

## MISSION STUDY GROUP

### *Mission in the Theological Curriculum*

Group Members: Stephen Bevans (convener), Jean-Marie Aubert, Vladimir Federov, Gorski, Kirsteen Kim, Young Dong Kim, James Knight, Moonjang Lee, Tung Kiing (James) Ling, Junias Venugopal.

In the first session of the group on Tuesday, a number of issues were raised for discussion:

- \* a broader understanding of the theological curriculum which included religious education and lay training
- \* the question of the *nature* of mission
- \* *why* missiology is necessary in theological education
- \* what *are* mission studies?
- \* what *kinds* of courses do we need in the curriculum?
- \* what is the relation between mission and theology in general?
- \* the *fragmentation* of the theological curriculum
- \* the need to have *both* specific courses in mission and have mission permeate the entire curriculum

On the first day as well the group decided to hear about specific projects and papers from the members of the group. Since he was leaving the conference the next day, Lee Moonjang shared with the group his paper entitled “Asianization of Theology and Theological Education.” For Lee, theological education, to be relevant in the context of Asia, needs to be (1) enlightening, (2) embodying, and (3) transformative. In other words, it needs to include but not deal exclusively with discursive rationality and must be done in the context of community. The Asian monastic tradition might be a better model than the theological professional school. The mistake is to think that a relevant theological in Asian is a matter of changing “software” (e.g. courses) in the context of a western, classical “hardware” (fourfold pattern curriculum, western organization). The entire “hardware,” however, needs to be changed. A lively discussion ensued point out the need as well for a *praxis*-based theological education (e.g. Robert Banks) as well.

In our second session Kirsteen Kim and Steve Bevans presented summaries of their papers.<sup>1</sup> Kirsteen spoke of the need to regard *all* theology as contextual theology, and offered a vision of the theological process as a multi-faceted conversation (a term preferred to dialogue) among these contextual theologies. The local context and practice of mission in that context could thus be enriched. As Orlando Costas puts it, such a contextual and missiological focus to

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<sup>1</sup>Kirsteen Kim, “Missiology as Global Conversation of (Contextual) Theologies,” *Mission Studies*, 21, 1 (2004): 39-53; Stephen Bevans, “Wisdom from the Margins: Systematic Theology and the Missiological Imagination,” *Verbum SVD*, 43, 1 (2002): 91-115; “Theological Education for a World Church: The New Curriculum at Catholic Theological Union, Chicago,” unpublished.

theology challenges all forms of parochialism. Again there was a lively discussion in which the members of the group shared their own approaches to theological education. In particular, Jan Gorski shared the syllabus of his basic missiological course in Poland. Steve Bevans then presented a summary of two papers on theological education: the first about mission and systematic theology, and the second about the new curriculum at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, USA, where he teaches. Since the presentation went until the end of the session, the group decided to discuss the articles in the next day's session.

Steve's paper on the curriculum, therefore, was the source of a wide-ranging discussion in the first part of the third session. Many particular questions were asked about the process of the new curriculum's development, whether there were any other curricula similar to it, and the authorities—academic and ecclesiastical—to which the new curriculum had to answer. In the course of the discussion Junias Venugopal shared some exciting policies and goals of Columbia Biblical Seminary and School of Missions in South Carolina, USA, where he is dean. The seminary's goal is to have 75% of the faculty drawn from former missionaries. The seminary has also just changed the name of church history to history of global Christianity, and the policy is that faculty can only be granted sabbatical leave if they spend part of it in a Third World country.

Kim Young Dong shared with the group the mission focus of the Presbyterian College and Theological Seminary in Seoul, Korea. The seminary has 2500 students, sixty faculty and four missiologists, and the focus of the seminary is on practice. A curriculum development committee has been formed and it seeks to develop a curriculum that will harmonize theory and practice, emphasize spirituality and team teaching, and work toward the development of deeper discipleship within community. One proposal is to organize the curriculum around five elements of the church's mission: kerygma, koinonia, didache, diakonia, and leitourgia rather than the classic fourfold disciplines of Bible, theology, history and practical theology.

Both Jim Knight and James Kiing Ling spoke of the importance of cross-cultural exposure in theological education. James pointed out, however, that he sees little hope of missiology becoming more than a number of courses within the classical fourfold pattern. Vladimir Fedorov shared his course on orthodox missiology that he has given in Russian seminaries, and Jim Knight shared the missiology program at Yarra Theological Union. Only YTU and the Evangelical Seminary in Melbourne offer missiology in the Melbourne College of Divinity.

At the final session on Friday the group heard from Jean-Marie Aubert, who spoke about the place of missiology within the curriculum of the Catholic Institute of Paris. Missiology is now taught in the Institute of the Science of the Theology of Religions (ISTR), and there is at present no strong relationship between this institute and the Catholic Institute's faculty of theology. There is a development underfoot, however, toward a department of practical theology within the theological faculty and missiology subjects will be taught in this new department—so there is hope for a better place for missiology in the future. Missiology, observed Jean-Marie, must be conceived as a *fundamental theology*, i.e., a theology that responds to the current questions of today's world.

Jean-Marie continued by sharing a paper he had written for the conference on the question of how the church in Europe can be enriched by missiological ways of thinking. First, the experience of *otherness* from migrants from Asia and members of Asian religions is close to contemporary French reflection (e.g. Lévinas) on otherness. A reflection on such otherness can yield a rich understanding that both *preserves* the other in his/her difference, but which also

yields a deep recognition of unity. In the same way, reflection on the Latin American experience and its option for the poor can lead the church in France to make its own option for anyone marginalized within its own borders.

Finally, the group heard from Jan Gorski from Poland. Jan reminded us that Poland at present has 2000 Catholic missionaries in the field and he spoke of how missiology now functions in the curriculum of theological schools. There is beginning to develop a new, more missiological, vision of the theological faculty, and mission studies have also forged bonds with other faculties as well. Many students are showing interest in other religions and in small Christian communities. A significant question for missiology in today's Poland is how Poles can learn from their experience under Communism. There is a consensus that the Vatican II definition of mission is outmoded and a new definition is being sought.

The consensus of the group at the end of the days of the mission study group was that the topic of Mission in the Theological Curriculum is a topic that needs to be pursued further in IAMS. To this end, the group decided to keep in contact with one another and to see if the group could be developed into a full-fledged IAMS interest group. The group agreed that mission in the theological curriculum could not be limited to a list of courses in the curriculum, nor to a vague sense of mission permeating the curriculum. The image used was that mission should represent a "layer" of a cake as well as a "slice" that cut through every layer. Missiology must appear *both* as a discrete discipline and a core value of theological education as well.

Submitted by Steve Bevans, convener  
August 21, 2004