Theological Studies at Istha

Peace, Reconciliation, and Unity in the Context of Angola

Perspective of Theological Education in Sierra Leone Context

Theological Perspective of Africa
Welcome to a new experience – an online Journal written by African theologians.

If we have learned anything in the last few decades, it is that the eternal truths from God must take root and have relevance wherever they are learned and lived. We call that the “context” for ministry.

Christianity is maturing and growing in Africa. The United Methodist Church has 16 schools of theology and pastor’s colleges on the continent of Africa to assist Christians, growing in their faith, to see those eternal truths through an African perspective. How does faith apply to their everyday lives? What does the story of the “Feeding of the 5,000” mean in the midst of poverty? What does the “Prince of Peace” have to say to African nations?

In 2011, the African Association of United Methodist Theological Institutions was born. As the deans and faculty gathered, they were able to share their celebrations and their challenges. They were also able to speak theologically about their calling and goals to shape spiritual leaders for the future of the church. In an effort to expand that conversation, they have created this Journal: Theology in the African Context, so that these conversations can be held throughout the world.

The Pentecost story of the Holy Spirit being known in various tongues – is still the story in Africa. The theological institutions in Africa use three primary languages: French, English, and Portuguese. This is in addition to local languages and their variations, e.g. Swahili, Shona. Although we cannot publish this Journal in every tongue, we are providing it in three languages.

We invite you to read and share these first articles – and watch for those to come. If you would like to converse with AAUMTI, we invite you to communicate directly with the Chair of the Editorial Board, Dr. Sidney Cooper, Sierra Leone. His email is siacooper@yahoo.com.

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BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

The United Methodist University in Côte d'Ivoire (UMECI), through ISTHA, as a continuing education facility for the workers of the United Methodist Church in Côte d’Ivoire, must attempt to organize a symposium (conference, seminar) in collaboration with the various players involved in the life of the United Methodist Church in Côte d’Ivoire.

Why such a conference?

This educational institution is often challenged by the following question:

Is there a perfect balance between the education as practiced in its own structure and the problems facing the United Methodist churches and especially the responses they must provide to the current controversial issues that haunt the minds of Ivorians?

Such a session must definitely be organized to address this issue because what ISTHA needs to do today is to work to reconcile the theological education with the churches’ social commitment.

Yes! All constituents of the United Methodist Church are called to contribute towards such an effort because:

The institutions of clergy formation and theological education are increasingly disconnected from the realities of society. The reason is that Pastors and Theologians most often behave as “the elite” above “the masses”.

Unfortunately, the Institutions of clergy formation and theological education too often model their teaching programs after those from western institutions that are, by and large, inundated by great theories that often do not have any specific foundation on people’s daily life.

The development of training centers in various regions of Africa requires a comprehensive policy for their profitability, their complementarity and their relationship.

The Churches today look more like indoctrination and conditioning centers; they look more like places in search of new members than environments or places where appropriate and sustainable solutions are provided to the social challenges of our time. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to choose a truly contextual theology, a theology that takes into account the values of the Gospel and its integration into Ivorian society. The mission of the Church is to nurture and give witness according to the Gospel, spread the Good News, in order to enlighten men and women on the social, cultural, economic and political situations in our country.
In an Ivorian society where the ancestral values no longer have a place and where the youth, without any point of reference, lapse into drugs, delinquency, prostitution, homosexuality;

political unrest has led to a climate of intolerance everywhere.

All the workers and all the intellectuals only seek to flee this country for a “better life” in the West, a western world that hardly welcomes them. The Church is challenged by an African society that is in danger of exploding. What can we do?

In this context, which represents a new challenge for the United Methodist Church in Côte d’Ivoire (EMU-CI) and for the Gospel, the future leaders of the EMU-CI must be prepared to tackle the problem in depth and to provide concrete, just and sustainable solutions.

DENOMINATION

UMECI ISTHA – THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION AND PRACTICE OF THEOLOGIE OR ECCLESIAL PRACTICE

OBJECTIVES
The overall objective is as follows: To redefine the theological education policy.

In addition, there are specific objectives:

To question society on the problems that undermine it;
To ask for enlightenment from the Bible;
To encourage the Churches to discuss their social commitment;
To capitalize on achievements;
To share experiences;
To implement a practical plan of action.

BENEFICIARIES

Christian men and women;
Professors and students in different educational institutions in Africa;
Church leaders;
Pastors;
Churches;
Lay people bearing specific responsibilities;
Social and political stakeholders;
Church organizations.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The expected outcomes of this symposium within the context of reconciling the initial education,
of the Churches' expectations and the church practice, and of the churches' commitment for a
more just and non-violent society, are as follows:

A new interpretation of theology that takes into account people’s daily lives;
The development of a community Theo-praxis;
A rediscovery as well as a rereading of the biblical texts in light of the problems undermining
our societies;
The emergence of a new theological education and clergy formation more closely linked to
people's daily lives;
The introduction of new methods of spreading the Gospel;
The articulation of a theological reflection consistent with the context of each region of
Africa;
The implementation of modular programs of education highlighting the relationship between
theology, peace, justice and reconciliation;
The emergence of a new society;
A new image and a new vision from educational Institutions;
Closer ties between educational Institutions.

DETAILED PLAN

The subjects taught at the Faculty of Theology at ISTHA (Abadjin-Doumé Theological College)
are structured like in other Faculties of Protestant Theology in Europe and in Africa into four
major disciplinary fields; in other words, they are a set of disciplines comprising four major
branches:

Biblical disciplines
· Old Testament
· New Testament
· Biblical philology

Historical disciplines
· History of Ancient Christianity
· History of the Reformation
· History of religions (various expressions of Religion)

Systematic disciplines
· Dogmatics
· Ethics
· Religious philosophy

Practical disciplines
· Practical Theology
· Musicology
· Sociology

NOTE:
The program offers courses in biblical sciences (Old and New Testament), in history of
Christianity, in systematic theology and in practical theology. Some courses are offered in sciences of religions.

All these disciplines are characterized by a diversity of approaches, but all have in common the willingness to enter into a dialogue among one another and to be focused on the same mission, the same quest.

Let us examine in detail the essential elements of these disciplinary fields.

**Biblical disciplines**

**I-1. Old Testament**

The teaching of the *Old Testament* includes:

The study of the different books of the Hebrew Bible that Christians call the Old Testament, which implies a serious study of the history and literature of the ancient Near East. These courses introduce the student to the reading and the critique of the texts, the understanding of literary genres and the conceptual universe of the ancient Israelites, hence, the study of the ancient Israelites’ languages.

In addition, it provides an insight on theological issues in the Old Testament Books.

**I.2. New Testament**

The study of the *New Testament* focuses on understanding the 27 books, including the Old Testament, which constitute the fundamental texts of Christianity.

The methodology used covers a wide range:
- Analysis of texts;
- History of nascent Christianity;
- Understanding the Jewish and Greek religious environment, hence, the study of languages of the New Testament.

Study of the theology displayed in each of the text. It is a question of determining how the authors of the New Testament, each in his own way, intended to report on the arrival of God in the life of the world through the life, the death and the resurrection of Jesus-Christ.

**Historical disciplines**

The teaching of the *history of Christianity* includes everything that was said, accomplished or thought in past centuries, directly or indirectly related to Christianity. It takes into account and compares:

- The doctrine and
- the practices;
- The theology and
the customs.
The theories of religion.

This course also introduces the comprehension of historical methods as well as reflection on the validity of historical understanding.

Systematic disciplines

In-depth reflection on the overall Christian faith in its various relationships with the cultural and religious world of today, the systematic theology comprises several teaching components:

- Dogmatics;
- Fundamental theology;
- Contemporary theologies;
- Philosophy of religion;
- Theories of religion;
- Ethics.

**NOTE:**
The teaching of ethics draws from different traditions represented by philosophy and theology. The fundamentals of ethics relate to the foundations and types of arguments stemming from moral reflection; the similarities and differences between secular ethics and religious ethics are taken into account. Applied ethics, another essential element, conducts case study analyses in different human and social areas (*sexuality, medicine, politics, environment*, etc.)

Practical disciplines

The teaching of Practical Theology draws from different traditions represented by the Practice of Theology, Sociology, Musicology, etc.

INTRODUCTION OF THE BACHELOR’S DEGREE

* Semesters 1 to 5* give the student the basic educational background in Protestant Theology. Let us review the disciplinary branches of Protestant Theology:

- Biblical disciplines (ancient languages, Old and New Testament);
- Historical disciplines (history of diverse expressions of Religion: Judaism, Christianity, Mohammedanism, etc.)
- Systematic disciplines (Dogmatics, Ethics, Philosophy);
- Practical disciplines (Practical Theology, Musicology, Sociology of Religions).

In addition to these Educational Credits for Protestant Theology studies, the following applies:

Training in university methodology and general studies courses (during the first two semesters), with several days dedicated to the interdisciplinarity in theology and
learning living foreign languages, which should allow the students access to non-francophone theological literature.

* At the end of the second semester and at the beginning of the third, the students take part in a 60-days internship program to raise their awareness about the professional realities.

* For the 6th semester, the student chooses between the ‘fundamental’ or ‘applied’ Bachelor’s track [Note: the ‘fundamental’ track focuses on theoretical aspect with further studies mind; the ‘applied’ track focuses on the practical aspects with employment opportunity in mind].

* The ‘fundamental’ Bachelor’s track includes in-depth studies of the disciplinary fields inherent to Protestant Theology and therefore, prepares the students for admission to a Master’s program. This is the diploma required by UMECI in terms of access to Clergy status.

* The ‘applied’ Bachelor’s is intended primarily for students who do not wish to go beyond the level of a Bachelor’s in Theology. It has a particular place for pre-vocational studies that offer several choices: practical theology, sociology, musicology, service (Diakonia), pastoral care, and educational psychology.

This track is intended primarily for students wishing to become catechists, church services specialized educators or social workers, church musicians, hospital chaplains, etc.

**COMPLETION OF THE BACHELOR’S DEGREE**

The studies take six semesters. The Bachelor’s diploma is granted after acquiring 180 credits (or 30 per semester). Credit units acquired in other Faculties may be submitted for validation to the Team of trainers who is responsible for the entire Bachelor’s track and who acts as the Board of Examiners in granting this diploma.
Peace, Reconciliation, and Unity in the Context of Angola

The God of human history reveals himself to nations and these nations respond through their religion. Truthful acts between the Creator and human beings are interpreted and systematized in theological knowledge. Religion and theology must walk hand in hand in order to obtain an experience of faith which shall lead to a balanced theological perspective of peace, reconciliation and unity.

It must be acknowledged that with the existence of the African Association of United Methodist Theological Institutions (AAUMTI), Africa has made significant strides towards materializing this vision. However, the African theological perspective is understood as the way through which Africans face and embrace theological concepts within their religious and socio-cultural traditions. Taking into account the diversity and also the existing religious complexity in the continent, known as the cradle of humanity, in this sense, this approach shows Angola’s reality. In addition to being the closest context, representatives from this country were present in the United Methodist Church Theological Higher Education Institutions third great gathering organized by AAUMTI in Nairobi, Kenya, on September 15-17, 2013.

Similarly to other African peoples, Angolans within their traditions and cultures may also be considered religious. In their ancestors’ times, there was a reality of faith which has prevailed into present time. In each one of the country’s tribes, there is a name to refer to God. For example, in the different native Bantu national languages, a specific term is used for the Supreme Being, who holds the flow of life. “Nzambi” is the name given to God by the Kimbundu, Tchokwe and Kikongo people. Speakers of Umbundu language, members of a tribe that carries the same name, have given God the name “Suku”. These names given to God, illustrate the sensible faith of Angola inhabitants, through the ages. With the arrival of the Christian missionaries, divinity became identified with God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

With such existing ethnic and cultural diversity among the people, will unity in the faith be possible? In Angola, the voice of peace spoke louder than the war cries. God’s sons in the fields of combat, which lasted about three decades, i.e. from 1975 to 2002, knew how to preserve their faith with the anticipation of hope. It was a unifying faith that transformed the armed conflict into a peaceful environment. Peace is essential for any society, because its benefits are visible in the eyes of all people. With the tranquility of the present, it is possible to materialize Christ’s commandment of going and taking the good news of the kingdom of God to all places (Matthew 28:19). This will not be possible when a nation is in a state of military agitation. The calm experienced today brings many benefits, not only material but also spiritual. Societal benefits of peace include the equitable distribution of the nation’s goods by all, the enjoyment of human beings’ spiritual ease in their daily lives, a socioeconomic development environment with the rehabilitation of infrastructures, and the improvement of the population’s basic needs.
Furthermore, peace brings unity in the midst of diversity in several areas, such as social, political, economic, cultural and religious.

In our current reality, set in motion by God, the country breaths an atmosphere of peace. The religious, cultural and theological context of today is different from what it was during war time. One may declare that the nation’s peace and unity was possible because men who disagreed, at some point understood each other. However, through a theological reading of the historical distance, this peace which created unity was only achieved by the grace of God. Many years of suffering have meant that people of faith interceded through prayer to Jesus, King of Peace, who preferred to enter triumphantly in the city of Jerusalem mounting a small donkey, symbol of humility and peace, instead of a horse which translates into power and war. In this sense, the facts of this story confirm, once more, God’s word when he says:

*For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility* (Ephesians 2: 14 -16).

The letter of the apostle Paul to the Ephesians, in chapter 2, verse 14, alludes to peace, using the Greek word “ειρήνη”. It should be noted that the noun “peace” is in the nominative form, conferring that the ειρήνη which we receive as a result of Jesus’ death on the cross, is also ours. We must remember the greeting that Jesus used with his disciples and followers: “Peace be with you!” (John 20:19).

In verse 2:16, the connection between “ειρήνη” and reconciliation is established. In the Greek language “αποκαταλλαξη” is the word used by the biblical text above mentioned, to reference the action of reconciling. The verb reconcile is conjugated in the subjunctive Aorist active, in the third person singular. That means that the author of the reconciliation is Jesus Christ himself; from Jesus men receive a great legacy, the ministry of reconciliation. For human beings to live united and in reconciliation with each other, first they need to reconcile with God, and then find Jesus’ peace which goes beyond the human levels of intelligence, as the Bible reminds us: “And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4: 7)”.

Is it possible for men to agree in the midst of disagreement? The Church, as a means of the word of the Lord in the world, has been fulfilling its reconciling mission of bringing together the conflicting Angolan sides until this desideratum is achieved.

In the Bible, we find a clear example showing that it is possible to live together in peace and unity, even if there is a lack of understanding and a severing of the interpersonal relationship ties. This means that even if one does not agree with the other, he or she remains an important piece within the divine project. The Book of Acts tells us about a quarrel or disagreement between the apostle Paul and his missionary travel companion, whose name was Barnabas. This happened because Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them on their trip, but Paul did not agree with that idea. As a result, Barnabas went with Mark to Cyprus, and Paul pursued another destination (Acts 15: 37-39).
Up to this point, there is no doubt that there was a disagreement between these two mission companions. But this may lead some of us to raise certain questions. Were Paul, Barnabas and Mark forever in disagreement? What happened in their lives after that quarrel? The answers to these questions can be found in the letter of Paul himself to Philemon, in which among several companions who worked with him in ministry, such as Mark were also mentioned, “Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends you greetings. And so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my fellow workers.” (Philemon: 1: 23-24). This letter is sufficient to show that Paul and Mark, despite their previous disagreement, met again and continued to work together in spreading the Gospel. This is a miracle that transforms quarrelers into collaborators.

The conflict should be considered under what point of view? The truth is that in any part of the world, as well as what happened in Angola, conflict brings devastating consequences at both individual and collective levels. However, within the theological perspective, the African people are a model of encouragement for the rest of the world to appreciate the positive in the middle of conflict.

Nelson Mandela, Christian Methodist, one of the most prominent African leaders, is a great example of the reconciling process that reflects God’s purpose for his people. Mandela was in prison for 27 years, but not long after he was freed, he became President of South Africa. Many, perhaps the majority, thought that it was fair if the newly elected president retaliated for the humiliation and abuse that he suffered while in prison. But the statesman of the South African nation did not take advantage of his political position to take revenge upon the perpetrators of all of his many years of suffering. He did the absolute opposite, opting for the path of dialogue, forgiveness and reconciliation. In other words, Mandela, whose actions are worthy of our imitation, made collaborators of his enemies.

What can be learned from this fact is that disagreements may occur frequently among human beings. When that happens, one must always look for peaceful means to solve the problem and reestablish the ties broken by discord. If peace and reconciliation are the highest goals, the result will be the glowing love of God among the people. Then, because of Christ, divergence will cease to exist, and forgiveness will take its place. Hatred and animosity no longer will be felt, and among all there will be friendship, brotherhood, companionship and cooperation.

Reconciliation is one of the theological causes through which Christ was sacrificed on the cross. However, contemporary theology must possess this reconciling focus when announcing the good news day after day.

Reconciliation faces the need of a mature spirituality. That means a life lived in Christ: full, guided and enabled by the Holy Spirit. The spirituality needed by the believer to practice the ministry of reconciliation is a life such as the one lived by Jesus in each fiber of his being; a life without vanity and selfishness, free to obey God. Paulo Jimenez, in his book, “Principles of Christian Education”, states that one of the pillars of biblical-theological teaching is that people shall live in this world according to a responsible manner. “Christian education leads us to examine and change our individual and social life style” supported by theological instruction, which makes disciples for the transformation of the world.

Taking into account the need of a theological contribution for the social development of a community and even a country, it is important that Higher Education Schools of Theology in Angola and beyond include in their academic curriculum courses that have to do with the matter
of conflict resolution. The courses in pastoral psychology, pastoral counseling, reconciliation theology and others based in Jesus’ teaching style, must have social and biblical-theological contents. These teachings are critically relevant to the current reality of Angola, in particular, and of the African continent, in general.

Considering Jesus Christ as the foundation of theology, Christian education must start from childhood, offering a conscious and responsible sense of discipleship.

The theological perspective in Africa has the possibility to reinterpret its social history grounding itself in a Jesus - like pedagogy. Dr. Mercy Nyman, a specialist in pedagogy, in her lecture titled “Dynamic and Scientific Pedagogy” to the faculty and students of the Methodist Higher Education Theological School in Quessua, in Malanje, Angola, references methodological principles to reach academic training based in scientific education and utilizing at the same time significant experiences lived by each individual. Nyman goes further when she defines these valuable experiences as “an extraordinary, powerful and transforming confluence of several lived realities, which causes a physiological exchange in the human brain, showing itself with the revelation of permanent knowledge without being forgotten and becomes present as a foundation for scientific and dynamic pedagogy. (Nyman, July 2013).

The process of teaching and learning which affects the human intellect and potentiates a renewal of the way of thinking, until it generates a qualitatively superior knowledge, includes a pastoral practice that must complete theological formation in higher education schools in Africa. Jesus in his ministry as Teacher took advantage of all daily life successes to reveal the will of God and taught based on the experience of life. This is also inspiring to create authentic knowledge which prevents forgetting theology education based on experiences and through the stories of diverse African contexts. Currently, theologians have challenging work before them. To apply practical theology in the midst of suffering, devastation, strife, hunger, homes destroyed, marginalization and other difficult African realities, is an incentive to follow the Wesleyan roots given by the Methodist movement, in England, in the 18th century; the great challenge is to develop a practical theology based on the heart and life.

The current theology in Angola plays a prophetic and visionary role which corresponds to the experiences lived by the people who inhabit that country of the African continent. In fact, it has conquered a social space that influences the evangelization of the Angolan population. For example, every Saturday morning, the main television channel in the country (TPA) broadcasts the United Methodist Church worship in its entirety. In addition, there are also other radio broadcasts such as Radio Kayros in Luanda, Ecos do Evangelho (Gospel Echoes), an ecumenical program of the Igrejas Protestantes da Rádio Nacional de Angola (Protestant Churches of Angola National Radio) and the Voz do Senhor (Lord’s Voice), a program broadcast by the Emissora Provincial de Malanje (Malange Provincial Broadcasting Station). Through these experiences, Angolan theologians take advantage of the opportunity to appeal to society with regard to ethics, and Christian values formation.

The preservation of peace, reconciliation and national unity lead the daily agenda in the theological perspective of the country. Men and women committed to the faith in Jesus Christ, the perfect conciliator, engage in pastoral work which allows for the objectives, already reached through peace, reconciliation and unity at the social level, to be included in the homes of all Angolan families. Just and sound societies are built with peaceful, reconciled and unified families. Angola is following this path!
It is obvious that a good number of the families still face problems which make peace and tranquility hard to achieve. Nevertheless, we believe that these problems may be overcome by the Divine power allowing for a smile to glow in their faces and the break of a new day to be full of grace. This is the hope that allows the work of the faithful towards the strengthening of Peace, Reconciliation and National Unity to be included in the African Theological Perspective in the context of Angola.

By: Rev. Dr. Leonardo Garcia Salgado  
Rev. Dra. Cleivy Benítez Rivalta  
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WHAT IS THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION?

Theological Education is the study of God’s word. It is God-centered. It is the type of education which takes place in seminaries, universities and colleges. It is a holistic education that involves subjects like Old Testament Studies, New Testament Studies, Systematic Theology, Philosophy, Greek, Hebrew and among others.

Theological education is intended to mould mind, body, soul and spirit through the authority of the Bible for God’s mission. It shapes, guides and witness students to know God. Without proper and relevant theological education the very future of the church, its dialogue with society and its participation in the daily struggle and longings of ordinary people is endangered; the less churches and their leaders are investing in theological education the more the future of Christianity will be left to those who promote a distorted image of Christian identity and endanger dialogue and co-existence with other churches as well as other religious traditions. Theological education is crucial for the interaction between church and society where many issues demand for a sharp position of Christianity. Its roles never limited to just training ministers, but attention and emphasis must be an renewal and formation for all God’s people.

Without an increased commitment in theological education for social justice, the unity of the church, creating social awareness, political discernment, social involvement and Christian participation in transformation process of societies, we might see or increased fragmentation of Christian leadership in our growing churches in Sierra Leone need our investment. The only proper remedy is investment in education. Lack of education and theological formation often is one of the root causes for ignorance against social contexts. Churches which take seriously their responsibility for theological education of lay people and future ministers and exercise a proper sense of ownership and support of the churches to all levels of academic and non-academic theological education are better equipped to counteract trends toward the tension in Sierra Leone today. A theological education that would be relevant to the Africa context and characterized by life’s situation is appreciated. There is a need for relevant theological education for all God’s people to enable them to be involved in ministry. In this regard churches and theological educators are invited to reckon seriously with the complex and varied nature of the Africa context as well as theologizing in local languages. There is a need for new methods and content for theological education the light of particular political, economic and multi-faith factors of the global village.

The Nature of Theological Education

Theological education has some unique characteristics that makes it different from other disciples of education. Theology grows out of the encounter with God: it is an experience and expression of our encounter with God and a reflection about this encounter. As such, it proceeds by revelation and reflection. All Christians share the encounter with Christ who call us, embraces us in baptism and knit us into the divine life by the spirit. All Christians are addressed by the word of God. All Christians are therefore called to the task of theology.
Unlike many other disciplines, which can limit themselves to imparting a body of knowledge, theological education by nature involves faith formation, which engages the whole person. Theological education is a process and has several implications.

Theological education is a journey of faith and needs to address spiritual development, yet all too easily it becomes an academic discipline that engages the mind but not the spirit. Students’ experience of seminary often becomes one of spiritual dryness. While students typically come to seminary to deepen their faith, they may find themselves trapped between this desire and a perception that it is not safe to reveal any spirit sense of inadequacy.

Theological education needs to ensure that in shaping person, it does not damage them. For some in Africa, theological education has often been painful, alienating and destructive. There have been far too few safe places in seminary to express our anger or bind up our wounds as pick up the broken pieces of a faith shattered in the collision between theology and lived experiences. Our theology grapple with what I means to be an Africa made in the image in Christ’s image. Here we made Christ in the Western, white rich image? Hare our brothers and sisters in the west assumed that the experience of faith and church is the same for all people no matter where they are? Does our faith formation sufficiently consider students’ cultural background, history and gender? Theological education must be homogenous. Education which fails to grapple with the implications of failing to engaged in faith formation contextually is liable to miss the mark or even do harm rather than good.

How do we address this? Our theological education should allow students to integrate theology with their faith within their context. When we deepen our faith through theological education, be it formal or informal, we encounter cultures that are different from others. We meet traces of cultures that flourished tow to four thousand years ago.

For many of us, the area of the world written of is far away geography. Thus, there are sayings and references that we simply do not understand, because our environment is so different.

Theological education is a tool for enriching people. The word of God must speak to the whole people of God. It should speak to us in our mother tongue, not in Latin, Greek, Hebrew or whatever the theological language is of the moment. God speaks to un in our culture, not only in our language. The word became human so that humans can hear, see, experience and accept God’s word and thus be saved.

Theological education can make people better or it can be meeting of making people fit for serving institutions. It should enhance and enrich the whole people of God. The more we know our theology; we can make informed decisions at all levels of our faith.

This was in the minds of those who made the effort in bringing theological institutions in Sierra Leone. In 1975.

**Sierra Leone Context**

Theology and theological education, is extremely difficult to define. Our definition will often
depends on our context that is, where we come from and our point of entry into the subject that is centered around our lives, a God hard to understand. Is therefore not possible to agree on a broad definition but scholars do agree that a bis sap exist in what different groups of people consider theological education to be. Thank God that my aim in this paper is not to decide but to simply share perspectives on theological education.

It is recognized that theological education has often been in pivotal feature in the development of many nations in the world, including Sierra Leone. The early teachings of the church helped to shaped many of our laws both written and unwritten. If we accept that theological education dies indeed shape and impact on peoples live from their formative years, our homes become the first classroom where we learn to speak and experience God’s love and care.

Today, many people are engaged in theological education without knowing that they are doing theology, just as many peopled tend to know God without reading about Him in the Bible. In Africa and elsewhere in the world the early missionaries teachers, doctors and administrators, each in their own individual roles, were doing opportunity to exercise leadership and changed their attitudes, behaviors and outlook on life. It also have developed and harness instinctual skills.

In 1975 the College of Theology and Management and Church Training Centre (formerly Sierra Leone Theological College and church training centre) was established. Before the establishment of this college, student for the ordained ministry in several denominations were trained at either Fourah Bay College Department of Theology or at Sierra Leone Bible College (now called the Evangelical College of Theology – TECT). For several years the United Methodist Church, had each a concern about the appropriateness of the university model for the ministerial formation of all candidates for ministry. The leaders of these three denominations met on several occasions to discuss the matter and to pray about it. The United Methodist Church sees the need to form its own school of Theology with its uniqueness and identity. The desire to form the school of theology stems out of the need for our particular Methodist traditional flavors and Wesleyan theology.
THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE OF AFRICA

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The Theme Theological perspective of Africa could be understood as the challenge that Africans have to make theology-Christianity authentically African. Africa should have its own theologians, African theologians born in Africa, rooted in Africa and in African culture or African philosophy, responsible in searching, exploring, analyzing and involving in deep theological reflection. It calls African theologians to verbalize African reflection about Divinity from the perspective of African grassroots background and culture, as Gabriel Setiloane said. Theological Perspective of Africa calls African Theologians to think, write and sell African theologian books, because Africa is rich so it has oral theology. As John Smith Mbiti said” Oral theology is produced in the fields, by the masses, through song, sermons, teaching, prayer, conversation, etc. It is theology in the open air, often unrecorded, often heard only by small groups and generally lost to libraries and seminaries.

As we know that Christian mission in Africa from the beginning was to Christianize and civilize all African Continent. By civilization means Africans should follow the western culture and consequently African had lost their own identity and philosophy, so, it needs to be recovered, for Africans to become authentic Africans and true Christians. In the opinion of B.S. Chuba in his reflection on the theme “theology cooked in an African pot”, is therefore, a theology relevant and conducive to a particular context, fully nurtured and keenly participated in by the indigenous without excluding the participation of peoples from other context. A theology which its context is African, its language is African; its advocates are Africans themselves, its target (result object of faith) is African.

Nevertheless, it is important to begin by saying that majority of African people in the continent live under poverty, natural calamities, endemics diseases, unemployment, lack of human rights, political conflicts and violence, and other factors which are big challenges for governmental and non-governmental institutions including and diverse religions. As we are talking about theological perspective of Africa, therefore, it is essential to say that Mozambique is one of the African countries composed by more than 20.226.296 people according to the 2007 census, and it is divided into three main geographical areas, namely: north of Mozambique, central and south, with its rich and diversities cultures and religions.

Throughout the last 3 decades, some political and natural disaster, made Mozambique to be one of the poorest country of Africa and consequently of the whole world. These and other factors take the country to remain dependent on international finances and support. Therefore, the main question that has to be thinkable for Mozambicans is the social integration like more justice and equality, freedom for democratic exercise, more and updated information, equal opportunity and right to all people, employments, education to all and good health, the high rates of violence and crime, poverty, HIV/AIDS and others. Consequently, the church has to do its mission, the mission of love, peace, freedom, justice, charity and solidarity to all people. For that, it has to train people who may take the message of salvation to all corners of the country.

Having in mind the above challenges, the United Methodist Church in Mozambique responds to these problems through providing education (building schools), providing health care mostly in
the rural areas by building hospitals, provision of charity through orphanages, water supply, provision of scholarships for high education and other kinds of social training either for pastor or for lay people without looking for the political or religious affiliation of the receiver.

The history of the Methodism in Mozambique started in 1890 in Mongwe-Inhambane Province by a missionary called Erwin H. Richards from North America who was trained in medicine and pastoral area. He worked with his wife Margheret, with the help of the Episcopal Methodist Church. Afterwards, he established the church in Chicuque and Cambine (both in Inhambane Province, South Mozambique). These two places became the pot where African-Mozambican Methodism were cooked, using the local language XITSWA, as official for all church services even in the annual conference 99.9% of people use this idiom.

This article with the theme: Theological Perspective of Africa intends to discuss about the historical growth of Cambine Theological Seminary. Cambine is a historical seminary which was created over some years ago within the Cambine Mission. It was a simple Bible school created to train indigenous people to get some knowledge about the Bible. At the very beginning Cambine mission started with secular school for boys only and the girl’s boarding school at Chicuque. The reason why it was just boarding school for boys it’s because in this area in particular and southern Mozambique in general, boys and girls could not have the same education and in the same place, since the African rites of preparation of boys and girls are also divided as such.

Cambine theological Seminary is located in Inhambane Province, South of Mozambique (southern Africa), and it belongs to the United Methodist Church. The church has two mission namely Chicuque mission and Cambine mission and the last is where the Theological Seminary is located. It is rounded by Secular Schools (O level, High level and professional and technical school), a health center, the Cambine parish, female and male dormitories for secular schools and other dormitories for theological students. There is also an orphanage and an agricultural project.

In 1923, the missionaries introduced Bible study taken into tree years, with the purpose of training the local people to become preachers and evangelists. According to Alf Helgesson, in his book titled: Church, State and People in Mozambique, an historical study with special emphasis on Methodist development in the Inhambane region (1994, Pg. 275), says that, “the closure, during the 1930’s, of hundreds of Protestant village schools meant a steadily increasing flow of pupils to these Central Schools. In 1941, just after the Concordat and the missionary accord had been put into effect, there were 172 boys boarding at Cambine. That was the year when the Portuguese Government Rudimentar schools all over the colony were transferred to various Catholic Missions. This event seems to have accelerated the growth of the Protestant Central Schools. Thirteen years later, in 1954, the Cambine School was overflowing with 1134 pupils.

On 21th September 1941, started the Cambine Theological School, later in 2007 it was known as Theological Seminary because it trains just pastors. The change of name it was a result of a long discussion between the Brazilian missionary called Nadir Cristiano de Carvalho who was a teacher at the Theological Seminary with the students. This was to establish the difference between secular and theological education. The first group of students in theological training started in 1942. Before this year, pastors had to be trained outside of the country.

Furthermore, there were also some requirements to engage to this education. One of the requisite was to have passed by biblical training which could take four years of study, and when the person finishes this and demonstrates his vocation or divine calling, he could be recommended to
theological school where he could spend other four years of study. These students had to be recommended by their ecclesiastical districts and they had to be married boys. It was a long way to reach the course of theology because, after accomplishing his grade after four years, it was required also for the candidate to be mature in his Christian life. They had to be called or to demonstrate in the local congregation his dedication, participating in all programs of the local church and district, and manifesting his interest or some other members of the church to propose him to request to the church to go to bible study in Cambine. If the candidate finishes the above requirements successfully he could be recommended to continue his studies in the course of theology.

From 1963 the time of Bible study course was reduced, the candidate could spend two years of Bible study in Cambine, and after that he could be recommended for four years of theology. Moreover, from 1998 to 2009, the candidate was directly recommended to school of theology for four years and from 2010 the course is three years of study. As it can be seen, the duration of study at the seminary reduced gradually. This can be justified in one hand as a result of financial problems, on the other hand, as a way to connect with the governmental institutes that are three years of study.

As we have said before, at the beginning this kind of studies were only addressed to boys, but later on, in 1977, two ladies were accepted to attend theological studies in Cambine, they graduated in 1979 and appointed to serve as pastors in the church. Many people admired, and they were thinking about the challenges that these women could have in the pastoral ministry. From there, female ministry was introduced in the United Methodist church in Mozambique and in 2009 female pastors celebrated thirty years of female ministry held in Cambine mission.

Besides theological studies, all students were also engaged in others activities mainly agriculture, raising animals, and their wives were submitted to bible study, trained for sawing and so on.

As we know, after the independence of the country proclaimed on 25th June 1975, two years later, Mozambique experienced civil war which took 16 years and it ended in the farthest 1992. On October 1986, Cambine suffered an incredible guerrilla and people ran away, and theological school was closed. It was reopened in 1994 after the agreement of cease fire between RENAMO and the Government (Acordo Geral de Paz). In this process the RENAMO was led by its leader Afonso Macacho Marceta Dlakhama and FRELIMO Government was led by Joaquim Alberto Chissano (the president of Republic of Mozambique). This agreement allowed people from different corners to do their activities and their studies. The Theological Seminary of Cambine was not away of this historical events.

Cambine Theological Seminary has graduated hundreds of ministers, both male and female, who have gone on to work in different parishes of the United Methodist church, some of them even became well known in the government. Currently, the Seminary has got 26 students; four married and the rest are still single with the age between 20 to 37 years old. There are 9 professors, three missionaries from German, Burundi and Brazil. The teaching personnel is one of the best within the local seminaries in the country. The teachers hold degrees from distinguished schools of higher learning. Rev. Thomas Gunther, and reva. Maisa Gomes de Oliveira are missionaries from German and Brazil, they hold degrees, and the last one went through Africa University for Intensive English. Dioudone is another missionary from Burundi hold bachelor degrees from Africa University-Zimbabwe, in the Faculty of Agriculture. The other six are Mozambican graduated from Africa University, except the retired bishop João Somane Machado.
who graduated from Universidade Metodista de Sao Paulo in Brazil and he hold master’s degree from a Protestant University of Kinsasha in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Júlio André Vilanculos the Dean of the seminary, currently is a PhD candidate from Pretória University-South Africa (distance learning). He holds Bachelor and Master Degrees from Africa University-Zimbabwe-school of theology. Rev. Moises Gujamo hold bachelor degrees from Africa University-school of theology and Masters in Philosophy, Rev. Nito Armando Joaquim, Rev. Iliana Lucite Pereira and Mr. Filipe Hoguane, they hold Bachelor Degrees from Africa University-school of Theology.

As we are reflecting on the theme: Theological Perspective of Africa, the mission of the Cambine Theological Seminary is to train, educate and building Christian leaders to serve the church and society (For instance, there is graduated pastor called Leonardo Massango from this School of theology, and appointed to north of Mozambique, he served as director of National Commission of Elections in the province of Cabo Delgado and later on he was called to serve in national office until now). On this perspective, students are trained to be creative, independents in their works and critical in their thinking and actions. It transforms the colonized minds and develops their faith in African context and helps the students to stretch their hands to the work. This theological seminary helps students or trained pastors to seek justice, freedom, peace, love and alleviate human suffering in the community by helping them to discover and utilize some local resources to develop some projects and income. Its objective is to guarantee the formation, training local pastors and promoting workshops for pastors in the ministry. In this situation some areas are developed such as Bible and Pastoral counseling, History and Wesleyan Theology. In order to develop and update its activities, the seminary established partnership with others Theological schools. In addition, there is a project called SOL_AFRICA whereby the seminary sends some lecturers to the Faculty of Theology in Brazil (Universidade Metodista de Sao Paulo_Brasil) for training in some areas. It also sends a lecturer to the United Theological Seminary of Ricatla (Maputo-Mozambique) to teach Methodism and Wesleyan Theology just for a semester.

The library is well-stocked with books on theology, philosophy, Portuguese dictionaries, history, among others, but most of these books are not written by African theologians or writers. A larger number of these books are written in Portuguese but in the context of Latin-American and German, because they are translated into Portuguese from the original German-language and others are from Brazilian scholars. There are also a lot of books written in English, those are used mostly by the professors and some students. The lack of written books from African theologians which could bring the truth and thoughts of the African context is a big challenge. In this Seminary, Professors usually work hard, they read books from other context, culture, and perspective, and then they have to bring to the African mind with another reality different from what the book was written. They have to contextualize it in order to respond the veracity of the Africans. For instance, there is a subject called African Theology, but there just four books written by African theologians. Therefore, theological books written by African authors would also be greatly beneficial to students and lecturers. Most of those books are obtained through donation of some missionaries, and universities especially from the Faculty of Theology of Sao Paulo Methodist University-Brazil, and others individualities.

For better functioning of this Seminary, there is an excellent organization, strategic, pedagogical and administrative, which corresponds to the objectives and high-quality curriculum, respecting the principles designed by the board of ordained ministry and education, and respecting the concrete reality of the process and development of theological teaching, in the national and
international levels.

The students start field education from first year of the studies where they do it in the local parish for better assistance by the pastor and chaplain, from second year, they go to others parishes within the United Methodist Churches, where they go out in the weekends. They assist the pastors in celebrating the sacraments, weddings, pastoral counseling, church plans and meetings, etc. It helps them familiarizing, practicing and developing practical theology. They discuss some issues or challenges that they face in the ground.

Moreover, this seminary is blessed by having dedicated, well-equipped professors, trained not only in theology, most of them were already teachers in secular schools and others continue working as teachers in the government. A good number of them were trained at Africa University. These professors have participated and organized many workshops and seminars and some of them have areas of concentration developing some themes in theological perspective of Africa.

On the area of partnership, the Seminary is a member of an association of Institutions that teach evangelic theology in Mozambique. In this way the institution is in the process of recognition by the government. Teachers are called to take part in debates or workshops in this movement.

Like any other institution working in Africa, the seminary also faces some challenges namely:

1-Salaries: as we said before, all professors did their degrees at universities, but no one is having his or her salary according to his or her degree. In addition to this, salaries are not coming on time where sometimes professors have to pass four to six months without having it. So, these teachers have to practice agriculture and raising some poultry such as chickens. Nevertheless, students are getting their subsides monthly from the Missouri Annual Conference, and they do not need much financial support from their families.

2-Transportation: the seminary is located in the interior meaning far from the main road. Because of that it becomes a challenge for teachers and their families to get transportation in order to buy something at the urban area.

3-Housing: the buildings of the seminary and all Cambine mission are oldest and with no condition for live. During the rainy season families are suffering.

In addition there is another challenge that the seminary is facing which is all about Teachers training- in the seminary we have three professors with bachelor degrees, they wish to continue their studies but there is no fund or no conditions for them to proceed. Therefore, it become as challenge to the seminary to look forward so that may have partners to help for further studies of the teachers, even for some distinguished graduated students.

Cambine is not only about challenges; good things also exist such as following:

1-Spouses training: there is a project of training spouses of resident professors and students in different areas with the objective of self-sustainability, especially they are trained in how to use sawing machine and Bible study is part of this training.

2- Project of HIV/AIDS for the society: the Seminary has got a subject which deals with how
pastors can live and work with HIV-AIDS infected and affected. We believe that this will contribute for the reducing of the number of deaths as a result of this pandemic. And also they

Perspectives: Self-sustainable project- the seminary is designing an agricultural project with the vision of training theological students in agriculture. This is because most of our students after graduation will be working in rural areas and in some cases without salaries. So, having some techniques about crop production and animal production, it may help them in their life and not depending on the money from lay people.

In conclusion the missionaries proclaimed, taught the gospel to Africans, but they did this in their context, their failed to meet the real situation of Africans, therefore, there is a need for Africans themselves develop a theology rooted in African culture. We need to decolonize the western philosophy in our minds and bringing out our own African mind, in other words, we need to understand and interpret the bible in African background.

The yellow stones wall is the chapel and is attached to school of theology, with a capacity for 80-100 worshipers. The school has four class rooms, an office for the dean, a library, and an office for the secretary and a chapel.
Other visionary side of Cambine Theological Seminary


Documento de proposta deregulamento interno da Escola Teológica de Cambine na sua pagina 2 (From the official document of intern rules of the Cambine Theological Seminary.)