

THE PERFORM OF THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION IN NIGERIA/AFRICA:

Intercultural Transformation

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Introduction

By the turn of the millennium, theological education in Nigeria will be slightly more than 50 years old, having been initiated in 1948¹. While the need to celebrate the progress and achievements of this sort of education must be recognized, there seems to me to be a parallel necessity to review its ideological foundation in the Nigerian and by extension, African context. This is with a view to fortify such foundations at points of apparent weakness, and to propose means of improving its seeming lack of a Nigerian-cum-African orientation from the outset, especially in the area of curriculum and methodology of teaching.

To this end, it is important to note, as Professor Ukeje has observed, that the religious education policy in Nigeria, "even 25 years after independence", was still based on the foundation laid by western Missionaries². This Observation is true for instance, of the Trinity College Umuahia whose theological education agenda still reflects to a large extent the imprints of the theological formulae devised by the European missionaries who "ruled" the College exclusively for the first 21 years of her existence from 1948-1968.³

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¹Shed N. Adiele. "Ministerial Training in the Anglican Communication in the Eastern States - 1904-1994" in *The Niger Mission Origin, Growth and Impact 1857-1995*. Shed N. Adiele (Ed.), Abu: Isaeco Press, 1996, pp.279-280.

²B.U. Ukeje, *Education For Social Reconstruction*, Lagos: Macmillan & G. Nig. Ltd., 1966, pp. 54-56.

³The background to this paper is from a review of the achievements of Trinity Theological College, Umuahia, Abia State, and Nigeria during her Golden Jubilee Celebration 1948-1998.

Missionary Education

The missionaries were the products of the 18th Century Evangelical Revival in Britain⁴. As such they reflected the temper of their age and saw themselves and their European culture as being at the apex of human and social evolution, while the non-European countries like those in Africa, including Nigeria, stood below on the lower rungs of the ladder of civilization. As a result of this mentality, the missionaries, who were the products of their age and the pioneers of theological education in Nigeria, did not consider any religion, any socio-culture expression of "God-man relationship" as valid, apart from the Christian religion, which they brought.

Consequently, they described African traditional religion as primitive religion, magic, fetish, juju, witchcraft, animism, paganism and heathenism⁵. They not only despised the African traditional religion and culture; they also sought to abolish them. According to J.B. Schuyler, some early missionaries saw African religion and cultures to be so intermingled and unified that there could be no real religious conversion without cultural rejection⁶. Also, Timothy Njoya of Kenya observed that:

The Missionaries wanted to save Africans from being Africans, as if to be themselves was the greatest sin. In their scheme of salvation, no distinction was made between sin and African custom. Sin and evil constituted such things as Africans homes, art, ethics, history, skills, plays and beliefs. African Christians had to be saved from such imagined evils as their dress, diet, rituals, tools, market and government. It was pagan to kill with a spear and Christian to kill with a gun.⁷

⁴E. M. Uka, *Missionaries Go Home?*, Berne: Peter Lang, 1989, pp.133-145.

⁵H. Kato, *Theological Pitfalls in Africa*. Kenya: Evangelical Pub. House, 1975, pp.18-24.

⁶J. B. Schuyler, "Conceptions of Christianity in the Context of Tropical Africa: Nigeria Reactions to its Advent" in *Christianity in Tropical Africa*, C. G. Heata (ed.), Oxford University Press, 1968, pp.209-210.

⁷Cited in Uka, 1989, *Missionaries Go Home?*, p.121.

Missionary Theology as Western Academic Theology

It should be observed with charity, that the African/Nigerian has depended rather too long on western missionary theology - and on its books and curriculum for reading, studying and interpreting theology.

According to my review of the twelve books by Prof. Adrian Hastings, a Roman Catholic missionary theologian, his topics centered on:

Missionary Principles, Mission and Ministry, Shortage of Priests, Theological Problem of Ministries in the Church, the Problem of the Ministry in East Africa, Church Reform, Reform of the Ministry, Marginal Ministry, Organization of the Ministry, Christian Doctrine of Marriage, Catholic Spirituality, African Christian Theology, and so forth.⁸

And one wonders whose interest and welfare were largely being served by this kind of literature which our theological students throughout Africa were compelled to buy, read, and study. Does it mean that the missionary writer did not know what the European invaders in Africa, who had conquered the world and were equipped with an almost infinite political and military arsenal, and could boast of unparalleled technical and scientific achievements, had seized the land of the African at gun-point and had forced him to become a wage-labourer, a servant and a slave to the invader?

The irony here is that it was the very Europeans who seized the land of the African by force and exploited both his labour and his mineral wealth, which also brought the Gospel to the African. A European missionary historian Richey Hogg, states the situation like this:

The western world approached the non-western world (like Africa) aggressively. This was evident in territorial conquests, commercial exploitations and all the pervasive western sense of cultural and intellectual superiority. Moreover, the West had all the benefits of

⁸E. M. Uka, *Critical Issues in Christianity in Africa*, Calabar: University of Calabar Press 1990, pp.1-50.

its industrial revolution. This was precisely the period in which western Protestant (including Roman Catholic) Mission emerged in full vigour. Almost invariably, missionaries consciously or unconsciously reflected this temper of the times.⁹

In effect, missionary theology which is more or less western theology was formulated against the background of a people who were in the majority and in power. Their theology was presented in abstract, universal and academic terms, which made little or no sense to those who did not belong to their group.

Western missionary theology sought to interpret faith from the perspective of those who struggle with issues of faith in post-enlightenment era. They sought to defend the supernatural in a natural world, and asked: Where is God of truth in a world of science and technology?

But for oppressed peoples like the Africans who struggled with issues of faith on the context of a post-colonial deprivation, and were searching for hope in a world of poverty, they asked the question: "Where is the God of righteousness in world of injustice?"¹⁰

The Need for Contextual Theology¹¹

The preceding discourse on those who are seeking for God of truth in a world of science and technology, and those are seeking for God of righteousness in a world of injustice, introduces us into the ambit of contextual theology.

By way of a sample definition, contextual theology can be called a conscious attempt to practice theology from within the context of real

⁹Richey Hogg, "Protestant Mission 1964-1984" in *History's Lessons for Tomorrow's Mission*, Andrey Abrecht (ed.), Geneva: World Student Christian Federation, nd., p.159.

¹⁰Samuel Rayon, "God of Justice" in Deane William Fenn, *Third World Liberation Theologies*, New York: Orbis Book, 1987, pp.348-355

¹¹Tissa Balasuriya, "Contextual Theologies" in Deane William Fenn, *Third World Liberation Theologies*, pp.331-335

life. This means that all theologies, even the most abstract and irrelevant, have been thought-out in one sociological context or the other. The problem is that western missionary theologies were mostly thought-out in an isolated context of the world of academia, in seminaries or universities or in monasteries, all in the context of western culture and liberal capitalism, and in the context of middle-class comfort and complacency. Hence they were both abstract and irrelevant to the African/Nigerian situation

Once we realize this, that the theologies we Africans inherited in our different churches and traditions are the product of another contextual situations, then we ought not be surprised to find that they were irrelevant to the Africans who did not live in those privileged and isolated contexts. The western theologies say nothing to the majority of the African peoples; they do not inspire them because they come from another context, another world, alien and alienated from that of the African.

What creates problems for us in Africa is that these western missionary theologies, despite the fact that we find them abstract and irrelevant, are still being presented to us as valid for everybody. Despite the ideological illusion that distorts their vision about certain realities, they still imagine that what they are saying is the whole truth and is valid for all human beings.

One of the greatest discoveries in theology in modern times is the discovery that every theology has a context. It is not surprising that this discovery came from the poor and oppressed nations of the world. In other words, it came from people who are not living in the same context as the western missionary theologians of Europe and North America.

Since all theologies are contextual, why do we speak about a special brand of theology as contextual theology? How would this theology differ from other kinds of theology?

The fact is that contextual theology is fully aware, right from the start, that it is being thought-out in and from a particular context, a

particular life-situation; whereas other theologies are blissfully unaware of their context, or pretend to be independent of any worldly context

Examples of Contextual Theology¹²

One helpful means of identifying the contextual theologies under discussion is to cite some concrete examples.

Black Theology: This is a contextual theology because it is a conscious and deliberate attempt to practice theology from within the experience of the oppression of the blacks. The very fact that it calls itself "black" shows that it is fully aware of the fact that it is starting from the context of black experience in a country dominated by white Europeans. But theology that come from and serves the interests of the white people does not call itself white theology because it is not conscious of its limited context.

Feminist Theology: Here again, the context from which this theology arises is clearly stated. It is the experience of being a women in "a man's" world; the experience of being deprived and marginalized as a women. Other theologies are for the most part masculine but they never say that.

Liberation Theology: Latin American theology of liberation is a conscious attempt to locate theology in a revolutionary situation of Latin American dependency, crying out for liberation. The context of the theology of liberation is the experience of being totally dependent culturally, economically, politically and psychologically upon the so-called developed nations or North America and Europe and the experience of struggling for liberation from this dependency. But the theologies that have emerged from the context of the developed countries do not call themselves theologies of domination or theologies of oppression. That is what they are, but they are unaware of this, or if they

¹²*Ibid.*, See also Y.C. Oneil, "Federal Theology", "Patristic Theology" "Alexandrian Theology", "Antiochene Theology" in Alan Richardson & John Bowden (eds.), *A New Dictionary of Christian Theology*, London: Scon Press, p.210. See also, R.R. Ruether, "Feminist Theology" in *A New dictionary of Christian Theology*. pp.210-212

are, they pretend to be something different; they pretend to be universally valid ways of talking about God and of faith in Jesus Christ.

Cultural Theology: African theology is a cultural theology. It differs from black theology because it starts from the context of American culture and not from the context of black oppression or neo-colonial domination.

The Curriculum of Missionary Theology¹³

As stated earlier, the African theological curriculum as set down by Europeans missionaries, invariably reflected a western theological and colonial orientation, which sought to define the supernatural in a natural world and prove the existence of God in a world of science and theology. Hence some of the western missionaries would ask: How can the untutored African comprehend God? In other words, to know God was an issue of science and technology, which have to be learnt before God is known. As such, the courses the missionaries mounted were calculated to expose Africans to the white man's worldview and culture, which at that time were considered conterminous with Christianity.

The subjects taught were Old Testament, New Testament, Church History in Western Scholarship, English Language and Literature (all written by people with a colonial western orientation), Pastoral Theology and Worship, with western formal liturgy and music (hymns). At that time, no single theological book was written or published by any African. Therefore, the theological education then, and other forms of education, focussed on how to be like the European in appreciating his culture and in despising the African culture. In fact, at that time people were made to believe that the African had no conception of God. That was why African scholars and theologians wrote to establish that the African had a conception of God.

Professor Bolaji Idowu wrote his doctoral thesis on *Oladumare: God in Yoruba Belief*¹⁴. The effort here was to prove that the Africans

¹³Shed N. Adiele, "Ministerial Training in the Anglican Communion in the Eastern States 1964-1995" in *The Niger Missions*.

¹⁴E.B. Idowu, *Oldumare: God in Yourba Belief*, London: Longmans, 1962.

had a conception of God. Also Dr. Danqua wrote *The Akan Doctrine of God*¹⁵, and Professor Mbiti wrote on *Concepts of God in Africa*¹⁶.

Dominance and Dependency¹⁷

Though the overall picture was that of dominance and dependency, it ought to be observed that at the micro-level, the missionaries, under the protection and support of the European colonizers, were able to stop human sacrifice, the burial of living human beings, quell inter-tribal feuds, check internal inter-tribal slavery and slave trade, stop the killing of twins and of babies born with abnormalities.

They introduced grammar school education, where reading and writing were taught; they built Christian churches, which were replicas of their home churches in name, liturgy, organization and architectural design. They also introduced hospitals. Though these agents of western civilization were good, yet they were destructive of the traditional modes of education, worship and healing. But in spite of the African's Revolution against western culture as represented by colonialism and missionary enterprise, millions of Africans almost in spite of themselves, have embraced several ideas and products of western culture.

The African experience with the West ended the geographical isolation of several parts of Africa. The introduction of formal education and literacy is perhaps the largest single benefit for which most Africans are particularly grateful to the missionaries. For through modern education, new opportunities for self and corporate improvement were made available. The net effect of western formal education was that it awakened all kinds of aspirations in Africans. It broadened the horizon of those who were exposed to the skills, values, and attitudes latent in western education.¹⁸

¹⁵J.B. Dangua, *The Akan Doctrine of God*, London: 1964

¹⁶J.S. Mbiti, *Concepts of God in Africa*, London: SPCK 1997

¹⁷A.E.D. Mgbemena, "Effect of the Anglican Church in the Life of the People of the Eastern States of Nigeria" in Shed N. Adiele (ed), pp.386-406.

¹⁸See also Chinweizu, et al, *Towards the Decolonization of African Lit.* Vol. 1, Enugu: Forth Dimension Publishers 1980, pp.137-138

The Theological Question

The theological question was a very powerful and pragmatic instrument used by the missionaries to compel the African to alter his conception of God and his world-view. The missionaries achieved this through a process of indoctrination by which they sought to suppress both reason and evidence in order to inculcate Christian beliefs into the African. Indoctrination in that context was, and still is, a deliberate attempt to suppress all possible criticism of beliefs transmitted. According to Schofield, "Indoctrination involves putting one line of argument so forcefully, so repeatedly, so uncompromisingly, that the learner is able to consider alternatives"¹⁹. This process of indoctrination accounts partly for why the Africans suffer from schizoid religious mentality up-till today.

Method of Teaching Theology – A Colonial Heritage²⁰

So far the method of teaching technological courses especially in Third World countries is the worn-out colonial "telling method" that generates ceaseless note copying and note-memory learning habits. The method leaves the students at the level of consumers of information when they should be generators of ideas.²¹

As one who has employed this nutritive/narrative or telling method for many years, I now find it uncreative, unproductive and un-exciting. Paulo Freire has done an incisive critical study on this telling style of teaching, which he describes as the 'banking theory of education'.

The main transaction of banking education is the transference of information from the teacher and depositing it in the students. Freire describes it in terms of ten characteristics namely:

- 1) The teacher teaches, the students are taught

¹⁹H. Scholfield, *The Philosophy of Education, An Introduction*, London: 1978, pp.7-60

²⁰See also R. W. Fazmino, *Christian Education: Principles and Practice*, G. Rapids Michigan: Baker Book House 1991, pp.136-138

- 2) The teacher knows all, the students know nothing
- 3) The teacher thinks, the students are thought about
- 4) The teacher talks, the students meekly listen
- 5) The teacher disciplines, the students are disciplined
- 6) The teacher chooses, the students comply with the teacher's choice
- 7) The teacher selects the context, the students adapt to it
- 8) The teacher acts, the students have the illusion of acting
- 9) The teacher imposes professional authority, the student lose their freedom
- 10) The teacher is the subject; the students are mere objects.²²

Freire's banking theory of education corresponds to what Jean-Paul Sartre calls the digestive or nutritive concept of education in which knowledge is fed by the teacher to the students to "fill them out"²³.

In effect, the theory and practice of banking education involves verbalistic lessons and distance between the teacher and the taught. The method serves to block the development of analytical and critical minds and causes the educated man to be the adapted man - the passive man.

This sad situation breeds and promotes an educational system that:

- is book/handout oriented
- trains for paper qualification
- tends to teach subjects-matter that is not related to the needs of the student and the society
- promotes a teaching methodology that does not encourage original, analytical or creative thinking.²⁴

Problem Posing Education

Having identified the problems in banking method of education, Freire proposes what he called "Libertarian education" which reconciles

²¹E. M. Uka, "Paulo Freire's Banking Theory of Education:" A Critique of Nigerian Educational System" in *Nigerian Journal of Educational Foundations* Vol. 1 No. 1., 1997, pp.112-123

²²Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Trans. Myra Bergman Ramos, New York: Seabury 1970 p.59

²³Cited in Paulo Freire p. 58

and seeks to find solution to the teacher-student contradiction and its attendant problems.

To achieve this goal, efforts are made to engage the students in critical and analytical thinking and in the quest for mutual humanization between the teacher and the student. Freire suggests the "problem-posing education method" which overcomes the problems associated with the banking theory of education.²⁵

In problem-posing education method, the dichotomy between "teacher of students" and student of teachers" ceases to exist. A new method emerges, that is, "the teacher-student" and "student-teacher" inter-dependent relationship. In this case, the teacher is no longer merely the one who teaches but also one who is himself/herself taught in dialogue with the student. In this way both the teacher and the student become jointly responsible for a process in which both grow in knowledge. As such, the students are no longer docile listener but critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher. By so doing the problem-posing-education-method creates new knowledge, arouses the mood that favours critical and analytical thinking, stimulates true reflection and action upon reality. It treats men as authentic human beings capable of engaging in inquiry and creative transformation.

In all, it is observed that whereas the banking theory and practice are narrative, nutritive, immobilizing, paralyzing and dehumanizing, the problem posing theory and practice are thought-provoking, mobilizing, humanizing and productive as they take a person's historicity and ability seriously. Besides, the problem-posing method approaches education not for education sake, but as a method that is geared towards solving problems.

A religious/theological education programme therefore, if organized along the said problem-posing method, will teach students how the religious dimension has influenced human experience, both for good and

²⁴E. M. Uka, "Paulo Freire's Banking Theory of Education: A Critique of Nigerian Educational System" in *Nigerian Journal of Educational Foundations*, Vol. 1. No. 1, 1997.

for bad. It will help the students to explore and understand the conceptual framework, rationality and structure of religion (Biblical faith). It will assist the students to recognize the significance, which commitment to a religion (Biblical faith) has, in the establishment of life-perspectives and in the promotion of reasonable priorities in the social order. The approach would enable the students to have the opportunity to explore the gravity, value and dynamics of religious thought as manifested, e.g., in Biblical history and heritage. It would also help the students to develop such skills as the ability to interpret Biblical and religious symbols; the ability to give a Christian or religious interpretation to issues of the day; and the ability to create awareness of religious phenomena and their significance. The approach will equip the students with enough knowledge to be able to give a Christian/religious answer to a problem.

A New Theological Agenda for Theological education in Nigeria²⁶

The African situation requires a new theological methodology that is different from the approaches of the dominant theologies of the West. African theology must reject the prefabricated ideas of North-Atlantic theology, by defining itself according to the struggles of the people in their resistance against the structures of domination (both within and without). Our task as theologians is to create a theology that arises from and is accountable to African people.

In view of the pedagogical, theological and ecclesiastical limitations of our western missionary heritage, our people still consider Christianity an alien religion, intruding upon but not integrated with the social life of the people.

A Ghanaian Christian sociologist, A.K. Busia, observed after a long research that Christianity was not introduced in Africa with its real characteristic of wholeness as taught by Jesus Christ of Nazareth. And so its impact is not similar to what Africans had known in their traditional faith and society. Consequently, the new faith became divorced from the

²⁵Paulo Freire, 1970, p.59

normal daily activities of the people's life. This fact led him to conclude that:

As one watches the daily lives and activities of the people, and takes account of the rites connected with marriage, birth, widowhood, harvest, or installation of traditional offices, one learns that a great deal of the normal communal activities are still alien institutions intruding upon but not integrated with social institutions.²⁷

This observation, though sad, is an objective analysis of a real problem of Biblical Christianity in Africa. Indigenous African Christian theologians have to grapple with this problem of lopsided Christianity and present a type that can be relevant to the African's true needs and his sense of worth. The critical limitation in content and methods of teaching and studying theology which we have reviewed compel us to come up with a new, relevant and radical theological agenda, that would respond to the limitations of our western theological heritage and to the critical issues of contextualization, indigenization, inculturation, injustice, sexism, oppression, discrimination, dehumanization, and the accumulation of wealth in the hands of few. In this effort, we must avoid a purely academic-theology-approach that is dissociated from the needs of an ecclesial community and the world. Our aim would be to develop courses and discourses on Biblical faith that would respond to the real questions raised by the contemporary world and the Christian community living in it. It has to be recognized that the task of Biblical theologizing, if it is to be rigorous in its elaboration and universal in scope, calls for a painstaking knowledge of scripture and a careful correlation with Christian tradition and contemporary theology.²⁸

²⁶J.N. Sarcco, "Search for New Models in Theological Education" in C. Rene Padilla (ed.), *New Alternatives in Theological Education*, Oxford: Regnum Bks, 1986, pp.5-25

²⁷K.A. Busia, *Report on a Social Survey of Secondi Taoradi*, London: Crown Agent for the Colonies 1950, p.79

²⁸Samuel Amirtham, "New Styles in Theological Education" in *Evangelical Review of Theology*, Vol. 3. No.1, April 1979, pp.120-126

To achieve this goal in theological colleges where ministers are trained for service in their ecclesial communities and in the world, theological education should, among other things, be: Student-Oriented and praxis-oriented, while the ministry should be people-oriented and communication-oriented.

Let us comment on these new-proposals briefly.

A New Style of Theological Education²⁹

To overcome some of the ills of our traditional mode of education which Paulo Freire has pointed out, especially in the area of teacher-student relations, we propose a student-oriented learning, where lectures and monologues by teachers are reduced to a minimum. Here students are encouraged to engage in private studies, and to attend seminars, workshops and discussion groups – all as part of the learning process. In this way, students are made the subjects not the objects in the learning process.

For theological education to be praxis-oriented means that there ought to be a dynamic interaction of action and reflection. To achieve this goal, involvement programmes are to be built in to the curriculum so that students can relate themselves to the realities of life situations.

It needs to be observed here that in theological work, the unity of theory and practice is vital. The rarefied atmosphere of theological scholarship must be related to the real life of the Churches at the grassroot level. The effort here is to consciously avoid “self-centred pursuit of academic theology” and to direct the training towards the needs of the Church and the society in which the Church exists. In other words, theological education should be aimed at prompting “Christian commitment and action”.

Another traditional dimension of praxis in theology is the task of interpreting what the Church says and believes about the society. A new

²⁹Ibid, Samuel Amitham, p. 124.

perspective is for Christian theologians to try:

- 1) to understand and interpret how the world sees the Church and
- 2) how society challenges the Church to re-examine the message of the Bible and to re-state the nature of the Christian faith.

This situation is like where Jesus asked his disciples: "Who do men say that I am?" (Mk.8:27-35). If this perspective is a valid point of view, the only way to approach it is to be concerned with the burning and disturbing issues in one's society. We have to begin seriously to challenge "the politics of man with the politics of God". For this perspective to lead to theological productivity, the minister and ministers-in-training have to share in the agonies of the people in order to constitute a force for justice and human advancement. They do not have to stand aloof and leave the change to God's miraculous intervention when God, as in the days of Ezekiel, is looking for someone to stand in the gap to save the people from beings destroyed (Ezek. 22:30).

Apart from empathetic participation in people's sufferings, the minds of the ministers and minister-in-training must be trained to be critical and articulate. When these two elements are present, theology is born. The implication of this, is that our theological colleges should be designed not only to be consumers of "western theologies" but creators of their own theologies that are relevant to the needs of the people.

A New Style of Ministry

Our theological education programme must enable students to be engaged in a new-style of ministry. This new style of ministry is to foster a people-oriented ministry and a communication-oriented ministry.

A people oriented ministry is not pastor-centred but people centred. It is a ministry that helps the layperson to be a priest and a minister to his fellow Christians. In this way the pastoral ministry becomes an enabling ministry. The pastor in contact becomes, not the benefactor or the administrator in the Church, but an enabler, a facilitator, like a teacher in a class. By this people oriented ministry, the concept of the priesthood of

all believers will be fully realized, as Christians offer themselves to one another, pray for one another, and sacrifice themselves for one another. Through all this, the people of God become "A chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people...", as stated in I Peter 2:9.

A communication-oriented ministry is aimed at helping ministers and minister-in-training, whose minds have been trained to be critical and articulate to be able to communicate the gospel effectively to all cadre of human beings. The minister-in-training also have to be trained to be involved in identifying areas of needs and to start new ministries within their Church to address such needs. Also minister-in-training should be encouraged to see the Christian ministry as a ministry of love. In which case they must work for structures, which promote justice and righteousness in the land.

Theological Curriculum

The theological curriculum for the realization of the above agenda will, in addition to the traditional Biblical-theological courses, involve study programmes that would reveal the impact of Biblical (religious) values on individual thought, behaviour, worldview, personality, social relations, marriage and family-life, occupation, social structures, and organizations. Indeed it would provide strong Biblical perspectives in the areas of family, law, education, politics, economics, and government. By this approach, the programme renders Biblical and theological studies meaningful, relevant and contemporary.

In view of the importance of the economic factor in the life of the people, the reading of the Bible from the viewpoint of the poor becomes important. For as Sobrino said, "The poor are the authentic theological source for understanding Christianity's truth and practice." In the past, theology grappled with the philosophical question of how we can believe in an unchangeable God in a world of chance and change. Today theology is called upon to answer the question of how we can believe in a God of righteousness in a society that crushed the poor and marginalizes their humanity.

Conclusion

The courses offered today in our theological colleges must be those that are relevant and responsive to the needs of the ecclesial communities and the world in which they live. We are to ensure through the courses that are taught, the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ as the power unto salvation goes along with a demonstration of the power of the gospel which should include the uprooting of the structures of injustice that oppress and dehumanize the people of God, both in the Church and in the society. Students are to be encouraged not only to read, study and write theology but to practice theology by translating their theological reflection into action. Also efforts are to be made to ensure that commitment to the risen Lord (who mediates to us the sovereignty of God's love), checks any attempt at absolutising any particular theological formulation, ideology, slogan, or programme. The students (including the Churches they serve) are to be made aware of the subtle ways in which some powerfully organized evangelical movements use the Gospel to support the status-quo and keep Christians insensitive or blind to the injustices, iniquities, inequities of the political, economic and social order.

In sum, theological education has to be made relevant, exciting, meaningful, liberating, and indigenous as it becomes involved in the history and struggle of the people to promote righteousness, peace and justice in the land.

Afterall, it is righteousness that exalts a person, a family, and institution and a nation, while sin is a reproach to any people: Prov.14:34.