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BOOK REVIEW

Dietrich Werner, David Esterline, Namsoon Kang and Joshva Raja, ed., *The Handbook of Theological Education in World Christianity: Theological Perspectives, Ecumenical Trends and Regional Surveys*, Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2010, Pages: xxix+759, ISBN: 81-7086-560-3.

The *Handbook of Theological Education in World Christianity* is a unique and impressive collection of important themes of the international debate on theological education. As the subtitle of the book explains, it deals with these themes from three angles, namely, theological perspectives, ecumenical trends and regional surveys. This collection of essays by more than 90 expert church leaders helps us to have a deeper understanding of the recent developments, challenges and trends in theological education. This commendable attempt is the result of the creative and farsighted attempt of the four important church organizations where the World Council of Churches took the lead role and has succeeded in leading from the front in its role of reminding the churches of their responsibility for strengthening theological education and in encouraging mutual cooperation.

The theological education is vital for the future of World Christianity. Any laxity in the effective imparting of theological education will result in the decline in the competence of church leadership, the holistic nature of mission and capacities for ecumenical and interfaith dialogue. This fact is clearly and systematically discussed in this collection of essays. The contributors and editors (Dietrich Werner, David Esterline, Namsoon Kang and Joshva Raja) try to see *the Kingdom of God* as the necessary theological frame work for training in the Christian ministry and thus attempt to deal with the history and future vision of theological education from a missionary and ecumenical perspectives. So the main emphases of the book are: the concern for quality of biblical-theological education, authenticity of theological education and creativity of theological education. The *Handbook* has got three parts. Part I deals with the Theological education in World Perspective and contains major issues in theological education in the past decades. Part II, presents Regional surveys of Development in Theological Education since 1910, and provides information on key developments, achievements, and challenges in theological education in the last 100 years. Part III deals with Theological Education from Denominational and Confessional Perspectives and provides articles on each of the major traditions. Finally, there is a useful list of Networks, Associations and

Resources for Theological Education with the websites. Part I helps the reader to situate himself/herself in the context of the vision and mission of the theological education in different parts of the world and gives a crosshatch treatment of theological education from various angles: pressing issues facing theological education at this time, regional and denominational views, special themes that face theological education. From the second part of the Handbook, one may attain a very vast and clear knowledge on key developments, achievements and challenges in theological education. Part III gives us a picture of the nature of theological education in different denominations like Orthodox, Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, Methodist, Baptist and the Reformed Churches. There are also essays on Theological education in Evangelical Theological Schools and Pentecostal Schools.

Theological education is understood as education for transformation and this book is a welcome contribution in the process of bringing it in the line of holistic practices. It urges us to continue our search for relating theological education to the wider perspectives of the Kingdom of God, to peace and justice and to include the future perspectives. The authors have made it a point to give serious considerations to the new areas like interfaith dialogue, people with disabilities, HIV and AIDS, women, Race, power and migration which are linked to the life of peoples and to the mission of the Church and thus points to the right direction in helping the future Church leaders “to discern God’s ways in the present world” and “to understand the signs of the times and engage the world more directly.”

At the same time, it is to be noted that in the process of keeping the “ecumenical equilibrium” and “balance of voices,” some of the major traditions of the Christian movement had to be satisfied with a limited space, finding a very brief survey of their long heritage. As the editors themselves regret there are no articles on environment and theological education, on human sexuality and the consideration of different sexual orientations in Christianity and their impact on theological education. With regard to the Pentecostal theological education, we find articles related to Asia, Latin America and Africa, but we miss one on North America, the land where we have the sprouts of these denominations. But, these one or two shortcomings do not affect the uniqueness of this beautiful and timely contribution.

As Archbishop Desmond Tutu wishes in the forward, this Handbook “enables us to become aware of the crucial importance of theological education for the renewal of the Church’s mission and service.” This book will contribute to ecumenical networking, mutual solidarity and crosscultural learning among the theological educators. It is definite that this Handbook will serve for decades as a resource book for theological educators, Church leaders, ecumenical formators, theologians and Church historians and others who are interested in the new trends in theological education.

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