian artist Luz de Souza in cooperation with her German husband Rev. Amndreas Krone which was presented in Busan: www.lucy-art.de; see also Green Church Network in Canada: http://egliseverte-greenchurch.ca/green/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=138&Itemid=149; and Eco Congregation network: <http://www.ecocongregation.org/>; or the international Arocha Network: <http://www.arocha.org/int-en/index.html>; see also Lecture on Ecology and Eco-Theology in India by Rev. Dr. Chilkuri Vasantha Rao, Principal, ACTC, in: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LfT765WAWwc>

⁸² These terms, understood as polarized concepts do not any more describe accurately the actual realities as identities in many cases have become mixed and mutually enriching.

⁸³ See for the context of this historical development: Michael Nai Poon, *The Rise of Asia Pacific Christianity: prospects and challenges for the church universal*, in: *Asian Handbook on Theological Education and Ecumenism*, Regnum, Oxford 2013, p. 38ff, particularly 41

50. Strikingly, there is a growing convergence today (some of which could be seen in Busan) between evangelical and ecumenical leaders engaged in Christian mission, interfaith-dialogue and theological education in Asia today. But the institutional landscapes and “camps” of theological schools and colleges to a large extent remain structurally divided. It is good to know that for some time now the Senate of Serampore College has become a family of both charismatic, evangelical and ecumenical Christians and theological traditions, “Evangelicals” and “ecumenicals” or “liberals” (none of these terms fit existing realities any more) today face very similar challenges in Asia and often develop similar answers. Evangelicals from the Lausanne Movement and evangelicals with deep commitment within the ecumenical movement often affirm shared understandings of mission, evangelism and education. Thus, churches and networks in Asia should move on and not be caught up in past and false stereotypes or define who they are in opposition to each other, but should rather act and learn together as part of the one body of Christ. There will no major progress in the ecumenical contextualization of theological education in Asia unless there are deliberate attempts to bridge the divides between ecumenical and evangelical/Pentecost networks of theological education operating in Asia. It is a good sign that AFTE has called together major Asian associations of theological schools, including ATA, for a meeting in Manila in January 2014 to consider a process to work out more common ground in mutual understanding and explore ways by which recognition of some of the degrees might be achieved in future.

5. Strengthening the public role and recognition of theological education institutions in Asia

51. In light of the rapid changes in secular education and in socio-political circumstances in Asia, the quantity and availability of theological education in many countries has been upgraded significantly in the past decades. Theological schools first established as centers to train Christian evangelists who had few academic qualifications have now been upgraded to become degree granting institutions, with higher admission standards and accreditation to assure quality. Membership in theological associations such as ATESEA, the Senate of Serampore College and ATA has grown rapidly. Yet in Asia there still are few places where there is state recognition of their accreditation as well as public acceptance.

This exclusion from state and public recognition has not only affected the credibility of the churches’ mission and witness regarding public issues in the wider society, it has also restricted their access to potential resources and engagement with other disciplines. Although in Asian countries such as Indonesia, Thailand and Taiwan degrees of seminaries and divinity schools can now be registered and recognized in the state education system, in most Asian countries this is restricted to the private realm and does not engage with other academic disciplines. But this is changing, as theological degrees are recognized by state authorities in more places, such as Korea, Japan, Hong Kong and the Philippines. How might Christian theological education become visible in the public arena and in public universities without diminishing the important tasks of ministerial formation?

6. Doing theological research and education in inter-religious dialogue and with Asian resources

52. One of the fundamental questions for theological education in Asia in the 21st century will be how Christian theological education is to open up for dialogue with different faith traditions and also the growing number of people without any religious affiliation in Asian contexts. Theological education in contemporary Asia has the task of preparing candidates for the transformation of

Christian community for the sake of the transformation of the whole society where it is located.⁸⁴ Only a certain segment of theological schools can afford or has decided to offer substantial courses and programmes on non-Christian religions, on Asian spiritualities and on interfaith dialogue. For Christianity in Asia to move out of privatized pockets and small niche-situations in societies, it is vital to underline that the Gospel of Christ is for the life of all and for the peace and justice in the whole of creation, not just for the limited interests and institutionalized expectations of a specific religious sector in society, represented by the Christian churches. The public character of the Gospel of reconciliation demands for public spheres of interaction and common platforms of learning and research in higher education with representatives of all religious traditions to seek the common good in society.⁸⁵

7. Making Indian theological knowledge accessible to the world community of theological education (and vice versa)

53. I want to close with the reminder that the Serampore Trio used the most modern technologies they could find in their time to develop better forms of education and for the communication of the Gospel. The most advanced forms of communication and education today should be explored in a similar manner, tested and applied in terms of their relevance for international and national dialogue in theological research and education. One of the new tools the WCC in cooperation with its partner Globethics.net foundation has developed is the *Global Digital Library for Theology and Ecumenics* (GlobeTheoLib). We have been in dialogue with the Senate of Serampore College to develop a *Serampore collection of Indian theologies* with this system, which is free for use by the end-user and accessible from anywhere in the world (currently providing free access to some 1,5 million full-text documents already). We hope that by the time Serampore College celebrates 200 years of its existence in 2018, a major part of this work that would make visible a collection of Indian theology and shared by GlobeTheoLib with all Indian users as well as with other constituencies in the global network of theologians and researchers would have advanced and could be presented to honor those who have started all this work.

I want to conclude with a commissioning word to all the graduates of Serampore affiliated colleges at this very special day:

54. May this graduation be more than the well-deserved recognition of your academic achievements and degrees obtained: May this day strengthen you in your inner faith journey and missionary commitment for the living God our Creator and for a comprehensive and inclusive theology of life today!

May this day confirm and deepen your ministry for Jesus Christ in all the circumstances you might be confronted with so that you do not lose courage, but be firm in your witness for Christ's reconciliation and for His unconditional love for each and every created being, giving witness for God's justice and a caste-free church!

On this day may God's blessing abide with you to strengthen your sincerity and faithfulness in witnessing to the Holy Spirit, the power to transform our values and to reorder our priorities so that the love of God can be communicated to all and across all national, social and cultural divides.

May you be inspired by the vision of the Serampore Fathers and continue their ministry in mission and education, guided by the attitude of expectancy which was captured in William Carey's words:

Expect great things from God, Attempt great things for God!

⁸⁴ Henry Wilson, *Theological education and ecumenical challenges in Asia. A checklist for the journey forward*;

⁸⁵ See: *Memorandum on the Future of Asian theological education*, EcRev, July 2012; see also: <http://ptcaweb.blogspot.ch/2011/12/doing-theologies-in-asian-ways-and-with.html>